

Turnabout is Fair Play The Marriage Law

TURNABOUT IS FAIR PLAY

Lucius Malfoy was feeling both annoyed and smug. Annoyed that Albus Dumbledore, as Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot, had managed to delay the bill that Lucius and his cohort Pandarus Parkinson had introduced, so that it had not yet been enacted into law. Smug that there could be no further delays, and today, on the last day of the session before the Wizengamot adjourned for the summer holidays, the law would become effective. In orchestrating the delays, Dumbledore had even worked in Lucius' favour, as now there could be no effective move to repeal, amend or counter it for six weeks, unless someone got desperate enough to demand a Special Session. But even that wouldn't be fast enough. In one week, Lucius' purposes would be served; he really had no interest in the law beyond that.

Dumbledore could delay no longer, and reluctantly picked up the last parchment of the session. "Lucius Malfoy and Pandarus Parkinson, you have brought a proposition before the Wizengamot, and in committee and by the whole it has been voted on and approved. Before it is finally enacted, I would like to go over its points, if you will?"

"Feel free," said Lucius, in his most gracious tone. The Final Questioning was traditional but tiresome, and he hoped Dumbledore would keep his questioning to a minimum. The procedure was intended to ensure that the law's sponsor was absolutely certain that the law said what he had intended it to, and that any changes made in debate or committee were only those agreed upon. Lucius was quite sure the law was as he had planned it, as he had carefully stacked the committees and rammed it through general debate during the period when the supporters of the Light were too busy celebrating the Final Fall of the Dark Lord to worry about laws making their way through the Wizengamot. Dumbledore had seemed to be the only one concerned, and he could only delay, not defeat, Lucius' bill. If it were introduced now, Lucius was quite sure, the bill would fail in the general debate and vote. Timing was everything.

"A Proposal Intended to Strengthen Family Lines in Pureblood Families," read Dumbledore, reluctantly. *"Whereas, wizarding Tradition and Knowledge since Merlin has been maintained by certain Pureblood Family Lines of long standing; and Whereas, these Families were in the habit of maintaining their Knowledge and Fortunes by marrying among themselves; and Whereas, this Custom has over time had the unanticipated Result of weakening the Family Lines, as decisively demonstrated by the work of Zelerod Trinrose, such that they are in danger of dying out; and Whereas, the recent Conflict in the wizarding Community has accelerated the Damage to the Family Lines of those on both sides of the Conflict, and Whereas, the damage to the Wizarding Community would be immeasurable if these Families were to fail; and Whereas, the most Efficacious Means of strengthening and reinvigorating the Family Lines is by marriage to talented Witches and Wizards of recent Muggle Ancestry; and Whereas, these Individuals are those least conversant with wizarding Tradition and therefore least likely to accept an honourable Offer of a Marriage Contract; THEREFORE a Resolution is proposed to be enacted into Law enabling Members of Pureblood Families to claim in Marriage for themselves or their Heirs appropriate Candidates of recent Muggle Ancestry for the aforesaid Purpose of strengthening the Family Line. Such Claiming shall be according to the following Terms."*

Dumbledore laid the scroll down on the lectern. His hands were visibly shaking. "Lucius Malfoy, I cannot believe that you put together such a parcel of ... of ..."

"Truth, Your Honour," said Lucius, carefully using the proper form of address for the Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot, regardless of how little he actually honoured the aged Wizard. "Every single item in the Proposition is true. You yourself validated Trinrose's work and wrote the Foreword to his book. You cannot argue that immediate steps must be taken to reinvigorate the Old Lines before the gifts and talents of the ancient mages die out."

"We might be better off if some of those gifts did die out," grumbled Dumbledore.

"The gifts of the ancients were given for a reason," argued Malfoy. "We cannot know for what purposes, or when they may be needed in the future, regardless of whether we distrust them now. Legilimency, Prophecy, the Sight, even Parseltongue, all played their parts in the recent, er, unpleasantness. These are gifts that only appear in the Old Families, never in the Muggle-born. Who can say where we might have ended up without them? Who can say when we might need them again?" He deliberately mentioned those old gifts which had been most useful to the side of Light; there were other gifts, such as Necromancy, which had been put to use by the side of the Dark, and reminding people of them would do no good. Then there were the gifts like the Malfoy family's own talent of Persuasion, which worked far better when people thought the line was weak enough that the talent had died out generations ago. The fact that Draco showed no signs of it – quite the opposite, in fact – did concern Lucius greatly. It was possible the fiction was on the verge of becoming fact, and Lucius was not going to let that happen if he could help it.

