

METAMORPHOSIS OF THE VAMPIRE

Charles Baudelaire 1857

Meanwhile, from her red mouth the woman, in husky tones,
Twisting her body like a serpent upon hot stones
And straining her white breasts from their imprisonment,
Let fall these words, as potent as a heavy scent:
"My lips are moist and yielding, and I know the way
To keep the antique demon of remorse at bay.
All sorrows die upon my bosom. I can make
Old men laugh happily as children for my sake.
For him who sees me naked in my tresses, I
Replace the sun, the moon, and all the stars of the sky!
Believe me, learned sir, I am so deeply skilled
That when I wind a lover in my soft arms, and yield
My breasts like two ripe fruits for his devouring-both
Shy and voluptuous, insatiable and loath-
Upon his bed that groans and sighs luxuriously
Even the impotent angels would be damned for me!"
When she drained me of my very marrow, and cold
And weak, I turned to give her one more kiss-behold,
There at my side was nothing but a hideous
Putrescent thing, all faceless and exuding pus.
I closed my eyes and mercifully swooned till day:
Who seemed to have replenished her arteries from my own,
The wan, disjointed fragments of a skeleton
Wagged up and down in a new posture where she had lain;
Rattling with each convulsion like a weathervane
Or an old sign that creaks upon its bracket, right
Mournfully in the wind upon a winter's night.

Translated by Edna St. Vincent Millay.

" THE VAMPIRE "

You who, like the stab of a knife,
Entered my plaintive heart;
You who, strong as a herd
Of demons, came, ardent and adorned,

To make your bed and your domain
Of my humiliated mind
- Infamous bitch to whom I'm bound
Like the convict to his chain,

Like the stubborn gambler to the game,
Like the drunkard to his wine,
Like the maggots to the corpse,
- Accurst, accurst be you!

I begged the swift poniard
To gain for me my liberty,
I asked perfidious poison
To give aid to my cowardice.

Alas! both poison and the knife
Contemptuously said to me:
"You do not deserve to be freed
From your accursed slavery,

Fool! - if from her domination
Our efforts could deliver you,
Your kisses would resuscitate
The cadaver of your vampire!"

Poem by Charles Baudelaire

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