

**(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)**

**A/N: Penny controls herself, at least for a second.**

**-x-X-x-**

Lifting her head, the Senior Undersecretary fixes Harry with a smoldering gaze. Briefly, Harry almost thinks Penelope might actually kiss him. But then the elevator dings and the doors start to open, prompting her to turn away with a slightly flushed face.

Just in time too, because as it turns out, there's someone on the other side of the elevator doors. Someone both familiar and not. Still, Harry would recognize this witch anywhere, he can't help but feel. The Hermione Granger of this universe freezes up at the sight of them... or more specifically him. Her eyes go wide as saucers at the sight of him, her entire body freezing up as her mouth opens and closes wordlessly for a long, awkward moment.

Until the elevator doors start to slowly close again and Penelope has to reach out and stop them before finally stepping in and clearing her throat.

"Ahem. Hermione? You're sort of blocking the path."

"O-Oh! I'm so sorry!"

Hermione quickly steps off to the side, allowing Penelope and Harry to get off of the elevator. For a moment it seems like that will be the end of the interaction as Penny seems determined to lead him to her office without further interruptions. But alas, Hermione can't help herself.

"Y-You're Lord Hallows then?!"

Turning back to regard the blushing brunette, Harry smiles warmly.

"That's me. And you must be Hermione Granger."

Her eyes widen at being recognized. Sure, Penny had said her first name, but she hadn't said her second. Reduced to even more of a stammering, blushing mess than before, Hermione jerks her head up and down.

"Y-Yes, I... that's m-me! But... h-how do you know me?"

Harry grins and raises an eyebrow.

"I could say the same for you, Ms. Granger. Been snooping at all?"

Blinking, Hermione rapidly shakes her head... and holds up a copy of the Daily Prophet.

"N-No! I just saw your picture on the Special Edition that the Prophet released earlier!"

Harry had figured as much, but he pretends like this is some great revelation, nodding 'thoughtfully' in response.

"Hm, yes... I see..."

His Hermione would have definitely realized that Harry was messing with her by now. But then, his Hermione was several lifetimes in the past. This Hermione had never known a Harry Potter and given the state of Magical Britain, he wasn't sure what sort of life she'd lived so far. Ultimately, she doesn't seem to realize he's essentially teasing her.

"So... h-how did you know?"

But she does still have that insatiable curiosity and dogged pursuit of knowledge that Harry has seen in every single Hermione Granger he's ever met. Chuckling, he gives her a wink and a shrug.

"I guess you could say... I did my homework, Ms. Granger."

And then, because he IS a Wizard Lord and therefore has the authority to do so, Harry ends the conversation there by turning back to Penelope and lifting a single brow.

“Shall we, Ms. Clearwater?”

Glancing between him and her obvious subordinate, Penny just nods.

“Yes, let’s. Back to work now, Hermione.”

“A-Ah! Yes ma’am!”

With that, they separate from the frazzled brunette, who is obviously some sort of employee here in Level 1 of the Ministry. Honestly, good for her. Especially since the Minister is Amelia... this Hermione is probably doing pretty well for herself, all things considered.

Penelope leads Harry into her office and closes the door shut behind him before locking it normally but also casting a couple of spells to lock it magically as well.

Harry raises an eyebrow at the precautions but isn’t overly surprised a moment later when the muggleborn witch throws her arms around his neck and kisses him deeply and passionately, with plenty of tongue. His hands go to her hips, holding her steady as they swap spit for a long moment.

Was she jealous because he’d given Hermione the time of day? Or grateful for his assistance with Lavender and Luna? To be fair, the two didn’t have to be exclusive... it could easily be a mixture of both.

Finally, they pull apart for air and Penny graces him with a thoughtful frown.

“How DID you know Hermione’s full name like that anyways? Neither Amelia nor I mentioned her to you, did we?”

He could lie and say that he and Amelia talked about the younger muggleborn witch while they were fucking the night before. But that was too easy for Penelope to check up on so instead Harry just shakes his head.

“You didn’t. But a wizard must have his secrets, Ms. Clearwater. I’m afraid I couldn’t possibly tell you.”

For a moment, Penelope scowls... unlike Hermione, she definitely recognizes that he’s teasing her right now. Still, her scowl only lasts a moment before turning thoughtful. And then her face smooths out and she finally nods.

“... Understood. I’m not owed any of your secrets, especially not after everything that’s happened. I’ll back off.”

Harry lifts another brow at that.

“Everything that’s happened?”

Flushing, Penelope pouts.

“Are you really going to make me spell it out? Fine then. I was an absolute boor last night. I interrogated you and made you swear a magical oath just to satisfy my own curiosity and prejudices. And even though I acted like a twat, you still went out of your way to help me this morning. What did it cost you to get Brown and Lovegood to back off and leave me alone?”

Tilting his head to the side, Harry shrugs at that last part.

“Nothing much.”

When Penny looks distinctly unimpressed by that answer, Harry just laughs and throws her a bone.

“Nothing I wasn’t predisposed to giving them in the first place, really. I’ve agreed to a sit down with each of them for a proper one-on-one interview in the near future. So long as I survive until said interviews, they’ve both promised to

squash the story and make sure the pictures of you holding your panties while looking owlsh and surprised never see the light of day.”

The muggleborn witch blushes hard at her description, even as she processes his words and slowly nods.

“... Then I really do owe you one, Lord Hallows. More than one, really. You’ve saved my career... and for what? Out of the kindness of your heart?”

Smiling, Harry shakes his head.