"That's as may be," said Dumbledore. "The fact is that there are better ways..."

"Then let the community be stirred up to discuss those ways in the future, and if a better idea surfaces than my humble proposal, then enact that as law and strike this down. I saw a need and I acted as is my duty, for the betterment of my community. Please, Your Honour, let us get this completed, so that we can all go about our business."

Reluctantly, Dumbledore resumed reading, and Lucius paid attention to the clauses with half an ear.

Lucius' original idea was for the law to apply only to Muggle-born witches being claimed by Pureblood wizards, as he was primarily interested in acquiring a suitable match for Draco, and possibly for himself since Narcissa had died at the Battle of Diagon Alley – really, he hadn't known she had an appointment at Madame Malkin's that day, there was no way he could have known to warn her that the Dark Lord was planning a training run for his new recruits, and her death had made it conveniently plausible that he (and his son) should shift allegiances to the side of Light just as it was becoming obvious that that side would inevitably win. Her death did leave him without a spouse, and he was a young man yet, not yet fifty. A younger Muggle-born or Half-blooded witch could warm his bed and perhaps provide him with an Heir who would show the family talent. With luck, she could be trained to be a suitable hostess, as well. Once his aims had been achieved, he didn't particularly care if anyone else ever took advantage of his proposed law.

However, Lucius' friend Pandarus Parkinson had found himself in the position of needing to marry his daughter, Pansy, to someone who could restore his own line's fading abilities. The Potter heir would be ideal (the Potter and Black fortunes were icing on the cake), but he wanted to do it without losing the Parkinson name or control of the family fortune to a jumped-up Half-blood wizard. Not that there was any likelihood of Potter offering for Pansy anyway. Expanding the law to include Half-bloods and wizards as well as witches, and limiting the legal rights of the claimed spouse, solved that problem.

Finally, of course, there was the urge to revenge the many insults to their families' honour which had been perpetrated by the youngsters who had orchestrated the fall of the Dark Lord. Thus the Marriage Law, and all of its clauses, were born.

"A Candidate for Claiming shall be any witch or wizard of recent Muggle ancestry (defined as having a Muggle or Muggle-born ancestor within three generations), who is unmarried and between the ages of seventeen and fifty; Claimant shall be a Pureblood (defined as having exclusively witch or wizard ancestry for six generations) who is unmarried and above the age of seventeen and capable of bearing or begetting children."

"If a valid marriage or marriage contract exists, the Claim on the Candidate shall not be valid, but the Candidate shall accept no proposal or marriage contract after a Claim has been registered, while investigation of the respective heritages of the Claimant and the Candidate is being made. The Marriage shall take place as soon as possible, but in no case more than one week after the validation of a Claim. The Candidate shall be irrevocably bonded to the Claimant by permanent Oath to ensure consummation of the relationship immediately, to ensure that Candidate wizards fulfil their marital duties to Claimant witches on a regular basis, and to ensure fidelity of Candidate to Claimant."

"In view of the incompetence of Muggleborn and Half-blooded Candidates when dealing with Pureblooded family finances, the Claimant shall take possession of the Candidate's property and inheritances, if any, and combine them with the Claimant's family property and manage them for the benefit of the children of Claimant and Candidate."

"The Candidate shall take the name of the Claimant, and any children of the marriage shall bear the name of the Claimant's family. Children born to the Claimant and the Candidate shall be exempt from consideration as Candidates in the future."

"The Candidate shall be supported by the Claimant's family, provided with living quarters, clothing, and suitable amounts of spending money; the Candidate may take employment with the Claimant's permission and subject to the above clause of addition of Candidate's earnings to the Claimant's family fortune."

"If a Claimed Candidate refuses the proposed marriage, the Candidate shall be confined in the low-security section of Azkaban prison until the Candidate agrees to enter into said marriage."

"Provisions for Claiming are to become effective immediately upon the Enactment of this Law." Dumbledore finished reading and put down the scroll again.

"Lucius Malfoy and Pandarus Parkinson, you have both been proponents of Purebloodedness, and the philosophies that go along with it, for many years. Your families for generations. I'm surprised that you would propose a law that would abrogate that. Are you sure you know what the effects would be on your own families were they to marry under this Law? They would cease, for all intents and purposes, to be Pureblooded."

"Your Honour, we are aware of that and are willing to make that sacrifice. Quite frankly, the events of the last two generations, with the wars against Grindelwald and the Dark, er, Vol-, er, *Him*, have shown the weaknesses of the doctrines of Purebloodedness. To us, it is worth it for the continuance of our family lines. Other families may choose to utilize this law or not as they wish, but it behooves us to lead the way."

