

Pureblood Traditions

Late on the morning of his seventeenth birthday, Harry sat alone in the Great Hall of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. It was shortly after the party thrown by the Weasleys, the Order, and most of his classmates and almost all of them were still wandering the grounds.

Staying at the school during the summer holidays was unheard of for normal students, but Harry was anything but normal. As Dumbledore had described it to him, this was one of the very few truly safe places left for him to stay for the summer.

At the moment, Harry was reading the new dueling book that was given to him by the assorted members of the Order. In the midst of the description of how to counter a curse that solidified all cartilage in the human body, Harry heard the flapping of wings. He looked up in time to see an unfamiliar owl swoop down and land in front of him.

Curious as to who would send him an unknown owl during what had otherwise been a quiet summer, Harry withdrew his wand and cast the standard detection charm that Alastor Moody had taught him regarding unexpected owl post. When the charm indicated no dangers, Harry untied the scroll from the patiently waiting owl. Apparently not expecting an answer, the owl immediately took off.

Request to Sire

Upon: Lavender Brown

Custody: Brown or joint

Offer: 2,000 galleons

Please respond by: August 10

Signed: Augustus Brown

This Request to Sire form was standardized by the Ministry of Magic, 1758.

Harry frowned at the parchment. *Request to Sire?* he wondered. *What in the hell did that mean?*

Shrugging at the minor mystery, Harry laid the parchment aside. He'd talk to Remus about it later. The werewolf was due in for lunch, and the question would keep until then. He got back to studying his new book.

Thirty minutes later, the entire process was repeated.

Request to Sire

Upon: Sylvia Babcock

Custody: Babcock

Offer: 2,500 galleons

Please respond by: August 5

Signed: Jonathon Babcock

This Request to Sire form was standardized by the Ministry of Magic, 1758.

Now a little bit disturbed by the unexplained situation, Harry laid the parchment on top of the first one and tried to return his attention to his new book.

Within five minutes, another one arrived. And another immediately after that.

As Harry was frowning down at the fourth one, Tonks entered the Great Hall.

"Wotcher, Harry. How do you like your presents?" She gestured at the book and the small pile of other presents he'd opened earlier.

"Hi, Tonks. This dueling book the Order got me is pretty good. I haven't really looked at any of the others too closely yet. I keep getting interrupted by owls. Here." One of the notes changed hands as she got close enough. "What in the world is this thing? I've gotten four, and I only recognize the name on one of them."

Curious, Tonks read the form over as she sank into a seat across from him. After a moment of reading, she started to laugh quietly. "Requests to sire? Oh, Harry, you poor, naïve wizard."

Harry frowned. In a testy voice, he asked, "Let's pretend for a moment that I was raised as a muggle, okay?"

She had the grace to blush. "Point taken. Okay, it's a really old pureblood tradition. I only know about it because my mother, who was a Black if you'll recall, wanted to be sure I knew all of the traditions, even if she wasn't about to force them upon me. In short, they're asking you to sire a child for their family."

"WHAT?" Harry shouted, wide-eyed. "They want me to produce a child for them?"

Tonks shrugged. "That's about the size of it. Remember, this is an old tradition, dating from the times that lineage was everything. Now, you don't have the purest of blood, so the fact that you're receiving any of these at all is quite a compliment. The fact that your mother was a muggle-born prevents you from receiving similar offers from Parkinson, Greengrass, and some of the other absolutely pure families with unattached witches anywhere near your age."

Harry simply gaped.

Her hair cycled colors for a moment before settling on a black that somehow managed to be even darker than Harry's. She pointed at the parchment. "From the top, it names the potential mother. Next, the 'custody' refers to who would raise the child. 'Joint' or 'offers of joint' are as good as offers of marriage. If it's the family name, it indicates they'd want to raise the child themselves with no legal responsibilities on your part. 'Offer' refers to how much you'd be paid once a healthy pregnancy is confirmed. 'Response date' is obvious, and it's based on the next highest fertility date for the witch in question. What's that new term?" She frowned in thought for a moment. "Ah, ovulation date."

"Now there's something I thought I'd never hear," a new voice entered the conversation from the direction of the doors. Ginny led Ron into the room as Harry and Tonks turned to look at her. "Tonks talking to Harry about ovulation dates? Is there something you need to tell us about your relationship, you two?"

Harry blushed scarlet.

Tonks burst into laughter. "No, Ginny, I'm afraid not." She got a speculative look in her eye as she looked Harry up and down before turning back to Ginny. "Not that it's such a bad idea, though."

Harry blushed an even brighter red.

Tonks smiled sweetly at Harry's reaction for a moment before saying, "He's received offers to sire. I was explaining what that meant."

Ron looked impressed. Turning to Harry, he asked, "Really? Offers to sire? Bloody hell, Harry, the last one of those I heard about was over a hundred years ago."

