

The Avengers – TNA

First Impressions

by Sula Bassana

Just a wee snapshot of an idea

First Impressions

FI (1)

Purdey looked out of the window for perhaps the fifteenth time, unable to shake the feeling of unease. Steed didn't seem to be taking this latest threat very seriously, but she couldn't find it in herself to be so blasé. In fact - damn him - recently he didn't seem to be taking anything that seriously. He seemed different - lighter and more mischievous, more like the roguish character she'd been warned about at the academy. And he was always wearing that enigmatic smile, in fact - she glared at him - the same one he was regarding her with now.

"I don't think I'm in any immediate danger my dear, I wish you would relax."

"And I wish you'd be more concerned."

"If I took every attempt on my life to heart I'd be a nervous wreck." He smiled and proffered a glass of brandy.

Just the one, she thought, perhaps it'll help.

But it didn't much.

"I think I'll take a stroll around the grounds."

Steed sighed, "If you must."

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Purdy took the indirect route towards the main gate, sticking to the deep shadows cast by the moonlit trees. She could see most of the drive. With a sudden shock and a rush of adrenaline she realised there was someone walking along it. No pretence of stealth, a brazen, nonchalant stroll.

She crept to a hidden vantage point in deathly silence, heart pounding. The stranger would have to pass nearby. Seconds ticked by but no-one appeared, perhaps she'd been imagining things after all.

Then from behind her came an apologetic cough. Her training kicked in, she whirled around and leapt to the attack.

And found herself face down in the grass, held in a painless but firm restraint. Her assailant spoke, a female voice, warm, feathery, amused. "Easy, I think you'll find we're both on the same side."

The grip on her arm was released and she was helped to her feet. "Not bad you know - for someone who learned to fight in ballet school."

Already furious at the way her attack had been deflected with such humiliating ease, Purdy boiled with rage at the jibe. She shook off the supporting hand and turned to face her

assailant, her mind racing; this person obviously knew who she was ... and suddenly realisation suddenly over her like cold water. She paused to consider a suitable reply. "I acted without thinking Mrs Peel, please forgive my ... youthful enthusiasm - I'm sure you remember it."

Emma Peel smiled at her artlessly, then laughed, actually laughed, damn the woman. "Touché." She held out a hand, "Its a pleasure to meet you at last. And please ... its just Emma."

The girl took the offered hand - it was only polite after all. But perhaps she couldn't keep all the feelings out of her eyes - even in the dark, because Emma frowned.

"I take it Steed didn't mention I was coming."

Purdy shook her head. The other woman muttered something under her breath, of which all she caught were the words "scoundrel", "games" and something which sounded suspiciously unladylike.

Emma looked at her searchingly, belatedly trying to unruffle some feathers.

"I'm sorry I crept up on you, I didn't realise who you were at first ... and then it was too late."

Purdy shrugged, "Forget it," she said rather stiffly. Her thoughts were of a darker nature, just try it again and we'll see how smug you look.

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A gentle rain started to fall as they approached the house.

"The gate was locked," said Emma, "I thought it would be easiest to climb over it and walk down to the house. I didn't expect the drive to be a mile long ... pretentious old goat" she added fondly.

"He inherited the house", said Purdy, trying not to sound too defensive.

"From one of his infinite supply of Aunts I suppose." Emma hmmffed disbelievingly, "I'd sooner believe he won it in a game of cards, and by cheating at that!"

The last was spoken loudly and Purdy saw its intended target was idly sitting on the steps with a bottle of champagne and three glasses.

"Bastard," she thought, surprising herself.

It was only when Emma looked at her slantwise and winked that she realised she must have spoken aloud.

"You only just realised?"

Well perhaps she could warm to her after all.

Steed got up to greet them smiling broadly. "Ah, I see you two ladies have got acquainted."

He regarded the two women standing side by side, both glaring at him, and stored the image away to treasure. "Well that saves time on formal introductions at least."

Then to Purdy's surprise he drew Emma into a very un-Steedlike hug, lifting her off her feet and spinning her round. Emma laughed as he put her down, "What are you doing?"

"Welcoming you to my humble abode." He released her and gave a little mock bow, gesturing for them both to enter.

Emma gazed around the hall as they strolled through to the library, "I have to say its completely ridiculous Steed. You'll be telling me you have a butler next."

"Ah well there's no need you see," Steed gave Purdy a conspiratorial grin, "we normally have Gambit to fix the drinks."

