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Opening extract from

Maddy: Gothic Goddess

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Published by

Orchard

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STARGAZER

Spectacular surprises for Leos this month!





Venus is rising and love is in the air…
If you're single, you're going to meet the soul mate you've been searching for.

You've got a hot date with Fate, so don't fight it!



'Where is she, Scott? Why isn't she here?' I say as we get to the school gates on Monday morning. The last thing she said was, '*See you next week, same time, same place*,' so why isn't she here?

'Don't worry about it.' Scott tries to sound cool but I can see that even he looks a bit rattled. 'Things happen. She might be late or—'

The bell rings and interrupts his attempt at soothing words.

'Well, there's nothing we can do about it right now,' he says as we hurry through the main entrance and plunge into the corridor. 'I'll talk to you at break, OK?'

He's right, there's nothing we can do about it, but that doesn't stop me from worrying.

Things haven't been going well at home for Starr. Her Mum took off quite suddenly to London and Starr went to visit her. She didn't return my calls yesterday and I'm desperate to find out what happened.

Mondays are the best time to catch up because we both have the same lessons all morning and can gossip without driving Scott mad. Today's different – no Starr, so no *giggly girly goss*.

I feel like a *Lost Soul* – which is the name of my new mag tucked safely away in my bag. Everyone else is in their own groups and gangs while I push through the crowds all alone.

Suddenly I get this strange, hollow feeling in the pit of my stomach, like a warning.

(Mad's note: Either that or you forgot to eat your breakfast.)

At least I can read the 'Stargazer' page at break time – take a sneaky peek into the future and find out what's happening to Starr…

'What a load of rubbish!' I say, slamming *Lost Soul* down on the desk two hours later.

We're stuck in a hot, smelly, overcrowded classroom because it's raining outside. I'm in a mood.

'It's so disappointing! D'you think I could take it back and get a refund?'

'Why did you buy it in the first place?' Scott asks.

Then he looks more closely at the black and silver cover. It's scattered with moons and stars and the weird title, *Lost Soul*, is written in strange loopy letters. 'This isn't the one you normally buy, is it?'

Scott isn't a fan of my mags so I'm amazed he even noticed. 'No, but I was getting sick of all that plastic-fantastic, girly-world stuff. This one looked different. And guess what? I didn't even choose it – *it* chose *me*.'

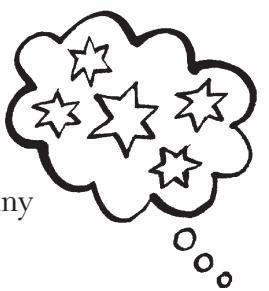
Scott gives me a look. 'What – did it fly off the shelf or something?'

'Yes – it kind of leapt at me and fluttered down to the floor – *spooky*!' I open it up to demonstrate. 'It was flapping its dark, paper wings like a bat out of hell.'

'Really?'

'Of course! So I had to buy it. Don't you think *Lost Soul* sounds kind of dark and prophetic?'

Lost Soul



A new alternative magazine just for you!
Explore the world of dreams, destiny and darkness…

Unleash your magic powers and let your spirit soar!
(Special introductory price)

He takes it from me and flicks through a few pages. 'So what's wrong with it, then? I thought you said it was rubbish.'

'Yeah, "*Explore the world of dreams, destiny and darkness*…" It sounds deep, intense and soulful but it's not. It's completely silly and shallow. *Look*…'

I point to the 'Stargazer' page and Scott reads. '*Hmmm*, it says *luurve* is in the air… What's wrong with that?'

I hold up my fingers and start counting. '*One* – that's what they *always* say. *Two* – where's the stuff about friendship? I want to know what's going to happen to Starr! *Three* – I'm going to meet my *soul mate*? Have you looked round the class recently? Where is he then?'

Scott follows my eyes and we watch what the boys are up to. They're either stuffing their faces with food, glued to computer screens or playing football with empty plastic bottles.

'Soul mates? I don't *think* so,' I say, turning away in disgust.

'"*Stargazer*"?' Scott's laughing now. '"*Venus is rising!*" …Why do you even read this trash, anyway? It's superstition and speculation. Stick to science – you know it makes sense.'

He hands me his big, thick science textbook.

'Yeah, thanks,' I say, flicking through pages of diagrams and data. 'Just what I always wanted.'

Scott rolls up my nice, new, shiny magazine into a tight tube. 'So I'll bin this for you then, shall I?' he says, getting up and walking away.

'No, wait!'

I grab his boring old textbook and hold it up high, cupping my hand like a megaphone. *'SCOTT, PUT THE MAG DOWN OR THE SCIENCE BOOK GETS IT!'*

Suddenly I'm feeling all protective about *Lost Soul*. Maybe it's too soon to pass a final opinion – I haven't even read most of it yet.

'I knew it!' he laughs. 'Once a mag-hag, *always* a mag-hag! OK, OK, I give up.'

I hand over his book and he surrenders my mag. Then I smooth it out and open up the silvery pages, reading the stars again, just in case there was something I missed.

'*Soul mate*… *Spectacular surprise*s…' If only it were true…

Suddenly the lights flicker on and off. Lightning flashes outside, followed by a spectacular crash of thunder.

Booommm!!!

Half the class rush to the window to see what's happening, then someone screams – a loud, bloodcurdling sound that chills the blood…

'AAAAAAaaaghhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!'

(Mad's note: OK, true confession. It's me – but I'm not the only one.)

'*Scary!*' I grab Scott's arm. 'It's still rumbling and grumbling out there like a huge, horrible, hairy monster!'

'Yeah, yeah, that's right,' he says, sarcastically. 'Either that or it's a build-up of positive and negative electrical

charges… They meet to create a bolt of electricity and a shockwave of sound known as thunder.'

But I'm not even listening. The lights flicker on again and something compels me to turn around.

Standing in the doorway is a tall, dark, mysterious stranger, dressed all in black.

He looks deep, intense and soulful…

I can tell by:

a. His deep, intense and soulful hairstyle
b. His deep, intense and soulful clothes
c. His deep, intense and soulful eyes

Everyone else is still looking out of the window. No one sees him except me. Our eyes meet and he slowly raises one finger in a signal to keep quiet.

This isn't a problem – I'm speechless with shock anyway.

The shock that you get when lightning strikes and your soul mate walks into the room.

He moves silently like a shadow and pins something on the notice board at the back of the class.

Then he crosses the room again, pausing briefly at the door to give me a wink.

By the time I can speak he's gone.

