

The Board

Minerva McGonagall pulled at the neck of her formal robes. She hated wearing the silly things, but the occasion demanded it. She stood in the Entry Hall of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry awaiting the arrival of Hogwarts' Board of Governors for the review of her first year as Head Mistress. She was sure that the meeting today would remove that annoying 'Provisional' qualifier from her title, and she could once again set to making Albus' dream for how Hogwarts should be a reality.

The door opened revealing the final members of the board to arrive, Lucius Malfoy and the other three members of his clique. The Malfoy family had survived the second fall of Voldemort and if anything had nearly restored their standing in Society to the level they had enjoyed prior to the Madman's rebirth.

"Minerva," the blond man said with that oh so superior nod of his, the greeting echoed by his followers.

"Welcome back to Hogwarts," Minerva said with a gesture that called the castle's House Elves to take the board member's traveling cloaks.

It was a short journey to the conference room traditionally set aside for meetings of the Board of Governors. The room was richly appointed with a massive mahogany table and leather seating for the nine board members, and much less comfortable chairs set provided for those who would be interviewed by the Board.

The School had reopened following the final fall of Voldemort with a Board looking to restore the continuity of the school. The staff that had been in place prior to the Snape/Carrows administration was restored to their positions on a provisional status with Minerva designated as Headmistress and Filius Flitwick as her deputy. This meeting was to decide if that staff would be retained or if a search would need to begin to replace them. This is why the entire Hogwarts Staff was crowded into the gallery of the conference room awaiting the verdict on their careers.

Malfoy and his clique took their places at the table and Lucius reached for the gavel to signal the meeting open when the doors to the conference room swung open. Minerva turned to see who had entered and was more than a little surprised to find four former students standing in the doorway, including two from her house... her former house, she corrected herself. The Headmistress could not show preference.

"What is the meaning of this?" Lucius demanded. "This is a closed meeting."

"Actually Mr. Malfoy, I think a review of the Board's charter would show you that all general meetings of the Hogwarts Board of Governors are required to be open," Susan Bones said with a small smile. "That was a provision of the charter that your ancestors fought to change fairly vigorously, but one instance where they have consistently failed over the years. We," she said gesturing to her companions, "have business before the Board."

Malfoy's eyes darted to the recording secretary, the nonvoting 'tenth member' of the Board of Governors who nodded signifying that what the young redhead had said was true.

"Very well Miss Bones, what is your business?"

Susan drew herself to her full height. "I am Susan Amelia Bones, heir to the Bones family and I have claimed my position as the Bones of Bones. Madam Thruston, the Bones family extends out thanks for your services on the Board of Governors since the passing of my aunt Amelia Bones and regrets to inform you that they are no longer required. I am assuming my family's seat on the Board."

"No," Lucius Malfoy sputtered as Agnes Thruston, the long time ally he had finagled onto the board upon the death of Amelia Bones, rose from her place at the table only to be replaced by a mere girl. "I will not stand for this. You lack the experience to..."

"If you were to examine the Charter of the Board, I believe you will find that you have no say in the matter Mr. Malfoy," Neville Longbottom spoke up, interrupting the older man. "I am Neville Franklin Longbottom, heir to the Longbottom family and due to the unfortunate condition of my father; I have claimed my position as the Longbottom of Longbottom. Madam Longbottom, I thank you for your services to the family these past eighteen years, but they are no longer required. I am assuming my family's seat on the board."

"Neville?"

"Gran," the large man said, his voice softening with affection for the woman who raised him. "It is time. The Heir is no longer a child in need of protection; it is time for the Regent to step aside."

Augusta Longbottom looked at her grandson for several seconds, as if seeing him for the first time, and then nodded. "As you wish Neville," she rose from her seat and hugged her grandson. "Will I see you at dinner?"

"You shall," Neville responded taking his place at the table.

"I am Daphne Ophelia Greengrass," the first of the remaining pair of former students said. Heir to the Greengrass family, and upon the death of my

father at the hands of the largely unlamented Dark Lord, I became Greengrass. Get out of my chair Leach, your toadying to the Malfoy family has served the Greengrass family in no way at all. You are dismissed. I am assuming my seat on the Board.”

Archibald Leach, another member of Malfoy’s clique, moved for his wand.

“Mr. Leach, do you have any idea how many Death Eaters I killed before all the survivors miraculously reformed and discovered their long term exposure to the Imperius Curse immediately following Voldemort’s death?” Neville asked in a conversational tone. “Imagine what I might do to a ‘former’ Death Eater foolish enough to pull his wand on a friend of mine?”

“I was under the Imperius!” Leach hissed.

“I bet,” Neville nodded. “My friend asked you to get out of her chair. If I were you, I’d take my weak minded self and do just that, because she’s starting to get annoyed and quite frankly, Miss Greengrass is a whole lot more dangerous than I am.”

“Thank you Neville,” Daphne giggled as she took her place at Lucius’ right. “You say the sweetest things.”

“I guess that leaves me,” The only student left of the groups of four said. “I am Parvati Patil, heir of the Patil family,” the Raven haired beauty said. “During the late unpleasantness with the Dark Lord Voldemort, my father has chosen to return to Gujarat to run his financial empire from a less volatile society. During my Grand Father’s time he obtained the former Wenlock seat on the Board of Governors as in return for the donation that built the Astronomy Tower. I have been directed, as my father’s heir, to assume direct control of his British assets, reporting only to him. Mr. Montague, this decree, bearing my father’s seal, releases you from your service on the Board with my father’s thanks. Until such time as my father decides differently, I will be standing in his place for this committee, and all his other dealing in magical Britain.”

