

Lost Mate

[Clover]

I watched as Stanton slipped off to sleep. Our rst time had been perfect. I loved how he responded to my orders and that he called me 'tigress' instead of mistress.

Propping myself up on my elbow, I worked to memorize every inch of his face. I couldn't help but feel ecstatic that the goddess had helped me nd my soulmate when the search hadn't worked out. I'd trusted him when he said I was his mate because I hadn't fainted or felt dizzy around him.

No one knew why it affected me like that, but this man didn't do it. That had to mean something. I hoped I wasn't reading too much into it.

It felt right. When he touched me, it was like being touched by someone I trusted. Even in his bear form, I felt like I could trust him.

The alarm on my phone went off. I needed to head back to my truck soon, or I'd overstay my permission. I looked through my bag, but I didn't have paper or a pen. I didn't want to wake him, he seemed really tired.

"You'll nd me. You said you could. I'll contact the collective and see if someone can help me get ahold of you. This isn't goodbye, Mr. Bear. I promise I'll nd you again. I love you." I whispered and kissed his cheek.

He rumbled a little but didn't wake as I dressed. I left the cloth behind because he was sleeping on it and that would have totally woken him up.

I quickly took a couple of pictures of him with my phone. One was a full-body shot for me to enjoy, and the other was a close-up I could share with my friends. I stashed my phone and headed off, back in the direction of my truck.

It felt like it took twice as long to get back to where I'd parked. I started missing Stanton almost immediately. I wanted to take him home with me, but he probably would have wanted me to go home with him.

If I didn't need to work tomorrow, I would have stuck around and gone home with him. I had a business I was responsible for. I had faith in the goddess and the bond between soulmates.

Climbing into my truck, I placed the bag beside me and sighed. In all, it really had been a fruitful trip. I found a lot of good plants. With longing in my heart, I turned on the truck and headed back toward the city.

I was stopped by the guards and they checked me out after a brief scolding about being ten minutes late. I apologized and thanked them. It felt like it was all I could do.

When I was pulling into my parking spot behind the shop, I realized I could have asked them about Stanton. I would try googling him. He gave me his rst and last names. Maybe there was a way I could contact him on social media.

After heading upstairs, I took a hot shower and dressed in my pajamas before pulling out my laptop. Emmalyn would be at her house for the night, so I was alone in my desperate search for my beautiful bear. I was happy not to have her asking me questions.

I searched for Stanton's name but turned up no results. I felt my heartbreaking. There was a heaviness that was more than just my sadness. I was pretty sure he was sad, too.

A text came in and my heart leapt. I don't know why I thought it was somehow Stanton. It was Josh. He wanted to know how my hike went.

Guilt washed over me a little. We'd just started our arrangement. It felt like it had been weeks since I'd last seen him. I asked him to lunch the next day. I had to end the physical part of our friendship. I couldn't cheat on my soulmate.

He accepted and I set my phone down. I sighed heavily. I needed to know more about shapeshifters. I needed to be the best support for Stanton after this.

I did a search on shapeshifter facts. There were a few sites that were denitely garbage. I decided to look through the collective's website.

There was a section for educational materials. I started reading through them. They were mostly about werewolves, nothing that could harm them, but facts about werewolves that they put out to help other species to understand them.

I started drifting after a couple of hours of reading. I thought about eating something, but my stomach didn't want food. All I wanted was Stanton. I couldn't believe I was missing him so bad.

After putting my laptop away, I went to bed. I plugged in my phone and looked at the picture I took of Stanton before I left him. He looked so peaceful and happy.

Tears lled my eyes. I could feel his loneliness and sadness mixing with my own. This whole shapeshifter mating thing was intense. Witches didn't feel what their soulmates felt. Someone would have told me if that had happened.

I fell into a tful and dicult sleep. My dreams were replays of that afternoon. They turned to nightmares toward the morning and I heard the beast in the forest after I left Stanton. I woke up soaked with sweat and crying.

The sun was just starting to come up as I calmed down. There would be no sleep for me until I knew he was safe. I felt like such an idiot. The beast could have found him after I left.

My hand ew to the mark on my neck. He said it would only fade if one of us died. I could still feel it. He was alive.

I dressed and brewed some strong coffee. I didn't drink it often, but I didn't trust that I'd be able to stay awake without it. The caffeine and sunshine chased away the nightmares.

When it was time, I dragged myself downstairs to help open the shop. Jen and Emmalyn were already there. I was a little shocked and greeted them with as much cheer as I could muster.

"You look like crap," Emmalyn said bluntly.

"I didn't sleep well," I admitted.

"What happened, Clover? You look like you've been crying," Jen said softly.

I laughed. "I thought I'd put on enough makeup this morning to cover that."

"Is it Steven? Did he do something?" Jen pressed.

"Was it the beast? Did you see it while you were out?" Emmalyn questioned.

"No. None of that. I... I found my soulmate. I had to leave him so I could leave the pack lands in time. I had nightmares that the beast found him. What if that's what it meant when we saw it in the spell? What if the beast is going to kill him? I don't know if I could survive that." I snied.

"We can't interpret the spell like that. The beast blocks all your future visions. It could have just been blocking that one. I'm sure he'll be ne. If he's meant to be your soulmate, then he has to be powerful. You're a very strong witch," Emmalyn insisted.

