

I stopped staring at the blank sheet and began to write.

*It's a little amazing how many people out there aren't humans these days.*

Miranda came in with some scrolls. "Hey Jim," she said as she put them down and picked up her coffee mug. She tapped my teacup with the mug. "Want me to pick you up something to drink? There are at least three more parchments that I'd like to see wrapped up before the end of tomorrow, but today would be even better. I can arrange for overtime if you think you'll need it."

I looked at her coffee mug to avoid looking at her. I hoped it wasn't obvious. She hadn't drunk from it yet. Coffee had splashed into it in the break room, and before that a rag had slowly and carefully cleaned out the interior of the mug. I blinked. "Sure thing," I said. "I think my cup could stand to be rinsed out."

"Too bad I stopped to get mine first," she said as she left with her full mug and my empty cup. "I had just washed mine."

As she left the room, I continued with my letter.

*I know this will come off as strange, coming from a clairvoyant. Neither you nor I are exactly normal human specimens. You're a famous precognator for the city's weather service; I have minor skills at divination of the past that are dependable enough for me to be employed as a docent and adjunct curator at the Blinkly Museum. I hope this jogs your memory slightly; I know the only time we met was at a city employees benefits meeting a little more than a year ago.*

Being honest, postcognition (or retrodivination, as it's sometimes called) is uncommon enough of a specialty that it's regarded with more than a little suspicion. My reports on objects are usually filed away until someone on the full staff can corroborate anything I've detected, and then I get called in to help draft a script for a short educational film or a document as a consultant. It pays the bills.

This talent is how I started to realize how many people weren't full humans. You don't notice things around you even though they've always been there. Think about it right now: how many things surrounding you at the moment have at least four different colors or pigments?

Probably quite a few things do, but you never really thought about it until you noticed it one day, and then started to look for it. It may even lead you into considering whether two small parts of a whole object have truly distinct hues, or if it's a trick of the light. New questions pop up and new worlds unfold, if only you look for them.

I kept writing.

*Miranda Kensh is a werewolf. I estimate there are many more in town. Many more.*

Miranda Kensh was on a scholar exchange program to Blinky from a similar organization that collects medical documents, records, devices and technology. She had a large number of ancient mortars and pestles, speculums, needles, and huge stacks of ancient scrolls that held records and data of famous and obscure plagues. I was working on some relevant parts of that collection when I picked up a read on her, without meaning to do it.

When the target is a living thing, there's a sensation that I am just behind their right shoulder, looking at mostly the side of their head. I can't see what they're seeing but I usually notice sounds and smells. I realized I had tuned her in by accident and started to tune away when I realized her ear was triangular and furry: black, bristly fur and a faint pink on the inside.

I heard loud panting and there was a sensation of moving fast, but without much effort. And then she shifted into the way she normally looked, like any normal human. She began to dress herself.

It was startling and I almost blurted it out loud to her when it happened. This was about two weeks ago. I don't think she knows that I know, but I can't be sure.

Werewolves and werecats, in most people's minds, are all that there are. And they're mostly living on reservations off by the sea, near the preserves for those individuals descended from dryads and naiads. The only ones we hear about are ambassadors who are confined to certain locations and have guarantors for their conduct.

We told ourselves they never really came into the city. Aside from the run-of-the-mill psychics like me, the urban areas only have a few large organized covens of witches,

and of course the Society of Vampires, but all together that would account for only about seventy people (using the term loosely).

I started spending more time tuning into nothing in particular, just being receptive to what had happened in the near past of those around me. The bus station where I came and went from work each day was teeming with wererats. I hadn't even realized there were such things, let alone there being an apartment building right across the street from the station completely populated by them.

A large fellow I knew, Hugo Aethor, works for the city in planning special events at the museums and historical societies. He's turned out to be a werebear. I wasn't aware any of them were alive these days, either.

And the list of different kinds grew. I ran across so many other mammals that now I just assume that if there's a furry beast, then somewhere someone can turn into it. There were various birds of prey, and I had never heard of any records of this type of shifter anywhere at all. Most recently I tuned a monstrous woman who may be either a werecrocodile or a werealligator. I always forget how to tell which is which. It was that meeting that led me to write the letter.

*Almost any time I go out, I find that it's likely that one out of every ten people is a werewolf. There may be many more, since I am really only aware of them if they've shifted themselves within a few hours of meeting me.*

Going deeper into their pasts would take some effort, and aside from that I began to fear that I was being noticed as I tuned to various strangers in public places. Prying into people's affairs this way is detectable, and it is a crime.

I decided to leave unmentioned all of the various breeds I had detected. If I sounded too desperate, too alarmist, the letter would be dismissed out of hand.

*I know there is some risk in mentioning this to you, as I am confessing to something that is not entirely legal. As my gifts lie entirely in determining the past and not the future, I wanted to alert you to this and ask what you believe the future may hold. Why are they mingling with us in secret? What do they intend to do?*

I decided against signing it. I folded the letter into thirds and looked up, realizing that Miranda was there. "I can take that out with the mail this afternoon if you address it," she said.

“I’m not positive what the address should be,” I lied. “It’s related to some unclosed business from a while ago.”

She inhaled deeply. I wondered if she could smell lies.