

Date: Oct 30 2002

Office XP Word

Time: 1203 am

Place: Trans American Pyramid: 40<sup>th</sup> Floor: During the Construction of CORE

Dear Friends

I write this letter with urgency and utter disbelief. What information I have uncovered and can remember (more on that in a moment) over the last century is contained in the pages that follow. This "draft", for lack of a better term, is likely one of dozens that have been started-and stopped-over time. It's odd to think that I have written these words thousands of times but have no recollection of doing so. I have however been able to rely on hand written notes left by me to guide me in this endeavor.

Having spent more time with the three of you than any other kindred, I am keenly aware of your personalities and what you have been through. I struggle even now on how to write and address you in this letter. The proper grammatical tenses still escape me so please excuse the wanderings in this writing. *Time is confusing matter.*

Knowing your nature, I have taken every opportunity to allow you to confirm the veracity of this information. It has taken me years to finally figure out HOW to convince you of the truth of this information. Please bear with me and have an open mind and curb your normally suspicious ways. I don't blame you for being suspicious. That is why I will provide information that only you know to be true-thus confirming its authenticity.

Also note, I am aware that this letter could fall into the hands of our enemies so I have **encoded it with some special information**. Simply put, it is a bit of treasure hunt but since you have lived the experiences, you will be able to piece together where and what you are looking for. I am sorry for being cryptic, but it's for your safety. Please remove Valmont's favorite wine bottle where you will find his diary. Valmont has (will) have written all the important information you have encountered since coming together as a group. This diary will be your blue print and guide. It will also hold clues to uncover some of the secrets I have left for you. You'll need to trust me.



My name is Ban Strahd. Yes, the very one that is likely sitting with you as you all read this. This is no trick and I realize that I am likely violating temporal rules (whatever the hell they are) by having you read this and me revealing the truth to you. But as you know, we were never the most cautious of kindred.

Let me continue.

I know you have many questions, some more important than others- so where shall I begin?

## **Jarvis.**

Jarvis is dead.

Final death- and it pains me to write these words. He was in fact incinerated by the Setite that we met in the Sabluri Vault on our return there. Jarvis' last act of selflessness was to throw our bag of holding into the Vortex Well so we would have the mirror backing and the items that we had collected since starting our adventures in Carson City in 1870. The Setite's name is/was **QUFUR Am HERU**-also known as the **Champion of Set**. My research indicated that he was the KING of Alexandria (he never used the term Prince as he thought it was below him). QUFUR is/was an ancient vampire **Methuselah of 5<sup>th</sup> generation** that controls the city of Setites. To say that we were out matched in that battle is an understatement. By sure luck and perhaps some unseen guidance, we escaped with our unlives. Or at least, three of us did.

From what I gather from my previous writings that I DO NOT RECALL writing; I was able to watch Jarvis die from peering through the portal in London-on the other side-in some manner. I was not able to interact with the vault room in Alexandria but only observe-hundreds of times over and over-the death of Jarvis. After Max jumped into the well, QUFUR walked through the inferno and cast a jet of flame at Jarvis. Half of his body was destroyed but his last effort as he fell to the ground was to throw the bag of holding into the well. My former writings indicated that Jarvis death was not noble and he did not even get a chance to fight back. I am saddened to think that his death was pointless. He deserved better- in every way.

I tried to find a solution to rescue him but for all my efforts and intellect, I have fallen short. There are simply some things that we cannot change.

## **Playing with Fire**

How I got to London and in that alley in particular is somewhat of a mystery to me but it seems that I was able to piece together Cerrano's mirror (or 3 out of 4 parts) and use it to some degree. The mirror would only allow me to travel to specific places and times (London-1899 Dec 22 for example) where I could observe certain events. Let me say that the thought of watching Jarvis die over and over again is not a pleasant one. He was one of us and loyal to the end.

The Mirror is composed of the silver backing, the glass covering, the wooden frame and the large metal base.

