

## A Vampire Love Story

by Adam Casalino

They stood in a circle of moonlight in a small forest clearing. The trees surrounded them like silent sentinels, guardians of this one precious moment. He was tall and pale of skin. The glowing moon shined in his eyes. She stood, shivering in his arms—not because she was cold—but because being close to him was almost too much for her to bear.

“Fredward,” she said, her voice shaking, “I don’t care what you are. I *need* to be with you.”

“But Stella,” he replied, “we’re from two different worlds. I cannot be in love with a mortal.”

“Don’t say that! I *know* you love me.”

“I do...” the words shook Stella to her core.

“Then kiss me Fredward! Kiss me and let us be together forever.”

The vampire leaned in close. His smooth, white lips hovered over hers. There suddenly came the sound of rushing wind. Fredward gasped. Stella opened her eyes to find her lover stumbling backward. She screamed. An arrow was sticking out of his chest, over his heart. Without a word Fredward collapsed to the ground. He didn’t move.

“Sorry about that ma’am,” came a voice from behind. Stella turned. A man dropped from one of the trees and approached her. He was garishly dressed in a brimmed hat and long overcoat. Slung over his shoulder was an old-fashioned crossbow. “I had to shoot before he pulled ya too close. Then I would have speared the both of ya!” He let out a gruff laugh.

“Yo—you killed the man I loved!” Her voice shook with fear and anger.

“Oh, no, no, no, no.” the man answered. “That there was no *man*, missy. That was a *vampire*. Vampires kill people, not sure if you realize that.”

“He loved me!” Stella was on the verge of tears. “We were going to get married.”

“I doubt that very much,” he said. He moved the girl away from the body and inspected it. “Yeah these things will say pretty much anything to catch a prey. Woods around here are *rife* with ‘em. It takes all my resources just to keep ‘em in check. Damn near almost dropped the ball with this one.”

“Who are you?”

“Huh? Oh, the name’s Anderson. Josiah Anderson. I kill vampires.”

He turned to her and extended his hand. She did not take it.

“Oh come now, missy. I did you a big favor! That goon over there was just going to drink your blood and eat your skin. Probably just dump your bones in the woods—he doesn’t look like one of the *neater* ones.”

“You’re wrong!”

A groan came from behind them. Fredward rose. Stella took one look at the man she once loved and screamed. His porcelain skin had become black and scaly. Thick, prickly fur sprouted from his body. His arms and legs grew long, hooked with sharp, dirty claws. Leathery wings jutted out from his back. His silky voice was a vicious, animal growl.

“You see there, missy?” Josiah stood proudly, pointing at the monster. “That’s what they’re *really* like.” Stella cowered behind him, now shivering from terror.

The vampire rose into the air. “Oh no you don’t!” Josiah clasped one of clawed feet and pulled it back to the ground. He climbed onto the monster, repeatedly punching it in the face. From one of the bags strapped to his side, Josiah acquired a length of rope and proceed to hog-tie Fredward.

“This one’s tougher to kill than he looks!” Josiah shouted over the vampire’s shrieks. The monster thrashed wildly, throwing him off. The vampire hunter withdrew a knife from his belt and lunged at it. The blade flashed as he slit the vampire’s wrists and throat. It’s movements slowed.

“And now the *pièce de résistance!*” Josiah produced a short, thin sword. He raised it over the vampire’s neck. The monster grimaced and let out one last fearsome snarl. Then it was over. The black, hairy face rolled into the forest brush.

“There!” Josiah let out a breath and returned the sword to its place. He looked around and found Stella huddled beside the bowl of a tree. He cautiously walked over to her.

“I know, it’s pretty awful. The world is full of strange and mysterious creatures. It’s my job to kill ‘em. You may be upset now, but one day you’ll understand.”

“Th-thank you,” was all she could make out.

“Oh, don’t mention it.” He wave the thank you away like it was a lazy mosquito. “But come now,” he extended a hand to the girl. “Like I said, this woods is full of those bastards. Lemme take ya home.”

Slowly Stella rose to her feet. Josiah guided her from the clearing, continuing to talk of things most humans wished not to know. As the moonlight

faded all that could be seen of Fredward was a pile of dust, that slowly disappeared into nothingness.