With only a glance toward Lucius, Cuthbert Montague, the third the Malfoy patriarch’s traditional allies on the board, rose from the table and the girl took her place to Malfoy’s left, much to the man’s consternation.

Through all this Minerva McGonagall had been confused, and then slowly, rather pleased. The power on the board had shifted. Just how it had shifted she didn’t know, but anything that disturbed Lucius Malfoy had to be a good thing.

Lucius once again reached for the gavel and was once again interrupted.

“Mr. Malfoy,” Susan Bones asked, her voice an advertisement for sweet innocence. “Perhaps since we have four new members, which if I recall my history of the school, is the largest single change in the membership of the Board of Governors since the original forming of the board, we should take a bit of time before the meeting official starts to affirm the rules and charter of Hogwarts and her Board of Governors?”

Frowning at the interruption, but seeing no harm in the affirmation of the charters, Lucius nodded.

The waiting staff fidgeted in their seats as the recording secretary produced copies of the charters of the School and the Board, and then while each member affixed their signatures to the documents. That done, Lucius Malfoy reached for the gavel a third time.

“I call this nine hundred ninety seventh meeting of the Hogwarts Board of Governors to order.” He said with his signature arrogance. He tapped the ivory gavel to its matching sounding block.

And nothing happened.

“What is going on?” Malfoy grumbled under his breath and he tapped the gavel on its sounding block a second time, with similar results.

“The charter of the Board states that the Chair of the Board is to be of the senior family,” Daphne Greengrass said. “Perhaps that’s the problem.”

“I am the senior member of the Board, stupid girl.” Malfoy spat.

“Actually Mr. Malfoy,” Neville interjected, “while you are the eldest member of the board, and the member that has currently served the longest, you aren’t of the senior family. The charter specifically calls for the ‘Senior Family’ not ‘Senior Member’. Yours is a young family, really. As I told your son more than once during our time in school together, the Greengrass and Longbottom families were senior members of the Wizengamot when the Malfoy clan was still selling their wives, sisters, and daughters for drink, and the Bones family is older still. I suspect that you were allowed the chair in earlier sessions due to the Charters not being affirmed for several generations prior to today, and the magics involved seems to have decided to start enforcing the rules since we all signed off on them.”

Lucius colored in the face of the insult, and grasped his cane planning on the ambush what would show the blood traitor his place before sending him on to meet his ancestors until his train of thought was derailed by Daphne Greengrass.

“Ah, ah, ah,” the beauty whispered. “That’s hardly Slytherin of you, showing your rage to a room full of witnesses. I doubt anyone would believe your claim of Imperius a third time. It’s becoming clear to me just where Draco learned his particular brand of cunning from.”

On Lucius’s left Parvati reached for the gavel. “I wonder,” She said, “If the more than five thousand years of magical heritage on my father’s side counts for this...” as soon as she lifted the antique ivory gavel, it took on a golden hue. “Well, what do you know? My first meeting, and I’m the chair. What fun.” She paused to clear her throat dramatically, “I call this nine hundred ninety seventh meeting of the Hogwarts Board of Governors to order.” She tapped the gavel on its sounding block and the entire room pulsed with magic.

Parvati’s eyes sparkled at the rush of personal power she felt as the school aligned its magic with her own. “Whoa! That’s really something. No wonder you were so resistant to giving it up Mr. Malfoy. So what’s on the agenda for this meeting?”

The recording secretary hesitated. Normally the chair simply read off the prepared agenda in front of him or her. “The first concern Madam

Chairwoman would be the certification of the teaching staff of Hogwarts school of Witchcraft and Wizardry.”

“I see,” Parvati said surveying the teachers before the board, most of whom had been leading classes she attended only two years before. “The floor is open to the Board. Any discussion?”

“Madam Chairwoman,” Neville spoke up, “I move that we adjourn to an executive session to discuss and overall strategy for this meeting. It might be best if the board took the time to consider it’s intentions before we begin public deliberations.”

Lucius Malfoy was surprised that such a sensible suggestion might come from the Longbottom boy. “I second the motion.”

“We have a motion and a second. The question before us is if we should adjourn to an executive session to determine our intentions toward retaining individual staff members. How say you, all those for the motion?”

Parvati was awarded with eight Ayes from the assembled board. “Any opposed?” she asked rhetorically. “And there we have it, the first motion of my Chairpersonship is passed unanimously, the Ayes over the Nos,” she smiled at her silly joke, and then turned serious. “The Board will adjourn to executive session to determine our overall strategy. This executive session will last no longer than one hour. The Board appreciates your patience and will return as soon as possible.” Parvati tapped the gavel again and a curtain of shimmering energy cut the Board members off from the rest of the room.

---oooOOOooo---

“Well people,” Parvati said, pulling her favorite tarot deck from the pocket of her robes, carefully removed the deck from its cloth container and began an elaborate shuffle. “We have hour to determine our basic strategy here, though we might as well be comfortable.” From a pocket she drew her wand, and with a casual wave a chilled glass of water appeared before each of the Governors.

