

**Release that Witch...  
and Wizard?!**

**Disclaimer: All characters here are at least 18. Hogwarts starts later, so by the time Harry arrives, he's 19. Cheng Yen (陈嫣) was in her mid-20s before waking up in the 21-year-old body of Garcia Wimbledon. Witches gain their first awakening upon adulthood, at 18 years of age.**

**Story Starts**

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**Chapter 4.2 -**

**Understanding  
and the Start of a New Dawn**

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A solitary cottage stood in the castle's secluded backyard, its weathered facade clad in rough-hewn planks that creaked faintly. Two small square windows peered out, glass fogged with age and webbed with cracks. An oval pond lay before it, perhaps eight metres across, its surface mirroring the overcast sky in muted grey. River water filled it, carrying a faint earthy scent that mixed with damp moss underfoot.

Beside the cottage stood a splintered wooden table, its surface worn rough by weather. Harry lounged nearby in typical irreverence—long legs sprawled, black coat on his shoulders, arms crossed over his chest. His voice carried, too distant to catch words. Smoke tang drifted from Anna's trembling fingers as delicate flame flickered above her palm, shadows dancing across hollow cheeks.

Princess Garcia's retinue clustered nearby, tension thick in the air. The Assistant Minister of Finance, Barov, shuffled his feet nervously on the damp grass, his white robes rustling as he wiped sweat from his furrowed brow despite the morning chill. Chief Knight Carter Lannis stood rigid at attention, one broad hand resting on his sword hilt, his unfortunate chin beard twitching with poorly concealed suspicion. Behind them, the rustle of starched aprons

and the faint clatter of silverware accompanied the maids as they manoeuvred their laden breakfast carts around the uneven ground, the scent of fresh bread and smoked meats cutting through the musty pond air.

Then Anna's flames flared wildly, engulfing her body in a column of fire. Garcia rushed forward despite her retinue's protests, and Carter Lannis moved instinctively to follow, one hand already reaching for his princess even as the other drew his sword.

The flames vanished as suddenly as they'd erupted, leaving Anna standing unharmed amidst wisps of curling steam. Her pale skin glowed faintly in the morning light, though there was no trace of burns or soot. Her hair fell in soft waves around her shoulders, catching the sunlight with an otherworldly sheen.

Gone were the previous night's tattered remnants of her prison garb. In their place, she now wore a peculiar yet elegant uniform: a crisp white blouse with a short black pleated skirt, a tailored black robe draped over her slender frame, and a scarlet tie knotted at her throat.

At the questioning looks from everyone, Harry explained with a casual wave, "I cast an Impervious Charm on her clothing. Whilst Anna here doesn't particularly care about modesty—though let's be honest, I do have some sense of propriety—replacing her clothes every time her flames flare up is a hassle." His tone was light, almost flippant, suggesting it was a practical solution rather than a genuine concern.

He shrugged, running a hand through his perpetually untidy hair. "Can't really repair things once they're ash and soot. Magic has its limits, you know." His green eyes flicked to Anna, softening briefly before he turned his attention back to the group, voice carrying a hint of wry self-deprecation, as though mocking his own limitations.

Anna glanced down at herself, pale fingers brushing against the crisp fabric of her new uniform. A faint flush crept into her cheeks, though whether from embarrassment or lingering warmth from the flames was hard to tell.

She opened her mouth as if to speak, lips parting with a soft, barely audible breath, but no words came. Her usual quiet reticence returned as quickly as it had faltered, and she simply bowed her head, slender shoulders tensing ever so slightly.

"Oh, look—food," Harry said abruptly, his tone brightening as he shifted the conversation. His sharp gaze landed on Garcia, and a faint blush crept up his cheeks as their eyes locked—memory of him apparating in while her maid serviced her. He cleared his throat, running a hand through his hair again—a nervous habit, it seemed. "Good morning, ladies and gentlemen," he added, voice a touch too cheerful.

With a clap and a wave, the space behind him transformed. The splintered table expanded into a rectangular wooden surface, polished to a subtle sheen. A long bench appeared on either side, sturdy and practical.

