

The Vampire Club

A TALE OF NOCTURNUM: THE PITTSBURGH CHRONICLES

By Jason Vey

(With apologies to Voltaire)

Note: This story was inspired by Voltaire's song "The Vampyre Club," which can be downloaded for free at his website (<http://www.voltaire.net>). No claim of ownership or infringement of copyright is intended; this little ditty should be viewed as a tribute to Voltaire, not a challenge.

"So, you actually got married?" Cyan's eyes were glittering as she shouted over the pounding music. The Upstage was exceptionally crowded tonight; the pulsing of Goth-industrial music gave rhythm to the dozens of sweaty, gyrating bodies that filled the dance floor.

"I did. *We* did," Drake replied, with his customary deadpan, "before she crossed over." He lifted his Guinness and took a long pull.

Cyan tilted her head to the side and regarded him for a long moment. Something about Drake was different. He seemed sad that Katherine was finally gone, yes, but that wasn't it. There was a kind of peace about him, a serenity she'd never seen in the tortured man.

Klaus noticed it, too. "I know I haven't known you long, but zere is something very different about you, ja?"

Drake looked into his beer, uncomfortable, unsure of what to say next. Cyan elbowed John, who was as always scanning the crowd for trouble.

"Ouch!" John said. "What?"

"Would you stop looking for vampires and monsters for once? We're here to celebrate Drake's wedding!"

"Can't help it," John said, taking a pull off of his own Guinness, "It's what I do. Congratulations, Drake. And yes," he added, with a sidelong glance at Cyan, "There is something different about you."

Drake took a deep breath and regarded his friends. "It's peace," he said. "Peace with myself, my place in the world, and the road I'm on."

"Glad to see zat *someone* has found peace," Klaus muttered.

"Indeed," Drake said in indication that he'd heard Klaus even over the din. "Katherine wouldn't have left were she not able to rest at last. That's all I ever wanted, for either of us. Now she has it."

John was the first one to pick up on where this was going. He arched one eyebrow and looked hard at his comrade, the one man he could always trust to have his back in battle, and never back down. "Drake... what are you saying?"

"I came back," Drake said at last, "To tell you all that I may be leaving. For good."

Cyan lit a cigarette, and lounged back. "No, you're not," she said. "You can't leave. None of us can. This place is like the *Hotel California*."

"Your pop culture references are lost on me, as usual."

"*Mein Gott*, Draco, even I know zat one. 'You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave'."

"Oh, but I can. I've joked about it in the past, but being in Ireland again, it amazed me how much it hasn't changed. After all these centuries, it was still home."

"What'll you do there?" John said, and lit a cigar. He offered one to Drake, who accepted and lit it himself.

"The same thing I do here, after a fashion. While I was there, I was contacted by the Watchers' Council, and the Devonshire Coven. Seems they have agents everywhere. They're like fleas. Anyway, they asked if I would be interested in helping to train new Slayers. It seemed like a good offer. After all, I have the skills, and no small amount of firsthand knowledge about the undead."

Sandra came up to the fence separating the bar from the dance floor, and rattled it. She was soaked with sweat and flanked by Carrie and Kay. "Come on, guys," She said. "*I'm* out here dancing. And you know if I of all people am on the dance floor and not sitting in a corner reading Blake, there's no excuse for the four of you to be sitting there."

"We're old," John said. "And I don't dance."

"Oh, but I do," Cyan said. "And I want a dance with the new groom. C'mon, Drake. I'll give you a dollar."

Drake quirked an eyebrow and turned to John, "Another pop culture reference?"

"A wedding tradition reference. The money dance."

"Ah. Well, I'm afraid I'll have to decline. This isn't my kind of dancing. Now if they put on a nice waltz, I'll gladly accompany you."

Cyan pouted. "You guys are no fun."

Klaus stood up and bowed low, "Fraulein, I shall be happy to dance vit you."

"Frau," John said.

"Pardon me?"

"She's married now. To me. Remember? She's not a 'Fraulein' anymore."

“She ist too young und lovely to be called ‘Frau’,” Klaus replied, and took Cyan’s hand. The two of them joined Sandra, Kay, and Carrie, and disappeared into the pulsing mass of bodies.

John turned back to Drake. “You sure about this?”

“No,” Drake said, “only around 80% certain.”

“Nothing we can do to change your mind?”

“I can’t go on living off of yours and Cyan’s charity,” Drake said. “In Ireland I would be my own person.”

“Hell,” John said, “If that’s all it is, you can start paying rent.”

