

From an Unknown Journal

Who am I? Why am I here? I thought that, by now, I would have all the answers, that I would be afraid no longer. I could not have been more wrong. Instead of answers, I found a cage, a pen, and parchment.

I do not understand why men who claim to be allies would treat me like an enemy. It is unknown to me what their motives are and why they treat me like a scoundrel. Perhaps they know more than I do. Maybe they know more about me than I know about myself. I can honestly say that before my awakening, I can remember nothing.

I awoke this morning in a room of darkness. Firelight illuminated from the tiered candelabras all around me, and it took some time for my tired eyes to adjust to the dim light. My head spinning, I slowly and cautiously rose to my feet. I stumbled on a raised wooden plank to my left and held fast the rounded tops of the wooden benches nearby. Suddenly, over my left shoulder, a man appeared; he had wings! I strained my eyes and noticed not one, but two men with large trumpets. Many men draped in robes sat below them, statues of what I could only guess were bronze, some with beards and some with hats, a little angel boy, and the head of a cow. It was difficult to see how high the ceiling went, for the candlelight was not strong enough to illuminate the ceiling.

I grabbed the smooth curved tops of the pews in each row to keep my balance and noticed the large stained glass windows rising over my head. They were dark and lifeless, their images masked in twilight. Candles were no match for the sun. They varied in height, most being long and narrow, and all had domed tops. As I tried to follow this sight to the rafters, all I could see was the grayness that hung overhead; the candles were not strong enough to illuminate the ceiling. It was then I heard the rain pattering against the roof of the church, and as my weariness waned, the rain pelted harder into the side of the building.

The aisle's end brought me to a small atrium followed by two large wooden doors taller than any one man could reach, separated by a column of stone, and heavily bolted and reinforced with iron bars. This door was sealed shut from the inside; it would be impossible for anyone to get in. The metal poles screeched and pierced through the darkness as I removed them from their resting places, drawing them out of their lock holes to each side of the doors. My eyes wandered as I worked, seeing above these doors large silver pipes, long and wide in the middle and narrow and short on each side. Two more winged men, angels in fact, sat with the pipes, protecting their songs. I went to push open both sets of doors, but my strength had left me, and they barely budged. Impatiently, I threw my shoulder into one side and pushed with all my might to get the door open. Finally, it gave way and I was anxious to see where I was and to get out. Perhaps someone in town could get me to an inn where I could get a good night sleep and in the morning seek answers. I wasn't thinking straight. No one would be taking me in this night.

"Hello!" I called out into the streets. Large puddles splashed my legs as the rain fell into them. The wind whipped across my exposed flesh, and I shivered at the cold. The paths leading out were dark and lifeless, an abyss with no answers, no salvation. With straining eyes I noticed an animal crossing just inside my sight's limits. It stopped directly in front of me and by chance or, seeming to me, intentionally met my gaze. The beast would not turn away; it only stared, almost as a form of dominance. I fumbled around, looking for an iron ring to pull the door shut quickly as the wolf gave a loud howl at the yellow crescent moon that sat beyond sight, obscured by the clouds that hung above, still unleashing the fury of the storm against the church.

I grasped the iron ring to bring the wooden door to a close as I turned back into the unfamiliar church. The encounter with the beast left me uneasy, not just in my stomach but also in my whole being. I think back to it now, and it still gives me chills. I felt something but have no rational answer as to what it could have been. Thunder crashed as the storm continued to punish the foundations of the church. I replaced the iron bolts and turned to make my way up to the altar. I stepped slowly across the stone center aisle and reached the red steps that led up to the sanctuary's most holy place. A copy of the Bible rested on that sacred table, and three large windows rose up from eye level all the way to the ceiling. Winged angels sat on either side, surrounded by candlesticks as long as small brooms. The light flickered and danced, illuminating a crucified Christ to the observer's right side. The entire time I had the feeling that I was being watched by something I could not see or hear. I hated that

feeling. If there was any comfort in being in this cage, it must be that I had those insecurities no longer. I followed the wall around to a concealed corner where I found a small table with a white sacramental cloth draped over it. Frescos decorated the stone walls, which I reached out to touch with my bare hands. They felt as if they were made of ice.