Harry's movements were fluid, almost theatrical, as if conducting an orchestra. With another wave, dishes floated gracefully from the trays and carts, arranging themselves in perfect order along the table. The aroma of fresh bread, smoked meats, and steaming tea filled the air, mingling with the lingering scent of magic. Harry's lips quirked into a small, satisfied smile, though his blush remained stubbornly in place.

Garcia noticed the very subtle sleight of hand as a missing piece from each dish vanished. 'He's set something aside for Nightingale,' she thought.

"Right, working breakfast then," Garcia announced, swinging her legs over the bench and settling into her seat before turning to her finance minister. "Barov, whilst you asked for three days, is there information you can provide already?"

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"Why does Border Town have no trade revenue or annual taxes in winter?" Garcia asked, her voice carrying a sharp edge of curiosity as she tapped her fingers against the table's polished surface.

*'Since the winters are so cold, lack of agricultural revenue makes sense—but absolute zero? Do the locals hibernate?'* Garcia mused, her inner voice tinged with sarcasm.

Barov sat before her, his white beard ruffling in the breeze. He coughed softly. "Your Highness, have you forgotten?" he began, his tone measured but tinged with impatience. "During the winter months, the 'Months of the Demons' take place. Since the town cannot defend its borders, all residents must evacuate to Longsong Stronghold." He paused, his gaze steady as he wiped his forehead with a handkerchief. "But rest assured, your safety is certainly our main priority."

"Months of the Demons?" Garcia echoed, her brow furrowing as she leaned forward, long dark grey hair cascading over her shoulder. The phrase stirred something in her memory—a fleeting mention in one of the countless reports she'd skimmed. Her lips pursed as she weighed his words, scepticism clashing with the reality she was beginning to uncover. *'Ghosts, demons, witches—like stepping into a medieval fairy tale. Except the monsters seem real.'* A faint shiver ran down her spine, though she wasn't sure if it was from the cold or the unsettling thought.

She glanced at Barov, her piercing eyes narrowing slightly. "And these demons—are they truly as dangerous as the stories suggest? Or is this another case of fear overriding reason?"

Barov hesitated, hands clasped tightly before him. "Your Highness, the threat is not to be underestimated. The stories may be embellished, but the danger is very real. I've seen the aftermath myself."

*'If witches exist, then why not demons? But if they're real, we need to understand them, not run from them.'* She straightened, her posture radiating determination. Garcia thought that if every year they gave up the frontline, what would happen if one day the demons overwhelmed Longsong Stronghold? Where would they retreat then?

"Very well. If these 'Months of the Demons' are unavoidable, then we need to find a way to mitigate their impact. I won't accept a system that leaves an entire town abandoned every year. There must be a solution." Garcia's voice carried the steel of absolute conviction, each word carefully measured yet burning with determination.

The scent of tea and morning dew filled her nostrils as she leaned forward slightly, her piercing eyes fixed on Barov's weathered face. She could almost taste the tension in the air, thick and oppressive like the moments before a thunderstorm.

Barov's expression tightened, the lines around his eyes deepening as he processed her words. His fingers drummed once against his leg—a nervous habit she'd begun to notice—before he caught himself and stilled the movement. "As you say, Your Highness. But I must still advise caution. These are not matters to be taken lightly."

*'Caution, caution—always caution,'* Garcia thought, frustration simmering beneath the surface like water reaching its boiling point. *'But if I'm going to drag this world into the industrial age, I can't let fear hold us back.'*

The cool air seemed to sharpen around her as she met Barov's gaze, her resolve hardening like steel in a forge. "Then we'll proceed with both caution and determination. I won't let superstition dictate our future—or the future of this kingdom."

The words hung in the air between them, and Garcia could see the exact moment Barov registered the shift in her tone—from princess making demands to sovereign laying down law.

"Sir Carter Lannis," Garcia called out, her voice carrying clearly across the space. The sound echoed, formally and commanding.

"Yes, Your Highness?" Carter's response was immediate, his military training evident in the crisp acknowledgement. She could hear the subtle tension in his voice, the readiness of a man perpetually prepared for orders.

"Assemble your men and find some of the local guards, hunters and farmers who've lived here for more than five years. Ask them if they've experienced the Months of the Demons. If you find someone who's fought a demon, that would be even better," Garcia ordered, her tone brooking no argument. "I want to speak with them personally—to understand what we're truly facing."