## Proof of Legitimacy

As I mentioned, I have stacks of papers that I had written to myself that I reference. While I don't understand them all, I have had a hundred years to figure them out as best I can. In order to prove the legitimacy of this letter, I have sealed it and left it for our good friend Fedor to give to us. I am sure Valmont will use his Auspex to confirm the truth that this letter is in fact written by my hand. I expect nothing less. This letter was sealed and left for Fedor to hand to us on the day after we left China Town to Carson City via Cerrano's mirror. He has not touched the original-hence (I hope) Valmont's vision he just had.

As I write this, I still laugh on how crazy this all seems.

Your next question, as would be mine, is **why I don't remember everything** ? Why do I have to rely on former letters to myself to piece this all together? From what I gather, I **have been dominated** by very powerful kindred with forgetful mind, erasing large parts of my experiences to hide some deep secrets. Who is this kindred?-it is unknown to me. I do know that I am likely a pawn in someone's Jihad. Its not a nice feeling what you know your strings are being pulled by another but cannot do anything to stop it.

However, I left clues for myself that took years to understand. Once I realized this, I began writing letters of what I had discovered and then hid them so no one would find them. Since I have been dominated, I am not sure what memories are missing. I do know that the current Ban who is sitting with you thinks he jumped forward in time from 1895 to 2024. This is not the case. He just does not remember living the experiences as the dominate has removed those.

## The Jihad is Real

What has become clear to me is that the WAR that we are in has at least two sides (as far as I can tell) and we are being pulled in opposite directions by opposing manipulators. I cannot say which side and it frankly is not a pleasant feeling that you have "no control" over your life. But I feel that I may truly have some control over my destiny finally.

To use the term chronological simply makes no sense to me as I have gone back and forth through time for a while now. Again, my forgetful mind makes some of this blurry so I had to rely on my intellect and magic knowledge to fill in the blanks. I have hidden my former letters several times, only to start the process over again to relearn what I had uncovered (its like the movie Memento). It appears my paranoia stems from the fact that I fear being dominated again. Whether this is true or not, I cannot say but I err on the side of caution so this final letter could make it to your hands. As I have said, I have spent over a hundred years hiding, traveling and researching this in order to bring SOME clarity on what has occurred.

As you can see, I have dated the above letter and placed my location on it to give you sense on when I last was able to put pen to paper. If I am able to revisit and rewrite this once again, I will update the date. I realize you are reading this in 2024 and I sit here in 2002 and CORE is being built around me. I have disguised myself and I am living my life, as of now, as a kindred named Cliff McClosky- a Malkavian war Veteran who has struck up a friendship with Tekki, CORE's soon to be Toreador manager.

Yes, the same Cliff McClosky we met. Obviously the Ban Strahd back then had no idea that he was talking to himself. I can't understand all of it yet but there must have been a reason I did not reveal my true self to ...well...myself

## Lost in Time: How did we get HERE?

You are reading this letter only moments all finding out that you are back in San Francisco. I hope I can explain how we got HERE at least. After Valmont jumped into the Bag of Holding, Max and I swam to the bottom of the Well and entered a "green glowing cave". When we arrived on the other side, we were floating in the middle of the ocean during a storm. It was agreed that Max would jump into the bag and I would fly above the ocean in order to find land. Little did I know that we were just outside Alexandria (not San Francisco) and I made my way back to shore. When I opened the bag, I did not see either of you and the mirror was rolled up. I could not unroll it no matter what I did. I gathered that the only place you could have gone was through the mirror but I did not know WHERE or WHEN you had traveled to. I began researching and trying to find you my friends.

I became utterly obsessed with trying to locate you and also trying to discover who was manipulating us. I hid from the world and spent **decades** researching time, magic and ancient lore. I have and still do, have bouts of forgetful mind and cannot retrieve ALL the information I want.