Urquhart Quince swallowed noisily. “The four of you all decided to just take your positions out of the blue like this?”

Neville shrugged and smiled. “After the fall of Voldemort several of us who were there for the final battle took some time off to travel, see something of the world and heal. The four of us met a few weeks ago and all decided that it was time that we started meeting our responsibilities.” The wizard’s grin grew larger. “The fact that our doing so removed three people with fading tattoos on their left arms from the Board was simply good luck.”

“You don’t understand the power of the Imperius boy!” Lucius spat.

“Certainly he does Malfoy,” Daphne Greengrass said dismissively. You and your fellow cowardly controlled puppets were fairly free with that particular curse. I believe one of your fellow Imperius victims managed to hold Neville in thrall for almost twenty seconds before he threw it off. I mean really, even if we were to believe the fiction that all of you were enslaved by the unforgivable curse, I would suggest that alone should disqualify you from service on the board on the basis of being weak minded fools.”

Stamford Jorkins was smiling broadly. “I’ve been waiting for this day. You four are working for Harry Potter, aren’t you?”

“Harry is a dear friend, who we all see socially as often as we can.” Parvati said finishing her first spread. No one seemed to notice that she hadn’t answered the question.

“I move that the board speak with one voice on the topic of the retention of the teaching staff,” Falco Youdle said joining his friend Jorkins in enjoying the gutting of the dark leaning families from the board, “and that voice should be that of our newest members.”

“Alright!” Parvati exclaimed happily while pointing at the cards in front of her. “Good fortune in an important endeavor. That’s a good sign, right? And look, romance in my future!”

Lucius and Thorfinn Rowle exchange a look of utter disbelief. This was the woman in charge of the Board of Governors? The pair missed the wry grins that the four newest members of the Board shared.

The discussion carried on for another half hour as the four new members outlined what they wished to accomplish before the motion carried, seven to two, with Lucius and Rowle being the only dissenters.

---oooOOOooo---

Parvati tapped her gavel once again, and was rewarded with a rush of magic to the room and her body. “The Board will now resume the session. After discussion it was decided that evaluating the teaching staff should not be the responsibility of the Board of Governors, rather it should be the responsibility of the professional educators in the position of the Head and Deputy Head. It is the position of the Board that starting with the next school year; each professor shall have a minimum of two unannounced in class evaluations per school year, to be scheduled by the heads. To be clear, that would be one evaluation by the Head and one by the Deputy.”

“Should the two evaluations vary by any significant degree, then additional evaluations will be made until the disparity is resolved,” Daphne Greengrass continued. “Every third year, beginning at the end of the next school year the Board will review the evaluations with the Head and Deputy Head with a view towards ensuring that each professor keeps pace with the current state of the art in their field, and ensuring that each Hogwarts student actually gets the education their parents are paying for.”

“So everyone gets a free year,” Neville Longbottom concluded.

“That means that the teaching staff can go with the gratitude of the Board.” Susan said from her seat. “If the Headmistress, her Deputy, the Heads

of the four houses, Professor Binns, and Mr. Filch would remain?"

---oooOOOooo---

"First things first I suppose," Parvati said with a sigh as soon as the teaching staff had exited the conference room. "Professor Binns?"

The ghost seemed to be a bit confused by being someplace other than his classroom. With seemingly great effort the spectral professor focused on the young Witch. "Ye... Yes?"

"Professor Binns, you are dismissed," Parvati said kindly. "The Board thanks you for your decades of service to the school, but our consensus is that your classroom has become as void of life as you yourself. We believe that it would be best if you were to move on and allow a living teacher to take on the rigors of teaching history to the young."

"What is this?" Minerva sputtered. "You just said that the evaluation of the teaching staff is not the responsibility of the board. How can you say that and then without warning dismiss one of my professors?"

"Move on?" The ghost asked

"It is quite evident that you have not sat in on a History of Magic class in recent years Professor." Susan suggested. "There is no teaching going on in that class. Professor Binns enters the room and immediately starts droning on about some minutia concerning a specific battle of one of the Goblin rebellions, usually without identifying which battle or indeed which rebellion he is speaking of. In my experience, and I took history all seven years of my time at Hogwarts, he never lectured or answered questions on any other subject."

"Quite." Lucius couldn't resist interjecting. During his time at Hogwarts he had hated the waste of time that had been the History of magic. He lifted the glass of water before him to his lips and sipped at the chilled liquid.

"And that ignores the fact that on the History of Magic NEWT I took, there was only one question concerning the Goblin Rebellions out of the two hundred and fifty question exam," Neville agreed. "Those of us who passed our NEWTs on the subject did so through independent and group study, NOT through anything taught by Professor Binns."

"I'm afraid I must agree," Parvati said. "We learned more history in your class Professor than we ever did in Professor Binns'. To allow another school year to be wasted while we wait for your evaluation that would tell us what we already know would be criminal."

"Move on." Binns repeated, seeming to think about it before nodding. "Yes. It is time."

The conference room became silent as the ancient specter faded from view. While every magic user knew that ghosts could move on to whatever exists beyond the plane of life, few had ever witnessed the act.

"The chair yields to Governor Bones."

"Thank you Madam Chairwoman," Susan said quietly. "Mr. Filch, I would like to say how happy I was to learn that you had survived the Dark Lord's reign. When you didn't return to school that year many of us feared the worst for you."