“Now, now. I’m sure I’m not as altruistic as you’re making me out to be. It would have reflected poorly on me as well, after all. And you ARE going to be carrying my child if all goes to plan.”

Huffing, Penelope shakes her head right back.

“It wouldn’t have reflected poorly on you at all. You’re the only damn Wizard Lord in Magical Britain. Noble witches of all stripes would have been lining up around the block to beg for an... injection from you if they found out you were already sexually active. Hell, they probably will be anyways even without the knowledge that you... coupled with me and the Minister last night.”

Hm, not a bad point. Harry tilts his head in acknowledgment before shrugging.

“Very well then. If you wish to pay me back, help me register my new business with the Ministry. It’s why I’ve come here today anyways. I now own property on Diagon Alley... the old ice cream parlour once owned by Florean Fortescue.”

Penelope’s eyebrows raise.

“You bought that place? I suppose I can’t blame you, it’s excellent positioned... in fact, the reason it’s been empty for so long is because as a corner shop, it was much too expensive for most witches of the more... industrious persuasion to be able to afford the space.”

Ah, Harry can pick up what she's putting down. Witches with the means to buy the space didn't have a reason to and witches with a reason to buy the space didn't have the means. Shrugging yet again, he just keeps on smiling.

"Well, it was well within my budget. Still, I would like for my new P.I. business to be certified... today, if possible."

Penelope hesitates for a moment... before nodding decisively.

"Yes, I can help you with that. The paperwork is easy enough. And... since it's a new business, we can waive certain requirements."

"Oh?"

"Well... under normal circumstances, a new type of business, especially one that seems so close to a Civilian Auror of sorts, would face quite a lot of... scrutiny. You would, at a bare minimum, probably have to prove that you can do everything a regular Auror can do before we can certify your business. Requirements like proving a Defense Mastery or a Potions Mastery, for instance. But I'm sure that won't be necess-!"

"Oh no... that's fine."

Penelope looks at him blankly, clearly caught off guard. Harry just chuckles.

"Don't waive such things on my account, please. I want all of this to be above board. After all, who's going to bother hiring a Private Investigator if he doesn't have any sort of certifications? Set up the exams for me and I'll go handle them today if I'm allowed to."

For a long moment, Penny just stares... then, she slowly nods.

"Ah... very well then. We'll do that, I suppose. Ahem, let's have a seat and get started on the paperwork, shall we?"

Harry hums and follows Penny over to her desk, sitting down on the other side as she takes her seat behind it. Then... the Senior Undersecretary takes over and he watches with some amount of amusement as Penelope Clearwater gets down to business.

Her wand is swished and flicked, papers are conjured and flown too and fro. Her eyes become focused entirely on her work with an intensity that impresses and pleases Harry if he's being honest. In fact, she has the paperwork made up in no time and given he's starting an entirely new sort of business as far as the British Magical World is concerned, that's downright impressive.

"Alright, fill out these forms please."

Harry nods amicably, taking the papers from across the desk and conjuring up his own ballpoint pen to do as he's been asked. Penelope doesn't comment on the muggle tool, though she does eye it with some jealousy even as she's stuck using a quill still. It's a magical self-inking quill to be fair, but at the same time... it's no ballpoint pen.

"As far as requirements go... the normal requirements for an Auror are quite stringent. Academically, one is expected to have a minimum of five NEWTs, none of which are to be lower than an Exceeds Expectation. I don't suppose you've taken NEWTs though, have you Lord Hallows? Or the equivalent anywhere else in the world?"

Harry just shakes his head, smirking. Penny sees this and huffs.

"Well, that would be where the Mastery Tests would come in then, I suppose. If you can pass perhaps... three of five Masteries, then that would be good enough. Defense, Transfiguration, Potions, Charms, and Herbology. Do you think you can handle at least three of those?"

Eyes positively twinkling now, Harry nods in amusement, even as he continues to fill out forms.

“Great. Other Auror Requirements are the character and aptitude tests, the background check... and a three year intensive training program with a focus on advanced defensive magics, ethics, investigative procedures, and how to deal with dark wizards and creatures.”

She finishes reading off the list of requirements with a rather dry tone, likely already knowing what he’s going to say before he says it.

“Well... I can’t say I’m going to bother waiting three years. I hope we can work around that part.”

Harry gives her a big smile... which Penny returns with an amused smirk.

“Yes Lord Hallows, given your... contributions to the Ministry so far, I’m absolutely sure we can. The Masteries will take the place of the character and aptitude tests anyways, and there’s no need for a background check since you won’t be working for the Ministry. On top of that, the training... well, that’s Auror-Only anyways. Can’t be giving away all of our secrets to someone who will never become an Auror, now can we?”

As she justifies making the certification of his PI business so much easier one checkmark at a time, Harry just smiles, pleased to see that he and Penny are working so... well together. Finally, he puts the last of his signatures on the papers he’s been working on and pushes them back over to her.

“Please, I think I’ve finished.”

Taking the paperwork back, Penelope looks over everything carefully, flipping through page after page until she finally nods.

“Yes, everything seems to be in order here Lord Hallows. And we can in fact get you tested for those Masteries today as well, I should think. Since its... priority and what not. It might take just a bit to arrange things, however.”

Suddenly, Penny is looking at him with a very different look in her eyes. Something like what she'd had in her eyes back on the elevator in fact. Leaning forward, her voice becomes downright sultry.

“You know, Lord Hallows... I never had a chance to put those panties back on today. I've been... going without all day long.”

Harry raises an amused eyebrow, prompting Penny to lick her lips.

“If you don't believe me... feel free to check~”

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**A/N: Remember to go back and VOTE!**