

Milos Beobach's Records
April 30, 1756

I am a horrible person. My sins are many, and I just do not know how much longer I can keep up my facade. You shall not steal, you shall not lie...I claim to be a man of God, yet I break commandments daily. It is in these days that my deceptions are finally catching up to me; all that I strived to protect and keep secret are rising against me. He hates me. This thought ravages my mind. I know I am making the sacrificing needed to set things straight, to make things right. The ends justify the means. The drugging and lying, it all must be done. God help me, I do not want to burn for my sins. I will make this up to him.

Fifteen minutes later, and I can finally compose myself to write again. I cannot bear to see him like that, chained and drugged, but worst of all, not having any answers. This is my choosing. I must provide the answers that he seeks; otherwise, his soul may be damned. The only bright spot is that the elixir seems to be working, and we may be able to prolong our time frame.

Thus far, it seems that the lad remembers nothing. I would call our experiment a success, but I do not want to rely too heavily on first impressions alone. We all must remain patient, for the slightest mistake in this case could be fatal.

I know that he is hunted. I heard the wolf howl like a trumpet sounding the attack of a great army, albeit an army of darkness. I fear an eminent attack will soon follow, I fear that there shall be a slaughter, and I fear that the lad will be lost to us, a consequence I may have to live with the rest of my life. Is it only a matter of time before our defenses and decoys run dry? I dare not tell the men, save for Jarvis, but we may be just delaying the inevitable. If Petru is wise to our schemes, he will come for the boy sooner than later.

I must not allow myself to dwell on the negative! It will accomplish nothing. We must have a plan, and that plan must be carried out if we are to be successful in our crusade. They say that Rome was not built in a day, but the Romans did not have fate's clock ticking away at them, threatening them with hell to pay should they fail to complete their constructions on time.

With these fears in the back of my mind, I instructed two of my newest soldiers to "interrupt" us downstairs, so that it may give me time to make proper preparations should my fears come to pass sooner than anticipated. They performed magnificently, I must say, even running around the house a few laps at full speed before coming downstairs to get me. As I waited upstairs for Jarvis to join me, I knelt and prayed, asking God for His blessings and His courage, for we shall all need it. The fight is coming.

Jarvis approached hesitantly as not to disturb me. "It is all right," I said. "I am all finished here."

"Perhaps there is hope, Milos. He remembers nothing. It is as though he has drunk from the very waters of the Lethe."

"Do not be so quick to judge," I told him. "You gave him no further hints, did you?"

"Nothing. Once I realized you did not want any information revealed, I stopped. I must caution you, Milos, that I do not see this ending the way you want it. Be honest with him. He deserves it."

"What did you do with him," I asked?

"I smacked him on the head, put him in a cell, and told him to start writing."

"You hypocrite," I joked, smiling at my old friend. I had penned my thoughts for years, even before falling into my line of work. Jarvis will do no such thing, claiming that life is too short to relive it through the pen moments or days after it has happened. I have tried to explain to him all the benefits that he is neglecting, but he will not have it.

He laughed with me, slapping me on the back and then rising to his feet. "I'll leave the scholarly work for you, old friend."

I stood alongside him, stretching and giving my neck a good turn. "Come," I said, "let us go to the pharmacy." Before we exited, Jarvis turned to me; his smile fading slowly as he fully embraced the seriousness of our situation.

"Milos, a moment if you will."

“Yes, what is it?”

He looked around with nervous glances. “It’s just that,” as he took a couple nervous steps forward, I knew what he was getting at.

“Yes, Jarvis, I heard the wolf howl last night.”

He nodded solemnly. “Let’s go to the pharmacy house.”

I swung the heavy wooden door out of the way and was face to face with a beautiful spring day. As I stepped out into the clear open air, the sun was warm across my face, and the world was animated with life. The thunderstorm last night clearly brought about a wave of much needed warm weather, which I was more than ready to welcome with open arms. I thought back to my younger days of innocence when my brother and I had not a care in the world. Sometimes I wish I could go back to those days and not be forced to bare the burdens placed on me for all these years by the choices I made for the sake of others. Then one day, you find you have reached a point in your time when life stopped giving and started taking away. Those innocent days were long, long gone, and it saddened me to think of the purity of youth and how growing older made you much more aware of all the evils that were leering in the shadows of the world. How naive we all were at that age; and how I long for it once again. Each pleasant memory was plagued by the howl, an unholy sonnet that would not escape my thoughts. Tobias’ Pharmacy House was only a short walk away, across the main town square on the other side of the road. It sat alongside the street, longer than it was wide, and consisted of an office area, a laboratory, and a warehouse. At the corner of the street, a large triangular beam split the entrance in two, so that a person could enter the small outdoor atrium from the south or the east. The south and east corner converged into a single doorway. The windows, two or three times taller than a man, were broad with a smooth arch at the top, lining the east wall. Four panes of glass were kept separate by crosspieces in the window sills.