"Very noble of you," Dumbledore commented sourly. "Very well. I still think the matter should have been handled differently, but the bill has been voted on and approved. With the placing of the Seal of the Wizengamot, it shall have the force of law. Secretary Midgen, if you would do so?"

The aged wizard, looking every day of his rumoured one hundred and sixty years, handed the document to the mousy-looking Secretary of the Wizengamot, who applied the ritually required hot wax to the bottom of the document and stamped it with the silver Seal. The document vanished, to be filed with all the other laws of the Wizarding World. Copies would be provided to the news media for reporting in the next day's *Daily Prophet*.

"Since there are no further matters to be brought before the Wizengamot, I declare this, the One Thousand Two Hundred and Seventh Session of the Wizengamot, closed. The One Thousand Two Hundred and Eighth Session shall convene in the fall, barring Special Sessions. Have a good holiday, everyone." Dumbledore slammed his gavel upon the lectern, and Wizengamot members began gathering up their possessions.

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Lucius and Pandarus wasted no time in leaving, stopping off at the Visitor's Gallery, to pick up Draco and Pansy, who had watched their fathers' triumph. "Come along, children, we have important business to complete."

Draco seemed somewhat less enthusiastic than his father. "I still don't see why I have to marry a Mudblood," he complained as they worked their way through the halls of the Ministry building, delayed somewhat by people wishing to shake Lucius' hand and congratulate him.

"Did you bother to *read* the Trinrose material I sent you, Draco?" asked Lucius, scathingly. "Or is it still in the bottom of your school trunk?"

Draco mumbled something about being too busy studying for N.E.W.T.s.

"Your grades say you should have studied more. But they only prove my point. I was quite serious when I said all the prefatory clauses were true. The Trinrose Report makes it quite clear that unless Purebloods start marrying outside our limited family lines, we are doomed. Our culture, our traditions, our magic, our talents, our gifts ... all dying out. All lost. You've spent seven years in schooling with Gregory Goyle and Vincent Crabbe. You know them as well as I know their fathers. You know they barely have any magic, no sign of family talents. Their children, if they ever realize what women are for, will be Squibs. Quite frankly, we're only a generation or two behind them. You're not a patch on me, and you wouldn't have lasted a minute against my father. Your sons? They'll be managing shops in Diagon Alley, if they're lucky. The most talented students in your year were Muggleborn or Half-bloods with recent Muggle ancestry. Potter. Granger. Thomas. Patil. Abbott. Goldstein. Davis. Even, Merlin help us, Finch-Fletchley and Finnegan did better on their N.E.W.T.s than you did and have more raw power than you do."

"All right, so I'll have to marry a Mudblood. But why *that* Mudblood?"

Lucius steered his son and the rest of the party into the elevator before answering. "She's not that bad, Draco. Well, except for the hair. That's a fright, but hopefully it won't breed true. And the attitude. That will have to be beaten out of her. But you should marry her because she's the most intelligent young woman, and the most powerful, in your class. Because she will be in demand from every research firm in the Wizarding world, and any share of any discoveries she makes will come to you. Because she's been taunting you for seven years, and that sort of disrespect cannot be tolerated. Pick your reason. It's not like you have to *associate* with the creature, just get her pregnant and keep her pregnant. She'll have her own suite at the Manor and you only have to see her when absolutely necessary. The rest of your life is your own; the bonding won't make any claims on *your* fidelity, after all." Lucius carefully did not notice the sidelong glances between Pansy and Draco. He'd known of the attraction between the two for some time, and didn't see any reason why they should not pursue whatever side relationship they desired, once Pansy had acquired the Potter heritage (and all that lovely money) and Draco had sired a child on Hermione Granger, the Most-Intelligent-and-Therefore-Most-Valuable-Witch-of-her-Generation.

The two fathers strode confidently into the Marriage Registry Office, withdrawing bundles of papers from the inside pockets of their robes. "We have Claims to place on Candidates in accordance with the terms of the Marriage Law passed today," said Lucius. "Pandarus, in view of the importance of your Candidate, you should go first." He graciously stepped back to allow his good friend to present the documents to the Registrar. Pansy was biting her lower lip nervously, and Lucius supposed he could understand her trepidation. She would, after all, be the one having to bear the Potter boy's children, but she certainly hadn't objected when the idea was raised. Hopefully she didn't find the idea too distasteful; the boy was short but not unattractive, and in the family histories, Potter males had been reputed to be, er, vigorous in dealing with their marital responsibilities. No, Pansy should have no complaints.