"Yes, Your Highness!" the knight answered with characteristic briskness. But then he hesitated, broad shoulders tensing as his gaze shifted uncertainly between Garcia and the two former prisoners. His jaw worked silently for a moment, caught between duty and protocol. He clearly wasn't willing to leave when there were individuals present who could potentially attack the princess.

Garcia noticed the direction of his worried glance and felt a flutter of exasperation for her loyal protector. 'Always the faithful guard dog,' she mused, though not without warmth. "Chief Knight, I trust them. You may go," Garcia assured him, her voice gentling slightly. She could see the conflict playing out across his weathered features—duty warring with protective instinct—and chose to meet his concern with patient authority rather than sharp command.

Garcia could still hear the knight's boots clanking as he entered the palace, his reluctant departure marked by the gradual fading of footfalls. Turning to her remaining attendants, she dismissed them, leaving only Tyre.

"Whilst we don't have much information on what we face," Garcia began, her fingers tracing absent circles on the expanded wooden table, "first, let us discuss how our two magical friends here can help us develop our little town."

"First, with Anna," she said, "there's no pressure in achieving this, but I want you to continue training your fire until you can melt these—" She gestured to the silver service gleaming dully on the side table.

"Your Highness, those are our silverware!" Barov interjected, his voice cracking like dry parchment. The old minister's hands fluttered toward the ornate serving pieces like startled birds, his knuckles pale with tension.

Garcia's jaw tightened, her pulse quickening with the effort of restraint. She exhaled slowly through her nose, counting heartbeats until the irritation ebbed.

"Barov," she said, voice low but edged like the silver they discussed, "it is imperative for our town's future that Anna can melt this type of material." She lifted a spoon, watching light slide along its curved surface. "If she's able to do more later, that'd be good, but for now, melting silver is the temperature we're trying to achieve."

"Excuse me," Harry's voice cut through the tension like a knife. The sudden shift made Barov startle—Garcia saw his shoulders jerk under his robes. "Does it need to be pure silver or just silverware?" The wizard rubbed his jaw. "Because I have plenty of those. You don't need to sacrifice your utensils."

The sudden silence felt thick, punctuated only by the distant drip of water from some unseen crack in the castle stones. Both Barov and Garcia turned toward Harry with identical expressions of startled assessment. The scent of damp wool from Barov's cloak mixed oddly with something herbal clinging to Harry's coat.

"Well, er—" Harry's fingers twitched toward his untidy hair, a nervous tic Garcia had noted before. The motion made his mokeskin pouch sway briefly at his hip. "I was the inheritor of both the Black family and the Potter family wealth, which were both considered ancient and most noble in my—" His gaze flicked to Barov, words stalling like a carriage hitting soft mud.

Garcia sighed, the sound carrying more exhaustion than she'd intended. She turned to Barov, watching how torchlight deepened the furrows of his aged face. "I need you to keep this in the strictest confidence." The words left her lips cool and measured. "I trust you, Barov, but this is a secret that must be kept."

Barov's throat worked silently before he nodded, his beard rustling against the stiff collar of his robe. "I would never betray Your Highness."

Garcia held his gaze, searching for the slightest twitch of insincerity. The old man's eyes were surprisingly clear—clouded with confusion, yes, but no deceit she could detect. The musty scent of old books clung stubbornly to his garments, that familiar library smell triggering a fleeting memory of rainy afternoons in her father's study.

"Can we add him and my personal maid to the secret?" she asked Harry, gesturing toward Tyre. The maid stood motionless behind her, but Garcia didn't miss the subtle intake of breath at being included. "I think I'll also eventually have Carter Lannis included in this."

Harry shrugged, the motion making his coat's green lining flash like hidden moss. With a fluid gesture, he conjured two pieces of parchment from thin air. She passed her inkpot and quill to Anna, watching how the girl's thin fingers moved with unexpected grace despite their visible fragility.

When Anna finished writing, the scratch of quill on parchment ceased abruptly. She passed the papers first to Barov—Garcia noted how his hands shook

slightly, making the parchment whisper—then to Tyre. The maid took hers with careful elegance, her amber eyes scanning the words with quiet intensity.

"Read this first, and return it to Anna after reading," Garcia instructed. The chamber had grown warmer, or perhaps it was just the weight of anticipation pressing down on them all.

