

Shades in Between

by Xani

Hermione finds herself in the hands of Rabastan Lestrangle, who is more than a little crazy and more than a little violent. She finds herself far more involved in the war than ever before and struggles to continue to fight despite being the cruel man's captive. As she begins to understand the drive behind the seemingly insane Death Eater, the many shades of gray between good and evil start emerging.

Hitting the Fan

Chapter 1 of 2

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Not mine, and a thanks to Lady Lynn for serving as Beta.

Hermione Jane Granger stumbled as she ran through the forest. Ridiculously, she wondered if it had really happened, since no one was around to hear the startled scream.

She lay there, staring up at the sun through a thick covering of branches. They were coming for her, she knew they were. Harry and Ron were safe with the Order. She had left their protection to take her parents out of the country. She no longer feared for her friends' lives, but they were coming for her. "God, what am I going to do?" she whispered to herself, finally shifting around on the ground, feeling for broken bones.

"Scream." The voice wrung another cry from her lips. The face was familiar, but she couldn't put a name to the man standing across from her, his stance deceptively relaxed and his wand pointed at her heart. "I suggest, little wren, that you come quietly, though I would truly enjoy it if you fought me. I like it when they fight me." His lips formed a smile, but his summer sky blue eyes never wavered from their malice.

"Wh... Who are you? I'm warning you, my friends are nearby." She cursed herself for putting her wand inside her knee-high boots, where it would do no good. Wondering how many times she'd be Crucio'd before she could reach it, she squinted up at the impossibly tall man, who was smiling as if they were sitting at the finest restaurant in London discussing a favourite book. The smile was gleeful, with a hint of frantic madness that was more terrifying than his powerful build.

"We've met, little wren. We've met. But please, allow me to formally introduce myself." The mocking smile seemed to grow at her flinch. "Rabastan... Rabastan Lestrangle. It really is a ... pleasure to finally formally meet you, though I expected Potter's Mudblood to be far prettier." Hermione's heart stopped and stuttered, and she was no longer listening after he uttered his name. She was certain she would not be leaving these woods; the unnamed forest would be the only witness to her last moments on Earth.

"Don't worry, Mudblood, you aren't valuable to me dead; not at the moment at least." He was quietly calculating how to wring the most value from her capture. He was in favour with the Dark Lord, but knew it would not always be so. Lord Voldemort had a long memory for slights, but favour went like a whore's affection. Easy to buy, hard to keep.

"In fact, if you're very good to me, little wren, you needn't even see any Death Eaters just yet." Without further explanation, Hermione saw a beam of light and then knew nothing. She did not see Rabastan close his eyes and wonder what he'd become. Kidnapping schoolgirls and chasing children. A noble cause indeed.

Feeling like wool socks had been stuffed in her mouth for days, Hermione started shifting as she woke up. She quickly took stock of her aches and pains, remembering the meeting in the forest with Lestrange. She noticed she was not bound, but looking around the small room, she saw no windows through which to make her escape. Rabastan wasn't there, only a dingy mattress on rotted-through floorboards, and a sickening smell that seemed to rise from the walls themselves. The door didn't look strong enough to keep her in, but she knew the man was not one of the most dangerous Azkaban escapees for nothing. The door was bound to be heavily warded.

"How do I get myself in these messes?" she muttered to herself as she reached inside her boot, knowing she'd be coming up empty. "Hello!" she yelled. Getting up and walking to the door, she wondered if he'd left her here to die. She would go insane before slowly starving to death. Maybe he was watching her pound the door. She refused to allow him to break her so easily, telling herself over and over that the Order would find her. Giving up at the door, she went to the mattress and sat, waiting for her captor. She started to lose count of the seconds she spent staring at the dingy door when he finally walked through, nose in the air and a superior sneer on his lips.

"I thought you would have a longer sleep. Forgive me, little wren. You must think me a poor host." He didn't have his wand in hand this time, and Hermione wondered if she could overpower him and run. Looking him over she realized that she wouldn't stand a chance. He stood at least 6'4" tall and had the build of an athlete despite what she knew to be many years in Azkaban. Going mad.

"What do you want from me?" Her chin went up in defiance at the smile that was starting to tug at his lips again. That smile was making its way on to the list of her least favourite things, right below Voldemort and right above Umbridge.

"Do not trouble yourself, little wren. Potter's Mudblood is valuable currency in the circles I travel." Out of nowhere the wand was back in his hands and pointed at her. "Come on now, we haven't much time. I'm leaving you somewhere... safe, for the time being." He gestured vaguely towards the open door way. "After you, madam." Bowing mockingly, he watched her leave the room. He knew she was no longer a child, but her small frame gave the appearance of youth, and he felt the stirring of his conscience. It pricked often, but he was more than a master at ignoring its nagging voice. After all, the choices had all been made, and where his brother stood, he would proudly follow.

