

The Vampyre

by John Stagg, 1770-1823

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Why looks my lord so deadly pale?
Why fades the crimson from his cheek?
What can my dearest husband ail?
Thy heartfelt cares, O Herman, speak!

Why, at the silent hour of rest,
Dost thou in sleep so sadly mourn?
Has tho' with heaviest grief oppress'd,
Griefs too distressful to be borne.

Why heaves thy breast?—why throbs thy heart?
O speak! and if there be relief,
Thy Gertrude solace shall impart,
If not, at least shall share thy grief.

Wan is that cheek, which once the bloom
Of manly beauty sparkling shew'd;
Dim are those eyes, in pensive gloom,

That late with keenest lustre glow'd.

Say why, too, at the midnight hour,
You sadly pant and tug for breath,
As if some supernat'ral pow'r
Were pulling you away to death?

Restless, tho' sleeping, still you groan,
And with convulsive horror start;
O Herman! to thy wife make known
That grief which preys upon thy heart.

O Gertrude! how shall I relate
Th' uncommon anguish that I feel;
Strange as severe is this my fate—
A fate I cannot long conceal.

In spite of all my wonted strength,
Stern destiny has seal'd my doom;
The dreadful malady at length
Wil drag me to the silent tomb!

But say, my Herman, what's the cause
Of this distress, and all thy care.
That, vulture-like, thy vitals gnaws,
And galls thy bosom with despair?

Sure this can be no common grief,
Sure this can be no common pain?
Speak, if this world contain relief,
That soon thy Gertrude shall obtain.

O Gertrude, 'tis a horrid cause,
O Gertrude, 'tis unusual care,
That, vulture-like, my vitals gnaws,
And galls my bosom with despair.

Young Sigismund, my once dear friend,
But lately he resign'd his breath;
With others I did him attend
Unto the silent house of death.

For him I wept, for him I mourn'd,
Paid all to friendship that was due;
But sadly friendship is return'd,
Thy Herman he must follow too!

Must follow to the gloomy grave,
In spite of human art or skill;
No pow'r on earth my life can save,

'Tis fate's unalterable will!

Young Sigismund, my once dear friend,
But now my persecutor foul,
Doth his malevolence extend
E'en to the torture of my soul.

By night, when, wrapt in soundest sleep,
All mortals share a soft repose,
My soul doth dreadful vigils keep,
More keen than which hell scarcely knows.

From the drear mansion of the tomb,
From the low regions of the dead,
The ghost of Sigismund doth roam,
And dreadful haunts me in my bed!

There, vested in infernal guise,
(By means to me not understood,)
Close to my side the goblin lies,
And drinks away my vital blood!

Sucks from my veins the streaming life,
And drains the fountain of my heart!
O Gertrude, Gertrude! dearest wife!
Unutterable is my smart.

When surfeited, the goblin dire,
With banqueting by suckled gore,
Will to his sepulchre retire,
Till night invites him forth once more.

Then will he dreadfully return,
And from my veins life's juices drain;
Whilst, slumb'ring, I with anguish mourn,
And toss with agonizing pain!

Already I'm exhausted, spent;
His carnival is nearly o'er,
My soul with agony is rent,
To-morrow I shall be no more!

But, O my Gertrude! dearest wife!
The keenest pangs hath last remain'd—
When dead, I too shall seek thy life,
Thy blood by Herman shall be drain'd!

But to avoid this horrid fate,
Soon as I'm dead and laid in earth,
Drive thro' my corpse a jav'lin straight—

This shall prevent my coming forth.

O watch with me, this last sad night,
Watch in your chamber here alone,
But carefully conceal the light
Until you hear my parting groan.

Then at what time the vesper-bell
Of yonder convent shall be toll'd,
That peal shall ring my passing knell,
And Herman's body shall be cold!

Then, and just then, thy lamp make bare,
The starting ray, the bursting light,
Shall from my side the goblin scare,
And shew him visible to sight!

The live-long night poor Gertrude sate,
Watch'd by her sleeping, dying lord;
The live-long night she mourn'd his fate,
The object whom her soul ador'd.

Then at what time the vesper-bell
Of yonder convent sadly toll'd,
The, then was peal'd his passing knell,
The hapless Herman he was cold!

Just at that moment Gertrude drew
From 'neath her cloak the hidden light;
When, dreadful! she beheld in view
The shade of Sigismund!—sad sight!

Indignant roll'd his ireful eyes,
That gleam'd with wild horrific stare;
And fix'd a moment with surprise,
Beheld aghast th' enlight'ning glare.

His jaws cadaverous were besmear'd
With clott'd carnage o'er and o'er,
And all his horrid whole appear'd
Distent, and fill'd with human gore!

With hideous scowl the spectre fled;
She shriek'd aloud—then swoon'd away!
The hapless Herman in his bed,
All pale, a lifeless body lay!

Next day in council 'twas decree,
(Urg'd at the instance of the state,)
That shudd'ring nature should be freed

From pests like these ere 'twas too late.

The choir then burst the fun'ral dome
Where Sigismund was lately laid,
And found him, tho' within the tomb,
Still warm as life, and undecay'd.

With blood his visage was distain'd,
Ensanguin'd were his frightful eyes,
Each sign of former life remain'd,
Save that all motionless he lies.

The corpse of Herman they contrive
To the same sepulchre to take,
And thro' both carcasses they drive,
Deep in the earth, a sharpen'd stake!

By this was finish'd their career,
Thro' this no longer they can roam;
From them their friends have nought to fear,
Both quiet keep the slumb'ring tomb.
