

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: Thumbing one's nose at government bodies... part two.

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It was tempting to just... let everyone else run around making their plans and schemes and see what they eventually came up with. At the same time though, this was supposed to be something of a vacation and leaving too many of his potential headaches to their own devices so that they could eventually blindside him with some contrived annoyance was... perhaps less than ideal.

Better to at least try and nip some things in the bud right off the bat... and Griselda Marchbanks' warning was given in good faith, so Harry figured he might as well get out ahead of the Wizengamot at the very least.

As such, the very next morning Harry heads back to the Ministry of Magic, this time with Fleur in tow in her proper role as his assistant. They attract just as many stares as he did yesterday, striding through the Ministry Atrium like they do, but this time Harry doesn't dally or spend a single ounce of time at the visitor's desk.

Instead, he goes straight for the elevator, making it clear that he has 'places to be' and is a man on a mission.

Together, he and Fleur make their way to the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, where the Wizengamot's administrative offices can be found. After all, on top of being Magical Britain's parliament, the Wizengamot was also the Highest Court of Magical Law in the isles.

In fact, back in his Fifth Year a dozen lives ago, it was members of the Wizengamot who had presided over his sham of a trial when the likes of Dolores Umbridge had set Dementors on him and his cousin Dudley.

Regardless, he and Fleur soon arrive at the proper place... to find a familiar face sitting behind the desk there. Padma Patil (Harry could tell that she wasn't Parvati, not nearly enough beauty charms and magical makeup to be the Gryffindor half of the twin pair) looks up at their approach... and goes wide-eyed at the sight of a wizard standing right in front of her.

"L-Lord... um... Lord Hallows, r-right?"

Harry inclines his head with a smile. That Special Edition of the Daily Prophet will have ensured pretty much everyone in Magical Britain should already know his title. Helpful in some ways, annoying in others.

"That is correct, Ms. Patil. And you, judging by the desk you're sitting behind, are Chief Clerk for the Wizengamot, no?"

After all, the Wizengamot might have been made up of all the noblest blood and most pompous windbags in the land, but it couldn't run without its underlying bureaucracy. Someone had to arrange the meetings. Someone had to make sure the chambers were cleaned by the janitors. Someone had to keep track of all the little things.

That certainly wasn't going to be the Chief Warlock's job, nor that of all the Lords and Ladies who made up the Wizengamot's membership. Or rather, just ladies now Harry supposed. No, in the end such things fell to the small fry. Small fry like Padma Patil, who looks awestruck that Harry knows her name.

Of course, then she seems to remember that her name is on the plaque right in front of her desk and goes a little red before clearing her throat and regaining some of her composure.

"R-Right. Yes... that's correct, Lord Hallows. I am the Wizengamot's Chief Clerk. In that capacity, what can I do for you today?"

Sitting up and lacing her fingers together all prim and proper, she seems intent on pretending like her initial reaction didn't happen. Harry, for his part... snaps his fingers, allowing Fleur to step forward with a clearing of her throat. Padma's

eyes flicker over to the part veela... and stay there as Fleur sets down a rolled up scroll of parchment on the desk before them.

“Lord Hallows has reason to believe that he is due at least one, perhaps two seats in the Wizengamot. We are here today to ascertain the truth of that matter... and consolidate said seats if necessary.”

Padma blinks rapidly for a moment... before snatching up the parchment scroll and unfurling it. Her eyes dance back and forth as she reads quietly to herself for a moment... and then she gets to a certain part and the parchment comes down so she can stare at Harry with wide eyes.

Fleur clears her throat again though, causing Padma to flush and retreat back behind the parchment scroll, reading through yet again before finally, slowly nodding. She gets to her feet and grabs a nearby tome along with a self-inking quill.

“If... if all of this is in order, then yes... you might indeed have a claim, Lord Hallows. Let me just... see to the testing. Right this way please.”

Fleur collects the scroll and she and Harry follows Padma into another room where a large, ancient stone basin is set up. This stone basin predates the Ministry of Magic in the same way that the Wizengamot does, and it has runes from hundreds and hundreds of years ago etched into every inch of its surface.