I made the Fortalsia my base of operations and Captained that ship for over 100 years. It was my home, my haven, my laboratory and my safe haven. Its crew was loyal and ghoulded to me and we sailed to world in search of answers. If all goes according to plan, and you need a safe haven, The Fortalsia is moored next to the USS O'Brien-I am sure you remember the O'Brien but you may have missed the Fortalsia last year when you visited.

## Cerrano's Mirror

I can't even begin to explain how the mirror comes into play here. Even though the Tremere are the smartest of clans, there is a magic there that I do not understand. We do know that Cerrano has used the mirror to travel back in time many times, thus making him 'ancient' in age. From

what I can see, he is almost 2000 years old and has he powers to back him up. I believe that Vangard is working against Cerrano for some unknown purpose. Our mission “back in time” was to try and gather the 4 pieces of mirror and prevent Cerrano from possessing them. Vangard was instrumental in guiding us to some of these.

The mirror is dangerous on every level. Cerrano certainly knows that we are inserting ourselves into his plans. He is not happy I can assure you. He also has, from what I gather, a fully functional mirror but its not in his possession at the moment (2024). We cannot allow him to gain control of it again. We must break the cycle. Our Chinese kindred may in fact have to be our allies against a common enemy. We Know where the mirror is-its just a matter of getting to it and DESTROYING IT.

If we do not, Cerrano will continue to live his accelerated unlife, gaining so much power that not even the Inner Circle, the Circle of Seven, the Inconnu or the Warlords of Sabbat would be able to stop him. This is an unimaginable threat that no one seems to be aware of. My calculations suggest that every year that goes by for us in regular time, a user of the mirror gains about 30-40 years of lived (prior) experience. I know this doesn't make as much sense as I would have liked but this comes on good authority from a kindred named Ticker.

The longer we wait, the more powerful Cerrano becomes. He is already a Kindred over 2000 years old and has killed and diablORIZED several power kindred. If we have any hope, we need to stop him NOW. Every day and year that goes by, the stronger he becomes. And now that he is aware of us “pesky gnats”, he has turned his focus on thwarting us I am sure.

What I have seen however, for better or worse, is that FATE is not an absolute. We CAN change somethings-if we are powerful enough. MY research has uncovered one break in fate-meaning-what we know to be true can altered. This begs the question-does this mean it starts a new timeline. I have not seen able to discern if kindred of our stature can change time but I am hopeful that is the case. I feel that my actions are my own at times but then, the Jihad rears its head and I lose hope.

## **Ticker: Who is he?**

Ticker (I do not know his real name) is a traveler through time. He is a True Brujah of the Inconnu. I spoke with him once and asked why would he gave us directions and how did HE travel through time. He was surprisingly forthcoming about the answers.

Ticker stated that his powers of Temporis, at very high level, can manipulate time and space to some degree. When I asked “how powerful”, he mentioned “an 8<sup>th</sup> level power of the True Brujah is called Slip Stream”. By 8<sup>th</sup> level I gathered he meant the powers of a 5<sup>th</sup> generation kindred. Its unnerving dealing with such powerful beings.

A slip stream allows a Temporis master to hitch a ride through time when other kindred re magically manipulating time (like Cerrano does with the mirror). Ticker has taken it upon himself to be a watcher of some sort-not interfering with time but monitoring it. I honestly don't know how old he is but I'm thinking around 500 BC as he mentioned Cyrus in one of our conversations ( I was born in the time of Cyrus).

I had asked "For a guy who doesn't like to interfere, you appear to be giving us a fair bit of information. Why?" Ticker stated that he had stopped "interfering" around 1000 AD, when he grew tired of kindred affairs. Such is common for ancient vampires he tells me. He became a wanderer and scholar, observing events as they unfolded. That is until he noticed what he called a "hiccup" in 1870. That is when Cerrano first went back in time from 1906 and landed in 1770. This hiccup as Ticker described began to happen with regularity. That is when he knew something was not right. He discovered that Cerrano had somehow used his magic to manipulate time and was going back on a regular basis. Time manipulation was once the realm of the True Brujah only but now, this power Tremere had entered the time club.

