

Cornering the Market

by blue artemis

Malfoy Industries needs a kick in the pants, and Hermione Granger is just the witch to provide it. This was written for the LM/HG exchange.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Lucius Malfoy was worried. Prior to the return of that idiot Dark Lord-*why don't dead people just stay dead?* Malfoy Industries was no longer the first thought on people's minds when they wanted the best of the best, the most innovative and creative potions. For Merlin's sake, the last potion they had a hand in creating helped balding wizards regain their hair. They were thought of as yesterday's news, your grandfather's go-to company. Severus Snape was his best friend, but no one really wanted to work in a lab headed by him. Since he could not really get the type of help he needed, he would only work as an adjunct, and did his research on his own. Lucius really wanted some new ideas, but unfortunately for him, his brain trust was full of yes-men. So he turned to a source who was more likely to say no than yes.

"What do you mean, I need to get Hermione Granger?"

"That was fairly simple, Father."

"I understood the statement. I just don't understand the reasoning behind it."

"If you want to be on the cutting edge, you need Granger. She is the only person to combine Runes and Potions and Charms to create the best warding and healing potions. She can use Arithmancy to tailor potions specifically. She is only the second witch in history to hold a Combined Magical Mastery. Uncle Severus is good, but she is it. If you could lure her to Malfoy Industries, then we could absolutely corner the market in specialty potions."

"She will not want to work with us."

"True. But you could use Severus as a lure. He is the only Potions master of merit that she has not worked with."

"Hm. Maybe she could get Severus out of his shell."

"Father, you cannot be either bored enough or meddlesome enough to try to match-make."

"No, but I can be looking out for a friend."

Lucius Malfoy was bored. Narcissa requested that the head of her house, one Harry Potter, dissolve her marriage on the basis that her husband's Dark Mark meant he broke the fidelity clause in their contract. Lucius had wanted to protest, but she was legally in the right, and so she left. He was told she was currently dating a rich Thestral racer who lived on the Italian coast.

He never had to court anyone, and hadn't met anyone worth courting, so except for the few witches who understood he was just scratching an itch, and were content to be seen on the arm of the notorious man, he was mostly alone.

He knew for a fact, though, that Severus did not even have the arm candy to bed, so bringing someone of Miss Granger's caliber into his sphere of influence, as it were, could really be good for his friend. It might even make him create something spectacular.

That decided, he sat at his desk to write a letter.

My Dear Master Granger,

I would like to offer you a position with my company. I am quite certain you have heard of Malfoy Industries Research Laboratories. You would be given free use of the laboratories themselves, provided with funding to pursue your interests, and the ability to collaborate with Severus Snape, who, although not a full researcher, is an adjunct and more than happy to use the facilities. Any patentable discoveries would be subject to a percentage split of profits and royalties.

My best wishes,

Lucius Malfoy, owner.

Hermione watched the regal looking eagle owl fly through the window into her small flat, which she was about to lose. It looked around disdainfully, as though it thought itself better than its surroundings. Unfortunately, that was true.

She took the letter from the owl, offered it a biscuit, which it snatched from her hands, then flew back out the window.

When she recognized the seal, she took her wand out and cast every spell she could think of to check for hexes and curses. Surprisingly, it was clean. She opened it hesitantly, then read it.

How does he bloody know I need this? I made myself broke trying to find the cure for lycanthropy, since Mullien would not support my research if it would not make him money.

She read it again, then smiled to herself.

Mr. Malfoy,

How much funding? Is this to be a salaried position? If so, I would have to decline. Also, a percentage? What percentage? If it is any more than twenty percent, again, I would have to decline. I require a place to live; if that is not readily available, I would have to decline.

Respectfully yours,

Combined Magic Master Hermione Granger

Lucius received her response and promptly sought out his son.

"Draco, she's insane! These are preposterous demands!"

"Of course they are, Father. She doesn't want to be associated with us. But I found out that Mullein would not pay her for any of her patentable potions because they could not settle on the percentage, so she has left. He unfortunately for her decided that her severance pay would be just the amount needed for 'rental of the laboratory'."

"What a cad. He will lose all of his credibility as a developer."

"I believe he was angry because she turned down his advances."

"Stupid wizard. No witch is worth your business."

"Apparently, this one is."

"We shall see. Now, Draco, what did Severus say?"

