

Vampire!Severus 9: Ambush

by MHaydn

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Chapter 1 of 1

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His fingers combed her hair behind her ears as they gently massaged her temples until she relaxed and then they kneaded her shoulders while she was thinking it felt too good and she should tell him to stop before she never wanted it to stop, but his lips were caressing her neck, and she couldn't get the words out.

"Ow! Did you just bite me?"

"Only a nip, my dear."

No, no, no, thought the editor. She wanted to get the pairs together since the summer holiday was nearly over and Cho and Theo had to return to school, leaving only Biff and her to resolve the plot lines for the literary readers, get the couples together for the romantic readers, and provide a suitable climax for the dramatic readers, but the resolution had to arise naturally instead of being hastily forced.

The editor watched Cho trying not to stare at Theo. "Would you like another cappuccino? Would you like to share an apple turnover?" she asked him.

Theo shook his head no without looking up from his newspaper.

Before the editor could ask Biff if she could get him another coffee, he was up and halfway to the counter. He didn't even notice that she needed a refill. The story was impossible. This was impossible. She despaired.

Cho gave up, left the group and hastened back to the office, and while she was trying to regain her equanimity, she had a moment of inspiration. The townspeople would come to their senses and lynch the Malfoys. A cattle stampede would trample Tom, and the farmer's daughter would accidentally run over Severus with her buckboard, driving a wooden spoke through his heart. Brilliant. She couldn't wait to show this to Theo.

As she approached his desk, he looked up. "You left before I could show you the newspaper article." He sounded disappointed.

"I thought I had some ideas, and I had to get them down," she said.

"Always the professional. You left before I could offer you another cappuccino, so I brought you one," he said. "I might have some thoughts, but they're a jumble, and I don't know where to insert them in the chapter. Let's see yours."

You show me yours, and I'll show you mine, thought Cho as she pulled up a chair, took pen in hand, and, once again, tried to regain her equilibrium.

"That was great," said Andy. "Was I okay, Tom?"

They had just surveyed a likely railroad route east of Hamlet-on-Prairie-Edge for distance and grade. Now, they were cleaning the instruments, and Andy was saying how worthwhile it would be to find the best route to the next town. She was also wondering why the equipment cases had RJK stamped on them.

She looked at Tom. Who was he? When she sat down, she realized she didn't want to get up again after walking all over Creation carrying rods, tripods, and a measuring tape, but she agreed that she and Tom could meet at the hotel for supper after they had both rinsed off the day's dust. A sherry and a steak. Several sherries and a big steak.

"You got the point across without being mushy," said Theo.

Meanwhile, back in her office, the editor was pacing the floor like a Biff simile caged in a story that was too small for it. Why hadn't he poked his nose in the door so she could rail at him about being an inconsiderate, self-centered snob, about being, well, a writer? She couldn't contain herself. She would suffer the humiliation of stomping down to his office and storming all over him. She didn't know what she would say, but she wasn't worried. She was creative.

Biff poked his nose in the door and said, "I don't know what to do with this story. I'm going spare. I'm obsessing. All I think about are the terrible plot lines, and most of the time, I don't know where I am or who I'm with."

My kind of man, thought the editor.

"Have a chair, love," she said. "You need to relax. I'll brew us a nice, strong tea. While the water is boiling, I'll massage your shoulders. Once you've calmed down, I know you can write a good resolution."

But once her hands were on him, her own feelings deceived her and she blurted out, "Oh, Biff, what are we to do with the characters? We've created monsters who can't be trusted."

And what am I to do with this one, she wondered, *who has no loyalty other than his craft, who treacherously reveals things in black and white that no decent, or indecent, person would dare whisper?*

Of those among us, are not the most demanding the betrayers, those with a far vision in their hearts that all but extinguishes the traits that most hold as noble, and are not these the ones whose companionship requires passion beyond reason, beyond any semblance of rationality, passion with the fire to jump the gap between our existence and theirs and sear the fabric of our being with a flame that renders all else pale in comparison, and should we not look kindly upon those who seek such companions, shunning the tepid morality that would bind them to a shadow life in favor of the heights and depths that few can survive and who balance the scales of justice with a loyalty that transcends any earthly motive to remain faithful to those who appear to have nothing to offer but whose yawning cavern of need for what they must ostensibly eschew creates a debt that on some higher plane returns many fold the agony and the ecstasy that lifts the bestower into a life far from ordinary.

Several doors away, Theo was encouraging Cho. "Try an impossible pair," he said.

