

Assessing in Azkaban

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Chapter 1 of 1

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There was a knock at the door, causing Hermione to look up. "Kingsley? What can I do for you?" she immediately asked, knowing that the Minister didn't just go around to visit for fun.

Kingsley smiled warmly at her. "May I come in, Hermione?"

"Of course, you know you're always welcome," Hermione replied. "Can I get you anything? Some tea?" She and Kingsley had been decently close since the end of the war and the beginning of her career as a clinical psychologist for the Auror Department.

"No, thank you, Hermione. I'm here for business." He smiled slightly at her. "I know you typically only work with the Aurors, but I was wondering if there was any way you could possibly see one of the prisoners in Azkaban? One of the Death Eaters has begun to act strangely, and as his trial is finally approaching, I worry that he may be faking for leniency."

"What do you mean by acting strangely? Couldn't it just be possible that the stress of being in Azkaban has finally caught up to them? It isn't uncommon for the prisoners to succumb to insanity while there."

"He's been in hysterics, crying, ranting and raving. When the guards try to speak with him, he only replies in gibberish. Claims of hearing voices and loss of body movement have also been made," Kingsley explained.

Hermione nibbled the end of her quill, intrigued by Kingsley's description. It certainly sounded like psychosis, but a part of her wondered if Kingsley was right and the prisoner was exhibiting Ganser syndrome. "I'll go to see them. Who is it?" Hermione asked, scribbling on her notepad to go to the prison in the morning.

"Rabastan LeStrange."

Hermione closed her eyes, sipping at her wine. "Out of everyone, it just had to be *him*." Her temples throbbed from the migraine she had gotten by stressing over him.

Ginny gave her a small smile. "Hermione, you're a smart and clever witch with a steady head on your shoulder. You won't succumb to Lestrage's dashing handsome looks," she said, a hint of teasing in her voice as she batted her lashes.

She groaned. Hermione had developed quite the crush on the younger Lestrage brother during her sixth year when she found an article on him in the library. Apparently, he was quite the Quidditch player before he suspiciously stopped during his seventh year. Hermione imagined that at that time, he was being inducted into Voldemort's inner circle. She had always been fascinated by his case, reading everything she could about him. There were claims that his brother had Imperiused him, but Hermione wasn't quite sure what to believe.

"Hermione, relax. Besides, I'm sure Azkaban has made him less attractive," Ginny tried to assure her. "And Harry will be with you. I'm sure he'll reel you in if you start acting crazy."

Hermione still didn't feel any better. She could only hope her assessment wouldn't take very long and that she would quickly be on her way. Taking another sip of wine, she did her best to push Rabastan Lestrage from her mind. "So, Ginny, Harry told me that the two of you are thinking about starting a family?"

Ginny began to gush and Hermione was happy for the distraction.

"Do you have everything you need?" Harry asked as they approached the entry to Azkaban.

Hermione shuddered, looking up at the formidable building. "You're asking me now?" She forced a laugh. "I've got my wand, a notepad, and a pen. What more do I need?"

"Always the minimalist," Harry teased. "Is your library in your purse for quick reference?"

"Stop teasing," Hermione snapped. She stopped, taking a deep breath. "Sorry," she murmured, glancing at the building once more. "I just hate coming here."

"Understandable," Harry said with a nod. "I don't care to come here either.... I don't think anyone does."

"Let's just get this over with," Hermione said, entering the prison.

Hermione went through the check-in process blindly, allowing herself, wand, and bag to be checked thoroughly. She couldn't stop thinking about Lestrage. What would he look like after all these years? Would he recognise her or Harry? Was he truly insane? Was he faking?

Before she realised it, Harry and her were being led down a hallway. She crinkled her nose, the smell of rot and decay filling it. She trembled, goosebumps appearing on her flesh as they walked. She loathed the prison.

"Here we are," the guard announced, stopping them in front of a dimly lit cell. "Auror Potter, I'll leave you and Miss Granger be. I'll be just down the hall and around the corner if you need assistance."

"Do you want me to go in with you?" Harry asked Hermione, seeing her shaking slightly. He reached out and put a comforting hand on her shoulder.

"Just stand here in the doorway," Hermione instructed him. "I'll be fine."

"Mr. Lestrage, you have visitors," the guard said loudly as he unlocked the entry to the cell. He handed Harry the keys before returning to his post.

