

# A Dark Transmutation

by Phillip Berrie

Dear Timothy,

How is my favourite English archeologist today? Hope you are well and that the weather in Schleswig-Holstein isn't too cold for you. By the way, you now officially owe that dinner you promised me. Yes! The translation is finally finished. The technicians here finally got round to using their digital wizardry on the high-res images you sent me and I was able to translate that last section.

Don't start celebrating too soon though, because it was probably not worth the wait. I have appended a version of the mysterious section in the modern vernacular below so you can read it ASAP and see what concerns me.

Basically, I think the last section is a hoax. How it got to be in your dig I have no idea, but I believe the last section has to have been written by someone other than that alchemist you believe this book belonged to. And I suspect the missing pages contained previous abortive attempts at this ridiculous prank and that eventually the prankster gave up on their mad scheme all together as being too fanciful to be believed.

So, for the record I must state that, despite a cursory similarity in the handwriting, the language and writing style of the last section are sufficiently different from the rest of the book that it is my considered opinion that it was not written by the same person and must therefore be discounted.

Anyway, I look forward to seeing you on your next trip to Berlin. I know this delightful little Chinese restaurant that I have been wanting to try :-)

Love Heidi.

P.S. I look forward to finding out more about your dig.

--- Pages 229-234 of the document SH2007,12. Translated H. Brandt.

One way or the other I will escape this accursed prison tonight.

There is but one more thing I must prepare before my attempt, but as failure will probably mean my destruction I feel I should leave some record of my incarceration here as my dark legacy to the world. Hah, a grandiose, but most likely futile gesture no doubt. The rising waters will no doubt claim this book as it would myself if I stayed. Still, I have always been one for grandiose gestures, so I will permit myself one last indulgence, just in case the plans I have to secure the book succeed.

I have just reviewed all of my writing efforts herein. As I turned the brittle pages it struck me just how closely this book and its contents mirror the changes in myself even though it was never my intention that it be a biography.

The majority of the book contains recipes for those dyes, cosmetics and medicines I once made for sale. I had not realised just how much of my previous life had been involved in the simple task of keeping bread upon the table -- of course, I am beyond such things now.

There are also records of more esoteric studies and my own pitiful attempts at analysing the results. All this material is written in the tight methodical hand of a scholar. How pathetic it seems to me now. They were written by an earlier me that lacked the knowledge of the true nature of the world that I now possess.

Then there are some torn out pages. I did this years ago so as to not be reminded of those bad times. The missing pages were written immediately after my imprisonment and they show all too readily my descent into the madness. I mention this here in explanation, but will say no more on the matter.

Pages of crude dirty scratches follow the missing ones. Scratches made with a variety of makeshift tools and dry ochres -- my original quills and ink having long since turned to dust. Crude though they are, these marks upon the page represent great achievement. They represent the attainment and mastery of my new abilities.

It was unfortunate that there was no liquid here at the time for me to make a proper ink for a true record of my achievement would be a worthy, if dark document. In truth, it is only the slowly rising waters that have allowed me to make this record.

But, I get ahead of myself. I must tell of what transpired in those times when I could not write in this book. It is a dark tale -- but one significantly wanting for a plot -- it is a tale that only the random acts of an uncaring universe could bring about.

You see I am a vampire, but I am a vampire who has never tasted the blood of another. As fate would have it I was entombed in this shrine on the very night of my creation by a movement of the earth that sent the roof of the corridor that leads to this hidden chamber crashing down, sealing it for ever, and trapping me within.

I cannot possibly describe the thirst that beset me but, unlike a mortal man, there was no escape from my torment through death -- despite many attempts. Without blood, my body withered and eventually failed completely, leaving me helpless. Then the raging thirst drove me mad. Those were indeed dark times. However, being immortal I survived and, eventually, it was the thirst that died. And for this I am grateful for with this release from torment came the beginning of my new existence.

Still helpless, all I could do was think, so I applied my critical mind to the situation. The total darkness that exists in this chamber had never hindered me and this capacity for sight stayed with me long after the fluid-filled sacks of my eyeballs turned to dust. I therefore reasoned that this sight must be something more than physical and that perhaps my vampiric nature had other such mind-enabled faculties. I began to examine my senses to see if something other than sight was available to me.

There was little to sense. There was no sound in the chamber. Smell and taste had disappeared with my thirst, and I had not felt cold or pain since I had risen. However, though incapable of movement, I apparently still had the capacity to feel for I became aware of a faint granularity at the edges of my perception. An exploration of these sensations revealed that I could move them with my mind. Imagine my surprise and delight when I discovered that they were not figments of my imagination, but particles of dust that I could make dance in the still air. Further experimentation revealed that it was only certain dust that I could manipulate and

eventually I realised that the dust was myself, or more correctly, what my body was turning into.

It took a long time to develop the strength to move such gross parts of myself as my bones and it was a moment of great triumph when my skeletal remains first rose to their feet. It was mind-over-body with a horrific bent, but I was far more than the archetypal skeleton used to scare children to sleep. For although my mind's telekinetic ability is constrained to my earthly remains, they are mine to command, completely, even to being able to lift them completely off the ground -- and therein lies my salvation.

I am now much more than man, much more than vampire, and unconstrained by the base needs of either for I apparently need nothing to sustain myself. However, like the genie of the lamp, I was still trapped. This thought almost drove me mad again.

Then came the second earthquake and with it the water and the insects. You can not imagine the despair and rage that I went through when I realised that I could not push my bones through that small opening while those damnable insects with their tiny life sparks and even smaller intelligences could come and go as they pleased. And the water, it can flow in, but there is nowhere for it to go. Even now it has risen to fill the lower third of this chamber and I have to keep myself high and dry or risk being dragged down forever by the mud.

Yet, it was the insects that showed me the way out and once I realised what had to be done I set about preparing myself for the ordeal with the aid of the sacrificial altar that had been the centrepiece of this underground shrine. The altar had originally sat before the dark stone idol. What this crude antediluvian figure represented or who used it, I know not and care less. I smashed the idol during my madness and its powdered fragments are the pigment in this ink that I am using. It was indeed fortunate that I left the altar itself intact because, for some no doubt gruesome functional reason, it has a concave upper surface.

This then became my mortar and my will the pestle.

I imagine a being of lesser mettle would have baulked at this task, but not I. Arm bones, leg bones, my skull -- all were grist for my mill and had to be ground exceedingly fine for I do not wish to leave any piece of myself behind. Now all that remains whole is a single tooth, the one with which I

pen these words. It too must be ground to dust for only by grinding exceedingly fine can I be assured that I will be able to follow the path of the insects up through the crack in the rock and escape this damned prison.

But enough, I have wasted enough time on this. I go now to my destiny.

Francis Rakoczy III

The Count of St. Germain.

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