

father, had graduated Hogwarts the year Sirius had started, but their families ran in the same social circles.

“I, Cassius Julius Warrington, have come to claim the Warrington seat of my birthright,” the eighteen year-old declared in a firm voice. Sirius saw several people exchange glances, no doubt curious that the boy had not said anything about doing so with the permission of his uncle.

As if he would admit such a thing even if he did have it, when his uncle was a wanted fugitive.

The Warrington seat glowed in approval, and Cassius’ robes transformed, the ring appearing on his hand. Sirius saw the way his shoulders loosened minutely — it was the same way Harry’s had, when the Wizengamot chamber had let Sirius take on his proxy seats.

The relief of knowing your future was in safe hands. In this case, in Cassius’ own hands.

“Welcome, Lord Warrington,” Scrimgeour sneered, his contempt visible. Sirius scowled; they deserved better than a Minister who judged people by their family name rather than their character. “Please, take your seat.”

The Warrington seat was only a few down from the Black seat, and as the young lord passed in front of Sirius, the animagus cleared his throat, bending as if to pick something off the floor. “Excuse me, Lord Warrington, I believe you dropped this.”

Cassius looked confused, but that cleared rapidly as Sirius discreetly handed him a folded piece of parchment with a small lump inside — a ring. Cassius met his gaze, and Sirius gave the barest nod. The portkey would take him to safety, should he ever need it.

“Thank you, Lord Black,” the Slytherin murmured, and continued on his way.

Sirius let his gaze slide to Narcissa, who had the tiniest shadow of a smile for him in response.

Scrimgeour started the meeting, and Sirius did his best not to doze off through the whole thing; most of it was just unnecessary waffle, whether it was the Minister or Dumbledore taking the floor. Nothing useful was being suggested — everyone was too scared of upsetting the balance in one direction or another, with all the outside forces at work. And with Sirius and Narcissa shifting the power around, no one was quite sure how voting would fall on certain matters; the Dark no longer had the confidence of keeping the Malfoy bloc, while the Light was fractured into those who supported Dumbledore and those who did not.

Just as things were starting to wind down, Narcissa raised her wand, startling the gathering.

“Lady Malfoy, you have the floor.” Scrimgeour was clearly reluctant to hand things over, but rules were rules.

Narcissa smiled, getting gracefully to her feet. “Thank you, Minister.” She turned to the gathered Wizengamot, who were eyeing her with varying levels of trepidation. “I would just