It appears that Cerrano is stuck only able to go as far back as 1870 and Ticker explains that this is likely due to a limitation in the mirror's construction. I have since learned that the frame of the mirror was constructed by the Jiang Shi, and one of their mages built this "fail" safe as they knew how dangerous it could become.

Why the Jiang Shi helped in the construction of the mirror is unknown to me but I suspect some sort of deal was struck between them and Cerrano. Ticker had informed me however that the mirror can only visit three locations and times.

*December 22 1870: Nevada Desert-20 miles outside Carson City*

*December 22 1899: London, England, Secord Alley*

*December 22 1903: San Francisco, California, Cerrano's Mansion*

So while the mirror is a powerful item, it does have its limitations.

Ticker explained to me that time is much like a multiverse of possibilities. Some time lines are billions of years old while others just years, minutes or seconds. What I did understand was that some timelines are what he called LEAD SECOND lines. By this he meant that no "time" exists in the future and that beings on those time lines are literally forging their own paths that are not predetermined. He said these are exceedingly rare but said that our timeline is part of the LEAD SECOND meaning our fate is what we make. We CAN change things. We also cannot have anyone from the future visit us as it does not exist yet. This is where my HOPE is strongest.

Also, one cannot use the mirror to jump FORWARD in time. You can only back. This limitation is another safe guard it seems. When Max and Valmont jumped into the mirror INSIDE the bag of holding, it created some sort of stasis where a few hours inside there lasted over 100 years in regular time. When I viewed Jarvis die, I had 3 out of 4 parts of the mirror and I jumped through to witness the event over and over.

## **Vanguard:**

I believe one of the only other beings to know about Cerrano's mirror is Vanguard. He understood how devastating its power could be and took it upon himself to try to assemble its parts back in time in order to prevent Cerrano from gathering them. I don't think Vanguard fully understood how time worked but tried his very best to thwart Cerrano from "the past".

Vanguard contacted me one other time in 1933 and he said that it was his wish to reconstruct the mirror and return to the night of the purge in 1998 and prevent the death of Nathan Kent and the overthrowing of the Primogen. Little did he know that the mirror had limitations but his loyalty to his time and Kent is impressive.

I do not know what happened to him or where he ended up. Vanguard is a wildcard in all of this.

## **Fabian Bullard: The Fat Bastard**

While Bullard is not part of the Cerrano problem, he IS a major pain in the ass that keeps screwing us over. He is smarter than we thought and remembered us from Carson City when he masqueraded as that small boy. His vengeance stems from back then and it appears that he has focused on us for 150 years, thwarting us when he could from the shadows.

Bullard was able to find our stash of money we left in the Bank back in Carson sometime in the 1990's and attempted to kill Valmont during that time. Valmont was entrusted with our money from our exploits in Carson but Bullard stole that fortune from him. During the attempt on Valmont's life, a mental break had occurred because of a frenzy and Valmont lost his memory of his former life.

While we did steal 4 million dollars BACK from Bullard, his fortune of 25 million bucks came directly from us and our hard work. He works from behind the scenes and does not directly involve himself because he is a, to quote Max, "scared bitch". Bullard, as we know, betrayed the Camarilla and aligned himself with the Sabbat in order to increase his power.

Keep an eye out for him as he is obsessed with our downfall.

## **What now?**

I am hoping that if you have any further questions and I have not died in the past after I have written this, I can try and help from beyond time. I will use Fedor as our messenger. If you don't hear from me, then I likely have met final death in the past. I am not sure if you being the lead

second will even allow me to know things that have or will happen. Like I said, this is madness and only the crazy can understand this stuff I suspect.

Be careful. Destroy the mirror. Kill Bullard. And when shit hits the fan, call in all your favors and allies as you'll need every one of them.

## Ban Strahd