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## Halfers

by Chris Hobson

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Dear Anna,

This is the first letter I've ever written you, and it'll be my last. There's no other way of telling you what I have to say without endangering myself and my family. And anyway, I couldn't bear your look of revulsion if I told you in person.

You probably won't believe a word of what I'm about to say; I hardly believe it myself. As I sit here writing this at midnight, you're asleep in the next room. The election has been called. Despite all odds, and to my complete dismay, your candidate won. I'd held out hope for a last-minute surge in the polls, that people would come to their senses and not elect a maniac. But it looks like my belief in people's basic decency was misplaced.

How to say what needs saying? Anna, during this long, ugly campaign you've noticed how I cringe when you use the word "halfers." Or when you call those poor souls an "unclean menace." You say I'm being defensive, a bleeding heart—that I shouldn't feel pity for the objects of your ridicule.

But Anna, they are me.

Ever since we met I've tried telling you: I'm part vampire. Being only 1/16th undead, the truth is I've always passed for a mortal. According to my mother, my great-great-grandfather was full-blooded. Growing up we had a family tree laid down on buckskin. Through it we traced our line to a band of shtrigas in Albania.

More than once I packed my bags to leave you, Anna. I swear, I never meant to hurt you. Everything has come undone so quickly. One time I even made it as far as Temecula. If I just disappeared, went my thinking, you could remember me as I was. Us as we were... standing on that Sausalito hillside watching heaven reflected in Richardson Bay. Riding the incline down Mount Washington in the driving rain, you holding onto me so tightly that my wrist turned chalk white.

But I could never summon the courage to go.

Enough of that—you deserve to know the truth. Wallace Grudinger, my great-great-grandfather, was kidnapped as a baby. After changing hands several times, he was adopted by a family of normals. Times were different back then; in their ignorance, regular people took it upon themselves to mold the undead in their image. In time Wallace assimilated, even growing up to marry a mortal woman, my great-great-grandmother Maggie. It's a story we've all learned in history class. But it's one my own connection to which I never revealed.

My family's position, always tenuous, has become impossible. They're my priority now, my mother, father, and sister. During his first hundred days, our new president will track down anyone with vampire blood. He's promised as much. No doubt he'll sign executive orders to build new prisons meant to hold us. Anticipating this, and without your



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knowledge, I struck up a friendship with others like me. Some of my new companions are night-walkers, and a handful can vanish for intervals. But none of us has a thirst for human blood: I want to make that very clear.

We plan to start a colony of our own, away from civilization. I won't say where, or even if it's in this country. But we've engaged a mountaineer we trust to lead us to a remote yet habitable spot. Far from the reach of man, we'll await a more enlightened time.

Anna, rest assured that the hematophagous blood coursing through my veins has caused you no harm. It's so diluted as to be nearly the same as yours. In truth, I'm practically normal: I sleep at night, eat regular foods, and have never had a taste for human blood. Without a DNA test, you'd never know the difference.

What I mean to say is that you'll... how do I even write these next words? You will move on and love another, a fully normal person like yourself. Nothing we've done has physically compromised you. It will be as if we'd never met, in body if not in spirit.

My one and only Anna. Despite your uncharitable views, you've shown me nothing but love. My affection for you will endure. Please, please forgive me. If you value my memory, you'll seek happiness where you can find it. Bestow kindness on those you don't understand, Anna. And do not, under any circumstances, come looking for me.

In happier times I'd hoped to make you my wife. You trusted me with your heart, and I've treated it recklessly. But I'll take solace in the fact that you are safe, and no longer connected to someone who although different, loved you as much as any man ever loved a woman. Be well now and always.

Yours forever,

Gabe

*The End*

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