The second story shares the same attributes, with the only difference being the windows are much smaller, running taller than they were wide. On the south wall sat one window, tall and narrow, which gives light to the office area. Construction was completed with simple white exterior walls and a red roof. An ally of mine, Tobias Mauksch came into possession of the pharmacy just a few years ago. To my personal standards, he was doing a fine job managing the place.

Jarvis and I approached from the south and entered with a knock and a wave. A few people stood in line at the counter, looking over the displays and waiting for assistance. However, at first sight of the two of us, these patrons left without a word. Jarvis and I had a reputation here; I need not say an ill one at that. I’ve been called mad, a murderer, a grave robber, and even a wizard, perhaps a bitter combination. The only one that got to me was the only one I consider to be true, the deceiver.

Tobias was nowhere to be seen, so I told Jarvis to wait while I checked the office. It sat mostly bare, per usual, housing only a small oak desk with a fine chair with a leather backing. Bookshelves were filled with medical volumes, and a large beautiful fresco hanging on the wall detailing some Hungarian history. I had just begun to give it a read when Jarvis called me over to him.

“Pardon, Milos, I was down below and did not realize you were here,” Tobias said. “What can I do for you, old friend? Please, step into the herbarium.”

Tobias was very particular about his pharmacy lab. Only Jarvis and I were allowed back in the lab and warehouse. Many secrets were housed on those shelves. Here he kept his powders, ground by hand in different mortars made of iron, stone, and clay. Varieties of pots made of tin, wood, ceramic, and faience sat on dusty old shelves. There was also a portable pharmacy made of wood with small drawers containing labeled bottles. Old pharmacy furniture, pots for preserving the medicines, instruments, printings, and wood pharmacy stalls sat alongside cancellors and almanacs. Other items included glass retorts, copper distillers, drip devices, recipients, and bowls made out of bronze and copper, pharmaceutical containers, and tin measuring tools.

“Greetings, Tobias, my good friend!” I said heartily as we toured the lab. “How’s business been this winter?”

“Just fine, just fine. It keeps food on the table.”

“Good, good.” I said. Tobias was a fine old gentleman, just a few years my senior. He was a tad shorter than most men, and what hair he had left was thinning quickly. He dressed simply in homemade dark green trousers and a brown button up shirt. He was an honest man, charging a fair bargain to his patrons; however, what some most often did not seem to realize was that fair didn’t always mean cheap.

“What can I do for you two gentlemen?” Tobias asked.

“We require the usual ingredients,” Jarvis said. “Perhaps a little stronger dose this time.”

Tobias nodded in acceptance and immediately began to rummage around the room and his displays for the ingredients for our elixir. He seemed to grow more excited as he gathered them.

His organization methods were unconventional but thorough. Within a few minutes, all that we required was placed before us. "I must know," he finally asked, "did it work?" As he spoke, Tobias began mixing ingredients by hand, setting aside some tin bowls and glass vials with corked tops.

I nodded as Jarvis spoke. "We are almost certain. He does not seem to remember a thing."

Tobias laughed, first quietly and then much louder. Perhaps some of his sanity was leaving with his youth after all these years.

"I think it would be wise, Tobias, if we kept our voices down," Jarvis suggested.

"Most certainly," said Tobias, still crushing and mixing different powders. He shut the door gently, and we all took a seat around his table. After a few minutes, he poured the mixture into the vials, corked the tops, and handed them to us one by one.

"This is all I have left. My ingredients for this particular elixir are all spent. Should you require more, you may have to take to the wild yourselves and quickly harvest them. As always, the ashes must be fresh and you must add them yourselves. Have you written to Sami with this news?" Tobias asked

"Not yet," I said. I grew very grim and stern, for despite the good news about the elixir, we had a more urgent matter at present to deal with. "There is something more pressing than our success with the elixir, so I'll just cut right to it then. I fear that Petru might know where we are, Tobias."

His remaining chuckles faded away instantaneously, and he stared at Jarvis and me. "We knew this day would come." Slowly he pulled out a drawer at his side, and produced from it paper and pen. "You must write Sami at once and post it with a horse and rider immediately thereafter." He handed the materials to me asking, "What evidence do you possess to lead to this conclusion?"

"More of an instinct," Jarvis said.

"Did you not hear the wolf cry in the middle of the night?" I asked.

"I slept soundly through the storm and everything, the whole lot of it," Tobias said.

"Then you were blessed," I said as I continued to write my letter. "You know Sami will want nothing to do with this."

