

Avalanche

by Fairfield

Collision on a slippery slope.

Chapter 1 of 1

Collision on a slippery slope.

"It's stopped snowing. That was quite a storm. There's enough on those hills to go skiing. What do you say?"

"I need to finish this manuscript."

"Scribble, scribble, scribble. Another bloody over-long essay," said the ghost who had wandered in.

"Why do you put up with that rudiment?" Viktor asked Hermione.

The ghost huffed and left. Hermione informed Viktor that he had hurt its feelings. He replied that it was not a nice ghost. She agreed but thought he could be more forbearing about it, and besides, he was misusing the word.

"I'll be forbearing about it if you will," he said. "Put down that quill and grab two boards. I've been practicing a slick charm that turns almost anything into great skis."

"You've got to think about something besides sports."

"Why?"

"I want to go too," said the ghost who had flitted back in.

Viktor commented that the weather must suit its icy soul. Hermione chided him for not responding kindly to a social offer. There was a row as the two of them hauled Hermione away from her uncompleted essay to the top of a steep hill with a long slope.

On their third trip down the hill, the blizzard suddenly returned. They slowed down because the snow had reduced vision to a few feet. Then they sped up when the wind knocked the snow out of the tree branches and they heard an avalanche behind them.

They stumbled, rolled down the hill, hit a tree, and crouched on its downhill side. A few minutes later, they were in a dark snow cave.

Viktor and Hermione concluded they were well and truly trapped, and they both decided to spend their last hour coming to peace with their faults and each other. Hermione lamented they hadn't filed a ski plan so that people could find them and she hadn't finished her essay.

The ghost popped his head in. "I spent my last hour cursing a chosen few and the world in general."

"Don't you wish you had done it differently?" asked Krum.

"Not particularly," said the ghost.

Viktor and Hermione were determined to follow their original plan in order to depart with a peaceful spirit. The one who was already a spirit wanted to participate.

"You're not going to be trapped here. You're a ghost," said Krum.

"He's been an outcast all his life, Viktor, he deserves a chance, too," said Hermione.

"Then let him start."

"I never grew up," said the ghost. "I made a foolish mistake, carried the bitterness of it to my grave, and made life miserable for those around me. I shall reform."

"Isn't it a bit late for that?" asked Krum.

"It's the principle of the thing," said Hermione. "We've decided that in our final hours, we will make amends."

"But it's not his final hours," said Krum.

"Viktor!" said Hermione.

"Oh, very well. We can let everyone on the pitch," said Krum.

"It's the sportsmanlike thing to do," asserted Hermione.

"Speaking of sportsmanlike things to do," said the ghost, "it's time to hear from Viktor."

"I was too absorbed in sports," said Krum. "I never appreciated the fine arts. I never read a single novel."

"All that French literature to misunderstand," injected the ghost.

"And I misused my fame to attract girls," said Krum.

"We're supposed to stick to things we regret," said the ghost.

"That is regrettable," said Hermione.

"I think you should be asking for civilized manners instead of culture," said the ghost.

The two humans turned toward the spirit.

"He called me a 'rudiment,' and that's a mighty hard thing for a ghost to bear."

"I'm certain Viktor didn't mean what he said and he didn't mean to hurt your feelings," said Hermione.

"Speaking of feelings, you never seemed to have any except for your books," said the ghost.

"I have feelings. I once had a lot of them for you," she told the ghost.

The ghost looked skeptical.

"I tried to attract your attention. For several weeks, I wore a short skirt and tight blouse to your class," said Hermione, "and speaking of a lack of feelings, you didn't notice."

"Yes, I did. Those were the two weeks where the boys didn't learn a single thing and Potions accidents nearly made ghosts of all of us."

"Hey, that's a positive effort," said Krum. "You have to give her credit for it. I wish I had been there. Didn't you stare at her legs or try to look down her blouse?"

"If I admit that I did, that counts as a positive effort, right?" asked the ghost.

"Okay," said Hermione, "I admit I spent too much time with books and not enough being a person that other people felt comfortable around. I missed out on one of the best things in life." She paused. "I wish I had read some books about surviving an avalanche."

"Something tells me you're missing the point," said the ghost.

Several confessions later, the three were at peace, and furthermore, they agreed that they had come to important conclusions about themselves. If the gods above performed a miracle that let them survive, they would reform.

They noticed that the blizzard had stopped and enough sunlight was getting through the snow to make the cave bright. They poked at a branch. It sprung up, leaving a gaping hole. There, ten yards away, was the Three Broomsticks.

Sitting at a table with a pot of strong tea, Hermione pulled two reference books and her unfinished essay out of her knapsack. She had brought everything in case the skiing didn't work out.

Viktor checked his watch, decided he had plenty of time before the next game began, and waved at two blondes at the bar.

As Hermione moved her quill across the parchment and the ghost made cross remarks on the perversity of people and the world, the two heard a low mutter from Viktor, who was crossing the room to join the two pretty fans at the bar.

"Rudiment."

Author's Note: Twisting of a prompt by AmuseAmusant about a collision on a ski slope. Wishing a swift recovery for kyria.