

Let's get down to business

Von viv-heart

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"I am glad you could make it," Rita said coldly, a forced smile on her face, as she offered her hand to Hermione.

"Drop the pleasantries. You are not fooling anyone," Hermione replied and walked past Rita to the sitting group behind her.

Rita looked at Pansy, who smirked at her and followed Hermione inside.

They all sat down and Rita looked uncomfortably back and forth between her two guests.

"What are you waiting for?" Hermione asked. "Let's get it over. I don't want to be here as much as you don't."

"Give her a break," Pansy who hadn't said anything to that point spoke up. "A shouting match between you two would only slow everything down."

"Fine," Hermione said and looked at Rita, who had pulled out parchment and quills from her bag. "But let me charm the parchments first. I don't want to see any alternative facts, and quotes without context in the article."

Pansy watched quietly as Hermione performed the spells and Rita squirmed at the sight of her wand.

"We can start now," Hermione announced and gave Rita the parchments back.

"Today, I have the pleasure to be interviewing Miss Granger and Miss Parkinson, the founders and leading figures of F.E.M.," Rita said, drawling out the word pleasure and one of her quills came to life and started taking notes.

"Miss Parkinson, would you tell our readers how everything began?"

Six months earlier

Pansy looked at Hermione in horror. "Granger? Are you alright?" she asked as she sat down on the chair next to her at the bar and motioned to the barkeeper to give her a drink. He didn't need more instructions.

"Oh, Parkinson," Hermione muttered as she realized who sat down next to her and downed her drink.

"What are you doing here?" Pansy asked with interest. It was not every day that Hermione Granger walked into her bar, looking like shit and tried to get drunk.

"None of your business," Hermione said and ordered another shot.

Pansy smirked. "That's true. But considering how much you are drinking you'll probably tell me anyway in a while so I recommend you to tell me now while you can

control it and actually remember how much you told me."

Hermione groaned. "Fuck off, Parkinson."

"I own this place, Granger," Pansy informed her nonchalantly and Hermione almost choked.

"Really? That's surprising..." Hermione said and really looked at the other woman for the first time in the evening.

The pug-faced girl she had known at Hogwarts had grown into a quite pretty woman. She had grown into her face and had cut her hair short and bleached it.

"Did you use muggle hair-colour?" Hermione blurted out and Pansy chuckled.

"Indeed. Are you surprised?" Pansy asked and downed her own shot. "People can change, you know."

"Nothing surprises me today," Hermione shrugged. "It looks good."

Pansy rose an eyebrow. "Now I am really curious. Why are you here?"

"I really don't want to talk about it," Hermione muttered. "Let's just say that I was disappointed by a certain someone and am single as of," she glanced at her wristwatch, "three hours and twenty-eight minutes."

Pansy nodded in understanding and motioned to the bartender to refill their drinks.

"That explains a lot. But tell me more about your life, if you don't want to talk about that. I've been wondering what had happened to the almighty Hermione Granger after she disappeared from the pages of the Prophet. We actually have bets going on, and I would love to collect my winnings."

Hermione laughed loudly and wished stray tears from her eyes. "Oh god, I really needed that," she said and Pansy grinned.

"You know, owning a pub teaches you a lot about people," she said. "But now, spill. Believe it or not, I wasn't joking about being curious."

"Alright, alright," Hermione held her hands up in surrender. "But I want another drink first."

Pansy rolled her eyes and walked behind the bar. "You talk, I mix us something really good," she said. "Deal?"

"Deal. Where to start?" Hermione ran a hand through her hair. "As you surely know, I went back to Hogwarts to finish my seventh year. I value education and all that, but to be honest I just wanted a break and to finally enjoy being a kid. It was actually quite fun, except it left me with not knowing what to do with my future. On certain people's insistence," she said with disgust, "I started at the Ministry in the hopes of continuing my activism. I still can't believe I was stupid enough to believe that that was a good idea. The bureaucracy did everything possible and impossible to kill my ideas and finally I quit."

I trained to be a healer after that, but I am no good with people as you know and I was constantly in a bad mood and yelling at patients who behaved like idiots. Some of them truly had to be idiots to get themselves injured the way they did. Let's just say I didn't have patience for that kind of stupidity and went into curse-breaking.

That is something I truly enjoy. It's a mental and physical challenge and just too interesting! I learn so much about history and magic with every new project! I actually finished that training under Bill Weasley's guidance a few weeks ago. There's only one problem now; Gringotts doesn't want to employ me thanks to the stunt we pulled during our Horcrux-search and their opinion counts in the business more than it should. Not to mention the general bias against female curse-breakers. You aren't strong enough, my ass," Hermione ranted. "It's not like I faced Voldemort every single year of my school career and am one of the major reasons he is gone!"