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"Well I have to get back into town," said Purdy once again returning to the window, "Will you be coming later?"

"In a little while," Steed replied, behind her he shot a glance at Emma, "I haven't yet given Mrs Peel the full tour."

A sudden, muffled spluttering came from Emma's direction, Purdy looked at her in surprise - she appeared to be choking on her champagne.

"Bubbles," she gasped, "Went the wrong way."

A little bemused, Purdy took her leave, Steed saw her to the door. Emma raised an eyebrow as he returned and he frowned at her.

"I resent that implication Mrs Peel, Purdy and I have a good working relationship - I have a great deal of respect for her."

She grinned and her eyebrow inched further upwards.

"Besides I have a rule; never mix business and pleasure."

Emma stopped grinning and walked in front of him, looking him straight in the eye, "Alright, who are you and what have you done with John Steed?"

He grimaced, "Hah hah."

She brushed an imaginary speck from his lapel, her hand coming to rest lightly on his chest. Then she turned away slightly and looked at him sideways, "You know, I'm actually quite insulted ...you obviously didn't have quite so much respect for me."

"Actually that rule was invented for you Mrs. Peel."

Emma expression became incredulous.

"Its just that you beguiled, bewitched and bewildered me and then plied me with strong drink ...as I recall."

Emma laughed and shrugged theatrically, "A girl's gotta do ... and you hardly needed a lot of plying."

"What can I say, I'm weak. And it was very fine scotch." Steed's hooded eyes twinkled. She smiled at him; that slow lazy smile, "So ... when do I get this tour?"

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"I hoped you might be able to give me a lift?" Steed smiled still slightly disbelieving in her presence. " Do you still have the Lotus?"

Emma looked rueful, "I sold her before I left for HK."

"Hmmm. Still something small and sporty though?"

She looked at him mischievously, "You could say that." She disappeared out of the room and returned a few seconds later carrying a motorbike helmet. Steed stared at it with dismay, "I'll call a cab then."

"Oh don't worry, I bought a spare, just in case." She laughed as his face fell further.

The End of the Beginning or something ;-)

First Impressions

FI (II)

Mike Gambit smacked the wheel of his E-type and cursed in disgust. He was only a few miles from Lord Faith's house, but possibly closer to the middle of nowhere. He'd only bought the car 2 months ago, how could it possibly have broken down? He popped the

bonnet and got out ... engine oil and tuxedo, not a good combination. Gazing down in dismay at the shiny confusion of metal and wiring, he barely registered the throaty sound of a motorbike as it flew past. These new engines, he thought in disgust, how on earth were you supposed to tell one end from the other, let alone see where the problem was.

How long would it take the RAC to reach him - certainly too long for him to reach the party in time, even if they could find him out here.

Despite his distraction a certain well-honed sixth sense kicked in to make him aware of the sound of the motorbike returning. He moved causally around to the other side of his car, comforted by the feel of his beringer snug in its shoulder holster.

The motorbike slowed up as it reached him and pulled across the road to where he had stuttered to a halt. The rider cut the engine and removed his helmet ... her helmet.

"Hello," she smiled at him pushing her hair back. It was a warm, very attractive smile, "Having problems?"

Gambit relaxed a little, ignoring a strange nagging sensation in the back of his mind. "Engine just cut out." He shrugged, "I'm ashamed to admit I have no idea why."

She swung a long leg over the bike and walked over to join him. "These new engines", she said shaking gorgeous, shoulder length tresses, "It's hard to tell head from tail!"

This could be love, he thought. "Isn't it though."

"She's a lovely thing though!" said the girl admiringly, she gestured at the engine, "Do you mind?"

"Please, be my guest."

The girl pulled off her gloves, and leant over the engine. It was possible that he's never seen a more complimentary set of bike leathers. Her voice came back to him, slightly muffled, "Can you turn her over?"

Gambit dutifully turned the ignition, the engine sputtered and died.

After a minute she looked up at him one eyebrow raised, "This is going to sound very condescending," she said apologetically, "but when did you last fill up?"

Gambit thought furiously, it couldn't be could it? "A few days ago, but the tank was half full - I'm not that careless."

"I've heard the petrol gauge can be temperamental in these cars, almost as bad as a bike. And believe me I've been caught that way myself more than once!"

His heart sank. Typical he thought, a beautiful woman turns up out of the blue and immediately discovers I'm a complete idiot. And we didn't even get to the first date.

"I could get you some petrol?"

Gambit slumped a little, "That would be kind."

