

The Miracle Worker

by pokeystar

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Harry sat at his desk, head in hands, the picture of despair.

What a bloody disaster.

Zabini had run circles around him at the previous night's debate. It wasn't that Harry hadn't prepared. He was well versed in the issues. He had a solid vision for the future of the British wizarding world and was committed to his platform. Unlike Blaise, who projected a front of unruffled calm and perfectly coiffed hair, but revealed little of substance.

Harry sighed. When he had decided to run for Minister for Magic, he'd forgotten one little thing. He loathed speaking in public. Feared it, in fact. He'd rather face a herd of Dementors or Voldemort resurrected from infinitesimal specks of dust and Ron Weasley's cooking than a crowd of attentive listeners. The problem was that Kingsley had made it look so easy, with that deep, booming voice and friendly, relaxed manner.

Harry knew Kingsley Shacklebolt. He'd worked with Kingsley Shacklebolt. Harry knew he was no Kingsley Shacklebolt. What Harry Potter also knew was that he was Doomed.

Woe.

His office door opened with a bang, and he jerked upright, his hair standing on end where his hands had worried through it over and over.

A gorgeous witch with glossy hair of such a dark brown that it was almost black and deep blue eyes framed in soot-colored lashes sauntered through the doorway. Her lithe form was dressed in close-fitting navy blue robes fastened at the throat. As she turned to shut the door with a flick of her wand, her robes whirled open, revealing a white silk blouse tucked into a slim navy pencil skirt that fell to mid-calf. Neutral silk stockings and conservatively-styled navy pumps with almost imprudently high heels set off her delicate ankles.

She came to a halt in the middle of the room and looked him over, clearly not happy with what she saw.

"Oh, goodie. A pity party. Can anyone join in?" She glided over to his desk and sat in one of the leather club chairs facing it, crossing her legs primly at the ankle.

He'd given orders not to be disturbed.

"Who the bloody hell are you?"

She smirked. "I'm the player to be named later."

"What..." he began, only to be interrupted by his office door opening again. Padma Patil walked in.

"Oh, good. You're here," she said to the other witch, and sat beside her.

"Only just," she replied. "I'm considering doubling my fee." She gave Harry an amused sidelong glance. "There's a bit more work here than I had anticipated."

Padma bit her lip. "But it's not impossible?"

"Nothing's impossible," the blue-eyed witch said, studying her impeccable manicure. "If one throws enough money at it."

"Would someone kindly," Harry gritted out, staring pointedly at his campaign manager, "tell me what the bloody hell is going on here?" He sounded like his Uncle Vernon.

Padma, startled by his tone, gave him an odd look. "This is Pansy Parkinson."

"And?" Was he supposed to know that name?

Clearly, he was. The name was *vaguely* familiar. The witches facing him both appeared exasperated. Feeling awkward under their scrutiny, he sat up straighter.

"I sent you a memo," said Padma, pointing to the pile of unopened correspondence on the corner of his desk.

"No time to read with the pity party in full swing," murmured Pansy.

Padma didn't hear her. "Pansy is the best political image consultant in the business." Pansy cleared her throat softly. "And the best speech consultant. We're lucky she was visiting relatives on break from her firm in Washington, D.C. I ran into her after the debate last night and she gave me her card."

It dawned on Harry then that Pansy had been mocking him since she'd walked into his office.

"I'm sure a fancy business card makes her fully qualified," he sneered.

Pansy's smile was icy. "My business card is elegantly understated." She made ready to stand. "I don't think this is going to work out."

"No!" Padma exclaimed, gripping her arm. "Don't go. You're our only hope of winning!" She glared at Harry. "Pansy works miracles; all my contacts say so. Potter, you are a ghastly speaker. You need a miracle."

"Miracles?" Harry echoed. He was a miracle. Or so he'd been told.

Pansy relaxed back into her chair and shrugged. "My services helped get a shrub re-elected."

"An actual bit of greenery?" He was amazed.

"Nearly," Pansy replied nonchalantly. "Perhaps a titch more sentient."

"There's only a month before the final debate, Harry." Padma reminded him. "Pansy will work with you every day to groom your image and improve your speaking skills to election-worthy levels."

Harry looked dubiously at Pansy. "You think that I can get elected?"

"You did defeat Voldemort," she said wryly. "I think you're smarter than the average laurel bush."

They shook on it.

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Pansy Parkinson lived by one creed alone: no remorse.

She was a fairly observant young lady, all evidence to the contrary...feigned obliviousness was a highly underrated survival skill, in her opinion...and watching her Head of House be consumed by a metric ton of guilt every day, his penitence massively under-appreciated, peace of mind treated as a dangling carrot held forever just out of reach, had taught her one thing. Guilt was something to avoid at all costs.

So she had.

She developed a vast array of mechanisms to combat her sworn enemy: indifference, denial, displacement, avoidance, transference, justification. She honed them to perfection and when they failed her after the Final Battle, in the face of almost universal disapproval, she had played her ace in the hole: she ran away.

She was grateful to Snape, really. If she hadn't learned that very important lesson from him, she wouldn't have gone to America and built a fabulous new life for herself. One in which she was sought out and celebrated for her very special, finely honed skills. If she'd stayed, she'd probably be a clerk at Honeyduke's, eking out a miserable existence as a social pariah in a tiny flat off Diagon Alley.

