

To The Honorable Pravda Society,

I am writing this letter on behalf of all the people of Bialnic Valley, whom I humbly serve as Knez Vlad the Tenth. My castle and the valley are located among the beautiful Carpathians in Transylvania, far from the worries of the Empire.

Just as we prepare for our yearly celebrations of my forefather Knez Vlad the First, our peaceful life has been suddenly interrupted by an unknown beast. It has brutally killed two farmers, and we found their bloodless and heartless bodies. Only God knows how many more will become the beast's prey. Our best hunters, including myself, cannot establish the nature of the beast, nor can we find its tracks or lair.

My grandfather, the Knez Vlad the Eighth, was honored to have members of your Society visit our castle. He witnessed their remarkable knowledge and craftsmanship and described it in his diary, which I found while exploring the library for clues on the beast. As soon as I read about the Society, I wrote this letter with confidence that your organization still exists in peace and prosperity.

I know the road to my domain is long and may be tiring, but my children in Europe will arrange everything they can to make it comfortable for you. You will be guests of honor in my castle, and I will provide you with generous remuneration for your services. I have no doubts that your visit will help our valley and become the beginning of our long-lasting friendship.

Please follow the itinerary I have prepared for you. As mentioned above, my children will make all necessary reservations for the Society.

With anticipation of your visit,

Sincerely,
Knez Vlad the Tenth



1B: The village map

June 16

We are now possessed of the knowledge as to the identity of the murderer. 'Tis an outcast, one born in sin and without lawful father, who perished in the midst of his years, yet soon thereafter rose again as one accursed - preying upon the villagers and slaying them, that he might feast upon their very lifeblood. God willing, we shall lay hands upon this abomination and deliver him to a final and righteous death.

1C: The priest's diary

The Knez is a man in whom no confidence may be placed. His very presence doth disquiet my spirit most grievously. Moreover, I am sorely troubled by the mysterious bond that seems to exist betwixt the Knez and the fell creature which we now pursue. His skin bears a hue most ashen and foul, and his limbs move with a suppleness most unnatural. Such marks may well betray him as a thampir - the lamentable offspring of a mortal mad and a creature of the night. Should this be so, it behooves us to inquire: who, then, is the sire of this unhappy wretch? Yet I dare not speak these suspicions aloud, not even amongst my brethren of the Pragma Society, for I know not where their true allegiance may rest.

1D: The hidden text

To whom it may concern,

My name is Josef Strasser. I am the Warden of Brygidki prison in the city of Lemberg, in the western part of Galicia. Lately, some unusual events have occurred here – several prisoners fell ill, and some of them have died rather gruesome deaths since then. I fear this streak might continue, and the thought that I can't do anything to help people who are my responsibility haunts me.

I believe in the safety of my prison, and those deaths looked out of the ordinary. I am no expert on the supernatural and, therefore, I am in great need of your assistance.

Here is a list of things that are not allowed within the Brygidki prison:

- explosives or weapons of any kind,
- anything sharp, like knives or scissors,
- tobacco or any products containing it,
- alcohol or any drinks/food containing it,
- money or any equivalent in valuables,
- medicine or drugs,
- lighters or matches.

If you are able and willing to intervene in this matter, your attention will be greatly appreciated. As lives are endangered, time is of the essence.

Most respectfully,
Josef Strasser

... locals believe that the staffs their shepherds carry around have miraculous powers of protection against it. I have researched by talking to numerous people, walking days and nights, and sleeping under the stars. It seems to me now that the staff does not protect those people. It is the material. One specific kind of wood. The elder wood. Wielding a staff made of it grants them protection against the powers of evil and darkness.

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2B: First page from *Treatise on the Apparitions of Spirits*

Numerous herbs are known for their mystical powers. This knowledge comes from the distant past, from our ancestors, who knew little about the Lord. But they knew a lot about what surrounded them, knowledge we are losing with the passage of time. Our ancestors knew which herbs heal flesh wounds and which treat soul injuries. They knew how to talk to the spirits of the land they inhabited and calm them or bargain with them. We lack this knowledge. There are only remnants left for us.

If one falls asleep under the Yew tree they shall never wake up again.

To clean the water, use Acronus.

Mistletoe shall be used and put on the grave to calm the spirit of the dead.

So that the marrying couple has wealth, shower them in the Humulus.

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2C: Second page from *Treatise on the Apparitions of Spirits*

People have different reasons to join the church and stay in a monastery. Some seek salvation, some yearn for answers, and some think that church authority will grant them power in life. But there will always be some for whom the monastery is a prison. People who didn't choose to join the church but were forced to. They struggle and cry in pain because nobody should be made to follow a specific way to the Lord.

This girl who joined our monastery a week ago... She is one of these poor souls. I know that from her eyes - the eyes of a wild animal thrown in a cage. Eager for freedom. A bird with cut wings. Poor Olha. She could have had the whole world, but now... Now, she is destined to spend her life in these walls, knowing only the Lord, and she is angry and resentful of those who chose this fate for her. The monastery will not let her go. Not after the gift her parents donated...

2D: First excerpt from monastery records

Today, we mourn a loss as if all the events before were not enough. As if an attempt to take away the monastery and turn it into a cell for human souls was not enough. But the ways of the Lord are mysterious, indeed. If it was the time for such a young soul to leave this world and move to Heaven, so be it.

...I can't help but wonder why such a young girl had to die. Maybe, I am losing my faith. Perhaps doubting the Lord's decisions is a sin, and I will pay for that. But why? Why did she die so suddenly and unexpectedly? Why would she even go to the bell tower? What made her fall from there?

2E: Second excerpt from monastery records

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as for a wandering vengeful spirit, commonly known in these lands as a wietrznicza or vykhrovyk, only one way to stop it is known. But a knife you will need. As no easy ways to hurt the wind exists, the one fighting a vykhrovyk requires something more than just steel. You must take a knife and find a church. Enter the Lord's house and speak politely to His servants. Then make your request. Let them take the knife you wield and put it in the holy water. Let them pray again and again until the knife of yours becomes the Lord's sword. Only then can you fight against this vengeful spirit. As your eyes see it, throw the knife, and it will pin the Devil's creature to the ground.

Finding my ancestor's notes was so reinvigorating. It might be the breakthrough I was looking for. Our nation, as well as all Slavic nations, can benefit from this. The voice of the oppressed will finally be heard. I can't believe that I had this marvelous solution so close for so many years. I must study it further to understand what can be done for our cause.

It is hard. I can't believe that my ancestor was so vile that he used this power for such petty things. It is almost unbelievable. But my work will correct that. It will be a magnificent creation that benefits all people. It will be used for the greater good, not the Jews or the Czechs only, but for all those who for too long lived under the boot of tyranny. I'm eager to complete my work.

Finding the right way is more complicated than I thought. I needed

help, and who was better to do it than the Jews - creators of the original creature? I asked the new rabbi at the Spanish synagogue about it, but he was not able to help me. Well, not directly, but they pointed me to Gedalya Isaaman, who resides in the place where the original creature creator lived! I went to the grave of Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel to ask for his blessing.

I lost some of my notes somewhere, but it's not important - right now, as I'm on the verge of a breakthrough. I've consulted all the works and checked everything twice, and I will bring it to life tonight. Some changes were needed to make it fit its purpose better, but I am sure that everything will work as planned. I've waited so many years for this. I cannot wait any longer.