When I turned to head toward the emerald green organ I noticed the frosty stone against my bare feet. I winced and looked down at them, wondering what happened to my boots, and was taken with surprise! My clothing was torn, ragged, and stained with blood. But how? I could not remember anything! I panicked thinking what I could have possibly done, and not being able to remember any of it made my heart race. First, I searched over myself for wounds. I found scars but nothing fresh. My God, I looked like I had been through a war! With a large candle from the main altar, I ran back to where I had been sleeping on the floor, searching with my palms flat against the stone. I could find no evidence to help solve my mystery. There were no clues to tell me who I was, where I had been, how I got in this church...not even my name. Not one answer! Damn, if I could only get one solid answer, instead of riddles and questions...and fear!

As time passed on into the night, my circumstances did not improve. Rain began to drip through the ceiling, and the storm showed no signs of letting up. I felt like morning would never come, like I had seen the sun for the last time. No one was coming for a man without a name. I sat in a pew near the trumpet-bearing angels, alone and afraid, wondering if I should wait for the priest or challenge the elements outside. As my thoughts wandered so did my eyes and that is when I noticed something.

The wooden planks that the pews rested on were all raised a step from the main stone aisle. Most of these long planks ran from the front of the church to the rear, but a small section was uneven with the rest and ran from side to side. I knelt down with my candle to inspect this inconsistency further. These planks were barely nailed down and had a slight bend in the middle when I stomped down on them. I squatted down in the main aisle in front of the board and with both hands lifted with all my strength. Surprisingly, with little effort the boards easily lifted away, secretly hinged towards the side of the church's wall. I eagerly took my candle and inspected the underside which revealed a short, descending tunnel that led underground! After removing a few more planks, I was able to squeeze into the underground passage. It was too high to crawl and too low to stand, so I crouched down, took a deep breath, and began to walk slowly into a black void with only my candle to light the way.

Many crosses of different sizes and materials hung on the sides of the tunnel walls. I examined them as I walked by; not seeing the trip wire merely inches away from my ankle. The trap sprang in silence, except for squeaks from the small systems of pulleys, and unhinged a small leather sack hidden in the arched ceiling. Poppy seeds were dumped all over the ground, thousands of them. With them were moldy and disgusting cloves of garlic. I found the stench most foul, and my eyes have been watering all night.

Using my small light to lead the way, I continued down the tunnel and discovered more sets of the trip wires. A total of four separate contraptions were spread out down the tunnel from beginning to end. At last, I saw a thin line of light protruding up from the tunnel darkness. The light grew brighter as I cautiously approached a wooden, walled structure. There was no handle, so I felt around with my hands. I searched nearby for a lever to pull, but found nothing. Finally, as a last resort, I pushed. The wall began to move! In a moment's time, I found myself entering what looked to be a wine cellar.

I took a moment to analyze my situation, for at the time, it was not apparent to me if I had made my situation better or worse. The tunnel was too far traveled to be a basement in the church. Why was it there? What was its purpose? Dwelling on the mysteries of this night only brought out more frustrations.

After emerging from the tunnel, I replaced the hidden passage door. From the inside of the cellar, the makeshift door was a wooden wine barrel stand on wheels. Planks were nailed to the backside to form the wall of the passageway that I had come through. The wine barrels themselves were not even completed on the back side; they were fakes, making the structure lighter and easier to push.

I walked down the center of the basement between two rows of wine barrels. The center of the room branched off into two opposite directions, unobstructed by the two sets of barrels that ran parallel all the way to a staircase; however, these areas of the basement were inaccessible and caged off. Large tarpaulin draped over the iron bars hid the secrets of those forbidden areas. I continued walking, straight towards the stairway. A total of thirty barrels, fifteen on either side of the walkway, led to an ascending staircase, which led up to an open, main floor. I observed many beds with plain white sheets and pillows and small wooden night stands. Glancing around briefly, I found nothing of importance and continued up to the second floor.

Up the stairway, I found that the walls were bare and led down a narrow hallway with rooms on either side and all of the doors shut, but on the farthest wooden door was a loose brass handle. Though the handle was locked, the door had not been fully closed, so I proceeded inside. Other than the view that the balcony offered, the room was not much to look at: two wooden rocking chairs, a closet, and a small bookshelf filled with volumes

covered with dust. To my distaste, the foul stench of garlic overpowered the entire space, despite the shutters being thrown open and flapping in the wind. I made my way through the drizzle that the wind threw at me to peer outside. Pointed treetops in the distance formed a haunting silhouette, and the wolf howled for a second time, reminding me of his eerie presence. I wiped my forehead of sweat and latched the shutters closed, pulling the heavy, green curtains across the pane glass. It was there I found the garlic; inhaling it like a poison made my eyes water and my nose burn with every breath.