"He said if you manage to procure the witch, he would return to the lab. Something about lycanthropy."

"Hm."

Miss Granger,

You must know that your demands are preposterous. But since I am a fair man, I will respond. You may have a small suite of rooms in the east wing of the Manor. Do not worry; it has been completely renovated since you were here last. No, you will not be salaried. A Master of your caliber is never employed; any wizard worth his salt knows that. You would be associated with Malfoy Industries, with a stipend for yourself of 2500 Galleons a year. You would not need to use any of that money to procure any ingredients; all research you do would be covered by the laboratory. As for percentage, you are insane to believe that we would allow anything less than thirty-two percent.

Best wishes,

Lucius Malfoy

Hermione received the response to her counter-offer with trepidation. She was quite certain that Malfoy would have been insulted beyond belief. She really did not want to add any credibility to his current attempt to ingratiate himself back into society, but she really felt she had no choice. She was amused by his response though. She knew he figured her temper would flare, but honestly, these were excellent terms, better than she had hoped for. She would have been quite pleased with a small flat and forty percent. She knew he would not put her on salary, but she had felt the urge to be obnoxious. She decided to put the wizard out of his misery.

Mr. Malfoy,

I accept. I will be arriving in London on the Twenty-Second of next month.

Hermione Granger

"Father, stop dithering."

"I. Do. Not. Dither."

"Then stop pacing. You are making me sea-sick."

"Draco, the future of this company rests on the small shoulders of this woman who hates me. Our stock has dropped enough to make me think of selling. Do not worry, our investments will cover our expenses for at least seven generations, but truly, what is a Malfoy without Malfoy Industries? I believe I am more than entitled to pace."

Draco looked gob-smacked at his father when the Floo flared up and the woman in question stepped through.

"Master Granger."

"Mister Malfoy."

"Granger."

"Malfoy."

Hermione looked at Lucius questioningly. "Am I to stay in your study, or is the promised suite ready for me?"

"Do you wish to have tea, Master Granger?"

"No, Mister Malfoy, I do not. I have had to pack up my flat in a hurry, because the landlord decided it would be perfect for his mistress, Mullein tried yet again to convince me that his bed was warmer than his laboratory, and wouldn't take no for an answer until I hexed his underwear to use his bits for a chewing toy. My accounts at Gringotts Germany were closed for lack of funds, and unbelievably, my hair went flat. I look like a sheepdog, I broke the heel on my shoe and all I want right now is a bed!"

After wincing at the thought of man-hood eating underwear, both Malfoy men were quite amused by the tirade the little witch had embarked on. Additionally, Lucius quite liked the idea of her in a bed. As he lost himself in the thought of Hermione supine in a bed, Draco took it upon himself to get the witch settled.

"Come along, Granger. I will show you to your room." Draco winked at his father as he offered his arm to Hermione.

"Was your father growling?"

"You know, I'm not sure."

Draco chatted companionably to Hermione as he walked her to her suite, telling her of his courtship of Astoria Greengrass and how both he and Lucius were hoping she could help restore Malfoy Industries to the forefront of wizarding innovation and creation.

"I knew from the terms your father agreed to that he wanted me here desperately, but I thought it was more to secure a better name, not improve his stagnating research department."

"I doubt he would have agreed to even contact you if it was just your name he was after. I will warn you. I believe he has decided to match-make."

"Really? Me? With whom?"

"Severus Snape."

"You are kidding me, right? I'm pretty certain that Snape is not interested in me that way. We have seen each other at quite a few symposiums, and he usually acts as though I carry Dragon Pox in my hair."

"Well, I do know Severus is interested in working with you professionally. Something about lycanthropy."

"Good. I wanted him to look over what I was doing. I'm fairly certain I am close to a cure."

Lucius had followed Draco and Hermione silently and was bemused by the conversation. He decided he needn't growl over her anymore. Draco had stated his position quite clearly.

"So, Granger. I would have bet my hair that you would never have agreed to associate yourself with the name Malfoy in any way, shape or form. Why did you accept?"

"Honestly?"

"I would prefer that, yes."

"I was broke. I have plenty of ideas, but Mullein really left me in the lurch. I never want to work with someone who wants to bed me, ever again! I am fairly certain your father has no plans for my body, I figured I could handle him if he just wanted my name, and I am quite used to people who wish to use me for my mind. His terms were more than acceptable, so I decided to take it. If he does anything to warrant my leaving, I will be certain to declare it to the world."