"I know, Milos," Tobias said.

Sami owned an inn North East of Cluj, the Golden Krone in Bistritz. Based on location, the inn sat strategically placed between us and the enemy. Sami always hated this fact and often wanted nothing to do with our exploits. He was a good man by all means, but he was far from the bravest. He wanted nothing to do with this fight, and honestly, this fight would only get him killed. He and his daughter, Suzanna, were complete opposites. She hunted often, cautiously while with others, recklessly when she was alone. If we were going to have a fighting chance, we would need Suzanna fighting with us.

As I continued to write, Jarvis spoke. "Perhaps I would be of greater assistance going around town and warning anyone who cares to listen?"

"Better you than him," Tobias agreed. Both men were right. Unfortunately, my reputation seemed to precede me. Most of the arrogant people of Cluj believed that these hauntings were my doing. It was true they were at peace before I had arrived, but this plague does not follow me alone! It would have fallen on them sooner or later. For years, I have been their scapegoat.

"I'll be off then," Jarvis said, and with a slight bow, he exited.

As he left, a man passed by him into the room. He dropped off a letter and bid us salutations.

"It's Sami," Tobias said. He continued to read quickly as quietly and then spoke. "This is terrible."

"What is it?" I demanded. "Are they all right? Did Petru?"

He raised his hand and shook his head. "No, Milos, they are all right. It is something else entirely." He read a portion over once again and then informed me of the letter's contents.

It seems as though a young man, Alexander Levelle, had gone up the Borgo Pass alone! The poor gentleman's wife had been kidnapped, and he had tracked her through Bistritz and was determined to go up the pass and claim her. Sami and Suzanna pleaded with him not to go, but he refused to listen, poor lad. Suzanna even tried to sneak off to aid him in his quest, but Sami was able to dissuade her from it. Thank goodness. We shall need her talents yet before this horrible ordeal is over.

"Had I not been needed here so urgently, I would ride for Bistritz at once," I said.

"To accomplish what exactly, Milos? Levelle has a head start and you would never make it in time to help him. The choice was not yours to make for him, Milos."

"You do not understand, Tobias. It is true; if Levelle ventured up the pass at this time, he is doomed. What concerns me is what is going to happen if he returns."

I left the letter with Tobias to be posted out to the Golden Krone, and proceeded to let myself out, for the shop grew busy as midday approached. I had much thinking to do, and I needed to be at peace. Fortunately for

myself, I had found one of the best places to calm my nerves (at least in the daylight) was just south of St. Michael's in the town square. Ancient walls, white as pearls, had been left to us there by Roman predecessors. I walked over to my favorite nook and rested myself facing the south end of the church.

Suzanna would be a powerful ally, but Sami would need to be persuaded to let her help. He hated parting with his daughter as any Father would, but she favored the hunt. The girl could fight, she knew her methods, and she was good.

I sat and rested and undoubtedly dozed off at some point, for I was awakened by Jarvis and a beautiful sunset pouring down from the west end of the church. It cast amazing colors on the church; the great, white structure seemed to change color with the surrounding sky. Its bright red pointed roof contrasted with the pink and orange sky, and a slight breeze from the east began to prevail. I watched as the large stained glass windows reflected a world of colors on the green grass below.

"Milos, it's time for us to get inside," Jarvis warned.

"Levelle travels to his doom, or worse, to fail the rescue attempt for his condemned wife," I spoke.

"What are you talking about? Who the hell is Levelle?"

As we returned to Corvin's house I recalled the details of Sami's letter to Jarvis. He admitted that Levelle's fate was unfair, but insisted there was nothing neither he nor I could do about it.

Now here I sit, ready to retire from this entry, but not quite able to. Despite all this recounting, I am still right where I started: hating myself for the decisions I am forced to make and always second guessing what I have done or failed to do. Jarvis sees my struggles and still urges me to just be honest. I fear I cannot. What I can do is finish here and head downstairs to check on the boy, but first watchmen must be posted. We must not be taken tonight by surprise.

Letter sent 30 April 1756 to Golden Krone Inn, Bistritz.

Dearest Sami,

My friend, dark have these past few days been, but we have discovered something for us to pin our hopes on. The elixir, concocted from the ashes of the undead, holy water, garlic, and other variables, seems to be working. There are no signs of vampirism, and indeed, the body has tricked itself into thinking it is not cursed by way of memory loss.

Unfortunately, this is just the temporary solution. As St. George's Day approaches, I fear the power of the drink will have a lessening affect. Only the cure can be final. Rest assured we are doing everything in our power to save the lad's soul. Right now, we have bought ourselves just a little bit of time.

I will keep you updated on our situation out here in Cluj. Take care of yourself, and stay safe.

Milos