My frustration finally getting the better of me, I unlatched the shutters so that I could grab all the garlic cloves strung both inside and outside the window and throw them to the ground. They slid across the floor to a bedpost set in the corner of the room opposite the door. The plain white sheets were left in a mess, and one pillow lay on the floor. I snatched up the pillow and tore it in two. The feathers flew everywhere as I heaved and puffed looking for something else to smash. Suddenly, I eyed the nightstand in the corner. When I grabbed it by the legs, a drawer opened, and a book fell to the floor, along with the wooden shards of broken furniture. I stopped, suddenly calmed, and taking the old book into my hand, began to examine it. Dust had overtaken its cover. Brushing it off revealed a name branded on the front, Leon. Fingering through the latest pages in the worn journal, I found the last entry no less disturbing than my own personal crisis.

Leon's Journal **April 27, 1756**

They are coming for me. I feel myself changing, lingering between man and beast. Such an ill fate, and my will to resist is fading fast. I want to give in, to unleash the demon that plagues my existence. Uncle says that his elixir will calm my nerves, but its subsiding effects are only temporary. These methods are unnatural and condemned by the church as witchcraft. My only hope, should one exist, is a cure.

I took a seat at the edge of the bed, paging through Leon's journal. As I read, the storm calmed and eventually passed. Outside, the sun was beginning to rise between the evergreen trees. I placed the book at my side and rose to greet the morning, a smile of relief crossing my face. Truly, this night had been the longest night of my life. Ready to breathe in the fresh smell of a new day, I threw open the shutters, excited to find someone in town who could provide me with some answers and a warm meal. With events starting to go my way, I should have known better. Instead of gentle warmth, I was met with scorching heat, as if a fire had ignited in front of my face. Was it my imagination, or was my skin actually burning? I used my hand to shield my eyes from the blinding light as I latched the shutters for a second time. Cursing from pain and sightlessness, I felt rage in my body. The sun was not supposed to be an enemy. Why did it pain me so? Would the sun burn me again the next time I stepped foot outside? Were these men even going to let me leave?

Just as I was about to burst out the door and back down the staircase, I heard man's voice. "Who is up there? Answer me!"

It was too noisy to be one man. To my dismay, I heard the sounds of iron and leather; swords were being drawn. Stealth was not their mission; they wanted me to know they were coming and well armed. I had nothing to defend myself with, so I backed up away from the door, still holding my arm where the sun had placed its deadly kiss. The clattering of mail armor grew louder as the unknown intruders approached the door. I noticed I was breathing quite heavily, and I would not allow my eyes to turn away from the door. Finally the noise stopped. Three hard thuds cracked against the wooden frame.

"I don't want any trouble," I said.

"My name is Milos. What is your name, friend?"

"I...I do not know," I answered. "I cannot remember."

Milos opened the door and stepped into the room, and after a few tense moments, lowered his sword and eventually tucked it away at his side. The three men behind him did the same. Milos was clearly their leader. He was an older man dressed in a simple brown robe with a leather belt that held the scabbard for his sword. The dark hood hid the complexion of his face, but a short silver beard streaked with black at the sides protruded far enough to see. His boots were leather bound, old and weathered, and on his belt rested a covered object secured at his hip. His presence was confident, yet his coal like eyes continued to dart around the room as if he were looking for something. Stepping forward he said, "You must come with me immediately."

"Do I know you?" I asked. "This has been a bizarre night, and I'm afraid I am still getting my bearings."

Milos turned away to have a word with the other gentlemen. I saw several nods of approval. Milos took a deep breath and then turned to face me. "I am an old friend, and you have been drugged. I am afraid this is why your memory escapes you." He paused, taking notice to my injury. "It is also why you are wounded."

"What do you know of this?" I asked, holding up my arm, anger engulfing my voice. At seeing my temper begin to rise, one of Milos' men silently placed his hand on his sword, a worried look forming on his face. He grasped the hilt tightly, ready to brandish the weapon at a moment's notice. These men feared me. Looking back now as I write, I am certain that they feared what I was capable of, which led to another issue on the growing list of questions since my...awakening: What was I capable of?

"I know that if you had your thoughts and wits about you," Milos went on calmly "that you never would have injured yourself like that, friend."

"Quit calling me that," I snapped.

"We are not the enemy, young man."

"I don't know who the hell you are or who I am!"

"You need to take a moment to look at the situation in front of you."

My options were few and I wanted answers, but these men brought me more questions and were fearful of my presence, with no reason to me why they should be. I reckoned that as long as Milos was with me, the other three would do nothing to counter his authority.