"I see. You decided that the benefits of using the Malfoy laboratories and money outweighed the issue of you having to associate with us."

"Don't pout, Draco. I had to grow up a bit, which means not always playing my cards up front. Yes, I'm using Malfoy Industries as much as you want to use me. But to be honest, you and your father have put me more at ease in the last five minutes than anything has in a while. I think this will work out just fine."

Draco's pout changed reluctantly into a smile. He pointed out the suite to Hermione, who was quite pleased with the set of rooms. There was the bedroom, with the sumptuous bed and enough room in the closet for her last flat. There was also a sitting room, a well appointed desk, her own bathroom which had a bath tub almost as big as a jacuzzi, as well as a shower, toilet, sink, and changing area, if she wished to use that instead of her bedroom's changing area. Hermione smiled widely when she realized there was also a small kitchen and dining area.

"You are welcome to cook your own food. That is the cooling cabinet, and you see the stove and oven. You can also just tap on the table with your wand, and the elves will serve you whatever they are serving the rest of us. And if you wish to dine with us, just send a note with one of the elves, or an owl."

"Thank you, Draco. And thank you, Mr. Malfoy. I do appreciate your hospitality. I was not kidding, though. I am planning to sleep. Please have an elf wake me tomorrow at 7AM if I haven't gotten up, and then we can head over to the laboratories and see my set up there."

"As you wish, Miss Granger."

"Sleep well, Granger. I look forward to working with you."

Hermione headed straight for her bedroom and the Malfoy men headed back toward the main part of the Manor.

"Well done, Draco."

"Thank you, Father."

The first week at Malfoy Industries passed in a whirlwind. Hermione set up the laboratory the way she wanted it, interviewed and decided upon her staff and started to work. At the end of the week, Severus Snape walked into the newly renovated lab to see Hermione's work on lycanthropy.

"So, Miss Granger, why did you decide on using unicorn milk and vitamin D as part of your cure?"

"Master Granger, Professor Snape, or Hermione if you wish. Miss Granger was a school girl; I am not she any longer."

"Master Snape, then, Master Granger."

"Are we done?" Snape nodded. "Good. I was trying to inject as much of the sun as possible into the potion, since it is as opposite to the moon as I could think of. Adding some part of a sunflower may also help, but the Arithmancy has not determined which part. I would be partial to trying the seeds or the petals."

"That is an interesting tactic. These ingredients you have added certainly improve the efficacy of the aconite. Now, why have you added the chamomile and peppermint?"

"Chamomile to soothe the nervous system and peppermint to soothe the stomach. Neither interact badly with the other ingredients."

"Hm. I will have to think about some of this. And you say it makes for a less painful transition?"

"Yes. And the patients who took it only reacted to the truly full moon, not the day before or after."

"This is brilliant work, Master Granger. I am quite pleased that you have chosen to include me in the research."

"Well, sir, no matter what you think of me, I do respect you."

"What did you think, Severus?"

"Isn't she joining us for dinner tonight?"

"She is, indeed. Now answer my question."

"She is brilliant. That was inspired on your part to get her to be part of Malfoy Industries. She has created buzz, and rightfully so."

"And what do you think of the witch, herself?"

"She is not what I expected, Lucius. She is self-sufficient, intelligent, composed, beautiful, in an unorthodox way. Why?"

"Always the suspicious one, Severus. I just think she would be good for you."

"I do not want her that way, Lucius."

"I could have told you that, Mr. Malfoy. As I said to Draco, on a personal level, Master Snape has always looked at me as though I carry the plague."

Both men looked a bit put out at being caught gossiping like school girls.

"Aren't you early, Master Granger?"

"My watch says seven on the dot, Master Snape."

"Why are you calling him Master Snape, my dear?"

"Because he started off by calling me Miss Granger. I have achieved too much in my life to be disrespected like that."

"Ah. Well, you can call me Lucius if you would like."

"Certainly, Lucius. You may call me Hermione."

Hermione smiled and turned toward the table and just managed to see the look of dismay cross quickly past Severus' features. She filed that away for further consideration.