The old squib rose to face the Board. "Thank you. My sister lives purely Muggle and she hid me during the bad times."

"It's good to have family to fall back on," the pretty red head said. "But that leads me to ask, why did you come back?"

Filch took on a confused expression, "What?"

"Why did you come back? It was fairly clear to me from my time interacting with you during my time as a student that you hated your job and everything to do with it, perhaps especially having to deal with the students. You constantly complained about the amount of work you were responsible for, complained about having to work with House Elves, and as I said, you really disliked having to deal with the students. Why did you come back?"

The old squib stood, turning his hat in his hands. "It's my job."

"It is," Susan agreed. "A job you hate, working around people you hate."

"Miss Bones, this is hardly an appropriate place to..."

"I quite disagree Professor. While your exposure to Mr. Filch may be that of a co-worker and nominal superior, the experience of the four of us new to the board is one of a rather bitter man who made no secret of his distaste for all of us. Bear in mind I am a Hufflepuff Alum, and we like almost everyone."

Lucius exchanged yet another look with Thorfinn Rowle. What was the girl doing? She should just fire the squib and be done with it.

"The four of us had long discussions about what we wanted to achieve when we took our places on the Board, and the elder members, in their wisdom have chosen this day to allow us our heads, for now, in our quest to improve the school for the students AND staff. Mr. Filch, it is the opinion of the Board," Susan continued, "that it is past time for you to take the retirement you've earned for your forty years of service to the school."

Opinion of the Board? Lucius almost started to protest when he saw that Quince, Youdle and Jorkins were all hanging on every word out of the girl's mouth. Besides, she was doing what he had always wanted done.

"But it's my job..." Filch said, looking to McGonagall for support.

"It was your job Mr. Filch," the redhead said quietly. "The unending hostility toward the students cannot be allowed to continue. You are excused with the thanks of the board."

Filch was stunned for a few moments before bobbing his head and exiting the conference room without a word.

"What that really necessary?" Minerva McGonagall asked. "Argus Filch has given loyal service to this school for longer than you've been alive Miss Bones."

"He has." Daphne agreed. "But can you tell me Professor, just what did Filch do at Hogwarts beyond stalking the halls at night and issuing detentions for every imagined slight?"

"He was the Hogwarts Caretaker." The older witch answered.

"That was his job title," Neville agreed. "But what did he DO? The House Elves clean and repair the castle with no human direction at all. There are large sections of the castle closed off to him since he can't do the magic needed to open the portals. Outside of terrorizing the students, what precisely were his duties?"

"He..." Minerva started saying.

"This is what the School's Charter has to say about the Caretaker," Daphne interrupted. "The Caretaker is responsible for maintaining the castle and for the smooth running of the school. This includes making maintaining the various heating charms and fireplaces, including the sweeping of chimneys, cleaning of the castle, portering student and staff personal luggage from the train station to the castle, moving furniture, doing repairs, ordering materials, etc." The Slytherin graduate raised an elegant eyebrow. "It seems to me that other than the ordering of materials, everything in the job description is done by the elves."

"Well, yes..." Minerva said hesitantly.

"So, we need to start a search for a new Professor of History and the Board needs to have a discussion about deciding if the school actually needs a full time Caretaker," Urquhart Quince said making notes.

Lucius sipped at his water and pondered what was happening. He had been trying to get rid of that pathetic squib since he first took his seat on the Board, and these children had managed to do so during their first meeting? Perhaps he had misjudged them.

"And that leaves us with the senior staff." Longbottom noted, pulling a small sheaf of parchment from his robes. "Let me preface this by explaining what we've been doing since leaving school. When Susan, Daphne and I realized that we had a responsibility to assume our family's positions on Hogwarts' Board of Governors, we took it upon ourselves to see a bit of the world, to see how other magical communities educate their children. What we found was eye opening.

"Then you wasted your time," Thorfinn Rowle spat. "Hogwarts is the premier school of magic in the world."

"I'd heard that my entire life," Neville agreed. "But I must say in our travels we discovered that the only people who believe that are graduates of Hogwarts. Graduates of Durmstang believe that about their school, and graduates of Beauxbatons believe their school to be the best in the world. The rest of the world considers it to be a draw between Japan's Academy of Emperor or Brazil's Escola de Magia do Novo Mundo for the premier spot. The three large European schools are looked down upon for stifling innovation, for backward practices and for a certain level of undeserved arrogance."

"It was quite disturbing to be automatically thought of as a provincial idiot when visiting some of those schools," Daphne admitted. "And after seeing what was taught at those schools, I was ashamed of just how backwards Hogwarts really is."

"So the four of us came to the Board with the intention of bringing our school up to the standards of the rest of the world," Neville admitted. "To do that we are going to have to make changes to the way things have always been done. What I am proposing today is that we set up a series of meetings over this summer between the Head and the Board with a view toward starting the planning stages of improving this school so that it will actually become the envy of the world that our graduates believe it to be."

"What kind of changes?" Filius Flitwick asked.

"At first," Parvati said, "small things." She consulted her notes, "to begin with, we would like to see a revamping of the detention system. As it was used during our time at Hogwarts, and we have no indication that anything has changed since then, it was little more than punitive make work that took up teacher's time and wasted opportunities. Scrubbing out cauldrons, assisting the grounds keeper in mucking out the thestral stalls, or any of the other mindless make work punishments serve no educational purpose. We would like to see all detentions become opportunities to teach the students something."

