

“It’s easier this way,” he insisted, checking something in a nearby book before crossing out something on one of the parchments.

“Dare I ask what you’re doing?” Snape said with raised eyebrows. Harry wriggled into a sitting position.

“I’m trying to figure out the origins of Dumbledore’s proxy seats,” he explained. “There’s got to be heirs for at least some of them, and if not the line should be declared extinct. Obviously he’s got mine, and the Founders, but there’s these other two and I can’t figure out where they came from. Unless one of them is his own? But I didn’t think he had a blood claim to any seat — Blaise says that’s why he became headmaster.”

“Mr Zabini is correct,” Snape told him. “The Dumbledore family only goes back four generations, to a muggleborn. Which are the two seats you cannot identify?”

“There’s the Ross seat, which I’ve got some early history for in some of the old Wizengamot books, but nothing particularly recent. And the Prince seat, which I can hardly find anything about,” Harry said in frustration. A strange look passed over Snape’s face.

“I believe the Ross seat belongs to Minerva McGonagall,” the man declared, “and the Prince seat is mine.”

Harry gaped at him. “*What?*” How was that possible? “You’re— but all this time, you never said! How?”

“My father was a muggle. My mother was Eileen Prince; third child of Octavius Prince, and not expected to inherit a thing. But both her older sisters died childless, so the line passed to me. By the time my mother passed, I was working at Hogwarts. Albus does not allow his teachers to hold Wizengamot seats; he insists it distracts from our teaching duties. He’s held my seat in proxy ever since, and Minerva’s for long before that.” Snape’s lips curled in distaste. Harry kept gaping.

“So you’re technically Lord Prince?” he asked, astonished.

“If I had ever been given the chance to step foot in the Wizengamot, I would be,” Snape replied. “But as that has not happened, I am still only the heir to the line. I believe Minerva is the same; her brother held the title before she did, but his children were both squibs, so when he passed away it moved to her.”

“But the rule about teachers not holding seats, that’s Dumbledore, right? That’s not a school rule?” If the Founders themselves could do both, Harry didn’t see how other teachers couldn’t.

“Indeed,” Snape confirmed darkly. “Albus put the rule in place when he first hired Professor Horace Slughorn. He claims it’s to make sure our full attention is on the welfare of the students.”

“To make up for the fact that his isn’t?” Harry remarked bitterly. Then, he brightened up.

“But this is brilliant! All we have to do is get Dumbledore removed as headmaster, and he’s