

like to announce ahead of time that I will shortly be placing a declaration in the *Daily Prophet*, where I will promise to personally fund any person who wishes to do an inheritance test at Gringotts Bank,” she stated. Sirius’ eyes widened for a moment — she hadn’t said anything about that to him!

“That is highly unorthodox, Lady Malfoy!” Lord Parkinson growled, and Narcissa’s sweet smile sharpened at the edges.

“Unorthodox, but not illegal,” she reasoned. “I’m sure we can all agree that it is... unseemly, for one person to hold such a large number of proxy seats in this governing body.” No one missed the way her gaze innocently landed on Dumbledore as she spoke. “I would very much like to return the guardianship of my houses to their rightful lines, to properly fill some of these grand seats once more. However, due to the events of the last several decades, I find myself lacking in viable heirs. We know they are out there, for the Chamber has not declared the lines extinct. I would like to encourage those who may not necessarily have considered their lineage to do so, with the hope that I shall not have to pass such an extraordinarily large burden onto my son, Draco.” She gave a demure laugh. “I find there are much better seventeenth birthday presents to be gifted.”

“I stand with the Lady Malfoy,” Sirius declared, on his feet before he really even thought about it. “And I am happy to offer coin from the Black vaults for this endeavour, should you be willing to accept.”

That sent even more shocked murmurs bouncing through the room, but Narcissa nodded to him in thanks.

Scrimgeour banged his gavel as the noise in the room grew, calling for silence. “Enough! Thank you, Lady Malfoy,” he said flatly, “for your... generous offer. Now, does anyone have any matters of *relevance* to discuss?”

Sirius sat back down, smirking to himself — across the room, Dumbledore looked like he had smelled something particularly foul.

Served him right.

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Remus turned the page of his book, though if he was truly being honest with himself he hadn’t really been paying attention for the last ten minutes. His jaw cracked as he yawned — perhaps it was time to attempt sleep.

Beside him, Severus was still sat up reading a potions journal. Remus slid his bookmark in, setting his book on the nightstand, and shuffled closer to his partner. Severus’ lips twitched, and he raised one arm, silently inviting Remus to cuddle up against him while he read.

The familiar scent of potion ingredients and sandalwood filled Remus’ senses, relaxing him far better than any balm or candle could. Severus’ free hand rested on his shoulder, and Remus let his eyes fall to half-mast, happy to doze until his partner was ready to turn out the light and properly sleep.