"I don't understand," he said.

"I asked if you ever thought about a change of scenery," she said.

"You're thinking about accepting the Malfoy offer and moving to San Francisco," said Severus. "What am I supposed to do while you advance in the heady world of finance, live on alley cats and urban possums?"

"There're butcher shops, and didn't you used to be some kind of chemical wizard?"

"That was years ago, and the community may not accept what I am."

"Your wasting away out here. You don't belong here anymore than I do. You could try, damn it," said Hermione.

"Keep going," said Theo.

"Will you buy me another cappuccino?" asked Cho.

"We're not going to Africa, are we?"

"Africa?"

Lucius and Draco were temporarily puzzled.

"Oh, you're talking about the purpose of our target practice," said Draco. "It's self-defense, not big game hunting."

"That's honorable, I suppose," said Parvati, "but wouldn't automatic weapons be better? The purpose of defense is to drive off the intruder."

"If you were looking forward to hunting, there's plenty of game in North America," said Lucius. "Besides, if we were going after elephants, we would want bigger guns, although you might take one down with a broadside from your submachine gun and that might be just as sporting as several great white hunters with nitro expresses backed up by a squad of native gun bearers."

There's defense, and there's offence, thought Pansy, keeping her thoughts to herself. *If the wizards aren't going to put the sniper rifles to good use, Parvati and I can take matters into our own hands.*

"We could go north for elk," said Draco. "They're as dangerous as anything."

"There's apple strudel in it for you if you can advance the plot," said Cho.

"Don't get me too excited," said Theo. "With whipped cream?"

How can an unassuming writer describe a scene beginning with the morning sun peering over the rolling hills like the eyes of the village virgin peeking over the window sill of a dance hall, her eyes, like the pen of our modest chronicler, rolling over all the bright colors that, glorious sights they may be, fail to hide from innocent eyes and even more innocent pen the coming swirl of action that plays out its primitive script.

"Shades of Biff and the editor," said Cho. *Forget the strudel. I'm going for peaches and cream.*

The bounty hunters were preparing their first breakfast after resupplying in a nearby town when Andy, failing to take into account the light refractive qualities of an invisibility spell, took aim at a scoundrel's skull, squeezed the trigger, and blew the maple-cured bacon out of the frying pan. The varmints scattered with one quick-thinking desperado grabbing the crate of free-range eggs and sprinting for the free range. When another peeped around a boulder, Andy took careful aim between his bright eyes, fired a round, and perforated the percolator. The coffee gurgled out onto the hot rocks around the campfire. As the scent of the wasted French roast filled the air, the gunslingers were like unto rending their garments.

Across the small, stream-filled valley, there was consternation.

"Someone ruined our ambush," said Parvati.

"Wow," said Pansy, "with these telescopic sights, I can read the label on that can of tomato juice."

"That's nothing. I can read the label on that can of sardines," said Parvati, blowing it away. "Take that you ... you pilchards."

"We're being stupid," said the two girls. They changed to targeting the whiskey.

Behind a rock below, someone was shaking a fist and yelling something about low-down, dirty skunks.

On a ridge above the invisible Andy, Lucius and Draco viewed the disintegration of their well-laid plan, shouldered their Winchesters, and headed back to town.

Crawling from cover to cover downstream from the camp, Severus and Tom decided the gang was now on the alert and the best they could do was scatter the gang's horses, but they discovered that someone else already had.

"We'll sneak up and rip their throats out another night," said Tom.

Biff couldn't find either Theo or Cho, and the editor was looking at him strangely.

Two wizards were chewing over the morning events like a pair of gourmands with a tough steak that had seen too many cooks.

"I think there were two sets of gunmen," said Lucius.

"I'm thinking about the set across from us," said Draco. "The shots were fired fast enough for two, and they shot up the camp after the bounty killers had taken cover."

"An irrepressible pair. We can make a good guess," said Lucius. "I wonder if they're responsible enough to take care of the rifles even though if we find them cleaning the rifles, we'll know it was them."

Thus it was that Lucius and Draco arrived just as Pansy and Parvati were arranging the tools and the guns on their separate tables.

"Well, well, well," said Draco.

"Well, well, well, yourself," said Pansy. "You can't accuse us of what we did without admitting you were there too."

"Where *have* you been?" asked Parvati. "And don't think you have plausible deniability because you didn't fire any shots and let us do all the work for you."

"Responsible," said Lucius.

"Smart and plucky," said Draco. "We're looking for such people."