"Such as?" Pomona Sprout asked.

"Such as assisting in the Greenhouses, or assisting with the maintenance of the Astronomy instruments, organizing materials needed for classes, or anything that leads to furthering the education of the students, and not something specifically intended to be both painful and pointless. Severus Snape specialized in those types of punishments, but all of the teaching staff assigned them at times, including the five of you." Daphne explained.

"There are other instances we would like to see changed and our conversations with the Head will allow a path to improvement of the school to be defined," Neville concluded.

“I... see,” McGonagall said, clearly not happy with the way this meeting was going.

“Now then,” Parvati continued. Onto our discussions concerning your positions. Professor Babbling, congratulations on your posting at Gryffindor Head of House, and Professor Vector, congratulations to you on becoming Head of Slytherin.”

The two women nodded their thanks, both silent as if waiting for the other shoe to drop.

“Rumor has it that the hostility between Slytherin and Gryffindor is at the lowest point that anyone can remember”

Septima Vector nodded. “The fall of You-Know-Who removed many of the more...” she glanced toward the Malfoy patriarch, “outspoken members of my house from the school, either to foreign schools or to home schooling due to... financial problems. Those who remain in Slytherin house have been informed that I consider blatant prejudice to be neither cunning nor ambitious.”

“And I sat down with my Gryffies and informed them that I wasn’t going to tolerate their antics,” Babbling said quietly. “They soon discovered I run my House like I run my classroom.”

A group nod passed through the conference room. Just as Septima Vector was famous for her Saturday night seminars on ‘Probability factors in Random Groupings’ (a poker game open to staff and 7th year students), Bathsheba Babbling was famous for the discipline of her classroom as well as her no nonsense approach to magic and life.

“Whatever the cause, the result is very good to see, and we of the board thank you for it.” Parvati paused for a moment, looking through some notes. “During our executive session we had a discussion about the pressures that you have taken on as Heads of Houses and the Board had decided to add a stipend to the position. As of today, the Heads of the four houses will be receiving a three percent increase in their pay.”

That news pleased the assembled instructors. The five professors exchanged looks. Albus had always believed that teaching was a calling rather than a profession and had never put much effort into making sure that the staff’s remuneration kept pace with the cost of living. Three percent wasn’t much, but it was a start.

“Now Professors,” Parvati interrupted their musings, “what remains of this meeting is intended for the senior staff, so unless you have any questions for the board...”

Both Vector and Babbling took the hint and exited the conference room, happier with their new positions as Heads of their respective houses than they had been prior to the meeting.

After waiting for the two women to exit the conference room and for the door to seal behind them, Parvati continued. “Governor Longbottom has the floor.”

“Thank you Madam Chairwoman,” Neville said with a smile. “To start off, I would like to thank the three of you for everything you did for me during my time at Hogwarts.”

The pleased look on the faces of McGonagall, Flitwick and Sprout were only matched by the look of incredulity on the face of Lucius Malfoy. “Boy, if you think...”

“Governor Malfoy,” Parvati interrupted his rant, “Governor Longbottom has the floor.”

Lucius glowered at the young woman, reflecting that he knew the proper way to teach a young bint her place in the world. He lifted his water to his lips and sipped deeply. Yes, at a time of his choosing, she would learn her place.

“Thank you again Madam Chairwoman. As I was saying, thank you for what you taught me. But I have to ask, what were you all thinking in 1991 when you allowed Albus Dumbledore to bring a dangerous magical artifact into a school full of children?” He paused for a moment waiting for a response. When none was forthcoming Neville continued. “You all contributed to the defenses of the stone, defenses supposedly intended to keep a Dark Lord away from the stone. Meaning of course that before the Dark Lord could approach those defenses he would have to be IN the school.”

Minerva was taken aback that. “Albus Dumbledore said...”

“I’m sure he did,” Longbottom interrupted her. “The fact remains you assisted him in bringing an artifact that would attract a Dark Lord, and indeed there are those who believe that it was intended to attract a Dark Lord to the school.”

“The Headmaster asked for our help, and we gave him our help,” Filius Flitwick said crossing his arms. “As the Headmaster we owed him our loyalty.”

“Really?” Susan asked. “And here I believed that you were all bound to the obligations of the school’s charter and your contracts both of which place the safety of the students and security of the school above all other concerns.”

“Besides, it doesn’t appear that any of you put all that much effort into your protections,” Daphne added, “when you consider that all of your vaunted protections were bested by three first year students... Well, to be fair, one student with Potter and Weasley tagging along, and probably getting in her way.”

“Mr. Potter got them through my portion of the Headmaster’s Gauntlet with his flying skills,” Flitwick pointed out.

“And it was Mr. Weasley’s chess skills that got them past mine.” McGonagall added.

Neville smiled. "All that points out is that a trio of first years made it through your defenses, as did the Dark Lord. I will grant you that Hermione is one of the brightest of our generation, that Ron plays a mean game of chess, and that Harry was born to fly and will risk everything to save someone, but that does nothing to explain why, with all your experience, your defenses were defeated by an eleven year old and two twelve year olds."

"I think perhaps we can all agree that mistakes were made in 1991," Parvati said with a smile. "The purpose of our discussion is not so much as to allocate blame as to establish the basis of a better future for our school. With that in mind, among the topics to be defined by the Board and the Head in our meeting this summer will be a definition of responsibilities for each position at the school."

