

# Vampire!Severus 1: Out West

*by MHaydn*

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## *Chapter 1 of 1*

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"Biff," said the editor, "meet your two summer apprentices, Theo Knott and Cho Chang."

"What brings you to this desolate rag?" asked Biff.

"We need the money," said the two apprentices.

"I like the lack of sentiment," said Biff. "Well, it's time for the magazine to put out another series about Vampire!Snape, but it's been done often enough that's it's hard to avoid clichés. We're looking for a fresh viewpoint."

Determined to give the two novices a chance for independent creation, Biff left to imbibe some inspiration. Theo suggested an adventure theme involving a romantic location. After staring into space for some time, he pounded out the opening sentence and declared himself ready for an espresso.

"Cappuccino," said Cho to the departing Theo, looking at what he had written.

Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear when the Black Rider rode the plains of the Wild West in pursuit of truth, justice, and a good cuppa.

Cho thought it needed little moral ambiguity.

Unknown to the thousands to whom he was a hero, the man once known as SS was a refugee of the Brit Wizard War whose miraculous, but incomplete, recovery from the bite of a radioactive snake gave him the powers and the curse of a vampire. Thus it was that when a dark stranger rode into Hamlet-on-Prairie-Edge, Hermione, the farmer's daughter, had no clue that he might be a saint by day but a devil by night.

The editor wasn't certain about the setting for the story, but she liked the suggestive part with the farmer's daughter. She could add a bit of emotional insight.

And how often it is that one of us of the weak constitutions but deep emotions look at a handsome visage and see the possible good that could be brought to life if only one so strong in the outward ways were but to listen to our gentle advice and be swayed by our commendable intentions which initially seem pale in contrast to the manly virtues but when followed lead to an interweaving of the whole that proves stronger than any single fiber, but alas, how difficult is the struggle against the darker side that looms within us all but positively flourishes in those that seem of exceptional strength, and how often this clash nigh on extinguishes the hope and faith of those of us of the frail breasts, and unless we are careful, leaves us but shadows of depleted virtue.

Biff read the manuscript and decided that two against one in the emotion versus action department wasn't fair. He would chip in.

"I hear the railroad's coming," said the gruff old man. "It may be coming to take away our wheat."

"That's the idea, father," said Hermione. "Instead of selling to just the locals, we can sell to the whole world – a hungry world ready to pay with real money."

"I hadn't thought of that," said the gruff old man, "but mark my words, if there's real money involved, there'll be skullduggery about."

Hermione was thinking that her father's words weren't empty. She had heard rumors about people tampering with the official records, replacing the original land deeds with false ones. She had to protect the official records, but how? It occurred to her that she could remove them from the court house and put them in a place of safekeeping, but she would need help, and who could she trust? Her thoughts turned to the dark stranger who had ridden into town. Against all outward signs, her heart told her she could trust him. She approached him one afternoon when he was sitting alone at a table, but his response surprised her.

"It will have to be done at night," he said, "and that's not a good time for me."

"You're not afraid of the dark, are you?" she asked. "Are you a grown man or not?"

Cho was thinking the heroine of the story had made the perfect retort, and her respect for Biff went up several notches. She would try to rise to the occasion and introduce some depth into the flat narrative.

All through supper, Hermione thought of the coming adventure and her heart beat. She thought of the dark stranger and her heart beat faster. She told herself she had her priorities wrong.

At last, near midnight, she met her partner behind the courthouse.

"Oh no, how do we get in?" she asked.

"Easy," he said.

He fiddled with a window, and a few seconds later, it was open. After they entered, they made their way to the room where the records were kept. It, too, was quickly unlocked. Hermione was wondering why she was aware of her heartbeat. She wondered why she was aware of the blood gushing through her veins. She was thinking she should feel nervous, but she felt warm and mellow. Her inner voice was telling her there was great danger near, but she was only aware of her companion looking at her strangely. Nevertheless, her fear rose until she grabbed the official records, and forgetting that she should remove traces of her entry, dashed to the window, leaped out, and ran all the way home as if the demons from hell were after her. It was only after she was in her bedroom with the door locked and the windows barred that she remembered that she had acted rashly. She had left her companion to remove the evidence of their break in, and she had run straight down the main street to her house instead of quietly moving through the shadows, shadows that she still imagined hid a hungry entity. She told herself she was being foolish and chanced a look out her window where she saw a black shape moving.

In the morning, her father had to coax her out of a remote corner in her room down to the breakfast table.

"When did you become afraid of the dark?" he asked.