The Registrar spent what seemed an inordinate amount of time going over the documents. "Yes, yes, Claimant's name, heritage, hmm, mother French? Hmm. Candidate's name ... well, this is a problem."

"What problem? Mr. Potter is over seventeen, unmarried and not under Marriage Contract, and his mother was Muggleborn. He's a perfect Candidate."

"As to that, your knowledge of Mr. Potter's status is out of date. He was in here just the other day, and by now I would imagine he and Mrs. Potter, the former Susan Bones, are now enjoying their honeymoon."

"WHAT?!" roared Pandarus, echoed by Pansy's shriek of "That can't be!" as she saw the Potter-Black fortune slipping from her grasp. "It hasn't been reported in the Prophet!"

"Oh, yes, quite. They requested that we hold off on releasing the information so as to allow them a day or two to get off on their travels with some degree of privacy. It should be in the society pages tomorrow."

Pandarus gathered his distraught daughter into his arms and let her sob against his chest while Lucius shoved his bundle of papers across the desk. "Take a look at these, then. Claimant is Draco Malfoy, Candidate Hermione Granger."

The Registrar pushed the papers back without even looking at them. "Hermione Longbottom is likewise currently enjoying her honeymoon."

"I won't permit this ... this outrage! I'll talk to the Minister! I'll have these marriages annulled!" Lucius ignored the look of relief on his son's face.

"You have no standing for that, Mr. Malfoy, no matter how many bribes you slide to the Minister," said the Registrar, acidly. "The Contracts for both these marriages were signed two weeks ago. They were performed properly by mutual bonding and all traditions were observed. Doubtless they were consummated at the first opportunity. There's nothing short of death that can break those bonds now."

Lucius growled something that sounded suspiciously like, "That can be arranged," and turned to go, but the Registrar called him back.

"Don't leave yet, Mr. Malfoy. We have other business to attend to."

"What possible business could we have with you now?" snapped Lucius.

"Well, there's the little matter of a Claim placed on your son, Draco Malfoy, as Candidate."

"That's impossible!" cried Draco. "We're Pureblooded! I'm not subject to a Claim!"

"As to that," said the Registrar, "there is a bit of an irregularity. It seems that Mr. Jupiter Malfoy, Lucius Malfoy's father, married one Catherine Devereaux, of the Devereaux family of Rennes-le-Chateau."

"A Pureblooded family with all the best connections," said Lucius haughtily.

"Mr. Malfoy, the French realized almost a hundred years ago what the consequences of Pureblood inbreeding would be, and took steps of their own to preserve their lines and traditions. In contrast to your approach, they decided that the most effective methods would be adoption and fosterage. Catherine Devereaux was the pampered *adoptive* daughter of Claude and Marie-Claire Devereaux, raised in the lap of luxury and steeped in wizarding tradition. Her blood parents, however, were impoverished Muggles, who were only too happy to allow their infant daughter to be adopted by a wealthy family who could give her more than they ever could. Your mother was, in fact, Muggleborn, and so your son is qualified to be a Candidate under the newly enacted Marriage Law."

Lucius paled. "That's ... that's not possible."

"Not only possible, Mr. Malfoy, but true. If you didn't check your own heritage closely enough before drafting your law, it's no one's responsibility but your own."

Pansy managed to work through the implications faster than anyone else in the room. "Does that mean ... that I can Claim Draco? Under the Marriage Law? And he would be ... Draco Parkinson?" *And I'd get all of his money?*

"Under the terms of the Law, it might be possible for you to make a Claim." Draco brightened a little; he already liked Pansy and had thought about being her husband. Perhaps this might not turn out too badly.

Pandarus Parkinson turned to the Registrar. "Wait ... *'might be possible'*? Surely there's no doubt about my daughter's status?"

"Your wife is also of French extraction, Mr. Parkinson. Miss Parkinson's exact status is in the process of being verified pursuant to a Claim that has been made by one Percival Weasley; if investigation shows that Miss Parkinson is of recent Muggle ancestry, she must be married to Mr. Weasley without delay." Pansy shrieked again and staggered to a nearby chair, to sit heavily and gracelessly. "I assure you that Mr. Weasley is of appropriate birth and a man of great integrity, and has promised to treat your daughter well in the event that his Claim is successful. If Miss Parkinson's mother's ancestry does not include any Muggles within the three-generation range, the Claim will fail and she will of course be free to marry where she will. If her mother's ancestry is pure to six generations, she can make Claim on an appropriate wizard, if she can find one ... there seems to have been an extraordinary run on marriages in the last few weeks. But as for Draco Malfoy, no. A Claim for Mr. Malfoy has already been submitted and validated by the Ministry Marriage Registration Office. Under the terms of the Marriage Law, no other proposal or Contract can be accepted. It's first come, first served."