She laughed disarmingly, "It happens to the best of us."

In ten minutes she was back with a small can.

She waited as he filled up then tried the ignition. The car spluttered then purred into life.

"Thank you."

"Don't mention it." With a rush of horror he realised she was about to put on her helmet, and disappear from his life.

"Wait ..."

She froze, helmet raised above her head.

“Perhaps, could I have your number ... we could have coffee sometime?” Oh very suave, he thought, cringing inwardly.

She looked at him quizzically and then her eyes danced with humour. “Oh, don’t worry,” she said, “I have the strongest feeling our paths will cross again shortly. Call it kismet.”

The bike disappeared off into the darkness, leaving Gambit briefly puzzled at this unusual turndown. He shrugged, it was hardly surprising, she must have thought he was a moron. He drove on to the party.

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It was a fairly select group of aristos and VIPs. Gambit felt like the proverbial fish out of water and mentally cursed Steed for inflicting this on him. He wandered through the milling guests to the bar. A prime position for discrete surveillance of the gathering; not to mention making the acquaintance of any impressionable young debutantes.

“Ah,” said a familiar voice behind him. “I always make it a policy at any party to befriend the man nearest the bar.”

He turned around, smiling with disbelief, it was her. Life truly was wonderful!

Once again he dismissed a faint niggling sense of familiarity at the back of his mind. It had been pointed out to him more than once in his life that one of his main weaknesses was allowing a certain other part of his anatomy to rule his thinking – and this evening proved no exception.

The bike leathers were replaced by an unconventionally simple blue dress, to stunning effect.

“Wonderful.” He said sincerely, she smiled graciously at the compliment. “Can I get you a drink?”

“Thank you, a dry martini would do me very well.”

He ordered a scotch for himself, and turned back to her as she settled herself onto a barstool. “Do you know many people here?”

She surveyed the crowd coolly, “One or two, not many, and you?”

“Hardly anyone, a friend of mine invited me, I was beginning to think it was a mistake,” he smiled at her to show he’d changed his mind.

“A friend?”

“Yes, I doubt that you know him ... John Steed.”

“Oh ... Steed,” she laughed, “What a coincidence!”

“You know Steed?” Gambit shook his head, trying to hide his dismay. “Small world!” He couldn’t believe it! The cunning old fox had got to her first, damn him. He thought furiously and after a brief struggle with his conscience decided firmly on dirty tactics.

“Have you known him long?”

The girl fixed her large brown eyes on him, her expression unreadable, she shrugged. “A little while. And you?”

“Oh we go way back, Steed’s a great guy.” He hesitated visibly in the throws of some internal debate.

“But?”

Gambit looked at her and gave the impression of giving in to some higher moral principles. "I don't want you to take this in the wrong way, as I said, he's a great guy, it's just, well he has little bit of a reputation." After all it was only fair to warn her.

"Really?" She looked at him with wide eyed innocence. He stared down at his drink.

"Yes ... well he's a bit of a ladies man,"

"Who's a ladies man?" Gambit choked on his whisky. The old devil himself had materialised as if from nowhere, he moved behind the girl - who was now grinning from ear to ear - placing a hand on her waist. Through his chagrin Gambit registered the unusually possessive gesture, the alarm in his head turned into a deafening klaxon.

He looked at Gambit with mock concern. "Mike - I feel I must warn you - she may look harmless enough, but she has more than a little of a reputation herself."

She looked up him grimacing, "You're such a spoilsport Steed - Gambit and I were getting along famously."

Finally, and with a growing sense of horror, he saw the light; the auburn hair, the easy familiarity with Steed. He groaned and thumped the heel of his hand to his forehead. Then looked up at her in resignation, Purdy was never, ever, going to let him forget about this.

"Mrs. Peel." He paused, "Your photos don't do you justice."

She smiled at him disarmingly.

Steed was grinning down at her, "Mrs Peel, you are a truly evil woman."

Emma bit her bottom lip and took Gambit's hand. "I'm sorry Mike, when I realised you didn't recognise me I'm afraid I just couldn't resist .."

Making a complete fool out of me, he finished mentally, then looked into the deep brown eyes, and was hopelessly mesmerised. Well she could make a fool out of him just anytime she damnwell pleased. "That's quite alright," he grinned, ignoring Steed's glare, "Perhaps we could have coffee sometime."

She laughed, "I'd like that."

Both parts originally on website:

http://web.archive.org/web/20040305094932/http://www.geocities.com/sula_bassana/first_impressions_2.htm