Operation: Spinner

by TrueRumbelle

Summary

After they returned from the Underworld the heroes banished Rumple from town believing that he took the Dark One powers for selfish purposes. Henry divulged the real reasons his grandpa took the curse back, and now he, Belle, Emma, and Regina set out to find and bring Rumple home. Question is once they find him: Will he want to return? And what about the false memories Regina gave him to keep him from wanting to ever return to Storybrook?

Notes

this started as a small drabble I typed on my phone at work.. so please excuse the typos and everything else that will be undoubtedly wrong with it..lol
Chapter 1

Leroy entered the diner walking over to the quiet group. “Whelp, I heard from the others. No sign of the Dark One since you banished him last night. I don’t think he’s coming back.”

“You what?” Henry stood not able to believe what he was hearing.

Regina smiled sympathetically at her son. “Henry, I know you want to believe the best in everyone but Gold didn’t change …so we did what was right for the town.”

The group nodded. However, Henry’s head was spinning. He looked from adult to adult not believing what was happening.

He turned to Belle almost pleading. “You’re okay with this?”

“He lied to me again Henry. You don’t know how many times he has hurt me.”

“This is all my fault.” Henry paced, anxiety washing over him.

He could see his mom about to protest. He would know her argument and it wouldn’t matter that he would point out his mother’s hypocrisy in regards to Hook’s actions and his grandfather’s, she wouldn’t see it. He just needed them to understand.

“None of you understand. Grandpa Gold did this for me. I asked him to help me.”

Belle’s face paled with realization that Rumple was trying to tell her something before they took him to the town line. “What did he do Henry?”

“I went to see grandpa at the shop shortly after my moms did. Seeing mom with Excalibur I knew something wasn’t right. I figured most of it out and went to grandpa for confirmation. He wasn’t certain it would work but either way you would die mom. I could lose one of my moms after I already lost my dad. I asked if there was anything that could be done. He said that he could anchor it to his heart now that it was pure. That perhaps he could fight it but either way he’d end up in the Underworld so the family would be safe.”

Belle gasped tears ready to spill over. “When he told me he was keeping a promise I didn’t believe him. I told him to leave. That he was never welcomed back.”

As she bent her head and cried Snow pulled Belle into a hug.

Regina looked sympathetically at Belle. “It wasn’t just you. None of us wanted to believe him. We all made the decision to force him from Storybrooke.”

Emma chimed in feeling ashamed. “It’s easier to lay the blame solely at his feet than to acknowledge your own wrongdoings in the name of love.”

“We kept his dagger as collateral in case he returned.” Regina added as Belle removed it from her purse.

Belle stopped and eyed it as she dropped it on the table. “His name is inverted look. It wasn’t that way before.”

Henry looked at it and smiled. He was the author now and somehow that connection he knew what it meant. “It’s because he’s not the same as before.”

Henry looked expectantly as everyone. Belle and Regina stood simultaneously as the others followed suit.

“What are we calling this one kid.”

“Operation Rescue Spinner”
Rumple pulled over to the side of the road almost immediately. Tears falling rapidly down his face made it difficult to see the road.

He lowered his head onto the steering wheel letting out a shaky cry. Replaying the events of the last few hours. They came back from the Underworld having challenged Hades for the soul of Hook. Almost immediately upon returning he was cornered.

They must have made this decision while we were still in that place.

He saw Belle and went to embrace her, seeing she was pregnant he felt elated that now was the opportunity to finally be a family with the woman he loved. But it was short lived. Emma had Snow take Henry back to her home with the excuse of checking on baby Neal and his momentary hope of happiness was ripped away once again.

What did they say or do that I didn’t deserve?

The look in Belle’s eyes as they told her about his deception and betrayal. Becoming the DO, somehow taking Hook’s valor away. The way she paled and once again saw him as untrustworthy…as a monster.

Before he could react Regina had placed the bracelet on him nullifying all his magic. They took the dagger and led him to the town line handing him the keys to his car.

"Belle please, don’t do this. Let me explain... it’s not what you think…”

“No Rumple, you can’t do this anymore. You can’t keep pretending, and harming everyone and having excuses. You can’t keep lying and expecting me to let you back in.”