The three enjoyed dinner, debating the various uses of plants, charms, runes and arithmancy in conjunction with potions. Hermione had traveled quite extensively and could converse intelligently on almost any subject, charming both of the men, neither who was used to a witch as powerful as Hermione with a mind to match.

After that exchange at dinner, Lucius started spending far more time in the laboratories of his company than he ever had before. He could often be found arguing with Severus or Hermione or both over nuances in their potions, Arithmantic calculations, or his specialty, runes.

Two or so weeks into Hermione's new life at the Manor and as part of Malfoy Industries, Severus was calling her by her first name, and she had both men eating out of the palm of her hand, if she would only notice something like that.

A short while after that, Hermione, being her Gryffindor self, asked Severus about his reluctance to date.

"I believe you know about my feelings for Lily, correct?" Hermione nodded, unwilling to talk and break the spell she was certain he was under, making him respond. "Some time after giving those memories to Potter, I realized that was an obsession, encouraged by Dumbledore. I did love her, but I doubt I would have stayed in love with her. I find myself more attracted to those that are constants in my life. And no one is more constant than Lucius. But Lucius would never have me, not alone. I've always wondered if we could both find a witch that would bridge that gap between us."

Hermione looked at him thoughtfully, turning the last few weeks of her life over in her mind. "Would you consider me?"

"Bloody hell, woman! That isn't funny. Isn't it just like a Gryffindor to take a confidence and turn it into a joke!" Severus started to storm out of the lab.

"Severus, wait! I'm not joking. The only reason I didn't say anything to either of you earlier was that I could see that my attraction to you would hurt Lucius and my attraction to Lucius would hurt you. Mullein had made my life so miserable, trashing my personal reputation in Europe that I was afraid if something like that came out, it would only reinforce his statements. I did not want to hurt either of you. But if we could all be together, well, that is another thing entirely."

Severus very slowly turned back toward Hermione and looked at her. He decided that he had trusted her so far and she had proved herself worthy of it, so he would just have to trust that she was not planning some horrible prank.

"Well, my dear, it is always said that an intelligent woman can be..."

"What, kinky? Of course. You can't read everything I do and not want to try some of it out."

The two decided to plan out a way to get Lucius involved with them, without him suspecting anything. The planning provided some rather entertaining breaks between their magical breakthroughs.

A few months into their collaboration, Severus finally asked Hermione to dinner, away from the Manor. He informed Lucius, giving the owner of the company good reason to gloat.

"Well done, Severus. I do think you and Hermione are well-matched. There are few witches who could hold their own with you."

"I agree, Lucius. I know you were meddling, but this has by far been the least troublesome meddling that has ever occurred in my life. But I noticed that you were also quite interested in her. Are you certain that you are willing to cede her to me?"

"I am far too old to begin courting anyone, Severus. Even a witch as fascinating as Hermione. But I am glad that you are pleased with my meddling."

The men smiled briefly at each other and waited for Hermione to get to the central part of the Manor.

When she entered the sitting room outside Lucius' main office, both men stood up, looks of wonder on their faces. Hermione was wearing a stunning dress, a deep navy blue silk jersey which clung to her voluptuous curves, the bits of jewelry she wore was silver or platinum, simple chains around her neck, hoops in her ears and a cuff on her wrist. Her shoes were also silver colored. She had her hair up in a simple chignon, with a pair of silver hair sticks holding it in place.

"You look absolutely beautiful, my dear. Severus is quite a lucky wizard."

While he was speaking, Lucius did not notice that Severus had quite surreptitiously nodded at Hermione.

"Thank you for saying so, Lucius. Would you care to join us? You should be part of our celebration tonight."

"I would not want to interfere with your date... Celebration? What are we celebrating?"

"It would not be interference, and you would have to join us to find out what we are celebrating. I believe that Severus is quite content to have you join us."

Lucius was quite startled, but looked over at his longtime friend, who nodded regally.

"You will explain yourself, Severus."

"After you join us for dinner, Lucius."

Severus, Lucius and Hermione headed out for a quiet restaurant in London. The owner was a Squib, related vaguely to the Malfoys, who provided some of the best meals ever, if you were willing to eat in a mainly Muggle place.

"Hello, Master Snape, Master Granger and Mister Malfoy. Your table is waiting. You have requested the tasting menu. Would you like for the house to provide the wines to go with it?"