Stepping to the side, Padma gestures.

“Please... if you would place your wand on the lip and cast a benign spell of some sort, we will find out if your magic is indeed connected to any of the current Wizengamot Seats.”

In a way, it's a similar test to what the goblins have at Gringotts. Can you open a vault with your magic? Then you're effectively guaranteed to be the owner of that vault, because the protections are just that good. The basin is treated the same way, even if Harry knows half a dozen ways to manipulate the results of both Gringotts' Vault Doors and the Wizengamot's magic testing.

In this case he doesn't, however. He simply pulls forth the Elder Wand, touches it to the lip, and casually casts 'Lumos' with an unaffected slant to his voice.

The light at the end of his wand is sucked right into the basin, which proceeds to read his magic while pulsing and thrumming. Finally, it settles on a pleasant blue glow, which Harry knows means that it's found something in his magic that it likes. Padma leans in closer, having been trained to read the details of such results... before finally nodding and jotting something down in her open tome.

"Your claim is verified; Lord Hallows. Both the seats of House Potter and House Black belong to you from here on out. Would you... still like to proceed with the consolidation?"

Harry smiles a wry smile. This was bound to cause waves... but then to be fair, he already knew that the goblins had screwed him in that regard. They'd tattled to the Ministry and whatever the Ministry knew, the Wizengamot would also learn. Even if it hadn't been in the Daily Prophet's Special Edition, it would come out sooner rather than later that Harry was in fact Lord of House Potter and House Black.

So why not make it come out on his own terms?

"I would, yes. I am declaring House Potter and House Black to be officially defunct. House Hallows is their natural successor."

Padma breathes in sharply at that. The dissolution of two Ancient and Noble Houses that had been around for centuries if not millennia was clearly something she didn't see very often in her line of work. Still, after a beat of processing what he's asking her to do, she nods and turns to her tome, getting to work. A few moments later and...

"Very well. Your request for consolidation will be processed within the month so long as there are no objections."

Harry pauses. And then smiles wryly.

“Oh? Objections?”

Padma looks a little nervous as she nods hesitantly.

“Yes. I... did you not know, Lord Hallows? Consolidation is... well, all remaining members of both Houses are entitled to voice their concerns to the Wizengamot about such a thing. While you are the only remaining member of House Potter as far as I know, there are still a couple of Black Witches left... albeit only one who will be able to actually raise a fuss.”

A couple of Black Witches left... Harry has his suspicions, but he gestures to Padma anyways.

“Tell me more. Who should I be worried about?”

Padma squirms a little, clearly starting to wonder if she might be... oversharing. But it's just the three of them back here in the testing chamber and he IS the first wizard she's likely seen in years. Actually, that did make Harry wonder why she was still here in Magical Britain and not back in Magical India with her family. The Patil Twins were effectively the equivalent of 'foreign exchange' students. Was the quarantine that Amelia feared already affecting some people?

“Yes, well... of the remaining Black Sisters... Andromeda Tonks was disowned decades ago, so she's not going to be an issue. However, Lady Narcissa Malfoy has been trying to gain control of the Black Seat in the Wizengamot ever since she took control of the Malfoy Seat. Unfortunately, things are all tied up in Goblin Treaties so as long as Gringotts refused to give her access to the Black Vault, her efforts went nowhere.”

Leaning in with a blush Padma drops her voice to a whisper.

“Rumor has it that she only barely managed to get access to the Malfoy Vaults, my Lord. They say her husband made no such allowances for his death, but fortunately enough, her son Draco did so before he passed a measly two weeks after his father.”

Harry blinks at that information, taking it in. But whatever reaction Padma is hoping for, perhaps some sort of scandalized gasp or something, the former Ravenclaw doesn't get it. Suddenly seeming self-conscious (and no doubt comparing herself internally to her gossip of a sister), she quickly pulls away.