“I can’t tell you how grateful that makes me,” Drake deadpanned.

A silent moment passed—at least, as silent a moment as one can get in a Goth club at peak hours—before Drake took another drink from his beer and said, “I’ve seen Anita.”

“Really? Take a trip to Missouri, did you?”

Drake quirked an eyebrow, questioning.

John took a drink of his beer and explained. “There was a call from the Mockers in Iowa—Cedar Falls, I think—that Anita was there. Cyan took a trip out there briefly, but whatever she saw, she couldn’t bring herself to talk about. I just know that after that, Anita went to St. Louis to visit family.”

“She did,” Drake nodded, “But no. She came to Britain, to convey her sorrows to Alan’s family. I received word from Willow that she was in the country, so I invited her to bear witness to my wedding to Katherine.”

“How is she?” John asked.

“Hurting. She’s not complete, and is very fragile. Seeing Alan’s family, I believe, both helped and hurt the process. It’s worse that he didn’t die. She gained closure—however horrible—from Kat’s death at last, then had the same kind of wound open with Alan.”

“He played us all,” John said. “I can’t say this in front of Anita—well, I can, and have, but it’s never a good idea—but I’m really sorry I didn’t just put a bullet in his head. It would’ve been better all around.”

“Perhaps,” Drake said. “But perhaps then we’d all be dead. If there’s one thing I’ve learned in nearly five hundred years, it’s that regrets and second-guessing serve no useful purpose.”

“True enough,” John said. “Sometimes I just wish Anita understood that I do the things I have to, not the things I want to. I would have killed him in a heartbeat if the opportunity arose. I wouldn’t have even regretted it after the fact. But I wouldn’t have liked it.”

“We all understand that, John. Anita is very much governed by her passions, though. But if she didn’t understand why you do the things you do, and if she didn’t appreciate your considerable skill and talents, I sincerely doubt the two of you would still be a team.”

“I guess,” John started, then his eyes narrowed as he scanned the door. “Uh, oh.”

“What is it?”

“Trouble.”

* * *

Sandra’s eyes narrowed as she looked at the door. “Uh, oh.”

“What is it?” Cyan said.

“Trouble.”

Across the room, into the bar walked about a dozen guys dressed in brightly-colored, frilly clothes, complete with long, red and blue velvet coats, wide-brimmed, feathered caps, and gold trim. Carrie and Sandra looked at one another and frowned.

Klaus looked at the newcomers, then back to the girls, clearly puzzled.

“Pirates,” they said in unison.

“So?” Kay asked. “The leader looks like a gay Captain Morgan.”

“Pirates and vampyres,” Sandra explained, “Do not get along.”

Klaus looked around, still confused, “Zere are vampires here?”

“Not *vampires*,” Sandra said, then made air-quotes with her fingers, “Vampyres. Goths who wannabe vamps. Like Vlad and Akasha over there. They’ve been dating for a couple months. Latest hot pair in the scene.”

“Oh,” Klaus said. “Those.”

As Sandra explained, the leader of the pirate-gang strode directly into the D.J. booth with a snide grin on his face, shoved the D.J. to the ground, and took the microphone from the stunned host. The music abruptly stopped, and the entire floor turned to face the pirates. John and Drake stood up, and tried to make their way out of the fenced-in bar area, only to be met with a solid wall of black-clad, whiteface-covered flesh. Still, they pushed their way through, knowing that when things eventually went bad, here, it wouldn’t do to be crowded into the tiny bar alcove. Not to mention, John wanted to find his wife.

A moment of feedback preceded the announcement of the Pirate Leader. He turned the booth lights on so that everyone could see him, and pointed directly to a dashing young man in a long, satin cape who stood upon the stage, looking quite nervous.

“That’s Baron Nightfalcon,” Sandra said, indicating the boy on the stage. “I wonder what the pirates’ beef with him is?”

“Hey, everybody,” the Pirate leader said, “See that fool in the cape? His name is Bernie Weinstein and he’s in the eighth grade!”

Bernie-Baron-Nightfalcon’s face fell. The red blush of his embarrassment showed clear through his whiteface, and he looked desperately like he wanted to be somewhere else.

Even Carrie was outraged. “Oh, no, he did *not!*” she hissed.

“Uh,” Kay said, “I’m new to this whole Goth thing. Fill me in, please?”

“Number one rule,” Sandra said. “Never call them by their real names.”

“Okay, you people are freaks,” Kay said.

“I’ve been saying that about us for years,” Sandra replied.

