

Vampire!Severus 8: Visitor

by MHaydn

The writers are prompted onward.

Chapter 1 of 1

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"Ready for a coffee?"

Theo looked up from a blank piece of paper to see the editor in the doorway.

As she sipped her café au lait, the editor asked Theo if he regretted his stint at the magazine instead of having a real holiday before he went back to school. He said he hadn't thought about it, but he liked the money and it had improved his writing. As the editor reached for a biscuit, her blouse stretched across her figure. Theo tried not to stare at the small, but firm, mounds. He looked at her face instead, but that might have been a mistake. He previously hadn't noticed the noble lines, the cute nose, and those intelligent eyes. Even worse, she gave him a friendly smile as if she enjoyed his attention. His mind, brought to a creative peak by a month of literary invention, presented him with a host of scenarios featuring a fascinating creature whose life had improved because of his whole-hearted involvement in it.

He floated back to the office, listening to her opinions of things. Once there, he stared unproductively into space.

He knew what Biff would say. "Your thoughts are hopping around like a bullfrog in a deserted lily pond."

Theo put pen to paper, determined to banish all thoughts about older women.

He came upon the lady sitting beside a broken-down stagecoach.

"Are you here alone, ma'am?"

"Yes, do you intend me harm?"

He assured her he had no such intentions while wondering why she was pointing a stick at him even though it seemed to be a special stick that was well-shaped and polished. She told him the axle had broken and the driver and guard had left her and ridden the two horses into town to get help.

"The code of the West ain't what it used to be," he said.

"Was it ever?" she asked.

"You're a lively one," he said. "I like that."

He said that Hamlet-on-Prairie-Edge was only five miles away and they could probably reach it before dark. He offered that the trail through the rough country was probably safer than the open road but she probably didn't trust him enough for that route. She replied that she was a middle-aged lady not a debutant who would drive men to evil but they could take the road anyway.

He looked at her closely. "I reckon I might prefer you to a whole flock of them fancy dance-hall girls," he said. "Oops, I reckon I shouldn't have said that."

"Now I'm forewarned," she said. "I'm Andromeda Tonks. Call me 'Andy.'"

He hesitated before saying, "Tom. Tom Anderson. Call me 'Tom.'"

"Certainly. 'Tom.' 'Tom' it is."

She learned that recently he was a surveyor for the railroad. He was once a civil engineer, but he had wanted to see the West. She actually seemed interested as he talked about foundations and roads and drainage and concrete. He smiled and said the main trick was arranging things so that water could run downhill.

"Like the Romans," she said. "A noble tradition."

She had come to see, and report, on her relatives, the Malfoys. They had come out here to look for investment opportunities, but they had stayed longer than expected and the family was worried.

"We're plagued with marauders, Andy," he said.

She stopped. "Marauders? Oh, you mean marauders, not the Marauders."

He wondered what had caused such a reaction from her. Was there another gang around or coming that he should be concerned about? He could believe the Malfoys brought their own trouble with them. There were other things about her that troubled him, that were affecting him almost as much as her serene beauty. She appeared confident even though she was with a stranger in a strange land. Once, when there was a noise in some roadside bushes, she had her stick out in a flash. Maybe she was expert at poking threats in the eye.

The biggest shock came when they arrived at Hamlet-on-Prairie-Edge and she asked, "How long have you been a werewolf, Tom?"

"What!" he said.

"You stopped to sniff the air every ten paces," she said, "and you have that graceful gait."

"Those dummkopfs," said Cho.

"Think of them as evil entities sent by the gods to sharpen our wits," said the editor.

"I'll wit them," said Cho. "I'll copy his style."

"Just do your usual with less finesse," said the editor.

Despite Theo being a heartless twit who had led her to believe he had feelings for her, the editor's comment still made Cho wince.

"Do you really think this is fun?" asked Andy.

"If we get good enough, we might be able to go on the safari, too," said Pansy, stroking the stock of a rifle.

"Do you think Draco and Lucius will invite us?" asked Parvati. "Would you drop some hints for us?"

Safari? No one's going to Africa, thought Andy. At least, they better not be. The Brits were trying to build a railroad across the Great Rift, but everyone knew that was a futile enterprise, a waste of money.

Amidst all the smoke and noise, it took a while for Andy's head to clear enough for her to realize the two young girls had misinterpreted the intentions of Draco and Lucius. While the two girls were plunking away at distant targets and squealing over the accuracy of the sniper rifles, Andy pulled her relatives aside and made her own suggestion about the gang-of-six, who could ride and shoot like a hundred, not that that fazed her.

"Why don't you hex their bits off?" she said. "I'll do it if you don't want to."

Draco and Lucius were reminded that they were dealing with one of the Black sisters.

"This is barbaric," she said, indicating the firearms with distaste. "You should be recalled. You've gone native."

The editor picked up her pen, determined not to let her disappointments with male initiative, or its lack, color her part of the story.

Pain never comes singly, but is always compounded, and thus our heroic creature of the canine variety not only suffered the pangs of intense longing for a lady he had just met, but he realized to his deep shame that, contrary to his advice to others to be bold if they wanted to capture fair damsel and to believe that if a woman showed interest it was because she wanted to be approached, he could not make advances to the middle-aged widow whose beauty and spirit had so intrigued him since he wasn't certain that such a refined flower could withstand the full force of the ardor that had risen within him, and as a consequence, his interactions with her were so filled with his sense of inadequacy that he would avoid meeting her if he could, but alas, he could not stay away, and in this manner, his life became a torment.

"We can be as sensitive as they can," Biff told Theo.

Every morning at breakfast, Andy felt as hollow as an old tree as she listened to the other three girls plan their day, planning their day as a team. Their mornings would be spent either discussing finance with the Dark Stranger or examining plots of land for investment potential. Their afternoons would be spent either target practicing with the Malfoys or trying new pastries. The Dark Stranger had promised them his recipe for Bakewell tarts. Tom hadn't helped. The rascal had told them he had found a cave where they could brew lager beer. At the center of everything they did were the men, the source that lit their lives.

Andy was thinking she was as bad as the giddy youngsters since she thought about Tom constantly. He always seemed glad to see her, but she was afraid that it was merely his natural politeness because he kept a certain distance between them. She had tried dressing provocatively to no avail, and she had tried telling him that she didn't care about his curse but it was too touchy a topic. She was afraid of losing him if she didn't speak up and afraid of losing him if she spoke too early.

Andy was staring into space after the girls left, feeling like the schoolgirl that no one wanted on their team. It didn't help that she was at odds with Lucius and Draco who were afraid of leaving a magic trail while she thought using guns instead of spells against the marauders was taking a big risk to avoid a small one.

Her mood lifted when Tom entered. She waved at him, and he sat down saying he came for a cup of coffee before visiting the nearby cabin he lived in while working for the railroad. When he remarked that she was looking as lovely as always, it came to her that Tom was in danger from the marauders, and she should do something about that. Nuts to the Malfoys.

When she asked what he intended to do at the cabin, he replied that he wanted to check on his surveyor's kit and his hunting rifle.

"I love surveying instruments," said Andy.

From the depths of her worries about Tom and the bounty hunters came The Way.

She asked, "And could you teach me how to shoot?"

A rifle and an invisibility spell should do the trick.

Prompt from MuseAmusant: bottle of lager, Bakewell tarts, bullfrog.

Author's Note: There was a delay posting this because of the embarrassment of Vampire!Severus not being a one-shot.