“If we can get Henry…”

Regina rounded on him. “You leave my son out of this. You may have fooled him with your tricks and deceit. Attempting to get on his good side, but you will not pull him into this.”

“Belle, our baby…please Belle…please let me be a fa…”

“No Rumple. Not your baby. You will only bring her harm. You are not welcomed back and you will never have any place in my child’s life”

That stung the most. She didn’t understand and he couldn’t tell her. When Henry had him promise not to divulge their conversation and his promise to help save his mother by taking the curse with him to the Underworld somehow it prevented him from telling anyone.

Rumple looked around him at the darkness and the trees surrounding him on both sides. The moon was high but did little help him see out in the wilderness.

“Bae, how I miss you.” Rumple cried loudly choking on all feeling of hopelessness that took over. “Even when I lost you I didn’t stop hoping that I’d find you and I did. But now...now I truly have nothing. A child I will never know or get to love. Belle is lost to me, as is home.”

The urge to leave the car and walk into the woods and await fate was overpowering. As Rumple considered it he felt as if someone was holding him back, keeping him from such a drastic measure. The tears fell harder as he thought of the son he loved so much and lost. Fourteen was too soon to lose you, and when I finally found you, you were a grown man and then you were taken from me before I could even know you again. “Bae, I won’t do it. I’ll make you proud. You’re the only one to still believe in me. To still love me.”

Rumple started the car again not knowing where he will go but just to drive as far as he could. I’ll go someplace where I can never be found. Live in exile as far away from the world as possible.
Belle had finished packing everything she thought they’d need as they went to search for Rumple. He has a head start of about 18 hours now, but hopefully they’d leave soon and they’d catch up.

As she walked into the back of the shop she saw everyone looking very tense, especially Henry.

“What happened? Did the globe not work? Weren’t you able to locate his whereabouts?”

“No, it’s not that. He’s on the move but we know that he’s currently in an area of Massachusetts in the Berkshire Mountains. A town called Lenox.” Emma answered as Henry didn’t seem to hear Belle. He was giving Regina a very angry look.

“Then what happened?” Belle was getting concerned as she watched Henry and Regina now.

“Why don’t you tell her mom…” Henry bit out

Regina gave a sad nod to Henry, knowing she had disappointed him. She looked over at Belle and gave a worried a smile. Knowing that Belle was not going to react well and that any anger was going to be well deserved.

“Belle, I have something to tell you and you’re not going to like it.” Regina motioned for Belle to sit. Belle crossed her arms and said nothing but the refusal was there all the same.

“I may have taken Gold’s memories away.”


“Well it seems to be our go to curse, and it was the easiest for the amount of time I had. I thought no one would want to take the chance of him returning. I cursed the bracelet since in the real world he’ll be able to take it off. If he did that he could return and have the use of magic.”

Regina could see that Belle didn’t like where this was going and could feel her son’s angry eyes burrowing into her back.

“So I cursed it that if he removed it he’d lose his desire to return here. that all he would remember that he is Mr Gold and that he despises us all. He wouldn’t remember us except to not want anything to do with us.”

Belle felt like she was going to cry. It was going to be difficult to locate Rumple as it was, but to find him and him avoid them…avoid her? He didn’t deserve what they had done to him and now this?

Regina added quickly.” Look Belle you have every right to be angry with me. I’m angry myself. It may not even work. But we need to get moving so we can correct this and bring him back.”

“What makes you think I will let you go with us? How can I trust you or believe that you’ll not sabotage this as well?” Belle snapped

Regina was taken aback and looked at Emma and her son. “I’m sorry Belle. I already told Henry I was sorry. Snow and David are staying with the baby and taking care of the town. I’m better off aiding you. I may be able to help bring back his memories since this was my spell.”

“She’s right Belle.” Emma added walking over to the Belle. “It’s not the most ideal situation…Actually it sucks. And it’s your decision on who should go. I know the outside world, Henry has blood ties and well Regina has known him the longest. She may be able to trigger his memories.”

Belle looked angry but knew that best option was to take Regina with them.”Ok ..but if you commit one act against Rumple or myself the bracelet will go on you.”

