

Saturday Morning

[Clover]

When I woke up, I felt heavenly. Josh and I had made good use of the night. He was gone now. I sent him home when I was done with him.

I was really pleased with how this relationship was working out. It was exactly what I needed while I was settling in. Quickly, I got out of bed and got ready for work.

Jen waved at me as I approached the front door. The teahouse had already been open for a few hours. Nixie was on opening and Maya would come around two in the afternoon.

Emmalyn was dragging her feet down the street. I unlocked the door and Jen put her things away. I went into the oce and opened the safe so I could get the cash bins for the registers.

The girls were stocking up our best sellers when I came back. I opened each register and put their money in before locking them again. I cleaned the area behind the counter and restocked bags.

We nished up with about ten minutes to opening. I smiled at the girls.

"Looks like you ended up having a good night." Jen giggled.

"I denitely did. What about you? Did you end up taking Paul home?" I asked.

"No, but we have a date for tonight. I don't really know how I feel about him." She replied.

"I almost slept with Derrick." Emmalyn said suddenly.

We froze and turned to her. She looked miserable. I put my hand on hers.

"You need to tell us everything." I told her.

"He came to my apartment last night. I don't know how he knew where I lived. He was returning my shawl. I kissed him. I yelled at him for a bit, then Jen's suggestion popped into my head. The kiss was because I was so drunk and I had an urge. I shouldn't have done it, because I don't think it was just Jen's suggestion that made me do it." She groaned.

"Okay, so you kissed him, you yelled at him, then you tried to sleep with him. How was he?" Jen asked eagerly.

"He wouldn't sleep with me. He thought I was a virgin and refused to take my virginity while I was drunk." Emmalyn scoffed.

"That's actually kind of sweet. I don't know how many men would actually do that." Jen replied.

"I actually stripped down in front of him." Emmalyn said. "He's seen me mostly naked now."

"Wow, drunk Emmalyn is risqué. So you just let him think you were a virgin and he left?" I asked.

"No." She scoffed. "I laughed at him, then I told him to leave if he wasn't going to do it with me."

Emmalyn put her forehead down on the counter and pounded it a few times. I winced. That sounded like it hurt.

"So he just left?" Jen asked.

"Yeah. I woke up and the door was locked and he was gone. I knew for a fact he didn't have s*x with me after I fell asleep, because I put my pajamas on and they were still on when I woke up. Should I have worked harder, or should I just be happy he didn't do it? I just want him to leave me alone. What if sleeping with him is the only way to get rid of him?" Emmalyn whined.

"You need to sleep with him. You said it yourself, you turned him down and he was a massive womanizer. Once he's gotten the ungettable girl, he'll wander off to nd some other conquest. You're not the only woman in the world, just the only one not to fall into his bed instantly." Jen said matter-of-factly.

"What if he falls more in love with her once she sleeps with him?" I asked. "If I slept with Steven, he'd never give up on me. He'd see it as proof that I really loved him. Don't sleep with him, Emmalyn. You need to contact Queen Bellamy or one of her lieutenants. Goddess only knows what he's planning now. Maybe he thinks you'll come running after him since he did something 'honorable'. This could make him chase even harder."

"I don't think so." Jen replied. "He probably left because taking her when she was drunk was too easy. She has to do it when she's sober. It's the only way he'll believe he seduced her!"

"I disagree. If she does it when she's sober, then he'll take it as her giving into his love and starting to actually love him back. Right now, it was a drunken impulse. Just like that kiss was. Next time you see him make sure he knows you aren't interested in him and that was all a reaction of the alcohol." I advised her.

"I hate this so much." Emmalyn groaned.

My alarm went off. "Sorry, time to open. You are staying at my place tonight, Emmalyn. We'll talk everything out. I need to be down here for vampire night. It starts a few hours after we close. You should come do rune readings for them."

"I don't really want to go back home, in case he comes back tonight. Thanks, Clover." She smiled.

Jen went to open the divider between the shop and the teahouse while I turned the sign on the shop door. No one was waiting, so I didn't have to pretend to unlock the door. Thank goodness no one had come in while we were getting ready.

I walked into the teahouse and waved to Nixie. She was serving a customer. Many of the tables were full of people with laptops or books, sipping their tea as they worked.

Heading to the counter, I waited for Nixie to be done before she came over. She smiled and bounced to a stop behind the register. I'd set it up last night, before I'd left, so she could just come in and get to work.

"Hiya, boss. Can I get you something?" She asked.

"I'm just checking in. How did this morning go?"

"The usual. Saturday mornings are slower than weekday mornings. Since we only serve tea, we don't have coffee hounds in here demanding lattes or whatever. Tea drinkers just have more chill." Nixie replied.

"I'll come back around noon to help with any lunch rush you might have."

"Thanks! I'll handle the food and you can do the tea. That's usually what I did with Miss Tonya." She told me.

I nodded and headed back to the shop. A few people ltered in. A lot of humans were coming to look around. We sold a lot of charms.

A group of teens came in and went looking for luck charms for their exams. One girl was looking through the premade potions. She sighed, and I went over to see if I could help.

"What are you looking for?" I asked.

"Um... well... I... umm...." She stuttered, then very quietly, she said. "I'm looking for a love potion."

