

# **Lone Star Stories**

**Speculative Fiction and Poetry**

# The Tailor and the Fairy

by Samantha Henderson

Once upon a time in a faraway kingdom there lived a hard-working tailor named Albert. Albert was a conscientious craftsman: his hems were precisely stitched with the best silken threads, and the silver buttons on his waistcoats lined up with mathematical precision. His tailcoats were, quite simply, masterpieces of the haberdasher's art, and his trouser legs made atheists believe in divine perfection.

I am sorry to say that Albert's wife, whose name was Euridice, was not at all a nice woman. In fact, she had the soul and manners of a three-week's-dead geoduck.

(What is a geoduck, you ask, my dears? Best not to know. It is a creature of unspeakable evil. It lives in a wet land, and when good little girls and boys meet it, they run mad from the horror.

Bad little girl and boys take it home to scare their mothers.)

Like most of his fellow villagers, Albert was rather shabby. You see, he could never afford to wear any of his creations: just like the baker would never eat one of his own sugar-silvered wedding cakes, and the mason would never live in one of his own tastefully appointed Craftsman-style river rock houses, and the seamstress would never don one of her own high-necked, ruby-sequined ball gowns.

These things were for the rich alone, and most of the villagers learned to accept that cold, immutable fact.

But in his heart of hearts, Albert never did.

When he touched the bespoke suits and stitched the collar of a lordling's shirt, he couldn't help but dream of life in fine marble halls, of glamour and intrigue, of assignations in the courtyard at midnight. The glint of diamonds around a woman's neck in the moonlight, the delicious menace of an assassin's blade poised behind a curtain.

He wondered if the seamstress had similar thoughts as she stitched at cloth-of-gold. He thought he caught a glimpse of it, sometimes, in her eyes. But she never said anything, and he never asked her.

Although his love for Euridice (his wife—were you paying attention, pets?) was a pale, timid thing compared to his flights of fancy, the tailor couldn't help but notice that the sharp edge of her tongue was blunted and that she was becoming sullen and morose rather than sarcastic and acid. In fact, the virago was suffering from a severe case of ennui: less a fishwife and more a limp fish.

So concerned was Albert that he called in the village wizard, a cut-rate mage who moonlighted as a leech-

(No, not that kind of leech, my darlings. It's an old word for a doctor.

Because they put bloodsucking leeches on people. Almost as bad

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