

## Claimed

I channeled the spirit of a wild cat to help me grip the rocks. I knew it was only a stopgap measure. If I couldn't find a safe way down, that drop could break bones and even kill me if I landed wrong.

"Help me!" I shouted. "Someone! Help!"

It was a long shot, but I knew werewolves had more acute senses, including hearing. With luck, someone could hear me. I kept calling out. It was times like this that I wished I was an air witch, like Jen. She would be able to lower herself slowly from a height like this.

There was a sound from above me and some dirt and pebbles came down. I looked up and saw a bear at the top of the cliff. I could tell it was a grizzly from the shape of its face. That wasn't exactly what I was hoping for, maybe it could lure some werewolves closer, though.

I felt a renewed strength in my hands and arms. There was hope now. I focused on the bear.

"Please. Help me, bear." I pled.

"How did you get yourself in this situation?" He answered.

"I was picking some oysters and the rocks gave way. I could die if I fall from this height. Could you go get help? There are werewolves nearby. I don't know how far away, but this is your territory, so you would know." I replied.

"You don't need werewolves. I'll help you. Hold on until I tell you to let go." The bear said.

I nodded and hung on. I didn't know what his plan was. I had to trust him. I was lucky he was willing to talk to me. I'd heard that grizzly bears could be assholes. I'd only ever met black bears before.

Something fuzzy brushed my legs. I looked down and saw the bear stretching up on his hind legs. He had to be over seven feet tall. I felt the roughness of his paw pads on my legs, they reached the back of my knees.

"Find another handhold that's lower. Even if it's loose, I'm here. I won't let you fall." He told me.

He supported my weight as I found another handhold and then another. Soon, I was pressed between his body and the wall of rock.

"Turn and put your arms around my neck. I'll get you safely to the ground."

I could hear the honesty in what he said and I knew he wouldn't bite. I carefully turned and got my arms around him. He snuffed my hair and neck.

"This is going to feel strange. I want you to keep ahold of me. Don't let go or you could fall."

"I'll hold on." I promised.

There was shifting under his fur. I felt fingers form under my thighs where he'd been supporting my weight. His thickness thinned out a bit and his fur started to disappear. I realized I was holding on to a werebear. I wasn't even dizzy.

My shock at the lack of dizziness was even greater than my shock at what was happening. I felt everything stabilize and I was looking into the most handsome face I'd ever seen.

He had dark brown skin that matched the color of his fur in bear form. His cheekbones were high and he had a hawk-like nose. His eyes were so dark they almost looked black. His lips looked so tempting.

I wrapped my legs around his waist. He was still pretty thickly built. He was a bear of a man as well. Exactly everything I liked.

"Mr. Bear. How can I ever thank you?" I asked coquettishly as I pressed my breast into his chest.

"How did you hear me, little tigress?" He asked.

"I'm an animal witch. I can talk to them. I've never been able to talk to a shapeshifter in their animal form. Thank you so much for saving me, Mr. Bear. I thought I might die." I whispered as I hugged him, placing my lips right next to his ear.

Normally, I was quite forward with men, but there was something that felt very right about this. I felt like I should be in his arms. One of his hands shifted up nearing my core. I could already feel myself getting wet just from being wrapped around him.

"I'd never let you die, tigress. As for my reward.... I want you, tigress. I want to possess you. I want to own you." He purred in my ear.

"I don't play like that, Mr. Bear. I own you and not the other way around." I growled and grabbed a fist full of his long black hair.

I pulled his head backward and forced him to bear his neck to me. I nibbled down his muscular neck to the curve where it met his shoulder. I licked over that spot and he groaned.

"Do you want to be mine, Mr. Bear?" I asked.

"You want to be my Ursa, tigress? You want to stay with me, even though I'm a monster?" He murmured.

That word, Ursa, it felt like it held a lot more meaning than just a title. I could feel the animal magic in me stir and swell. It recognized the word and the meaning of it. My magic wanted it. I was in touch with it enough to know that meant something good.

A lot of witches who weren't fully in touch with their magic might run when they were faced with something that makes it swell. Every time I'd felt my magic swell and went along with it, something amazing happened. I embraced it and did as my magic directed.

I held him close and bit down on the area I'd just licked. I bit hard and felt his skin breaking. His chest rumbled and he pressed me against the rock wall as I licked over my bite. The bleeding stopped, but the bite mark was still there.

"I thought you would heal that." I whispered.

"You marked me, tigress. I've never heard of a witch marking like a shapeshifter. It will never heal entirely. I'll have this mark for the rest of my life." He said softly into my neck.

My magic told me to bare my neck to him. I was a little nervous, but my magic had never steered me wrong. I braced myself. I was certain he would bite me back, but he didn't.

He licked and kissed me in the same spot on my neck. I felt something like electricity everywhere my skin touched his. I loved the feeling and I wanted to feel it all over.