"Who am I, Milos?"

"A friend."

"Am I this man? Am I Leon?" I turned, grabbed Leon's journal, and tossed it to him.

"I know not of whom you speak," he said.

"Then what is my name?"

"My men and I have decided to use your amnesia to our advantage, so I am afraid I cannot reveal your identity at this time."

"Madness, what do you mean advantage? This is not a game of chess, old man."

"Quite simply, lad, the less you remember, the safer we all are."

"Safe from whom?"

"Enough!" The man at Milos' side had grown impatient. Milos turned and nodded his agreement.

"We have dawdled here long enough, come with me if you want to live," said Milos. "There isn't any time."

"Old man, all I have is time! Why do your men fear me? What power do I possess over them, a man who cannot remember his own name?"

"Now you listen to me, boy. We will be safer once we get underground. You have my word that I will reveal to you the answers that you seek, but for now, it is imperative that we move. You are a fugitive of sorts, yet you have committed no crime. Now please, come with us, now!"

I glanced again at my old clothing, splattered with blood and shredded. Murder, robber, rapist...whatever I was, this man was offering me a chance. He noticed my self-examination, and stepped closer.

"I know how this looks; I know what you must be thinking. I can assure you that you are innocent. I know this, God knows this, yet I know this concerns you. For your sake, we need to go now, please."

What choice did I have? These men were armed, and I was a mess. The only advantage, if I can even call it that, was that they were willing to seek my cooperation, rather than force my hand with a blade at my throat. So it was an easy decision to make. I would go willingly for now, though without trust. Milos would have to earn that.

We passed through the hallway and proceeded back down the stairs to the wine cellar basement with one man leading the way, Milos and I at the middle, and two more at the rear. I knew I was not trusted either. We passed the first rows of barrels and came to the middle of the basement where the hall split and crossed directions. On our right hand side, one of the men removed the tarps while a second used a key to open one of the previously locked iron cages. Surprisingly, the passage led further down than I thought it would. We were no longer in a basement, but more underground again, like the tunnel that had led me here.

"It's not far," Milos said, pointing straight down the tunnel. The dirt had turned to mud, soaked with the rain water that had fallen from the patchy ceiling. About 100 paces later, we arrived at a doorway with no handles. Perhaps I was a murderer, I thought, and these men were charged with locking me away in the cellar in a place where I would be forgotten. He gave the door a shaking pound followed by two sharp knocks. "Interficere Diaboli Draco," he said.

Another hooded man, much younger, perhaps my age, hurried us in uneasily with nervous glances into the entrance. As we walked by him, the door was locked and braced with wooden planks that rested on metal

brackets on either side. To my astonishment, there were about a half a dozen of these men clothed in brown cloaks and robes each with broad swords at his waist; mysterious objects covered at their sides and a sack of water hung across their bodies.

“You fear me as to add more to your numbers?” I questioned.

“No, we are in hiding,” Milos said.

“What kind of cult is this?” I asked. What trust could I hope to find in a man who hid his comrades' existence from the world?

“It is more of a monastery,” Milos corrected, “but the church will say we do not exist, lest our mission be handled on a more civil authority. This is something we are trying to avoid.”

“I seek answers, and you seek secrecy. I fail to see, old man, how our respective agendas have anything in common.” Milos whispered to his men. Perhaps I had made him uncomfortable. So, I decided to keep up the pressure. Maybe I could learn something from this.

“Interficere Diaboli Draco,” I repeated to him. “What curse is this?”

“It is no curse, friend. It is Latin, it is what we are and what we represent...to kill the devil dragon.”

The room resembled an arsenal fit for an army, housing many varieties of swords, knives, and axes. A few stray barrels were stacked in an unlit, dusty corner marked with the symbol of a fish. There were rows of the mysterious, covered objects like all the men carried, some slightly different in size, but all able to fit in the hand. Cupboards with the Holy Wafer were clearly marked, and crates, which gave out a very foul garlic stench, were stacked along another wall. All of these, I noticed quite quickly, as if I knew to look for these things as the men quickly and nervously began blowing out remaining candles in the room. They left one lit, placed it on the wooden table in front of me, and then retreated back into the shadows with their hands on their swords as if they expected me to leap out and attack.

“Let me guess, fishermen?” I asked.

Milos glanced over at the wine barrels. “Not exactly. You see, hundreds of years ago, during Roman persecution, Christians would draw the fish into the earth in order to identify themselves without the guards noticing. It was their code. They were feared by the empire as a cult that ate human flesh and drank human blood.”

