

*Lost River*

by

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The sign outside St. Bridget's read: BEREAVEMENT FRIDAYS 8:00. FOR THOSE WHO HAVE LOST. Larry and Lois had no clue what Fridays are, but the rest was clear – to Lois, at least – and the offer was too convenient to ignore.

“This is ridiculous.”

“Honestly, Larry.”

“This is a human place!”

“B-E-R-E-A-V-E-M-E-N-T, Larry. *Beaver*. Honestly! Learn to read!”

“You’re going to get us in trouble.”

“You have such a thing about asking for directions! Now that I can speak to them, you might consider swallowing your pride and acknowledging the benefits.”

Larry shook his head. “I’m not stepping one foot in there.”

With that, Lois told Larry that she’d be right back. She scuttled up the steps of the church and moved through the propped door. Inside, more steps. In her head, she practiced what she would say: *Hello, Lost Humans. Here I am come because I have lost. Might you point me to the river? Which must not be so far, since Larry and I only ran a little bit, full of fear, from that huge truck before ending up in your fine bushes and gasping for air?*

At the top of more stairs, hanging a left, Lois found a circle of humans. One of them was crying. *My baby*, she cried. *My baby my baby my baby. He was my baby.* And someone next to that human rubbed her shoulder with a large hand like a mitt. And suddenly Lois felt something big and vast in her belly like hunger pain, because this was all Lois could say when little Lenny got pecked and eaten by that owl. How she’d cried. *My baby.* And Larry snuggled her, not talking because no words were good enough, dabbing her tears away with a leaf.

Lois drew a shaking breath. “Oh, humans! I am feeling what you’re feeling, too!”

That crying human dabbed at her eyes and smiled down at Lois. She held out her hands. Lois moved toward her – slowly at first, then sped up when the human nodded, yes, come here, little beaver. Let me hold you. Let me love you, baby.

How Lois heaved in her arms! To be embraced in that large, swooning cradle, warm and velvety soft!

“Lost,” Lois managed through her tears. “Lost!”

And the human nodded. “Lost,” she affirmed. And all the other humans in the circle just wept and nodded, wept and nodded.

Lois wondered, lost together? But she didn’t have to ask. Looking at them all, she knew the answer.