Just then, Lord Ravensholme, a large man who resembled Lurch from *The Addams Family* stepped up to the D.J. booth, where the Pirate Leader was emerging, cackling with glee. Ravensholme (whose real name, incidentally, was Bartholomew Robbins), blocked the path of the Pirate Leader back to his lackeys.

“Get out of my way, Sasquatch,” The Pirate Leader hissed.

“Why,” Ravensholme said, a quiet calm in his voice, “Must you come here to harass us? We just wanted to have a good time in peace.”

“Why? Because we want to have a good time, too, and this is our fun. Making freaks like you cry.”

With that, the Pirate Leader drove his pointed boot right into Ravensholme’s crotch, dropping the big man to the floor like a sack of potatoes.

“C’mon, boys!” He yelled. “Time to pillage and plunder!”

And the fight was joined.

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“This could be trouble,” Drake said. “If there are any real vampires in here tonight...”

“I thought of that,” John said. “If we see any game faces, open up. ‘Till then, let’s try and remember these are just kids. I don’t particularly want to go to jail for killing a kid.”

“It wasn’t me who killed a small fat child by shooting him in the face.”

“His name was Julius. And you’re never going to let me live that down, are you?”

“Never.”

Drake sensed a buildup of Essence surrounding John and looked at him, aghast. “Powers? I thought we weren’t to kill anyone.”

“Key of Life,” John said. “Someone’s bound to land a punch eventually, and ‘don’t kill anyone’ doesn’t mean ‘I want to get hurt’.”

“Oh, splendid,” Drake said. “Does this mean I get to cheat as well?”

“It’s not cheating,” John said. “It’s winning.”

Both men ducked as a body—the body of Father What’s-His-Name—flew through the air into a gaggle of groaning Goth girls, taking them down like dominos. A girl named Missy, who was already whaling about losing a fang in the ladies’ room, started crying when the other fang went clattering across the floor when she made contact with the floor.

“This could get ugly,” John said, making eye contact with a guy called Boris at the bar.

“Nah,” Boris said, “Just another night at the vampire club. Hey, bartender. Another Bud, would you?”

“I think he’s got the right idea,” Drake said with a smirk.

“Let’s find Klaus and the girls and get out of here,” John replied.

“Good idea.”

The two men began to fight their way onto the dance floor, John looking something like the Incredible Hulk, smashing heads, and hurling kids aside; Drake resembling Neo, dodging every punch that came his way without breaking a sweat, delivering return blows only when canes and clubs were involved.

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Things got real ugly, real fast for Cyan, Sandra, Klaus, Carrie, and Kay. Fortunately for the girls, even Pirates had some misguided sense of chivalry, so they mostly avoided the girls.

The Goth chicks, on the other hand, were a different story. It was like once the scent of blood was in the air, they all decided this was an opportune time to take out all their subculture politics with fingernails and fists. Sandra ducked a wild swing by a chick who called herself Baroness Lucretia, and sneered at her, “Come on, Agnes, let it go already.”

“Don’t *call me that!*” Lucretia screamed, leveling another blow at Sandra’s chin. This one connected, sending Sandra sprawling into Klaus’s arms.

Agnes-Lucretia came on hard, and just as Sandra squared herself for a fight, the girl stopped dead, lifted off the air, and flew into a group of pirates who were ganging up on a 90-lb. kid who couldn't have been more than 15.

"Thanks," Sandra said to Carrie.

"No problem. That's what sisters are for, right?"

"We're not sisters," Sandra said, but Carrie had been through this banter before.

"May as well be."

"Good point."

"So...Agnes? Looks like you broke the number one rule," Kay said.

"I hate that bitch," Sandra said.

"She wasn't a big fan of you, either," Cyan said, ducking a sailing chair. "Care to explain?"

"Nothing to tell. I slept with her boyfriend."

"I'll be sure *not* to tell Anita about that."

"Appreciate it."

"Ladies?" Klaus said, "While I appreciate this female bonding moment in ze middle of a barroom brawl...might we get out of here?"

"Good call," Cyan said. "Kay, you thinking what I'm thinking?"

"I am now," Kay said with a wink.

"Mind readers," Cyan said, exasperated.

The two girls picked out the biggest guys they could find in the place and focused. Immediately the guys looked at the group of girls and their eyes said all that needed to be said. The kids, teenagers both, immediately made for the girls, googly-eyed, and said, "This is no place for ladies like you. You're so beautiful...we need to get you out of here."