"If he's perfect for you, the way your soulmate should be, I know he has to be a big tough guy. What kind of magic does he have? Is he a dual or triple anity too? Is he super hot?" Jen asked.

I blushed. Everyone thought my mate had to be a witch. I'd always thought that too. Would they distance themselves if they knew he was a shapeshifter? I didn't think Emmalyn would because her sister was basically married to a vampire.

In the coven town I lived in, people only married witches and humans. There had been one man who had found his soulmate was a werewolf. He talked to her Alpha and rejected her in the way the shapeshifters did.

I hadn't even considered rejecting Stanton. He was perfect for me. I couldn't give that up for a husband who would never be as perfect as the man the goddess paired me with.

"He... he doesn't have any magic," I replied.

"How did you nd a human on the pack lands? How did you know he was your soulmate?" Jen pressed.

"He's not human, is he?" Emmalyn asked. "That's how you know even though your soulmate search was scrubbed. He's a werewolf. All shapeshifters know their mates by scent."

"Werebear," I corrected.

"Your soulmate is a shapeshifter?! Dear goddess, what are you going to do?" Jen asked.

"I'm going to love him. I'm going to take care of him and his people. I'm not giving up my perfect match just because he's got a furry side." I told her.

"But, I thought you fainted when you saw them in animal form and you got dizzy otherwise. You want to live like that?" Jen scoffed.

"He doesn't do that. When I rst saw him, he was in animal form. I didn't faint. I thought he was a real bear. It wasn't until he was holding me and he shifted that I even realized what he was." I shrugged.

"We need the whole story. This store doesn't open until we know everything," Emmalyn stated rmly.

There was no arguing with her. She was stone stubborn. Most earth witches were.

I began telling them about my gathering trip. Jen hit me when I told them about climbing down for some plants on the cliff face. When I told them about the marking, Emmalyn pulled aside the collar of my shirt.

"You just left him while he was sleeping?" Jen gasped. "How could you do that? He might think you were just using him or that you changed your mind. You need to nd him."

"What's his name?" Emmalyn asked.

"Stanton Bruinwald. I thought it was funny because he didn't look like a Stanton." I smiled a little at the memory.

"What did he look like?" Jen asked with a bounce.

I pulled out my phone and opened up the picture of his face. When I showed it to them, Emmalyn nodded appreciatively. Jen started going on about how hot he was and what an idiot I was.

"We could have taken care of the shop. You need to nd him. No work for you today. You need to nd your soulmate! I'm sure he's sad," Jen told me.

"I know he is. I can feel what he's feeling. It's so weird. He didn't sleep last night. I can feel how tired he is," I replied.

"Find him, Clover. We have the shop. Contact Queen Bellamy's assistant. They have les on every person in the collective. If he was on the pack land, he has to be in the collective. They'll be able to help you," Emmalyn said. "You need him. You're so fragile because of your past and the beast hanging over your head. You do a great job of projecting condence. You even believe it yourself, but anyone who knows you can see that you're still fragile. Even Jen."

"Hey! I'm observant! But, she's right. I can tell. And you look weaker whenever you have to deal with Steven. Go, nd your bear. We've got the shop. We did ne yesterday. We'll be ne today," Jen insisted.

"You're sure?" I asked.

"Absolutely," Emmalyn said and pushed me toward the door. "Get out. Don't come back until tomorrow. Spend the day looking for your man."

I waved to them and headed back upstairs. I started going through the emails and the collective's website, trying to nd the contact information for the Queen's assistant. I found the phone number for her lieutenants. It looked like I needed to call Lance or Rita Blood. I tried her number since his was listed as Rogue Issues.

"This is Rita," She answered.

"Hello, my name is Clover Harrison and I am a witch member of the collective," I told her.

"Yes, the new witch. All the reports from people that I've seen have said you're doing well and blending into the community ne. Are you having issues with someone?" Rita asked.

"Not really. I'm looking for someone. I was told he was probably a member of the collective. Can you help me? He's my soulmate. We got separated and I don't know how to reach him," I explained.

"I'm sorry, Clover, I can't give information about a member of the collective to another member unless I have that person's permission." She said softly. "If I don't have proof that he's your mate, then my hands are tied."

"How about if I give you the information about him, you look him up and tell him how to contact me? You have my permission to give out my information. Please. I can't lose him." I insisted.

Rita sighed and hummed. "I... I guess I can do that."

"Thank you so much! His name is Stanton Bruinwald and he's a werebear. A grizzly," I told her.

"Oh.... I'm sorry. He's not a member of the collective, Clover. I'll pass the information to Queen Bellamy's assistant. I wish I could be more helpful," She replied.

"That was fast. You know him. You know him, don't you?! Please. If he's not a member of the collective, you can tell me how to reach him. Rita. He's my mate. Please. Tell me how to reach him." I pled.

"I can't do that. Even if he's not a member. I'll do everything I can for you. For now, just focus on your work. Everything will work out if the goddess wills it so. She doesn't like to make her people suffer. Pray, relax, and breathe." Rita said in a kind tone.

"Thank you." I sighed and hung up.

I knew I was so close. I hated that I got stopped. Why couldn't she give me his information? Why was she contacting the Queen's assistant? Nothing made sense.