Pansy who had nodded along as Hermione talked grinned. "You were talking about your infamous break-in, right?"

"Exactly. They should employ me just so I can make sure nobody does that again as I obviously know their safety precautions better than they themselves do!"

Pansy laughed and put a nice cocktail in front of Hermione. "Now drink," she said. "You deserve it. Your story is even better than expected."

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"What happened afterwards?" Rita asked, leaning forward curiously.

"We started meeting on a regular basis and ranted to each other about nothing and everything," Hermione supplied.

"More like you showed up at my bar a couple of times because somebody pissed you off again and I made you drunk," Pansy snickered and Hermione hit her playfully.

"Oh shut up. You enjoyed it! And ranted even more than I did!"

"But how did you come up with your project?" Rita cut in. She needed to write an article and she couldn't do that with some nonsense about drinking and Hermione's censorship.

Three months earlier

Hermione marched into Pansy's bar half an hour before opening time, her hair standing even more into every direction than usual and a furious expression on her face.

"What's wrong?" Pansy asked when she saw her and closed the menu she had been working on.

"I've had just enough," Hermione slapped the Daily Prophet on the table in front of Pansy. "This day is simply getting worse and worse!"

"What happened?" Pansy asked and pulled the Prophet closer to herself.

"Read the article on Ginny. And do yourself a favour and count how often she is actually called by her name and not referenced to by the usage of Harry's and Ron's names," Hermione said and walked behind the bar, where she grabbed a bottle of Gin and two glasses.

"And that's only the top of the iceberg that is this horrendous day. First, I got another rejection, where they told me I was too frail to work as a curse breaker. Then, I ran into Malfoy who told me that he was rejected from the healer training again because of yet another bullshit reason and then, I heard two mothers lecture their children on importance of looks and education. Of course, the boy had to be smart and the girl pretty. When I read the article I exploded! Wizarding Britain pretends to be so progressive, but if you look at the facts, it's just plain sexist! We have to do something about it!"

"And why should I get involved?" Pansy asked, sipping from her drink.

"You got shit for owning a bar!" Hermione reminded her. "Isn't it why it is in a muggle neighbourhood?"

"You got me there," Pansy smirked. "I am in. Let's make them pay!"

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"Would you want to sum up what your company stands for, for our readers?" Rita

asked, looking between Hermione and Pansy in anticipation. She had finally gotten what she had wanted and the story was entertaining enough to get a first page, especially if two former enemies decided to change the wizarding society and were already quite successful despite having started less than three months ago.

"Of course," Hermione swiped a stray curl away and continued, "F.E.M. is an organization that offers help with filling out resumes, career choice and law suits for discrimination for both women and men who feel like they have been overlooked thanks to their gender or other pre-existing condition they can't change."

"Like the Dark Mark?" Rita asked sharply.

"Like choices they made under enormous pressure when they were kids," Pansy said, her glare pinning Rita in place.

"Besides, we are working on establishing a basic education program for all children in the wizarding world, where they learn basic skills muggle children learn in school before they go to Hogwarts. We have planned an extra follow-up program for squib children to make it possible for them to either work in the wizarding world or have an easy transition into the muggle world after they finish schooling. Squibs are among the most oppressed groups in the wizarding society and it is incredibly hard for them in the muggle world as well. We have a bunch of other projects like orphanages in mind for the future, but we are just starting as you've already noted," Hermione finished her explanation.

"How do you finance yourself?" Rita inquired and this time Pansy jumped in.

"Mostly through donations and Ministry subventions, but we hope to be able to let the company pay for itself soon."

"I have one last question," Rita said. "Where do you see yourself in five years?"

"Still owning my bar, leading the company and laughing in the faces of those who said we couldn't do it," Pansy replied immediately.

"Probably the same. Except I'll break curses," Hermione shrugged.

"Thank you for the interview," Rita said finally, relief evident in her voice.

"Sure," Pansy said and stood up. "We can let ourselves out."

Rita nodded and Pansy and Hermione walked out of the conference room and into the elevator.

"Wasn't that bad, huh?" Hermione said and Pansy laughed.

"She really is terrified of you."

"She should be," Hermione's eyes glinted. "And so should everybody else, who even thinks about crossing our way. Things have to change and they will."

"Let's get down to business," Pansy laughed as they walked out of the elevator and into the lobby. "There is still a lot of work in front of us."