"Mr. Lestrage," Hermione said, stepping inside the cell. Using her wand, she conjured a jar and filled it with her bluebell fire so they could see more clearly. She handed the jar to Harry, who held it tightly in one hand, his wand raised in the other.

Her eyes went to the small, dingy bed in the cell and saw the skinny man lying upon it. His long, red hair was tangled and matted. Hermione swallowed down the bile threatening to rise up from the smell. "Mr. Lestrage," she said more clearly, watching as he stirred on the mattress.

Rabastan groaned as he sat up, squinting his eyes at her. "Granger and Potter," he snarled, leaning forward slightly, his eyes wild.

Okay, he remembers who we are Hermione made a mental note. *And besides his grungy and wild appearance, he appears to have his wits about him. His posture... it shows that he is alert... not dazed as someone typically would be.*

"Mr. Lestrage," his gaze snapped to her, "I was hoping you would be most cooperative as I ask you a few questions."

A small smirk appeared on his face. "What makes you think I would cooperate with a Mudblood like you?"

He's answering my questions quite clearly, she made another note.

Hermione ignored his question. "The guards have mentioned that you've been complaining about hearing voices. Could you please explain some of the things you've been hearing?" She looked at him intensely and saw the exact moment that he realised why they were there. Suddenly, he shifted, refusing to look her in the eye.

"Did you know a Hungarian Horntail's flame can reach about fifty feet?"

Hermione glanced at Harry, who was shaking his head slightly.

"Mr. Lestrage, I need you to answer my question please," she said firmly, moving so that she could see his face.

He looked at her, a semi-glazed look in his eyes. "Who?"

"Mr. Lestrage, answer my question."

"Who is Lestrage?" he asked. "I don't understand." He began to rock forward slightly. "It's my mother's birthday today... She'd be proud."

"What would she be proud of?" Hermione asked.

"My service to the Dark Lord... I tortured the Longbottoms... She'd be so happy."

Hermione felt as if she might be sick. "Mr. Lestrage, could you tell me what happened to your mother?"

"The papers said stroke... but I know my father killed her." He looked at her, that wild look in his eyes once more. A small smile appeared on his face. "Shall I kill you, Granger?" He lunged but before he could get at her, Harry Stunned him.

"Are you all right?" Harry asked, moving closer with his wand point at Rabastan.

"I'm fine," Hermione said. "I got everything I need. Can we leave?" She looked at Rabastan's crumpled form on the floor and was filled with disgust. How could she have ever doubted his guilt?

"Of course," Harry said. "Come on." The two exited the cell, Hermione waiting as Harry locked it both manually and with magic. "We'll just have to go through a debriefing process. It shouldn't take too long."

Hermione gasped in the salty, fresh air as soon as they exited the prison. She bent over, promptly throwing up into the grass. She was repulsed by herself for ever thinking that he was an attractive wizard. She threw up once more.

Harry rubbed her back in soothing motion. "All right there?"

"Mmmm," Hermione grumbled after a moment. "I hate this place." She straightened up, wiping the sick from her mouth. "Come on, I want to speak to Kingsley. Give him my report than head home for a glass of wine."

"I can send Ginny over later if you want," Harry offered.

"Sure," Hermione said numbly. "Can we just leave, please? This place is giving me the creeps."

Hermione waited as Kingsley finished reading the report she had typed up.

"So, it was definitely Ganser syndrome?" Kingsley asked her.

"From what I saw, yes," Hermione explained. "He was alert and focused when we entered the cell, and he knew who we were. Once I started questioning his hallucinations, there was a shift in his body language and, all of a sudden, he didn't know who he was and starting spitting out random facts. He started to talk about his mother and torturing the Longbottoms, and when I questioned what happened to her, he told me the truth before addressing me as 'Granger' and attempting to attack me. I've given him the diagnosis of Ganser syndrome."

"So he's faking?" Kingsley clarified.

Hermione gave a curt nod.

"Thank you for this, Miss Granger. I know it's difficult for you to go to Azkaban. I appreciate you doing this for me."

"Of course, Kingsley," Hermione said, standing. "Now if you don't mind, I'm going to head home for the day."

"Of course," Kingsley said with a wave of his hand, dismissing her.

Hermione gave him a brief smile before heading home. She needed a large bottle of wine to be able to put this day, and previous feelings about a certain dark wizard, to rest.