

“The twins have got nothing on me,” Charlie insisted, seemingly delighted by the challenge. “You’ll see.”

Harry wondered if he should be nervous, but the feeling didn’t last; he was too swept up in Charlie’s unbridled optimism.

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Harry sat with his hands on his knees, green eyes carefully surveying the group of wizard and witches sat opposite him.

The trial of Sirius Black was about to begin.

The Wizengamot looked incredibly imposing, sat in their identical deep plum robes. Even the familiar faces within the mix couldn’t calm Harry’s nerves. Not when Albus Dumbledore sat there, looking entirely too happy for Harry’s liking.

“The Wizengamot calls the defendant; Sirius Orion Black.”

The side door to the courtroom opened, and Sirius was marched in between two aurors. Unfortunately, they weren’t aurors Harry knew — Tonks had been recused due to familial connections, and Kingsley was on Wizengamot duty. Still, Sirius kept his head high, and offered Harry a reassuring smile that didn’t quite meet his eyes. He was forced into a chair in the centre of the room, and when one of the aurors tapped it with her wand, chains sprung up and wrapped around his arms and legs. Sirius didn’t flinch.

Minister Scrimgeour cleared his throat, but before he could speak again, the main door slammed open. Harry’s breath caught in his throat.

Narcissa Malfoy strolled in, looking for all the world like she owned the place, wearing perfectly tailored charcoal robes. “Humble Wizengamot,” she called in greeting, grey eyes flashing. “Following the death of my husband, Lord Lucius Malfoy — I, Lady Narcissa Malfoy, claim his right of proxy guardianship over the houses of Malfoy, Burke, Lestrangle, Rosier, Rowle, Travers, Yaxley and Mulciber, until such time as their rightful heir can claim them.”

Before Scrimgeour or anyone else could say anything, there was a hum of magic, and the empty seats of the eight houses she’d listed glowed briefly.

The Wizengamot magic had confirmed her position. To show it, her robes transfigured immediately into the same plum robes that the rest wore.

Scrimgeour cleared his throat. “Very well, then, Lady Malfoy. Please, take your seat so we may begin.”

Narcissa gracefully swept towards the Malfoy seat, catching Harry’s eye on the way. She looked incredibly pleased.

Dumbledore, too, looked quietly delighted by the proceedings; likely he thought Narcissa would vote against her cousin’s freedom out of spite.