Greetings Dearheart,

After reading the last page of your letter, I had that bloody Celine Dion song from Titanic stuck in my head for days. I’m never going to forgive you for that.

That’s a total lie, by the way-about me never forgiving you, not about the song being stuck in my head. It was. Really. For DAYS.

In all seriousness, now that I’ve read your letter a few times and, I believe, thoroughly processed it, I think I am finally ready and able to respond. There are many things that I would like to say to you, but I don’t know how. I have never been good at expressing my feelings—I have a cultural heritage of emotional repression to uphold, after all. And, as you know, I am nowhere near as eloquent as you are, so please bear with me.

I need you to know that I meant everything that I said. You are in my heart, and I will always be here for you, no matter what happens. I hope that you will keep the amulet and that when you feel the pearl against your heart you will remember when I gave it to you and the kiss that we shared. Please don’t harbor any guilt about that, by the way. That kiss was a long time coming. I do not regret it, at all, and neither should you. Also, for the record, I am not questioning or doubting my choices…save, perhaps, not telling you sooner about my feelings for you, because I always promised that I would be honest with you.

I do love Emily, with all of my heart and soul…and she also loves me, which is a mystery I have never and will never understand. As you are aware, our marriage has not always been easy, mostly because I’m an idiot…but despite our challenges, I would not change one single thing about her or our life together. I know that I am a very lucky man, indeed. I do wish she was nicer to you…and you to her, as well…but c’est la vie. I think she knew what was happening between us before either of us did…well, before I did, at any rate. You both are far smarter than I am in a lot of ways.

I also love you, Sandra. I feel like I should apologize for that…but I’m not sorry. I told myself for a long time that my feelings were something else, anything else…but eventually I couldn’t swallow the lies anymore. I wanted so much to tell you the truth about how I felt, but I was terrified that I would lose not only you, but also Em…and as I said before, I couldn’t bear that. And as…complicated…as the revelation of our mutual affection has made things, I would not choose any differently with regards to meeting and knowing you, either. I would not be the person I am today if I hadn’t.

Were this Burger King, that magical place where I can have it my way, I would, being the self-interested prat that I am, choose to be with you both, the two incredible and very different women that I adore and respect so much. But, I don’t get to have this my way…and anyhow, neither of you would ever accept that arrangement, nor should you. As you said, it just can’t be. I do understand that. You can’t blame this poor old chap for dreaming, though. ;)

As sad as I am that you are gone, I also understand you needing to escape Pittsburgh. I felt very similarly when I left England and first came to this country…one of the few mandates of the Order that I was more than happy to oblige.

For what it is worth, I really liked the lyrics you borrowed from Roger Waters about the fishbowl…and the bit you said about us finding each other again in our next life. I truly hope that you’re right about that. I offer you one of my favorite quotes in return, as it seems appropriate:

“Here is my secret. It is very simple: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”

While commiserating with my good friend Old Crow at the Voltaire show, I had this idea that we should make a silent black and white short film with subtitles. Subtitles are cool, right? We can call it, ‘Finding Sandra.’ Brilliant, right? That all seemed much funnier at the time, in my head, than it does now. Oh well. Maybe the sequel can be, ‘Finding Tinsley’s Sense of Humour.’ It’d probably be a long one…akin to the extended editions of the Lord of the Rings movies.

I can only imagine the grief that you have carried all these years after losing your Lorelei. If it were in my power to do so, I would take all of that away from you and endure it. One thing I will never understand is why you have had to repeatedly suffer so much in this life…it is so patently unfair. And yes, love, I know that the world is, quite frequently, a most iniquitous place. I also know that I have likely been the cause of some of your pain, and I don’t know if I’ll ever forgive myself for that. I hope, though, that you know that I never, ever wanted or meant to hurt you, and I am truly and deeply sorry that I have.

Perhaps Lorelei’s return to…life?...is a portend of a turning of the tides for you. I truly hope so. I also hope that when she wakes and you are finally able to be with her again that she realizes how incredibly lucky she is to have been loved devotedly for so long by such a beautiful, talented, and amazing woman.

I know that I am, too, exceptionally blessed and very fortunate to have a place in your heart. Your friendship is and has been one of the greatest gifts I have ever been given. For all of my so-called education, it is you who have been my very best teacher about so many things: truly exceptional sarcasm, American pop culture, politics in the Goth community, the eternal wisdom of Clive, courage, even myself…but most of all, about the unparalleled and transformative power of deep, steadfast, and resilient faith.

You are truly a miracle, dearheart…and you hold high expectations for me. I think you put too much of your faith in me, to be honest...more than I deserve. But, I will try and do my best not to disappoint you, and to always honor that gift…to be better, as you asked, and to be the hero that you believe I can be.

I do need to focus on the work at hand here, and on my family. Whatever is happening is really affecting both of them-Henry physically and metaphysically and Em psychologically. I signed her into Western Psychiatric yesterday…and there’s really nothing else to say about that. Just looking at the words makes me feel physically ill. I know that I must find a way to stop the infection that is rapidly taking hold of our city, but I don’t know how…and I’m afraid that time is running out.

I don’t want to upset you anymore than I already have, but I should probably tell you that Carrie is currently in police custody. She apparently attacked her wife, Kay (who is currently in critical condition in the hospital) around the same time that Em attacked me and Henry. And, Megan has gone missing. Klaus is looking for her. And, the Cabal of Psyche also attacked the Rosicrucians. And, the Rosicrucians are a big, bloody mess. I think that about brings you up to speed. Needless to say, you chose a really good time for a sabbatical.

It appears that you are officially on call with the Powers That Be, now…though you were always a champion, too, as much as you tried to deny it. Welcome to the proverbial club, such as it is. I offer you my sincerest condolences on the death of your previous ringtone. And please know that the wayward employees of Blake Investigations stand ready to assist you, too, should you ever need us.

I miss you so much, Sandra. I do selfishly wish that you were here. Some days your absence hurts a little less. Maybe today will be one of those days. Others it is really a struggle…like I’ve misplaced a vital organ somewhere along the way. I am trying to move forward, though, I really am. Chin up. I promise.

I pray that She Who Is Wisdom keeps you safe and well, and that on your journeys you find healing, peace, and all the joy and happiness you so deserve. Finally, I hope that you always know how very much you are loved, especially by Father Bob, Anita, and I…and most importantly, that you know, deeply in your soul, that you are indeed worthy of that love...and of so much more.

My wonderwall, I remain yours, always,

Darrek