Minerva's mouth set into a firm line. "And what do you mean by that? This school has been function quite well for almost a thousand years under the system in place."

"Just because something has worked in the past is no reason to refuse to attempt to improve Professor," Daphne noted.

"We believe that the staff is too burdened with minutia to truly excel at their responsibilities," Susan said. "Take your level of responsibility during your time under Professor Dumbledore. You were carrying a full teaching load, standing as the Head of Gryffindor House, and you were the Deputy Headmistress all at the same time. That was clearly too much for any one person."

"Excuse me?" Minerva asked frostily. "Are you suggesting that I somehow failed at my positions?"

"Well, yes," Susan answered, sounding surprised that McGonagall didn't recognize the truth of her statements. "Your performance in the classroom was beyond excellent; I don't think anyone would question your abilities in Transfiguration, but as Head of House? Come now Professor, the tales of your performance in that position even reached the Hufflepuff dorms. We used to wonder why you did some of the things you did."

"Our fifth year for example," Neville interjected. "Do you recall your answer when I came to you following a detention session with Madam Umbridge?"

"Was it anything like 'keep your head down'?" Parvati asked. "I know that's what you told Harry Potter to do after hearing him explain the result of his meeting with you while bandaging his hand in the common room. That led to a long discussion in the common room about just why you were the Head of House for the 'Brave House'."

"Did you ever defend members of your house when they had House Points deducted by Professor Snape for 'Breathing too loud'? When those deductions stood, it always amazed and amused us in the Slytherin common room." Daphne noted.

"Other Heads of House were advocates for their students. I know I was amazed when 'Puffs, 'Claws and Slytherin's all told me that their Heads routinely disputed punishments and even detentions assigned by other staff members. I can't recall you ever doing so. If anything on the few times we complained, you increased the punishments," Neville concluded.

"And that brings us to your performance as Deputy Headmistress," Susan said again taking control of the discussion. "I'm afraid, that much like our questions of Mr. Filch, I have to ask 'What did you do' in that position?"

The three professors immediately radiated hostility at the suggestion.

"I beg your pardon?" Minerva said in a voice so cold it would challenge the arctic in January.

"Tell me Professor," Susan asked, "why precisely is the 'Forbidden Forest' forbidden?"

"Because of the danger some of the denizens of the forest offer obviously. A student wandering in the forest could easily end up badly injured if not killed."

"I quite agree with your assessment," Susan said nodding. "Perhaps then you could explain why you felt the need to send four first years into the forest with Rubeus Hagrid in 1991, after midnight, looking for a creature capable of killing a unicorn."

"What?" Pomona Sprout blurted.

"Preposterous!" Filius Flitwick agreed.

"It was a detention!" Minerva explained. "They were found wandering the halls at night. A lesson had to be taught."

"Minerva!" Sprout protested.

"Death strikes me as a fairly severe lesson Professor." Daphne noted.

Once again reaching for his chilled water Lucius found himself to be amused by this exchange. These children were actually going to fire the old bat out of some sort of childish spite? He hid his smile as he allowed the water to pass his lips. They were doing his work for him. Once he resumed control of the board he would have to remember to thank them as they were leaving in shame.

"Moving past the mistakes of 1991 again," Susan continued, "could you explain your inaction during 1992 when you allowed the school to refer to Harry Potter as 'the Heir of Slytherin'?"

"The Headmaster felt that Mr. Potter needed to learn to deal with public opinion."

"I see," the redhead said. "And your toleration of the abusive 'Potter Stinks' buttons from the Triwizard tournament? Was that also the doing of the

Headmaster?"

"Well, yes," Minerva admitted.

"So, once again I ask, what did you do in your position as Deputy Headmistress?"

The School Charter details the responsibilities of the Deputy Head as follows:" Daphne interjected. "The Deputy Head is responsible for maintaining the educational standards of the school, developing new academic and interscholastic programs, selecting and coordinating the class prefects and evaluating the performance of the school staff. In addition these responsibilities, the Deputy will assist the Head in the performance of his duties."

"Well, that's fairly clear," Susan concluded. "Where in the Charter's description of your duties does it say that you should aid the Headmaster in the abuse of students?"

Minerva had no answer so Susan continued. "When did you ever monitor the classes of Professor Snape, Professor Binns, or Professor Trelawney? Among your responsibilities as the Deputy Head was to maintain the standards of the school, how did you do this without actively monitoring the classes?"

"I was not qualified to judge the skills of Severus Snape, nor those of Sybil. Severus was a Potions Master, and Sybil... well how could someone go about judging a subject as subjective as Divination?"

"Professor," Neville sighed. "I believe you know full well that it wasn't the specialty skills you were supposed to evaluate, but the teaching skills. Why didn't you ever, as your position as Deputy Head required, monitor the teaching skills of any of the professors?"

Minerva found that she couldn't meet their eyes. "The Headmaster said that it wasn't necessary."

"Then, of course," Susan interjected, "there was the kidnapping you were a party to."

"Excuse me? Kidnapping?" Minerva sputtered.

"Were you under the impression that an orphaned child is usually placed with family by someone leaving him on the doorstep in the middle of the night?" Susan asked.

"And that the involvement of the courts was optional?" Daphne added.