They walked silently down a narrow hallway, and Hermione wondered where they were. "Through there." His voice was low, and she thought it sounded like an instrument left many years without use. They had passed many doorways, and when she pushed through the large door, she was unprepared for the sunlight hitting her eyes. "If you make a sound, or try to run, I will take great pleasure in killing you."

Shaken and Stirred

Chapter 2 of 2

Rabastan takes drags his captive along for a ride.

I make no profits from the writing of this story, and no characters belong to me. Thank you to Lady Lynn for being an awesome beta!!

Upon exiting the decrepit building, Hermione quickly felt his callused hand wrap around her wrist, and without warning she felt the pressures of Apparition. Before the girl could get her bearings she was being dragged through a falling down courtyard and into an aging house. The word "house" didn't quite fit the decayed monstrosity, and as they walked through the wide double doors and she looked around at the moth-eaten furniture, she started wondering where she was and how anyone would ever find her.

"Little Wren, I present to you the great Lestrange Manor. No one will come looking here, we are as far from the war as I could safely get you, without my master becoming too suspicious of our whereabouts." The hand still at her wrist burned unpleasantly, and she felt her stomach clenching at the realization that all of this was real. She was trapped in the home of a Death Eater. The home of several Death Eaters.

"My brother and... Bella do not come here often, if ever. They dislike seeing our home so far from its former glory." Hermione noticed the hesitation before his sister-in-law's name, but thought nothing of it.

"Why did you bring me here? If you let me go now, I won't tell anyone, I promise. Just let me go." She knew it wouldn't work, and she was prepared for a great many reactions. Torture, perhaps being stunned unconscious again... she was not ready for his laughter. It was rusty, but seemed to fill the large parlor. Continuing to drag her, he kept laughing. It seemed that he could not stop, having started. Hermione started to wonder if she had driven him further into madness. "You're crazier than I thought. Wonderful." Muttering to herself, she tried to keep up with his long strides. She lost count of the doors they passed along the narrow corridor, and it seemed an eternity of being dragged along before they came to a stop in front of an unassuming green door. He opened it and pushed her in.

"I will make sure you are fed, and if you keep your mouth shut you might just live through this. Know that I will not allow you to malign my brother, Bella, or the Dark Lord in my home. I will not be around much, but when I am you will obey me, little wren. Do try to keep those Gryffindor qualities in check. I would hate to have to hurt you..." Releasing her wrist, he flexed the palm of the hand he had been dragging her along with, the mocking smile that seemed to always be stamped on his face slipping.

For the first time since the forest, Hermione started to really wonder what would happen to her. He'd yet to curse her, and had not been physically violent, but who knew when he would snap. He turned to her suddenly, a strange light in his eyes. Making the distance between them uncomfortable, he looked down at the top of her head. "Make no mistake, I will not hesitate in punishing you should you try to run. Do not, however, worry for your virtue. I would much rather the company of my hand to tainting myself with you, Mudblood." She did not miss the venom in his voice and being the brightest witch of her age, bit her tongue on the sharp retort.

She kept her head down, though she felt as if the words were rising from her throat like bile. She pulled away and walked to the small bed in the center of the room. Rabastan was left standing before the door, eyebrows pulled down and an unreadable look stamped across his harsh features.

"While not often, others do come. I do not think they would be as understanding as I have shown myself to be, little wren. Stay in this room." As soon as he had swept out of the small alcove, Hermione started thinking of ways to make good her escape. The room had no windows, and she had no idea where the Lestrange home was, but there was no way to stay here. Eventually Rabastan would drag her to Voldemort, and she would be tortured and killed.

Sitting in his father's study, a place his eldest brother should be master of, Rabastan closed his eyes and tried to imagine living in a world that was different. A world in which there was no Dark Lord, no Harry Potter, and no Azkaban. The dementors still haunted his nightmares, and though pretending madness had its advantages in his Master's service, he knew he was not insane. Not in the way Bella was insane. Beautiful Bella, who he remembered as a vibrant girl full of mischievous laughter and who had given him his first kiss.

He felt himself harden at the memories of the heated kisses he'd shared before the night she had been given to his brother. He had not known, not suspected, that a marriage contract was being negotiated as he kissed the girl feverishly in Hogwarts' darkened hallways. Not allowing himself even the thought of release, he got up from the ancient chair and walked to the fireplace. Time to return to the Dark Lord's lair. As it was, he had been away too long, and could not afford suspicion. He would be

punished for not coming up with the girl, but many of the best trackers had been sent. The blame would not rest solely on him.

Walking to the fireplace he allowed himself a smile; things were about to get interesting.