Barov's brows drew together as he read, his beard twitching as his lips moved silently. Garcia saw the exact moment comprehension dawned—his eyes widening, the parchment trembling more noticeably now. Behind her, Tyre handed her sheet back to Anna without reaction, her face betraying nothing, though her knuckles had whitened slightly around the folded fan at her waist.

Anna burned both papers with a small flicker of flame that licked upward without consuming her fingers. The brief flare painted their faces in orange hues before vanishing, leaving behind the faint scent of charred parchment.

"What is the meaning of this?" Barov demanded, his voice cracking like dry tinder.

"Harry here, our resident wizard," she said carefully, tasting each word before letting it free, "claims to be from a different reality, meaning he is not from this world." She paused, watching Barov's face cycle through shock, disbelief, then dawning horror. "And before you claim he is from hell—"

"Yes, I came from a whole different world," he said, his crisp British diction cutting cleanly through the heavy air. "Where the magicals are hidden from muggles—" He launched into an explanation of his reality, his words painting images of hidden towns, shopping districts, and enchanted castles, the cadence of his speech quickening with remembered wonder even as he kept the details deliberately vague.

Garcia raised the delicate china cup to her lips, the steam curling in fragrant tendrils that carried an earthy scent. The tea burned just slightly on her

tongue, sharpening her focus as she studied Barov's reaction. His bushy grey eyebrows knotted together like storm clouds, his normally composed features twisting with such intense bewilderment she could practically hear the gears of his bureaucratic mind screeching to a halt. 'There it is,' she thought, hiding her amusement behind another sip, 'that exact moment when his worldview shatters like dropped porcelain.' The old minister's mouth worked silently, his liver-spotted hands fluttering toward his beard—his tell for deep distress.

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After a bit of explanation, the minister sat stunned on the bench Harry had conjured, his weathered hands gripping the edge as though the world had tilted beneath him. Harry, with casual ease, fished out his mokeskin pouch. When Harry opened it, the assistant minister's eyes widened to an almost comical degree—the pouch seemed to swallow Harry's entire arm up to the elbow, defying every law of nature Barov understood.

The *Hogwarts: A History* that emerged first made Garcia's breath catch. The book's leather binding was pristine, unmarked by time, and when Harry opened it, moving images danced across the pages like captured dreams. Students waved from the photographs, their robes billowing in an eternal breeze; staircases shifted and rearranged themselves with mechanical precision. The paper felt impossibly smooth beneath Garcia's fingertips when she dared to touch a corner—nothing like the rough, wood-pulp sheets they used here.

But it was the encyclopedia that truly shattered Barov's understanding. The photographs within showed towering structures of glass and steel that seemed to scrape the very heavens, horseless carriages moving in organised streams along perfectly paved roads, and people dressed in fabrics so fine they shimmered. The quality of the printing was flawless—each letter crisp and uniform, the images so detailed they might have been windows into another world entirely.

"So here, I have some silverware from both my families," Harry said, his voice cutting through her reverie. He began laying out various items with the casual air of someone unpacking a picnic. Each piece caught the glint of sunlight and threw it back in dazzling patterns—trays so perfectly polished they served as mirrors, utensils with elaborate engravings, pitchers whose surfaces bore no tarnish despite their obvious age, and finally, a single silver coin that seemed to pulse with its own inner light.

The craftsmanship was beyond anything Garcia had ever seen. Each curve was perfect, each line precise, and the weight of the metal spoke of purity no local smith could achieve. The very air seemed to hum with quality, with magic, with possibilities.

"Here, Anna, you can use this." Harry's voice gentled as he gestured towards the girl. "Don't worry—as I don't really have much use for this. Though I'm not sure if you can melt the silver coin, as it has some goblin enchantments in it."

Garcia reached for the coin, the metal cool against her palm. Markings were etched into its surface, and at the centre was a dragon, the word Sickle etched above it.

"This will sound rude," Garcia began, her throat suddenly dry, "but you said you brought most of your assets, right? How much of this coin do you have?"

The casual shrug Harry gave in response made her stomach lurch. "Er, yes—I did leave some for my friends living at my estate, but I have about three million of these silver coins. I have considerably more in gold."