The problem was, Pansy didn't believe in Karma.

Snape would have been the first to tell her that what goes around comes around. He might have added that Karma was a vindictive, heartless bitch. Alas, having a freakishly huge snake tear one's throat out made it pretty difficult to speak. Also, the freakishly huge snake? Was poisonous. So Snape was dead, and not inclined to dispense advice.

Which meant that when Karma snuck up on Pansy Parkinson, she didn't recognize the trap. Until it was far too late. And all that remorse she'd been ignoring, denying, displacing, avoiding, transferring, and justifying? Came down on her like a metric ton of bricks, leaving her no place to run.

Karma struck during the debate she'd attended with her parents "for fun."

It was sheer agony watching Potter twitch on stage, his signature lightning bolt scar highlighted against pasty white skin, like a deer Patronus surrounded by Dementors.

The next thing she knew, she was handing her card to Padma Patil and arranging to meet her the next day in Potter's office.

She notified her firm that she needed an extended leave of absence. It was time for her to get down to the business of purging her guilt.

The first day, she was rudely reminded of why she'd sworn guilt off in the first place. Potter didn't even remember her, let alone what she'd done. Pansy tried to leave, figuring that made them even, but guilt had sunk its claws in and wasn't about to let go. Finely honed scalpels weren't much good against a metric ton of bricks.

So she'd resigned herself to heavy lifting.

Parkinsons weren't meant for manual labor, and former Gryffindors made for very stubborn piles of brick, so it was a slow process, but by the end of week three, Pansy had

achieved much progress.

"So, in conclusion, my plan for education is to require two years of Muggle Studies for all students, introduce a summer exchange program for third through fifth years, introduce a month-long interhouse exchange experiment, and re-sort every year. I believe fostering understanding is the best way to shepherd our children into the future," said Harry. He smiled at the room full of witches and sat down to thunderous applause.

He was confident and poised while speaking, his bespoke suit and tailored robes reinforcing his image of responsibility and quiet strength. The deep green silk tie matched his eyes and subtly underlined his message of forgiveness. His hair was still unruly, which Pansy considered her stroke of genius. The younger witches flocked to him, wanting to tame it. The older witches felt compelled to mother him. He definitely had the women's vote sewn up.

She frowned, watching the biddies swarm around him, fawning, giggling and flirting. Maybe she'd done her job too well. She left the banquet hall and slipped into the dressing room to gather up her things. It was time to think about returning to her life in the States. She'd stick around for the debate, to make sure it went off without a hitch, and then get back to business as usual. Her heart winced at the thought, and Pansy dismissed the pang as the last twinges of remorse.

The problem was, Pansy didn't believe in love.

"So, that went well, I think," said Harry, making her jump. "You okay, Pansy?"

She waved him off. "Fine. Just thinking. It went really well."

Harry tilted his head a little. Usually, she had a lot more to say. "I forgave you a long time ago, you know," he said quietly.

She froze in the middle of collecting her notes. "Now you tell me."

"I was scared. You were scared. It was natural. I forgot about it." Harry shrugged. "You needed to forgive yourself."

"I think I have." She shoved her notes into a briefcase.

"Good." He gently turned her to face him. "Are you staying for the debate?"

She looked him straight in the eye. "Yes."

"I was worried," he admitted. "You're pretty good at running away."

"Not anymore," she murmured and left the room.

He watched her go. "Right," he said to the briefcase.

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On the night of the debate, Harry caught his first glimpse of Pansy in a week. Her skill at avoidance was spectacular. She'd managed to communicate with him only through Padma, preparing him for the debate without ever having to deal with him directly. It was both admirable and frustrating.

What Pansy forgot was that Harry Potter was fantastic at catching avoid-y things. Like Snitches. And witches in denial.

He found her in the hallway outside the ladies' washroom.

"I just wanted to thank you before I went on stage," he said, blocking her exit. "Padma said you worked miracles and she was right." He rubbed his scar unconsciously.

He was a miracle. Or so she'd been told. "Why before?" she asked.

"I have a feeling I won't see you again," he replied, edging closer to her. She backed away until she hit a wall. "My feelings are usually right." He moved again, and less than an inch separated them.

Pansy averted her eyes. Avoidance hadn't worked. Denial was failing her again.

His lips brushed hers softly again and again until they parted, and his tongue invaded her mouth, flicking against her tongue, drawing it in to his own mouth, where his teeth nibbled it. She shivered and her knees nearly buckled.

She hadn't seen the trap until it was too late.

"A very wise man told me once that love is the greatest power of all," Harry murmured against her lips. "I'm a miracle in need of a worker."

She smirked and he chuckled.

She could always try acceptance for a change.

They shook on it.

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**Author's Notes:** *"I'm the player to be named later."* is from Bull Durham. *"Smarter than the average (bear)"* is from Yogi Bear. The Kingsley Shacklebolt bit is a play on *"Senator, you're no Jack Kennedy."* from Lloyd Bentsen.

Huge hugs for corianderpie, who betas with a savoir-faire unparalleled in this or any other universe.