"Absolutely, Jean-Pierre. David has one of the best palates I have ever encountered. Please tell him that I ask that he not hold back for fear of the cost."

"As you wish, Mister Malfoy, I will convey your message to Chef."

As Jean-Pierre went back to the kitchen and relayed his message, Severus could see the very pleased smile on the chef's face. He figured, quite rightly, that whatever was being planned for them was just upgraded a few notches.

"You certainly knew just what to say, Lucius."

"It was proven quite decisively that our old prejudices had very little merit. Power, taste and wealth are not just the realm of the pure-blood, rather, there are quite a few with mixed blood, or little magic, or even Muggle parents that prove that point. Consider the company. As it is, David Meadowlake is one of the best chefs in the world. Did you know that our shared great-grandmother had what they call 'magical sason'? It means that she could power her cooking with her magic. David seems to have inherited the sason without the magic. It makes for wonderful meals."

"I did not know that, Lucius."

The three were startled by the approach of the good-looking, white-blond haired chef.

"You must have some of her magic, David, somewhere. You could not have approached the table otherwise."

"I discovered I could get through familial wards when Draco was here. You did not look as though you were having a personal conversation, so I came by. I just wanted you to know that you will be enjoying the best of what I can do, including a few new dishes I would like to try out. Anything you won't eat?"

Hermione could not eat raw onions, although cooked ones were fine. Severus had a similar problem with raw leeks, and Lucius said he could eat anything. David nodded and left.

Lucius turned to Hermione, who had a beautiful smile on her face.

"What did I do to earn that, my dear?"

"You were just being you, Lucius. All those years ago, I used to wonder what would happen if the pure-blood would open their minds to the possibilities surrounding them. I now see that it can be transcendent."

Lucius looked into those deep, intelligent brown eyes that seemed to see right through him and was oddly flustered. He turned to Severus, who had been sitting there bemused by the interplay between his two favorite people. "What are we celebrating?"

"We believe we have found the cure."

"For lycanthropy?"

"Yes."

Lucius's eyes lit up. This would make his company.

"And how do you wish to distribute it if it does, indeed, work?"

"I was thinking that we could distribute it for one Galleon above cost for each cauldron. Once the British werewolves are cured, then we could figure out world-wide distribution. Since this is going to be a one-time sort of thing, it won't harm you financially, but the marketing and publicity will make sure that Malfoy Industries is again the

top company in the wizarding world for innovation in potions. There are a few other things we are working on, vanity items, that really could make a lot of money."

Lucius and Severus both looked at the enthusiastic little witch with fondness and more in their eyes.

"You certainly have thought this through."

"Of course I did. I give my best when I work. Right, Severus?"

"You most certainly do, Hermione."

"What about when she plays, Severus?"

"I would not know about that, Lucius."

"Truly?"

"Yes, my friend. We both want you. She wants both of us. We decided to wait to see what your decision would be before we played together."

Although the three were eating an absolutely fabulous meal, they could have been eating at McDonald's for all they noticed the food. Hermione could hardly breathe from the tension running through her. It looked to her as though Lucius and Severus felt the same.

"Severus, put up some wards."

"As you wish, Lucius."

"Why are you two doing this? Why would you tease an old man with his fondest wish?"

"Oh, you stupid Slytherins. For smart men, you are both idiots. I've already had this conversation once*We are not teasing*. If you return to my suite with us, which by the way, no one other than me has been past the sitting room, we shall see if that sumptuous bed will hold us comfortably."

"As you wish, little lioness. Are you certain, Severus?"

"I've never been more."

As Severus's velvet over gravel voice washed over the three of them, they finished their meal in a hurry, paid David twice what he was asking and as soon as they were able, Disapparated.

They appeared in the foyer of Malfoy Manor.

"Are you certain?"

"How many times do you plan to ask that, Lucius? Let's go!"

"Impatient little witch, aren't you?"

Hermione just smiled at the two beautiful men looking at her. "Yes, and you better catch me before I change my mind!" With that statement, she turned and ran for her suite. The two former Death Eaters looked at each other and with rare grins turned and ran after their witch.

As Hermione, then Severus and Lucius thundered past the sitting room, Astoria turned to Draco and asked, "Will she be all right?"

"I'm sure she will be. But I don't think my father or uncle will ever be the same."