"I want to mark you so bad, tigress. I'm a grizzly bear. Even my natural cousins are considered monsters. You're so small and fragile. I don't want to hurt you."

"Mark me. I need it. I'm not small, Mr. Bear. I'm as tall as most men. I'm a triple anity witch. I'm not weak. You're not a monster. You're my bear." I told him.

"This is a forever mark. I'm not playing, tigress. This will mark you as my mate." He warned.

I felt like reworks were going off in my heart. I had thought eventually I would be able to do my soulmate search and find the man meant for me. The outside forces that came with having done the failed spell must have brought my soulmate to me.

My magic desired this man. It told me I needed to be his mate. My body agreed.

"There's a beast." I said. "Every time someone sees my future, they see the beast. No real context until recently. I tried to do my soulmate search and I saw it. I didn't see you. I didn't see your bear. Are you sure you want to choose me? I'm sure you can still reject me."

"I'll destroy the beast if it tries to take you from me, tigress. I came here because I smelled my mate. You are my mate. I'm not choosing you. You are the only woman for me. You are the one the goddess intended for me. Can't you feel it?" He asked.

One of his arms slid up and wrapped around my back. The musky masculine scent of him surrounded me. I felt myself melt a little.

All thoughts of Josh, Steven, and any other man faded away. My entire mind and heart was consumed with my bear. I could feel the connection with him and I didn't want to be anywhere else ever.

"I can feel it. You found me, even though I couldn't find you. What's your name?" I whispered.

"Stanton. I'm Stanton Bruinwald." He replied and kissed down my neck.

"You don't look like a Stanton." I giggled.

"How many Stantons do you know?" He asked indignantly.

"You're the first." I admitted.

"Then I look like every Stanton you've ever met." He chuckled and nipped at the curve of my neck.

I moaned at the feeling of it. My magic swelled again happily. It wanted this. The power of it was overwhelming me.

"I'm Clover." I whispered breathlessly.

"You're my tigress, Clover. As bold and strong as a powerful cat. You even smell like one a little." Stanton murmured against my skin.

"I do?" I asked.

"You smell like a wildcat, like a bear, like home and love, like mine. You smell like mine, Clover." He growled a little. "This may hurt a little."

I felt his teeth elongate into the pointed teeth of his bear. I breathed deeply and slowly, trying not to panic. He held me tightly as his teeth pierced my skin.

A whimper escaped my throat as my eyes filled with tears. The pain was wiped away by the power surging through me as my animal magic swelled larger than it had ever been. It was like a blast of power exploded from me.

He licked over the bite and it was like I could feel his tongue everywhere. I gripped his hair and pulled his mouth to mine. I kissed him deeply and aggressively. He ground himself against me.

"Is there somewhere we can go?" I panted as I pulled back. "There are too many rocks here to be comfortable."

"Goddess, yes." Stanton groaned.

The pressure of the stone wall pressing us together was gone. Stanton took me to the tree line while holding me close. I nibbled his jaw and ran my hands over his chest.

This wasn't just a thing. This was my soulmate. The person my magic called to. The person I was meant to love. I never thought I would find him.

When he got to some shaded place, he carefully knelt down and laid me on my back. I let him go and he leaned back on his heels. I could finally see everything I'd been feeling.

His body was magnificent. My eyes dropped lower and I licked my lips. Stanton chuckled. I looked back up at him and smiled.

"It seems I'm a little overdressed." I giggled.

"I can fix that, my tigress." He smirked.

"If you tear my clothes off, I'm going to kick your ass." I warned.

"That just makes me want to tear your clothes off even more." Stanton winked.

I called the plants and some ivy nearby responded. It wrapped around his wrists and pulled him back. He struggled against them for a little while before giving up and looking at me helplessly.

"What did you do?" He asked.

"I stopped you from making a big mistake. You have to learn to be obedient, now that you're mine." I replied, scooting away from him and standing. "You stay right here. I'll be back in a little bit. If you hurt the ivy, I'll have to punish you."

Caressing his jaw, I pulled him in for a kiss. I teased at his lips before pressing my mouth to his tightly. He moaned against my lips.

"Be a good boy, Mr. Bear. I'll be back quickly and we can play." I promised.

He nodded and looked up at me. The love and adoration on his face almost made me change my mind about going back for my bag. I gave him one last kiss before hurrying back to the place he'd saved me.

I didn't have any toys or anything, but I did have the cloth that would protect me from the ground and some snacks for afterward. Of course, grizzly bears tended to eat meat more than plants.

It was strange that my soulmate would be something so opposite of me. A black bear would find me better if it had to be a bear. They tended to eat plants unless there wasn't much to be found, they weren't really hunters.

The pictures you see of bears catching fish tended to be grizzly bears. They were built to kill and hunt. I put my hand to my mouth.

That was the first time since I was able to speak that I'd tasted blood. I never wanted to do it again, but I didn't really mind it. I marked him. A giddy feeling went through me. I would make sure he didn't regret me being his mate.