"T-That is to say... I doubt Lady Malfoy will let you consolidate House Black into House Hallows without a proper fight, Lord Hallows. She will have to be alerted to your intentions by the end of the day, and I suspect she will call a session of the Wizengamot to complain and try to stymie your efforts by the end of the week."

Hm, that was a very fair prediction to make, Harry had to admit. Though all of Padma's advice does bring one more question to mind.

"... You mentioned Andromeda and Narcissa. Are they truly the only two witches with Black Blood remaining? Didn't they have a sister that was in Azkaban?"

Padma blinks and tilts her head to the side for a moment. Then, her eyes light up in remembrance.

"Oh! You mean Bellatrix Lestrange. I remember, she died in prison years ago. Back in my Third Year if I recall correctly. Around the same time that her cousin Sirius Black passed away in prison as a matter of fact."

Harry pauses and takes a moment to process that information. The moment stretches on long enough that Padma squirms a little and even Fleur starts to look worried for him.

Still. Sirius dying instead of getting free of Azkaban was... strange. Had he never gotten a glimpse of the Daily Prophet Article where he saw Peter in his rat form? Maybe not if the Weasleys had never gotten to go on their trip and therefore made the paper.

But still... him and Bellatrix dying around the same time when neither would have passed in a normal timeline wasn't just mysterious, it stank of enemy action. Or maybe Harry was just being paranoid.

Either way, he forces a smile on his face and pushes his thoughts to the back of his mind, instead focusing on the present.

"Well, I truly do appreciate everything you've helped us with so far today, Ms. Patil. It seems to me, given what you've told me, that there's just one thing left to do."

Padma looks confused.

"O-Oh?"

"Indeed. I'd like to call a meeting of the Wizengamot please. If Lady Malfoy is going to be obligated to do so anyways, I might as well get there first, no? That way we can all have a nice chat about my Lordly status and whether or not I will be... allowed to consolidate my two seats into one."

Really, there was no point in them denying him the consolidation. The only one who might get in his way was Lady Malfoy. So by preempting her and calling the meeting first, Harry was already getting a leg up, so to speak.

Padma seems to agree if the way her eyes widen in awe is any indication. She quickly nods and jots down some more things in her tome before leading him and Fleur back out to the front desk.

"It will be done, Lord Hallows. You should receive a confirmation as well as the general summons by way of mailing owl later today."

"Excellent."

Before departing, Harry catches Padma's hand in his own... and brings it up to his lips, giving the back of her hand a chaste kiss as she goes scarlet and freezes in place. Smiling at her warmly, Harry just chuckles.

“Your help is most appreciated, Ms. Patil. Most appreciated indeed. If there’s anything I can ever do for you in turn, you need only let me know.”

Letting go of her hand, he expects that to be the end of it, anticipating having the final word mostly because he’s leaving Padma in a state of shock. And she always was the more bookish and shyer of the twin pair. Except, just as he and Fleur are turning to leave...

“G-Go on a date with me!”

Padma’s outburst causes them both to turn around, Fleur with a scowl on her face and Harry with a raised brow. Padma immediately shrinks back, looking mortified by her own words.

“I-I’m sorry, I don’t know... I shouldn’t have s-said that, I-!”

Harry cuts her off with a raised hand, his eyes twinkling rather merrily as he grins.

“Sounds like fun. But let’s wait until after the Wizengamot Meeting, shall we? We don’t want any conflicts of interest, after all.”

“O-Oh... okay...”

She looks dazed by his easy acceptance, while Fleur just gives her one last narrowed eyed assessing look before they depart from the Ministry. As they go, the part veela also looks at Harry wordlessly but intensely, making him chuckle as they reach the elevator that will carry them back to the surface.

“Padma Patil isn’t the kind of witch to just... want a date for the sake of a date. Something tells me there’s more to it than that. I’m curious to see what exactly that is.”

Fleur remains quiet for a moment longer before bowing her head.

“As my Lord wills. Where to next?”

Harry considers that for a moment before shrugging.

“My new office, I should think. We’ll finish renovations and if it goes quickly enough, I might just have us open up and see if we can snag our first case before the end of the day.”

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A/N: Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!