I love being an empath! Kay shot telepathically to Cyan.

I love being a witch! Cyan thought back.

"By all means," Carrie was saying to the boys. "Please, get us out of here!"

Kay smirked at her companion and partner. *Amazing how she can play straight when she has to,* the Asian girl thought.

As they made for the door, Cyan saw John and Drake fighting their way across the dance floor. She grinned, waved to John, and pointed to the well-enraptured boys guiding them out.

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Irritation was the first emotion that went through John when he saw his wife, smugly grinning at him as she made for the door, two large teenage boys parting the bodies like the Red Sea. Then, seeing Kay, Carrie, and Sandra in tow as well, he was grateful.

Then he saw the Pirate coming up behind Klaus. He gestured wildly to get the German's attention, and took a hard right cross for his troubles. Klaus still got brained with a silver-headed cane and went down in a heap. John spun on the kid who hit him, and sent the poor bastard to the dream world of Hod with one sharp right cross.

He and Drake were shoulder-to-shoulder, halfway across the dance floor, now, when an all-too-familiar voice sounded out just behind them.

"I love this! This is great! Why don't you guys do this more often?"

"Oh, God," Drake rolled his eyes at John. "That's Ebonor, isn't it?"

"Yes. Hi, Nyarlathotep," John said, laying out another scrawny kid that had been stupid enough to come after a huge bald ex-marine. "Sorry we don't have much time to banter with you right now."

"Oh, that's okay, I just came to watch and—*Ouch! You hit me, you impetuous mortal!*"

Before John could say anything, there was a sick, wet tearing sound followed by a hollow POP! He exchanged a quick glance with Drake.

"I don't want to know what that was."

"I tend to agree," Drake said, dodging yet another punch. He went low, lashing his foot out in a circular motion and sending four Pirates to the floor in a heap.

"Well," Ebonor said, "He shouldn't have hit me."

"Look," John said, over his shoulder, "I know I'm going to regret asking this, but do me a favor and at least get Klaus outside and safe with the girls? The poor bastard is likely to be dead by the time we get to him. Then you can come taunt us all you like."

"Goodness, you're such a baby," Ebonor said. "Fine, I'll do you one better, and it's on me, no strings attached. I'm feeling magnanimous today."

Suddenly, John and Drake found themselves standing outside, about ten feet from Sandra, Carrie, Kay, and Cyan. The latter two were unsuccessfully trying to fend off the advances of the two huge guys they'd enchanted to get them out of the bar.

Drake looked down to see Klaus unconscious at his feet. He knelt and checked for a pulse. "I think he's going to be okay," He said.

John's eyes were fixed on the brute trying to molest his wife. There was a cold fire smoldering in them.

"You know," Drake said, "She did likely bring it on herself. You felt the Essence, didn't you?"

"And that," John said, "Is the only thing that's keeping him alive right now."

John strode forward. Just before he reached the kid, Ebonor appeared next to Cyan. He winked at John, then tapped the kid and pointed. The kid turned just in time for his chin to meet John's fist, went down, and hit the ground hard with a groan.

The other kid, trying to force himself on Kay, spun on John. Drake casually walked up beside John and folded his arms. Seeing he was hopelessly outnumbered, the kid ran.

"Thanks," Cyan said. "But I could've handled it."

"I was tempted to let you," said John, "but we both know that never turns out well. Is everyone okay?"

"Everyone except Klaus," said Carrie, Kay, and Sandra at the same time. Then the three girls started giggling, which John found nearly as disturbing as the Pirate-Vampire battle in the club.

Klaus was coming to. Slowly, he pulled himself to a sitting position and rubbed his head.

"Ow," He said. "Vat happened? How did ve get here?"

"Well," said Drake as he helped Klaus to his feet, "That was a fun night out."

"That was nothing," Sandra said. "If you really want to see blood fly, you should be here when the ravers show up."

The group stood quietly in the alley for a few minutes, listening to the melee raging inside the club, then Cyan spoke up. "Hell hath no fury like a vampire scorned."

"Once upon a time, that would've been my line," Drake said.

"Aw, Drake," Cyan said in her cute voice, "It's still your line. So, Eat n' Park, anyone?"

"Sounds like a plan," Sandra said, then with her trademark sarcasm, she added, "It's still early. Maybe we can beat up the survivors when they show up there later."

"Don't make me shoot you," John said.

"You wouldn't dare. Anita would ground you for life."

"Can't have that, can I? C'mon, let's go. The Hummer's just down the street."

~FINIS~