"Albus said it was necessary, I told him that they were the worst sort of Muggle, but..."

"I see," Parvati said taking control of the meeting once again. "Perhaps Harry was just unfortunate enough to find his life being controlled by the worst sort of wizards. Professor McGonagall, it is the ruling of the board that you will not be assuming the position of Headmistress. We appreciate your service to the school for your service to the school during the provisional period, and hope that you will see your way clear to continuing as Hogwarts' Transfiguration Mistress, though we fully understand if you feel you cannot continue."

There was several seconds of silence before Flitwick broke it. "I am not going to take the position of Headmaster."

"I'm glad to hear that you aren't interested Professor," Parvati said softly, "Because you aren't going to be offered the position, for much the same reason that as Professor McGonagall."

"What?" the small man asked incredulously.

"What do all these students have in common?" Neville asked. "Eddie Carmichael, Kevin Entwhistle, Sally Anne Perks, Luna Lovegood, Orla Quirke, Evan Parker, Clinton Sheets or Valdimus Cooper?"

"They were all Ravenclaw students," Flitwick answered.

"They were all Ravenclaw students who were systematically abused and bullied by the model students of Ravenclaw house. Our information is that you were completely aware of what was going on Professor." Neville said.

"Some were abused worse than others. Sally Anne evidently broke under the pressure, not returning after our second year," Parvati pointed out. "Luna seemingly got the very worst of it, but ignored her abusers in a way that infuriated them and drove them to ever more severe abuse."

"That is nothing more than jockeying for social position," Flitwick said dismissively. "The students will encounter others who they need to learn to deal with throughout their lives. The time in the dormitories is simply the first of those lessons. If the students cannot deal with adversity it is best to find that out young so that they can avoid conflict in the future."

"Filius?" Minerva and Pomona echoed in horror.

"It is a little known fact that I was the second born of my family. Padma preceded me by seven minutes. That meant that she was supposed to be here in Britain representing our father. Then she explained the 'jockeying for position' to Papa, and was amazed when he deemed that abusing people for no other reason than you could was hardly the attitude that he would allow in someone at the helm of one of the branches of his financial empire. So Padma was quickly betrothed and here I am." The normally flighty graduate from Gryffindor house was suddenly very focused. "No Professor, it is the position of the Board that the Hogwarts Charter intends that every child enrolled at this school should be treated with respect. You will not be offered the any position of leadership in this school. We do hope that you will consent to remain as the school's Charms' Master, but you will not be the head of Ravenclaw house."

Lucius Malfoy couldn't believe what he was seeing. The entire administration of the school, the entire 'cult of Dumbledore' was being gutted right before his eyes, by four children. Draco hadn't mentioned this level of ruthlessness to be part of the character of any of the four with the exception of the Greengrass girl... perhaps it was time to start reevaluating the trust he placed in his son's views of his year-mates.

"There are going to be many changes to the staff from here on," Daphne Greengrass said breaking the quiet that Parvati's comments had spawned. "The Heads and the Heads of the four Houses will not be burdened with full time teaching assignments. They will of course be available for the occasional class, but their focus will be on the administration of the school and the individual houses. Also, the Deputy will not hold the position of Head of House, as the obvious conflicts will inevitably arise. Other aspects of the changes to the staff will need to be ironed out at the conference meetings this summer."

"You're going to destroy the school!" Minerva protested.

"Professor McGonagall," Susan said quietly, "surely you don't believe that the school could be destroyed by the Board expecting a certain level of professionalism from the Hogwarts staff and refusing to allow the abuse of students do you?"

"But... Albus' dreams... his ideals..." Minerva faltered with the realization that the girl was right.

"Hogwarts is going to need a new Head, as well as a new deputy and several other staff members." Stamford Jorkins pointed out.

"We will," Susan agreed. "And in discussion with my fellow new members prior to our taking our places on the board, we believe we have the perfect candidate for the Head position."

"Oh, let me guess," Lucius snarked, no longer able to control himself. "Harry Potter?"

"The idea of Harry Potter being an administrator is laughable Governor Malfoy," Parvati giggled. "He would be the very first to tell you that."

"No, not Harry," Susan agreed. "We were thinking of someone who was always looking out for her students, someone who continuously filed complaints against Severus Snape and his teaching methods. Someone who, when the complaints against Snape were ignored taught Potions on the weekends to anyone from any house who was willing to learn from her." The redhead smiled at a memory, "and someone who, even though Cedric Diggory was from her house, still tore a strip off my back when she caught me wearing a 'Potter Stinks' badge during the Triwizard Tournament. The four of us are of the opinion that Pomona Sprout would be our first, best candidate for the position of Headmistress."

"I so move that Professor Sprout be offered the position of Headmistress." Neville intoned.

"We have a motion on the floor," Parvati noted. "Do we have a second?"

"Second." Daphne answered.

"We have a motion and a second. All in favor of offering the position of Headmistress to Professor Sprout?" Parvati asked.

Her three fellows instantly raised their hands, with Quince, Youdle, and Jorkins following suit after a few seconds.

"That's six for, all opposed?"

Neither Malfoy or Rowle moved beyond their traditional scowls.