"WHAT?" Harry exploded. "These people are offering me money to get their daughters pregnant! You think this is some kind of honor?"

"Actually, it is," Ginny commented.

Harry goggled.

Ignoring his expression, Ginny explained, "Think about the time period and school of thought that this tradition is rooted in. This was a way to add to a family's line while keeping it pure. You're a powerful wizard, Harry, from a politically powerful and old family, long associated with Gryffindor and the Light. This is putting aside your own list of accomplishments, of course. They're getting their own powerful witch or wizard into their family to raise their prestige."

"But, but, it's prostitution! I mean I'm no gigolo! They're basically paying me to have sex with their daughters, right?" Harry clearly couldn't wrap his mind around the situation.

"Not necessarily," Tonks corrected him. "Having sex with Lavender Brown -"

"Or Hannah Abbot," Ron added, reading the scroll he'd just pulled off of yet another owl.

"Or Hannah Abbot," Tonks agreed, "is the easiest and, um, most entertaining way of getting them pregnant, but it's not the only way. There are several magical methods available if you're thinking in those terms. There's a specialized form of a Transferring Charm as well as the standard Impregnation Charm."

"This all sounds about as romantic as breeding bulldogs," Harry moaned.

Tonks and Ginny shrugged. "I wouldn't phrase it quite that way, but in essence, that's exactly what they're suggesting."

"But do these girls even have a choice?"

Tonks frowned a little. "Honestly, no. Until they're seventeen, they're technically the property of the Patriarch of their family. So from the time they're sixteen to seventeen, their Patriarch can legally demand this of them. Once they're seventeen, they do have the choice to cooperate or not. On the other hand, they can simply propose marriage to you directly at that point if they've a mind to." Tonks graced the overwhelmed wizard with her most flirtatious smile.

Ron grinned at Harry. "Cheer up, mate. Think of it this way: If you DO get some classmate of ours pregnant, you can claim to just be fulfilling one of these Requests."

"Would you say the same thing if one of those had come from Dad?" Ginny asked her brother coolly.

"You're not old enough!" Ron objected, paling dramatically.

"By wizarding law, I will be in less than two weeks," she answered evenly.

Ron opened his mouth for a moment before closing it again. He looked back and forth from Harry to Ginny for a moment before pulling himself together again. "Dad wouldn't do that to you."

"Probably not," Ginny freely admitted. She sat down next to him and casually rested her hand on Harry's shoulder.

Ron started and stared at her hand. Tonks appeared to be mildly surprised at her actions.

Harry sighed. "Okay, are there any other old pureblood traditions I should know about now that I'm old enough to receive owl post like this?"

"Flesh golems and dowry-brides have been outlawed for the past hundred years, so those aren't an issue anymore," Tonks thought out loud. "Ah, yes. There is another one you should know about. Betrothals."

Harry groaned. "I've heard about those. I thought they were only used among muggle royalty, back like a million years ago."

"Nope," Tonks dashed Harry's hopes with an obscene cheerfulness. "Betrothals are still commonplace among the pureblooded. It wouldn't surprise me if several of your classmates are betrothed."

"Malfoy and Parkinson," Ron immediately said.

This didn't surprise Harry much, but the next one did.

"Bulstrode and Nott."

Harry made a face. "Millicent and Theodore? Yuck."

Ron shrugged. "In our generation, there aren't all that many pureblooded witches available for those families who think along those lines. Not that Weasleys or Potters ever particularly cared."

"Oh, good. I was afraid for a moment that you were going to tell me that I'd been betrothed when I was a baby."

"Your father could well have received offers for all the same reasons you're receiving requests to sire now," Tonks pointed out.

Harry was again rendered momentarily speechless. Finally finding his voice, he begged, "Please, PLEASE tell me he didn't betroth me."

She laid a calming hand on his arm from across the table. "No he didn't. Magical betrothals are all recorded in the Hall of Records at the ministry. When Professor Dumbledore put Order guards on you, he searched the records to see if there was anything in there about you that he didn't already know. You're not betrothed to anyone."

Harry whooshed out a relieved breath. "Thank Merlin."

"Would being engaged to Hannah, Susan, Parvati or . . . oh, Cho be all that awful?" Ron asked with a grin.

Harry glared. "I'd rather have a bit more choice in my own marriage if it's all the same to you."

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That evening, he wasn't all that surprised to find her in his four poster bed.

He approached and pulled out his wand, quietly countering the Notice-Me-Not Charm. Laying his wand down on the bedside table, he sat down facing her. He reached over and absently twirled the diamond ring on her finger. "Do you think we should tell them?" he asked.

"That's your choice, Harry. You know I'll support you either way," she answered softly, studying the wizard in front of her.

Whatever he may have said was interrupted by Ron walking into the room. "Harry, do you know where . . ." he trailed off as his eyes took in the scene. "Bloody hell, Harry!"