Lucius reached Hermione first, just as she got in the door to her rooms. He snatched her up and tossed her over his left shoulder. He turned to his friend and pulled him close. With a look of delight in his eyes, he reached out and kissed Severus deeply. He was jolted out of that bliss when the little witch on his shoulder gave him a sharp slap on the rear.

"Hey, I want to see that. You can't just keep me with my rump in the air!"

"I can't, can't I?"

With that, Lucius waved his wand, and all three of them found themselves disrobed. "I know that sometimes there is a joy in the slow unveiling of one's lovers, but right now, I just wish to..."

"Less talk, more kissing."

With a smile at the impertinent, naked witch over his shoulder, Lucius strode to her room and tossed Hermione onto her bed. Severus followed him as both of the wizards stretched out on either side of their witch.

"Are you..."

Hermione looked at Severus and they both reached up to kiss Lucius. The three way kiss got heated, then they each managed a passionate kiss with each other, Hermione quite delighted in the picture the two made kissing above her. Lucius reached for her lower lips, running a large finger from her clitoris to her anus, plunging one into her depths, as she was already wet. While he was doing that, Severus was massaging her breasts, then laving them with his tongue. The multiple stimulation was too much for Hermione and she shattered in their arms. Both wizards smiled delightedly at the responsiveness of their witch. Severus lowered himself down the bed, and began to use his tongue and nose on Hermione, while Lucius used the moisture to begin to stretch out her anus.

"Oh, yes. Please! I want both of you. Now, please, now!"

"Impatient little witch."

Hermione was never sure which one of the men said that phrase at that moment. Severus laid on his back and pulled her over him, impaling her on his penis. As she adjusted to his length and girth, he nodded to Lucius, who had by this point, three fingers in her back entrance. He pulled them out, making Hermione cry out, then lubricated himself and pressed the end of his penis up against her.

"Push back against me, love, all right?"

Hermione just nodded. Lucius pushed into her slowly, then as he felt the ring of muscle give, he surged in all the way. Hermione wailed at the top of her lungs. Both men stopped.

"Don't stop! It feels amazing. I just had to let it out!"

The startled men smiled at each other in relief, then began an inexorable rhythm that had Hermione writhing as best she could between them.

"More, more more more moremoremoremoremore ahhhhhhh!"

As her orgasm crested, both Lucius and Severus had theirs almost forcibly torn from them.

They collapsed on the bed together.

"So, when you two are ready to go again, can I watch?"

"Truly?"

"Yes, truly. As long as you don't shut me out entirely and for always, I think you two are hot together."

"Do not worry, witch. We could leave you out about as much as you could stay quiet. I thought maybe wild sex would do it, but no, it just increases the incoherency of your babbling."

Hermione looked at the two smug wizards holding her close and decided not to say anything. But the smile on her face made them think twice.

"Hermione, love?"

"Yes, Lucius?"

"Just remember, Severus is the one who said it."

"Oh, I know, Lucius. But you didn't stop him."

The next morning, after rounds two and three in Hermione's bed and bath, the three were joined at breakfast by a smiling Draco.

"Went well, did it?"

"Of course it did."

"So, which one of you managed to get Granger angry?"

"What do you mean, son?"

At that Hermione dissolved into giggles. It wasn't until the visiting six-year-old daughter of one of the potioners asked her father quite loudly, "Why do those men have bows in their hair?" that Lucius and Severus realized that playing with a Combined Magic Master was going to be more challenging than they thought.

Lucius smiled. He certainly wasn't bored any longer.

A/N: Many thanks to my beta, Southern_Witch_69. She makes my writing so much better. I couldn't choose, so I combined prompts one and three.

First prompt: Lucius decides that his friend Severus needs a romance. He picks Hermione for Severus, but in the course of playing cupid he falls for her himself. Extra points if you can turn it into a three-way romance. I prefer happy endings, for any of my prompts.

Third prompt: It is several years post war (ten or more), Hermione is now a world renowned whatever (Potions, Mistress, Arithmancer, Charms Mistress, etc...whatever your little heart desires). Whatever she is an expert in, Lucius has need of her help to solve a problem. Initially she doesn't want to help him because, well because it's Lucius Malfoy! Somehow she is convinced to help him and during the course of their working relationship a more personal relationship develops.