"How ... who could possibly have submitted a claim already?" asked Lucius, sounding somewhat as if he were being strangled. Draco couldn't even manage that. His mouth was opening and closing but no sound emerged, making him look rather like a beached fish.

The Registrar pulled a folder of papers, already bearing the Registry seal, out from under the counter and slid them across the scarred wooden counter. "The claim was submitted by one Bernard Midgen, currently Secretary of the Wizengamot, on behalf of his only child, Eloise. Miss Midgen's heritage has been verified to the required six generations, she is of age and more than capable of bearing children sired by Mr. Malfoy. Additionally, her family is prepared to take control of Mr. Malfoy's property and inheritances, which, under the Marriage Law, he is presumed to be incompetent to manage properly, and to support him and his children appropriately. Miss Midgen has been notified of the verification of the Claim made on her behalf and is prepared to marry immediately."

Draco Malfoy fainted dead away.

The Registrar leaned over the counter to look at him. "Well, perhaps that can wait until the groom regains consciousness."

Lucius was having his own difficulties. In one stroke, his entire self-image, which had largely been based on family pride, had been destroyed, his revenge ruined, and his son taken from him. He would be a laughingstock. He had to figure out how to recover something from this debacle ... how to recoup. Draco was lost to him, but the Malfoy fortune was still his. Only a portion had been transferred to Draco on his majority. The rest could be saved for another Heir. That was it; another Heir. He had to remarry, he had to find a Pureblood bride, he had to go somewhere to find someone before news of this disaster spread out of England ...

The Registrar cleared his throat, offering another packet of papers, signed and sealed, to Lucius. "I'm sorry, Mr. Malfoy, but our business isn't quite finished. You may have forgotten, but you are under the age of fifty yourself. A Claim has been placed against you also, and all qualifications have been investigated and verified. Your bride awaits you, Mr. Malfoy."

"My ... bride?"

"Yes, a woman of impeccable bloodline, with verified purity back to ten generations. The family, however, has fallen on hard times and she's been forced to work for a living - she's been a teacher at Hogwarts for the past seventeen years. Perhaps your son took classes with her. Now, of course, she'll be able to stop working, since she'll be taking over the Malfoy properties and taking her proper place in society. And she has you to thank for it. I heard your words about duty and sacrifice today in the Wizengamot today, and I have to say I've been happily surprised by the lengths to which you have gone to prove that you meant what you said. I hope that you and Miss Trelawney will have many happy years together."

"Trelawney?" Lucius croaked. "That ... that fraud ... from Hogwarts?"

"I assure you, Mr. Malfoy, Miss Trelawney is no fraud, but a qualified Seer; indeed, she foresaw the exact circumstances under which she was able

to lay Claim to you. I must admit, I doubted her, but I'm happy to say she was right, since she is, in fact, my sister."

A door connecting to the Registrar's private office opened. Sybil Trelawney stood there, in her wedding finery, holding her arms open to welcome her bridegroom.

Lucius Malfoy joined his son on the Registry floor.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed his erstwhile bride.

"Sybil, even I could have predicted that would happen," said Tieresias Trelawney, Registrar of Marriages. "As a matter of fact, I think I did. I'll call for assistance and we can get this done before luncheon. Mr. Parkinson, Miss Parkinson, since you're here, may we ask you to act as witnesses to the nuptials? Thank you."

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Dumbledore leaned back in his seat until the galleries emptied and the Great Hall of the Wizengamot was silent. "Well, Bernard, that's done. Unfortunate business, but it can't be helped. But I believe I may soon be able to wish your daughter happy?"

Bernard Midgen finished straightening up his desk. "I hope she will be happy. She's had a crush on the young Malfoy for years, and she's strong-willed, so maybe it will work out. But as for the Malfoy and Parkinson parents ... Care to bet on just how fast they make it back here, demanding an immediate Special Session?"

"No, I don't. I just want to make it out of here before then, and ensure that I'm not available for at least the next ... oh, make it a week and a half. Everything should have worked itself out by then," mused the Chief Warlock, regaining some of his accustomed twinkle. "Yes, I do believe it should all be over by then."