“Nonsense,” I said. “Am I Christian?” I asked.

“I believe that you are,” said Milos.

Just then, another man much younger than Milos but years my senior approached us. He was clean shaven with dark hair that slicked back behind his neck. His eyes were light and his face lacked color, his brow and nose narrowing with a villain's complexion. “You never studied,” he said to me with a warm smile as he extended his hand. Before I could react, Milos placed his hand over the other's wrist and lowered it.

“Silence, Jarvis. He does not remember anything.”

“You know me?” I asked as Milos lowered Jarvis' hand. “You know me! Who am I? What is my name?” I pleaded, begged for a sliver of information. Anything that I could cling to would have given me the security I was so desperately lacking.

Jarvis looked over disapprovingly at Milos, but he did not disobey him. “Sorry, comrade, but I cannot.” He took a seat with Milos and me at the table.

“I deserve to know, damn it!”

“Indeed you do, lad,” Milos interrupted, “but not at the cost of others' lives.” He could easily see my distaste for him.

“Who are you to tell me what is best for me?”

Milos stood confidently. “I am, at this time anyway, your jailer. And when the answers you seek put people in harm's way, then I will keep you in the dark as long as it takes to keep yourself and others safe!”

Jarvis turned to Milos. “Easy, mate, he doesn't follow our logic; and if he did, he would understand why are talking the actions that at this time make no sense to him.” He then turned to address me. “You are among friends. Your amnesia is a side effect of your ailment. We can use this to our advantage, to save your soul!”

“You said yourself Milos, I have committed no crime. My soul should not be in danger.”

“He has a point,” said Jarvis. “I don't like it, but we could use this to gain the advantage.” He sat back in his chair. “That is our ultimate goal.”

I looked back and forth at the two men. They seemed to know more of my early morning mystery than I did, and my frustrations were on full display. “Then, what can you tell me?”

“We are crusaders in an unholy war against a powerful demon race,” Milos began. “The strigoi.”

“Vampires,” said Jarvis.

“Vampires?” I questioned in disbelief.

“Vampires,” Milos continued. “It was only a matter of time before you were drawn into this war.”

“I beg of you for answers, and you give me superstitions and witchcraft? If I am a free man, then let me go. If I am a villain, then lock me up. But save me from the stories. I want no part of this fantasy,” I said getting up from the table, ready to storm out. Just then, Jarvis withdrew a blade and grabbing my shoulder slammed me down back into my seat.

“Afraid we can’t let you leave that easily, comrade.”

“Then I am a prisoner here,” I said. “Tell me, what have I done that is so horrible?”

“Just let the man finish,” Jarvis said.

Milos slowly lowered Jarvis’ wrist away from my neck. “I told you. You are innocent. It is the demon we are after. The undead creature that sucks the very life and blood out of its victims, cursing them in the process to be damned to walk the earth immortal as they are with the memories, thoughts, and the body of the victim, but one must remember, they do not have the soul, which is restless until the vampire is exterminated and destroyed. The body must be properly disposed of, for the regeneration capabilities of vampires are exceptional. Piercing the heart with a stake and decapitation along with some other precautions will assure that the soul stays rested, and the vampire does not return.”

“This is ridiculous,” I said.

He and Jarvis then went on to tell me about Milos’ own personal accounts of his encounters with two vampires.

“In 1727, in Meduegna, near Belgrade in Serbia, Arnold Paole returned home to start a farming life after a tour of duty in Greece for the Serbian army. He claimed that while he was in Greece, he had been bitten by a vampire, followed it to its grave, and destroyed it. Then he bathed in its blood and ate the dirt of its grave to prevent him from being infected by it. You see, he thought that it was merely a rabid disease. He told this account to his wife who retold it to the authorities when he died a week later in a fatal accident with some farming equipment.”

“At least that is what the field report said,” Jarvis chimed in.

Milos nodded. “Three weeks after his death, people claimed to have noticed Paole during the night. When some of those same people began to die, Paole was suspected of being a vampire.”

“There was military present,” continued Jarvis, “and when they opened Paole’s grave, he lay to one side, open jawed and with fresh blood on it. He was staked and emitted a long howl, and fresh blood rose from the wound. Nearby caskets were staked as well and all were then cremated by the townspeople.”

“You have no proof,” I said.

“Yes, we do,” said Milos, handing me a folded up parchment. “This report was filed in 1732 in Nuremburg by a surgeon friend of mine named Johann Fluckinger, commissioned by Emperor Charles VI himself!”