The number hit the room like a physical blow. Garcia felt the blood drain from her face, her hands growing cold despite the warmth radiating from the fireplace. Beside her, Barov made a strangled sound—half gasp, half wheeze—as though someone had knocked the wind from his lungs.

Her mind raced through the calculation. Here in the Four Kingdoms, one of which is the Kingdom of Greycastle where Border Town lies, one hundred silver coins equalled one gold royal—a sum most people never saw in their lifetimes. If Harry's silver Sickles held similar value to their local silver currency, then three million pieces would convert to approximately thirty thousand gold royals. The royal treasury itself likely contained less than half that amount.

Garcia's thoughts reeled. 'Not enough to fund an entire industrial revolution across the kingdom, but that's roughly equivalent to Longsong Stronghold's total annual revenue. And he said this is just his silver...'

"And—you said you have even more gold?!" The words tore from Garcia's throat as she shot to her feet, leaning forward with such intensity that the bench scraped loudly against the stone floor. Her heart hammered against her ribs, sending heat flooding through her veins. She was dimly aware of her cleavage straining against the fabric of her blouse as she leaned over the table, close enough to Harry that she could see the startled widening of his green eyes.

Harry's eyes flickered downward for just a moment before snapping back to her face, a faint flush creeping up his neck. "Umm—I brought thirteen million gold Galleons," he said, the words hesitant as he tilted backwards, clearly flustered by her proximity.

Garcia's mind supplied the conversion automatically. *'If Galleons are similar to our gold royals in weight and purity—and they must be, given the name and Harry's casual equivalency—then thirteen million...'* The number was so vast it temporarily short-circuited her ability to think clearly.

That amount didn't just dwarf the royal treasury—it could probably fund the transformation of an entire kingdom. Roads, bridges, factories, schools, hospitals—everything she'd ever dreamed of building to drag this reality kicking and screaming into modernity.

*'But I can't just demand he hand it over,' she realised, forcing her breathing to steady. 'And flooding the market with that much gold would devalue the currency entirely. This requires finesse.'*

"We'll talk about that later—maybe we can discuss the idea of treasury bills," she managed, proud that her voice came out level despite the way her pulse was racing. "Is it safe to assume the gold is secure and locked?"

"Yes, only I can access my mokeskin pouch, and all my gold is within an expanded chest inside it, which is also keyed only to my magical signature," Harry explained with the same unbothered tone he might use to discuss the weather.

A brilliant idea struck her then, cutting through the fog of her amazement.

"Can you add that into the secret?"

Barov, who had been sitting in stunned silence, leaned forward with visible confusion creasing his weathered features. "What do you mean by 'add to the secret'?"

The question gave Garcia the perfect opening to weave another layer of misdirection. "Oh—the paper you read earlier, and anything related to that message, is locked under a magically binding secret which cannot be divulged through any means without the express permission of the secret keeper.

Right, Harry?"

She deliberately avoided mentioning Anna's role as the actual secret keeper, allowing Barov to assume that only Harry could release the information. The deception felt necessary—the fewer people who knew Anna's true importance, the safer she would be.

"Oh, we can do that after our discussions," Harry said, nodding thoughtfully, "but I need everyone who originally has the secret to be present." The implication hung in the air—Nightingale would need to be included as well.

As if summoned by the mention, Garcia felt a gentle tap on her right shoulder, followed by an invisible finger tracing the word 'okay' across her back through the fabric of her dress. The touch was warm and reassuring, and she had to suppress a shiver at the unexpected contact. Nightingale was there, listening, approving of the direction their conversation was taking.

"Harry," Garcia said slowly, each word placed with surgical precision, "that night in the dungeon—after Nightingale freed you from the God's Stone—you said something that's been lingering in my mind." She met his green eyes directly. "You told us not to worry about the guards interrupting because you'd 'warded and silenced the area.' Do you remember?"

Harry nodded slowly, as he sensed where this was heading.

"Those wards kept trained soldiers at bay despite multiple reasons for them to investigate. They created a... barrier, for lack of a better term. A space where the normal rules didn't apply." Garcia leaned forward, her voice dropping but somehow becoming sharper. "Tell me—was that the limit of what such magic can do? Or can wards be made stronger? Larger?"

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