

Sam's Story

SAM GLASS.

I don't know where to start, but I guess I'll start at the beginning, as boring as it is.

My name is Sam Glass – Samuel Abelard Glass, to my mother when she was annoyed.

I was born in 1932, a Depression-era child who grew up to a World War II teen, and a post-war adult. I turned eighteen in 1950, which in Morganville meant that I had to choose to either align myself with a vampire Protector, like my parents had before me, or strike out on my own without any kind of guarantees.

I'd like to say I was brave enough to do that. I wasn't. I signed the contract, got the bracelet, and life went on as normal, at least in terms of this town where vampires are a fact and living with them is a challenge everybody faces.

I started at the local college, Texas Prairie University, and when I was nineteen I met Melinda Barnes, and I fell in love. She was a lovely girl, bright as a star, and things went fast. Too fast, maybe. At twenty, I found myself with a wife, and a baby on the way. My parents had passed on, so I had inherited the family home, one of the big Founder Houses in town. Melinda was dreaming of a house full of kids, and as she got bigger every month with the child we'd made, I thought about it too. I wondered if it was the right thing to do, having kids in Morganville, but I'd made the choice, and Melinda was so happy

And then something went wrong, badly wrong, while I was in the waiting room at Morganville General Hospital's maternity wing. In those days, fathers were expected to sit and wait, or pace and wait, or worry and wait. I paced, wondering how many hours I had left to go, wondering if those shrieks I could hear from beyond the doors belonged to Melinda. Feeling guilty and anxious and scared.

When the doctor came out, he came slowly, and the look on his face told me all I really needed to know.

Melinda had died in childbirth. They'd managed to save my son, though that had been close, too.

Married at twenty, a widower with a baby at twenty-one. We got by, me and Steven. I'd been terrified of having a baby to tend, but he won me over right away, the first look I had at his big china-blue eyes. So beautiful. I'd never understood what it felt like to really belong so completely to someone else, but little Steven became my world.

I wasn't all on my own, of course – in the 1950s, nobody trusted a young man to properly raise a child on his own. I had plenty of help from the local busybodies – and some of it was welcome, I admit.

One day, I had a visit from the Founder.

I had never met Amelie, but I expected someone old, dry, chilly. Instead, she was beautiful, and quiet, and when she smiled, the world lit around me. It was a courtesy visit, a condolence call to acknowledge my loss and meet the newest member of the Glass family. She didn't mean it to be anything more. Neither did I.

Instead, we became friends. Tentative friends, well aware of the huge gulf between us, but I sensed how lonely she was, and she could see the same thing in me. I was alone in the world, with Steven depending on me, and I suppose I was overwhelmed, too. Her kindness – and it was kindness, as strange as that might sound, considering who she was – seemed like water in the desert to me.

She began to drop by more often, helping with Steven, leaving her bodyguards at the door or dispensing with them altogether. With me, Amelie could shed the thousands of years and remember what it was like to be human. To simply ... be.

By the time my boy turned three, I was in love with her. Not the kind of flash-point love I'd felt with Melinda; that had burned fast, and faded. This was different, longer, richer. I knew it was stupid, impractical, impossible, but I could see, in unguarded moments, that she felt the same.

It might never have been anything more than a phantom, a dream that neither of us could acknowledge, except that Edgar Bryan went insane.

Old Edgar had never been one of the town's saner residents; he'd been bounced in and out of mental treatments for years, and most knew to avoid him when he was "in a mood." I don't know how it happened, exactly, but I earned a reputation as a reasonable man, someone who could help calm down a bad situation; I'd dealt with more bar fights than I could remember, and even a few political arguments between humans and vampires.

When Edgar went around the bend, the first person they called was me. In fact, I got to the Barfly Tavern before the police, although I could hear the sirens wailing across town. Edgar had barricaded himself in a back room, along with six hostages, after he'd gone crazy and accused half the town of being out to get him.

It was already a killing matter by the time I got there. One of those he took hostage was a vampire – a young one, not nearly as capable of protecting herself as most of the others. And I knew her – her name was Marion, she was so quiet and shy she barely registered as a vampire at all.

When Edgar started waving his buck knife around at one of the bartenders, Marion stood up and stepped in between them. She had to, by Morganville's rules – she owed the girl Protection. I wasn't there, but I heard she was brave. She trusted that being a vampire was enough to protect her, because nobody could be that crazy.