I glanced over the document *Visum et Repertum*. It further explained the story of Paole that Milos and Jarvis had finished telling me.

“Again in Hungary in the town of Kisilova, this time accompanied by my brother, Peter Plogojowitz died an abnormal death in September 1728.” Milos paused and motioned for another man to approach the table. A robed guard knelt at Milos’ side, received instructions from him, and hurried away.

Jarvis picked up the story. “The details of his death were uncertain when reported by his wife. Months later, nine peasants perished within a week, all of them having claimed to have been visited by Plogojowitz during the night. The townspeople feared vampirism and called on the Austrian government to be present as they dug up the gravesite.”

“My brother and I were both present when they opened the casket,” Milos explained. “The body had not aged at all, looked fresh and full of color, and grew hair, beard, and even nails. Fresh blood lay in the corner of his mouth. Villagers quickly filed a wooden stake and pierced him through the heart, where fresh blood flowed. Then he was burned to ash. No other nearby caskets noted vampirism, but just to be safe, garlic was placed in each.”

“Finally, in 1751, I had the chance to converse with Dom Augustin Calmet in Paris. He was a Roman Catholic scholar who resides now in France. He collected as many reports of vampirism as he could and published them in 1746. I have a copy here.” He handed a book to me. “He defined what vampires are, what they do, how to destroy them, and what weakens them. He focused on inconsistencies between the different areas where vampires had been reported. He was unable to disprove the vampire and accepts their existence as I have noted on this page here.” He turned to a marked page then read aloud. “It seems impossible not to subscribe to the belief which prevails in these countries that these apparitions do actually come forth from the graves and that they are able to produce the terrible effects which are so widely and so positively attributed to them.”

“Currently there is an outbreak of vampirism in Silesia as well, and Empress Maria Theresa is in the process of making laws trying to remove the material from the clergy and issue it to her government,” said Jarvis. “This is why our order must remain a secret. Vampire hysteria has been sweeping all of these parts since I was little, but, you see this is not hysteria. This is real.”

It was at that time that the guard Milos had sent away returned with a covered serving plate and a golden goblet, which was encrusted with diamonds and jewels at its wide base and shimmered in the candle light of our underground refuge. He handed it to Jarvis, who handed it to Milos. “You must be famished. Please, eat and drink.” I hesitated to accept their meal, but Milos took a sip from the golden cup. “Fear not, it’s not poison,” he said. It was against my better judgment, but I took the cup in my hand. It sparkled in the glittering candlelight, and the smell was quite soothing and pleasant. “They excused themselves and left me to myself. Had I not been starved, I would have objected. I removed the cover off the plate and was delighted to see a roasted seasoned fowl with potatoes. The meal was already sliced, and I was offered no knife. It seemed to me that these men still did not trust me, nor I them. I ate and drank my fill, and shortly they returned.

“Are you still hungry?” Jarvis questioned. He extended his hand just outside the cage, and I passed him the soiled dishes. Carefully he eyed the goblet, and nodding his head in satisfaction, he handed it to Milos. The old man took a peek inside, and my suspicion arose.

“What secrets does that chalice hold?” I questioned.

“This is the Cup of Trigoviste, which was left alone in town square by a corrupt thirteenth century war lord. By his tyranny, no one dared to take it.”

“Or they would face impalement, his favorite execution,” added Jarvis.

“Or worse,” said Milos placing it on the table.

It was against my better judgment, but I took the cup in my hand. It sparkled in the glittering candlelight, and the smell was quite soothing and pleasant. It took me by surprise how relaxed I felt soon after drinking it. “What is it?”

“An elixir”, said Milos, “passed down through generations of my order.”

“You drugged me again!” I shouted.

“You drugged him again?” questioned Jarvis.

“Quite,” Milos said to him. “Get him to his cell. “If you wish to remember anything of this night, I would start writing if I were you.”

And here I am now, fighting against hope to keep my eyes awake. I feel sleep overtaking me. My greatest fear is that I will wake up somewhere alone and afraid again or perhaps not at all. Before I pass out completely, I can just barely remember the two men discussing my memories. Something about it working a second time, but remembering more.

Milos you bastard. I cannot stay awake any longer. If I remember anything of this nightmare when I wake, it will be your deception.

LATER

I woke in my cell, with the instructions, “Write down everything.” I am given food through a slit in the door, though I only trust the fruits and water, and armed guards keep me from getting out. And now, a copy of Calmet has been placed in between the bars of my iron hell along with instructions to read.