

# The Vampyre

(Strigoiu)

By Vasile Alecsandri

Near the cliff's sharp edge, on high  
Standing out against the sky,  
Dost thou see a ruined cross  
Weatherstained, o'ergrown by moss,  
Gloomy, desolate, forsaken,  
By unnumbered tempests shaken?

Not a blade of grass grows nigh it,  
Not a peasant lingers by it.  
E'en the sombre bird of night  
Shuns it in her darksome flight,  
Startled by the piteous groan  
That arises from the stone.

All around, on starless nights,  
Myriad hosts of livid lights  
Flicker fretfully, revealing  
At its foot a phantom, kneeling  
Whilst it jabbars dismal plaints,  
Cursing God and all the saints.

Tardy traveller, beware  
Of that spectre gibbering there;  
Close your eyes, and urge your steed  
To the utmost of his speed;—  
For beneath that cross, I ween,  
Lies a Vampyre's corpse obscene!

\* \* \*

Though the night is black and cold  
Love's fond story, often told,  
Floats in whispers through the air.  
Stalwart youth and maiden fair  
Seal sweet vows of ardent passion  
With their lips, in lovers' fashion.

Restless, pale, a shape I see  
Hov'ring nigh; what may it be?  
'Tis a charger, white as snow,  
Pacing slowly to and fro  
Like a sentry. As he turns  
Haughtily the sward he spurns.

'Leave me not, beloved, tonight!  
Stay with me till morning's light!'  
Weeping, thus besought the maid;  
'Love, my soul is sore afraid!  
Brave not the dread Vampyre's power,  
Mightiest at this mystic hour!'

Not a word he spake, but prest  
The sobbing maiden to his breast;  
Kissed her lips and cheeks and eyes  
Heedless of her tears and sighs;  
Waved his hand, with gesture gay,  
Mounted—smiled—and rode away.

\* \* \*

Who rides across the dusky plain  
Tearing along with might and main  
Like some wild storm-fiend, in his flight  
Nursed on the ebony breast of Night?  
'Tis he, who left her in her need—  
Her lover, on his milk-white steed!

The blast in all its savage force  
Strives to o'erthrow the gallant horse  
That snorts defiance to his foe  
And struggles onward. See! below  
The causeway, 'long the river-side  
A thousand flutt'ring flamelets glide!

Now they approach, and now recede,  
Still followed by the panting steed;  
He nears the ruined cross! A crash,  
A piteous cry, a heavy splash,  
And in the rocky river-bed  
Rider and horse lie crushed and dead.

Then from those dismal depths arise  
Blaspheming yells and strident cries  
Re-echoing through the murky air.  
And, like a serpent from its lair,  
Brandishing high a blood-stained glaive  
The Vampyre rises from his grave!