Only Edgar was, and he killed her.

In Morganville, that meant that Edgar's time was up; he was going to die for that, most likely in a medieval, horrible way. There was nothing I could do for the dead vampire, but I could try to get the other five people out without losing more of them to Edgar's ravings.

It took all night, but I convinced Edgar to let the rest of them go – and it was a good thing I did. Amelie showed up before dawn, with her entourage, just as I took the last of them out to safety, while Edgar agreed to lay down his knife for good.

He snapped completely at the sight of her -- maybe knowing that his life was over anyway. He went straight for her, screaming. If I'd been thinking at all, I'd have known that he couldn't hurt her; she had guards, and she was far stronger and faster than he was.

But I wasn't thinking. All I could see was Amelie, and the knife, and that horrible sight of poor Marion in the back room with her head lying two feet from her bloodless body.

So I played the hero. You can guess how that ended – with Edgar's buck knife buried so deep in my guts that the tip sliced through my spinal cord. It didn't matter. All that mattered was that I'd stopped him before he got to Amelie.

I didn't see what happened to Edgar, which I suspect was a blessing. I closed my eyes for a while, and when I opened them again, my head was lying in Amelie's lap, and she was staring down at me with an expression of completely unguarded grief on her face.

There were tears in her eyes. Tears. That meant something, something so huge I couldn't even put a name to it.

Before I could, I went away again.

The next time I came back, I was ... different. It felt quiet inside, so very quiet, and yet I could hear everything, feel everything so intensely. Amelie's cool fingers against my face, like silk and marble.

I tasted salt on my lips. Salt and copper.

Blood.

Amelie hadn't made a human into a vampire in a hundred years in Morganville. But she'd done it to me. She'd done it to save me, for my son's sake -- or so she told me. But she knew, and I knew, that it was something else.

I blamed her at first. It was hard to understand the life – if you can call it life – that vampires lead, the cravings, the impulse to violence and cruelty. I'd never been a cruel man. It sickened me to find that in myself, and I fought hard to beat it down. Stay the kind of person I'd been in life. Be a peacemaker.

I tried to stay away from Amelie. Being around her awakened all kinds of emotions in me – and the stronger the feelings, the harder it was to control my worst impulses. Amelie kept me at arm's length, rightly afraid that she and I would make each other too open, too vulnerable, and after what seemed like an eternity, I spent whole days at a time without feeling out of control and desperate.

But I missed her. I missed her all the time.

I was a terrible father in those years, but Steven turned out better than I deserved. He grew up strong and wild, and not a bit afraid of me, even when the black moods came over me. I suppose his love helped keep me the person I wanted to be, in the end.

At eighteen, Steven refused to sign a contract, and more than once, I was forced to come to his rescue when he got on the wrong side of one vampire faction or the other. A few years later, he fell wildly in love with a girl from out of town, Rose, and within a year after that, they were expecting a child. I'd been a father, widower, dead man, vampire ... being a grandfather seemed too much, suddenly.

But just like when I'd held Steven in my arms for the first time, holding my grandson Michael on the day of his birth seemed to fill that empty space inside. Love hadn't changed for me. I still loved my family. I still wanted desperately to protect that small, beautiful life.

Michael Glass. He was my grandson, but as I watched him grow, watched him settle into a kind, thoughtful, gifted boy with loving parents to guide him, he felt more like my own child. And I tried to give him the guidance I hadn't been able to give Steven. From time to time, it even felt like I succeeded.

Amelie – Amelie and I are complicated. I love her, I know that. I would do anything for her, anything at all, and that's dangerous to her as well as me. So we keep our distance, for the most part. She has to play the ice queen, especially now that Oliver's in town and pressing her for control, and I understand that. I make her vulnerable.

I hate being her weakness.

When she turned Michael, I agreed with her decision, but I hated that, too -- seeing his mortal life end, and my grandson being dragged headlong into this world of ancient politics and power. I wanted to protect him. I always thought that I could protect him for everything, but not even a vampire can promise that.

Not even a vampire should, in Morganville.

One thing about it, though: I don't feel as alone.

Selfish as that is, I can't tell you what it means to me.