"Oh, I'm sorry. Love potions have a huge magical cost. We don't sell those. Can I ask a few questions, maybe I can help you nd something else that might work." I offered.

"There's this boy I like and we're like friendly, but not friends. I want him to like me back, but I don't think he does. He and his girlfriend just broke up a week or so ago, and he's too cute and popular to be single for long." She sighed.

"I see. Can you bake?" I asked.

"Yeah." She answered slowly.

I went to the bins and gathered some lavender, rose petals, bay leaves, and sage, then led her to the workstation. I selected two crystals and handed them to her.

"Focus on him and think of his name while holding these crystals tightly." I instructed.

While she did that I opened up a small envelope and prepared it for the spell it would hold. I put the ingredients into the stone bowl and instructed her to put the crystals on either side of the bowl. I started grinding the ingredients.

Some of the teens who had come in with her came to watch me work my spell. I incorporated a small chant as I turned the leaves and owers into a ne powder. When I was done, I poured the powder into the envelope.

"Bake something and mix this into your batter. Eat it with him. It will enable you both to speak and hear with your hearts. I added some romance to it, it is not a love spell, but it is a bit of an inhibition loosener for love. You may not get the exact result you were wanting. If he loves someone else, he will tell you. If nothing else, it will answer the questions you may have." I told her.

"Thank you!" She grinned and took the envelope from me.

"See one of the girls at the counter to pay for that." I said and started cleaning up.

I had just nished wiping out the bowl when someone walked up to the worktable. I put my customer service smile on and looked up. The smile fell from my face.

"What are you doing here, Steven?" I asked.

My ex-best friend stood in front of me. He was 6'1" with a thin build and a natural tan. Steven's hair was a more reddish orange than Emmalyn's and he had dark gray eyes.

He gave me a dazzling smile. The one that I knew he used when he was working his charm on people. I used to have a hard time controlling my laughter when he got that smile on his face, because I knew he would use it to manipulate whoever his target was.

"I came to see you, Clo. I tried giving you space, but I couldn't stay away. Did you like the snacks I sent?"

"I gave them away. I don't want anything from you, Steven. I'm not dating you. I'm not marrying you. I won't change my mind." I told him.

"Clo." He sighed. "You don't get it. You're my soulmate. You just need to open your heart to me and you'll feel it like I do. Give me a chance. I told you, I can be what you want."

"I am not your soulmate." I replied.

"You did your soulmate search, then?" Steven asked.

"Well... no, but, even if I did, I know it wouldn't be you. You know we have a little tug toward our soulmate, even without the search. I don't feel that with you." I insisted.

"You closed yourself off to it when you decided I wouldn't be your friend. I could tell we've always been close. We almost kissed when we were in seventh grade. I could tell that you felt it back then. Then you disappeared on me and came back with a renewed conviction that I was only your friend." He said.

I shook my head. I had almost kissed him in seventh grade. I wanted a boyfriend, but was growing into a gangly girl. My curves didn't come in until the summer between ninth and tenth grade, but my height put me among the tallest people in the class.

Like most girls, I wanted to have a boyfriend and feel what it was like to hold hands and kiss someone. I wanted someone to go to dances with and get valentines from.

When I got close to Steven, I had a visceral reaction. I thought I was going to be sick. It took me a while to be able to even consider going near him without my stomach twisting.

Most people would think it was some sort of food poisoning or a u, but I took it as a sign from the goddess. She was telling me that I needed to wait. She was telling me Steven wasn't for me.

I left the workstation and started gathering ingredients. I was done with this. If it would get him off my back, I was more than happy to do my soulmate search.

"What are you doing, Clover?" Emmalyn asked.

"I'm nding my soulmate, Emmalyn." I announced.

She and Jen looked at each other, then worked faster to get people checked through. They herded the customers out of the shop and Emmalyn locked the door while Jen went to close the divider between the shop and teahouse. Steven stood and watched as I pulled everything out and went to get a hotplate from the back room with a small cauldron.

Emmalyn started creating a magic barrier around the workstation in the shop. Jen pulled the blinds. Normally, this spell was done with family around and complete privacy. In the smoke that rose, you would see an image of your soulmate and your future with them. Everyone could see it.

I started the oils boiling. Chanting the incantation, I started grinding ingredients. I cut my nger and spread the blood over a crystal.

Adding the powdered ingredients, I mixed the spell and dropped my own blood in before putting a band-aid on. I tossed in the whole ingredients and nally the crystal.

A cloud of smoke ejected from the small cauldron. I couldn't make anything out, then the beast appeared. It was rampant and angry. Drool and blood dripped down its fangs.

Jen screamed. I couldn't take my eyes off it. The long, sharp, teeth, the large paws with deadly looking claws. It was covered in blood and chunks of things. There was some fur, eyes that looked crazed, and I could almost feel its roar in my bones.

The cloud cleared and I could see Steven's face. He looked pale and shaken. At least it seemed that he realized how much of my future was tied to the beast.

"I swear. I'll save you from that beast, Clover." He whispered and headed for the front door, unlocking it and opening it. "I'm your soulmate. I'll save you and we'll be together forever."

I stared after him. "No, you won't."