"Six for and two abstentions. The motion carries. Professor Spout, the board extends you the offer of the position of Headmistress. I understand that this is an unexpected turn of events, and that you will need to consider what you want to do. If you decline the position we will need to begin a search for a suitable candidate, so if you could let us know inside of two weeks? Further if you decline we will need to know if you wish to remain Hufflepuff Head of House or to continue teaching as holding the two positions simultaneously is no longer allowed."

The stunned herbology professor nodded her understanding.

"Professors McGonagall and Flitwick," Parvati continued, "We will also need to know your intentions with in that same time period. If you choose to leave your teaching positions we will need to begin a search to replace you."

"And again, we thank you all for your service to our school," Susan said.

"Is there any other business for today?" Parvati asked. "No? Then I call the Nine Hundred Ninety Seventh meeting of the board closed. The young woman tapped the gavel on its sounding board and shuddered as the magic realigned itself to the new reality.

---oooOOOooo---

The board members were silent as the three stunned educators exited the conference room.

"What do you think?" Daphne asked, "Will she take the position?"

"She'll take it," Neville confirmed with Susan's nodding agreement. "It's too much of a challenge for Pomona to pass on. What I don't know is if Filius and Minerva's egos will allow them to stay on to teach after holding the posts they did."

"I'll ready a worldwide search for replacements." Urquhart Quince said from his seat. "I can't believe you've done this."

"Neither can I," Lucius Malfoy said. "In a single day the four of you have managed to unseat the cult of Dumbledore, something I freely admit to

having tried to do for more than a decade. My question is: why?"

Daphne shrugged. "Blame a shared general distaste for the way things were done while we attended Hogwarts. We all saw too much of the Headmaster's thinly veiled plots, bad teachers, horrible house administration, fools, bullies, and cowards that hid behind their father's money."

Lucius fingered his cane at the allusion towards Draco.

"As soon as we formed our block we knew that we could get what we wanted done given the only way to stop us would be for the five of you to put aside your differences and vote together to block what we were trying to do," Susan pointed out. "Given that the five of you could never reach a consensus on what to have for lunch, we calculated that we would succeed."

"Someday we will have children that need to go to Hogwarts," Neville said continuing the explanation, "and we would prefer them to attend a school relatively free of the plots of a crazy old man and the staff who enabled him."

That was when Thorfinn took on a rather greenish hue and stood from the table, bolting from the room.

This brought about confused looks between the board members. The older Board members gathered their things and left the room, speaking excitedly about the changes the meeting had brought about.

The last to leave, Lucius Malfoy paused for a moment, contemplating whether or not to warn these children that he was going to destroy them.

"Did you enjoy your last Board meeting Governor Malfoy?" Daphne asked.

"Last Board meeting?" Lucius sneered, "What are you on about girl?"

"When we decided that we were going to improve Hogwarts, we also decided that we didn't want any former Death Eaters involved, be they actual true believers, or weak minded imperius victims, so we've taken steps." Neville explained.

Lucius felt a cramp rip through his gut. "Nothing too terrible really, you and Thorfinn have just been drinking a little potion in your water," Daphne said. "It's from an old Italian potions book. My Italian is terrible, I can never get the pronunciation right, but it translates to 'Cuckold's Revenge'. Obviously, it was developed to punish those who would dally with another's spouse, but it works well in our setting as well... doesn't it Lucius?"

The head of the Malfoy family doubled over in pain.

"It starts off with some rather vicious stomach cramps, but if you stay in the presence of those the potion is keyed to, well, before too long you will be bleeding from the eyes and your groin." Neville said with a smile. "Keep your distance, and you have nothing to worry about."

"About a quarter mile should do it." Susan suggested.

"It's an intent based potion, so you need to keep your thoughts about us pleasant and helpful, no matter how far away you are." Parvati added. "Trying to hire someone to do unpleasant things to us would be... ill advised."

"And you really don't want to know what happens if you were to pull a wand on someone you are keyed to," Neville laughed. "It gets really messy."

"You're going to have to get someone else to sit in your seats on the Board, because we aren't going anywhere," Daphne said. "If you send any of your fellow 'imperius victims' we'll take care of them as well."

"And you would really have to be stupid to send Draco in your place." Susan advised. "We aren't overly fond of you, but Draco, well, let's just say that your son has given all of us plenty of reasons to want to see him suffer. So, please do."

A dark red stain started to spread in the crotch of the suffering wizard's trousers.

"Oopsie," Daphne laughed. "Looks like you stayed too long Lucius, you'd best get yourself to St. Mungos..."

Neville took hold of the elder Malfoy and lifted him to his feet, then guided the man to the door.

"That went well," Parvati observed as Neville rejoined the group.

"Yes it did," the stocky wizard agreed. "So, dinner at my place tomorrow night? Gran will be out and Hannah wants to practice a few recipes on a group. She doesn't think I tell her the truth about her cooking."

"She cooks Muggle style doesn't she?" Parvati asked.

"She learned from her mother," Susan said. "And hanging out with Harry sort of reinforced it."

"And Harry can cook!" Neville observed. "So everyone game?"

After a round of assent from the group, Neville spoke again. "You know, they're going to blame Harry for this."

"We should let him know what we've done," Daphne said. "If he's going to get the blame the least we can do is try and not blindside him with it."

A quartet of elves popped into the room with the four friend's cloaks. "You know," Susan observed, "if I didn't know better, I might think the staff wanted us to leave."

The four laughed and made their way to exit the castle. One way or another, they all knew that the school would never be the same again.