

Crookshanks' Revenge

by blue artemis

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Chapter 1 of 1

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"I can't believe you did that!"

"Will you stop saying that?"

"You don't even feel bad, do you?"

"Do you want the truth, Hermione, really?"

"You killed my familiar, Ronald. Yes, I want the truth, really!"

"How the bloody hell can I feel bad? I've always hated that thing. You love him more than you love me! And he tripped me on purpose, so that you would wake up and tell me off for being drunk again! So, I accidentally fell on him. Big deal!"

"After you cast an *Immobulus*? Ronald, do you KNOW the penalty for willfully killing a familiar?"

"You are the high-powered legal expert. You tell me!"

"If I reported you, it would be three years in Azkaban. Due to our friendship, I won't, but Ronald, you can forget any fantasy life you have of us getting married, ever! I'm so very glad I refused to have sex with you until our wedding night."

Ron looked at Hermione in horror. Somewhere in his drunken fantasies, he had figured if he got rid of her familiar, his fiancée would be so distraught she would jump into his bed, forgetting her vow.

"Oh, and, Ron, if I hear from any of your family that you told them anything but the truth about the end of our engagement, you will be in Azkaban so fast you won't know what hit you."

Ron walked out of Hermione's cottage with his head down. He never meant for this to happen. It was all that stupid smushed-face cat's fault. As he walked toward the Apparition point, he found himself flailing about wildly as he tried to keep his balance. He looked for what had tripped him, and he saw Crookshanks' smug face. He Apparated home, not noticing that he had left all of his body hair behind. Crookshanks' spirit very contentedly swept the hair into the gutter.

"You did WHAT?"

"Mum, really, it isn't that bad."

"Ronald, she could have you in Azkaban."

"She said she wouldn't."

"What would make you do such a thing?"

"You don't want to know."

"Yes, I do want to know."

"Fine. Bloody fine. You want to know? She agreed to marry me, but unlike every other Muggle-born in existence, she KNOWS about the power transfer from a witch to her wizard the first time. So she wanted to wait until our bloody wedding night! I went out drinking, and when the cat tripped me up, I decided that if I killed it, maybe she would forget all about it and have sex with me! Are you happy now?"

Molly looked at her son with grave disappointment in her eyes. "Get out!"

"Mum?"

"Get out now! You let me believe that girl was sleeping with Harry on your camping trip."

"She was. It was cold."

"Sleeping, Ronald. Not sex. I couldn't see why you wanted damaged goods. Your sister gave up her virginity thinking she had to compete with Hermione. And now she and Harry have broken up. You have always made me think the worst of that girl, and I'm going to bet it was always you. Did you know that in ancient times, a man who tried to seduce a girl who had vowed to stay pure would be haunted? Now, I don't want to look at you anymore. Get out!"

"Dad?"

"You heard your mother. I am amazingly disappointed. Get out!"

Ron tried Harry's next, but Ginny had gone over there to apologize to him after hearing what Ron had let them all believe about Hermione. Harry didn't let him stay, either.

Ron ended up renting a room at the Leaky Cauldron. When he came out of the bathroom, he saw his bedding was shredded and there was orange cat hair everywhere. Suddenly all of the things he had left at Hermione's came crashing down on his head. He sat on the floor and wept.

Hermione looked around her cottage and banished everything that was Ron's to land on his head in a shower of painful memories.

That done, she sat down to review what she was feeling. Anger at Ron. Check. Painful sadness about losing Crooks. Check. Relief at being done with her farce of an engagement. Che... *Where did that come from? This is what I get for doing what I thought everyone wanted instead of what I wanted*

"Thanks, Crooks!"

Hermione could swear that she heard a very familiar miaow in response, but she just shook it off as nerves.

Rabastan LeStrange was nervous. He had been found to be a victim of Bellatrix as well as his brother. Rodolphus was always told that family was essential, and in his twisted version of reality, he had done what he could to keep his brother under his control. Bella took advantage of this weakness of her husband's as well, reinforcing the unity of the Death Eaters and how all the purebloods were family. Rabastan had not had a chance. With people like Hermione Granger in charge of seeing that justice was served, he had been exonerated, his fortune and his family home restored to him as well as his freedom. He had made an appointment today to see Miss Granger, to thank her personally. He left his home so early he missed the owl rescheduling him to a later date.

"Miss Granger, why is your receptionist missing?"

Hermione raised tear-filled eyes to the handsome man in her doorway. "I gave her the day off. Didn't you get my owl rescheduling you?"

"No, I didn't, I'm sorry. I had left early to get you a gift. If it is not too intrusive, may I ask why you are crying?"

"My ex-fiancé accidentally killed my familiar."

"Ex-fiancé?"

"He wasn't upset enough about the whole thing."

"You have my condolences, my lady."

"Why do you do that?"

"What?"

"Call me Miss Granger or my lady the way you do?"

"You are a powerful, talented witch. If rumors are true, you also have saved yourself for marriage. All of those traits make you a lady, and worthy of respect."