"We're not going to pay your extortionist interest rate, so you can forget about that," said Pansy.

"Of course not," said Lucius, "but we can talk business later. Read through the cleaning instructions, and Draco and I will help."

Lucius stood behind Pansy and whispered, "Isn't it beautiful the way the bright metal contrasts with the dark stock, just like your complexion contrasts with your raven hair?"

Draco, behind Parvati, was also speaking softly. "I've always liked the walnut stock of the rifle you picked: golden hued, nicely curved, and a joy to hold."

Pansy and Parvati unloaded the rifles and read the cleaning instructions.

Turn the safety off.

"We accomplish nothing by playing it safe," said Lucius.

Prepare to free the bolt.

"An essential step," said Draco.

Push the floor plate back until it clears. Remove it, the magazine holder, and the catch lock.

"Nothing must impede the coming action," said Lucius.

Free the bolt, handling it carefully.

"Good girl," said Draco

The breach is now open.

"Everything is prepared nicely," said Lucius.

Make certain everything is lubricated, and insert the rod into the breach.

"Well done," said Draco.

Biff came out of his writing trance to find the editor behind him, gripping his shirt.

The road back to Hamlet-on-Prairie-Edge looked as long and dreary as a Sunday sermon after an Saturday night kegger.

"Everyone else gets to ride away, but we have to walk," said Tom.

Severus was reminded that no horse would come near either of them and that they had intended to frighten the gang's ponies but someone had deftly stolen all the mounts. It had to be someone familiar with livestock and who knew how crucial horses were. One person came to mind. He suddenly missed her, but there was a problem. "How are we going to explain our absence?" he asked.

Tom was thinking about that when he spied some roadside signs.

In the rough brush
You had a close shave
But no need to rush
There's your face to save
Buy Burma-Shave

"We'll be fine," said Tom. "We'll tell everyone we've been scouting for railroad routes. Andy will be thrilled because she wants me to become a surveyor again with her as an assistant, and Hermione will be happy you're rejoining civilization."

With his mind now calm, Tom was able to reflect on the morning events. One shooter had only fired two shots and had not joined in the destruction of camp supplies. That person was cool and deadly and had shot only to kill, but why had that person missed?

"Do concealment spells bend light?" asked Tom.

"Yes," said Severus. Guessing what Tom was thinking, he said, "We're not going to follow the rational policy of a solitary existence, are we?"

"Involuntarily, perhaps," was the reply.

Tom arrived at his cabin to find Andy sleeping in his cot. He checked his hunting rifle. It was freshly cleaned, and he thought two cartridges were missing. He stretched out on the rug for a nap and later woke to find Andy snuggling. Her lips met his in a kiss as deep and yearning as a Rocky Mountain canyon in midwinter.

Meanwhile, Severus appeared at Hermione's just after she had climbed out of the tub.

"I'm in no fit state," she said, wrapping her bathrobe tighter.

"You look fit to me."

"Is that a vampire version of sweet talk?" she asked, but she let him into her room.

She sat in front of her mirror and reached for her hairbrush, but he saw her wince when she picked it up.

"What did you hurt?" he asked. "Did a pack of horses nearly pull your arm out of its socket?"

"I have no idea what you're talking about. They shoot horse thieves in these parts."

"It was a brave thing to do," he said, "and not many people could manage it. How bruised are you?"

Down girl. He can't really be concerned about me.

"Now you want to see my black and blue spots," she said. "Is that how vampires make a lady's heart go pitter-pat?"

"I could kiss them and make them better."

"Not these you can't," she said. "That's indecent."

"It would be the gentlest of caresses. It would make you sigh with pleasure, and that would make my soul content," he said, stepping up behind her and placing his hands on her shoulders.

I will not sigh. I will not give him the satisfaction. I will not sigh, she thought. As his fingers moved over taut muscles and sent their message to her center, she fought down the schoolgirl sigh ... and moaned. *Bugger.*

His fingers combed her hair behind her ears as they gently massaged her temples until she relaxed, and then they kneaded her shoulders while she was thinking it felt too good and she should tell him to stop before she never wanted it to stop and before he stopped he should tend her bruises and make them all better, all of her bruises and sore spots, and her picturing him doing so made her tingle since she shouldn't let him do such things and what was wrong with him that he wasn't paying attention to where she ached, and she wanted to ask why he wasn't being a true gentlemen, but his lips and teeth were caressing her neck, and she couldn't get any words out until there was a sharp sting.

"Ow! Did you just bite me?"

"Only a nip, my dear."

END