"Thank you. Most people think I'm silly."

"By most you really mean your friends. The Weasleys were trained in the proper way to behave, but choose to ignore it for the most part. Mr. Potter never learned; really, he was kept from learning the proper way to behave. Traditional wizarding rules would have never allowed him to have led the life he did, which in turn would have kept him from being the perfect sacrifice. I am betting that Mr. Longbottom has defended you every single time anyone has said something about your choice."

"You are right. Why did Dumbledore allow this ignorance to fester?"

"He had to be seen as opposing Riddle. If that meant discarding meaningful traditions, well..."

"It was for the greater good?"

"Exactly."

Hermione smiled her first real smile since Crookshanks' demise.

Rabastan really enjoyed being the person to put that smile on her face. "Would you like to accompany me to lunch?"

Hermione looked at the man, then remembered that Crookshanks had gone willingly with him to help rid LeStrange Manor of vermin. "I would be honored."

The unorthodox pair raised some eyebrows as they entered The Golden Lute. Even more when Rabastan behaved in the manner in which he was raised, and, instead of being lost, Hermione responded appropriately.

"Did she always have such beautiful manners, Draco?"

"Yes, Mother."

"Then why did we think her so uncouth?"

"I believe it was the company she kept."

"Alas, I believe you are right. Too bad. I think Rabastan is smitten."

"It looks like she is interested right back. But if he thinks he's going to get a taste, I'm told she has kept to all the traditions."

"Draco! Mind your mouth. If he didn't know that, he wouldn't be treating her the way he is. Unlike your generation, one does not treat their doxy as a date. I still don't understand why you must show off Miss Parkinson as though she has some value."

Draco just looked at his mother with his mouth open. He didn't realize that he had been behaving in the same uncouth manner as those with a lesser upbringing. He would have to talk to Pansy soon.

"You know, my lady... "

"Call me Hermione, please."

"Rabastan, then. And as I was saying, when your familiar was over at the Manor, I believe he may have gotten friendly with one of the barn-kneazles. Now, do not think I am being insensitive, but if you are used to having a familiar, it would be better for your magic to acquire one soon. If one of my kits is related to your beloved Crookshanks, well, I couldn't think of anything better."

"I appreciate that so much, Rabastan. I knew I was going to have to find another familiar quickly, but this way I could still have a piece of Crooks. Oh, you are a love. When can I come over to see the kits?"

"Since you have given your staff the day off and rescheduled your appointments, why don't we go after lunch?"

"I would really like that." Hermione smiled at Rabastan, and he gloried in having the lovely witch gift him with her joy.

Their luncheon complete, they were heading out the door, Hermione's hand resting lightly on the crook of Rabastan's extended arm.

"Rabastan, may I ask where you are heading with the lovely Miss Granger?"

"Yes, of course, Narcissa. Hermione is coming with me to the manor. She has recently lost her familiar, and since some of the barn-kneazle kits were his, I thought she should see if one of them suits her."

"What a lovely idea, Rabastan. Enjoy your visit, and I hope you do find a kit suitable, Miss Granger."

Rabastan nodded while Hermione thanked Narcissa quite nicely.

"Do you mind if I Side-Along us, Hermione?"

"No, not at all."

Rabastan smiled at the trust the little witch showed in him, closed his eyes, and spun them into nothing.

They arrived at LeStrange Manor easily. Hermione looked around happily. "Oh, this is beautiful. I would imagine there are some beautiful views of the sea."

"Yes, my dear, there are. The informal dining room is on a glass encased deck, over the cliffs. It is spectacular. If you are willing to stay for dinner, the elves are wonderful cooks and would be pleased to cook for a lady. They haven't since my mother passed."

Hermione smiled inwardly at the thought that Bellatrix was quite emphatically not thought to be a lady.

"I think I would like to stay."

"Wonderful. Now, do you want to see the kits?"

Rabastan led Hermione to the barn where there were five small three-quarter kneazle kittens, eyes wide open, pouncing each other for fun. One kitten, white with orange-striped patches and spots, took one look at Hermione and leaped, ending up on her shoulder.

Hermione turned to look at her newest acquisition. "So, decided I'm yours, did you?"

"Miaow!"

"I think I've been chosen, Rab. Shall we head for the house?"

"What are you going to call her, love?"

"Polly, of course. She thinks she's a parrot."

Rabastan laughed and took Hermione's hand to lead her to the Manor.

Out of the corner of her eye, Hermione thought she saw Crookshanks looking at her with a very pleased expression on his face. She turned to the handsome wizard leading her to his home and smiled up at him. "I believe Crookshanks approves."

Prompt from LaMuseAmusant: 3. A drunken Ron (accidentally or not) kills Crookshanks. Hermione's beloved familiar comes back to both haunt the wizard who ended his life and to help his grieving mistress find true happiness. (Inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's The Black Cat).

Many thanks to Southern_Witch_69 for the beta. ~Smooches~