“Mom agrees.” Henry spoke loudly making certain that everyone knew he was still there and planned to be the peacekeeper in this trip. “Now lets go before Grandpa get farther ahead of us.”

They four said their goodbyes to Snow , Charming, Leroy and Granny, having been given packed lunches by the latter they were off. Hopefully they will stay hot on Rumplestiltskin’s trail.

Rumplestiltskin stopped at a tavern. The town was called Lenox he noted. A small, quaint town nestled in Western Massachusetts. It was a place rich in history, the buildings, the covered bridge, a place that gave off an air of elegance in its community. He laughed at the name of the tavern; Rumpy’s. Established 1771 said the sign with a silhouette of a small man that looked more jester than terrible Dark One.

He was about to exit the cadillac when he felt the bracelet irritating his wrist again. Rumple had been so distracted by all the events that took place that he had forgotten he still wore it. He knew
in Storybrook he wouldn’t be able to remove it but possibly here he could. With is small tug he was able to loosen it and ease it off. Throwing it in the glove box he felt relief that it was no longer on him and he walked out towards the tavern.

Rumple felt a moment of nauseousness as he walked. Anger, frustration and bitterness washed over him. He went in and sat at the bar as a waitress handed him a menu. “I’ll have the shepherd’s pie…and I see this is also an inn. Whom do I speak with about renting a room, possibly indefinitely?”

“I’ll place your order and have the owner come speak with you…Mr.?”

“Mr. Gold.”

Chapter End Notes

There is actually a Rumpy's tavern in Lenox MA. I have a pic on my tumblr.
Chapter 4

A/N: the magic that Regina placed on the bracelet has worked, and though Rumple remembers Belle, Henry and the others, the details in his relationships and what happened has changed. This is also short, but hopefully next part will be longer.

Mr Gold had settled in his room; a two bedroom suite overlooking the small village. The top floor was only accessible to the owner’s, himself and a couple employees. Something Mr. Gold spent the majority of the evening working out the details for a lengthy stay and complete privacy by offering the owners a small fortune for their discretion. The owners of both the inn and tavern were two older woman named Drea and Jennifer Cartwright, they assumed he was a divorced man looking to avoid his numerous ex-wives. Mr Gold listen to them create an elaborate backstory since he did not share much details and didn’t bother to correct them when they wrote up the agreement signing his name Rum Gold.

“Obviously gold digger’s looking for more of your wealth.” Jennifer told Drea. Nodding her agreement Drea turned to Rumple.

“Don’t you worry Mr Gold, you can have the run of the inn. We’ll make certain no one bothers you.”

“I appreciate your discretion as I value my privacy and though I doubt there will be anyone looking for me; ex-wives especially, I am pleased to know that my confidence is in capable hands.” Rum bowed slightly to both woman. They reminded him of his Aunts who had raised him after his father left.

Mr Gold knew his ex-wife wouldn’t come seek him. She had been having an affair with a man named Will, having married him only for his power and money. Not love as the Regina Mills pointed out after a city council meeting. The mayor sounded triumphant in her tone when she had shown him proof that his young wife despised him as did the rest of the town.

The humiliation, the bitter and costly divorce and the pain that it caused on top of the recent loss of his son was too much He sold his remaining assets after everything was finalized, cut his ties to the town and left for a new start. There’s was no one in the world that would wonder where he went especially not anyone from Storybrook.

Rum turned from the window and settled on the sofa with a glass of scotch and a book. He’d take this time to relax and not think of the past. He had all the time in the world now

10:52pm Emma noticed when they reached Lenox. Regina had called to make reservations at a bed and breakfast for the four of them. The Eastgate Inn B&B was just off Interlaken Rd and after having made multiple wrong turns they finally found the right place. They all exited the car and walked towards the Inn Emma noted how quiet the area was. “And I thought Storybrook was small” she muttered

“Henry, this is where the globe told you Rumple was?” Belle was anxious, worried about if they even found Rumple what kind of state he’d be in. She was furious that Regina had placed a spell on him to give him unpleasant memories of his life in Storybrook, in particularly his marriage to her. Now was not the time to deal with that however. She’d confront Regina about it when this was over and hopefully wipe that smug look off her face. Right now she needed to get to Rumple and hopefully fix the mistake that all made. That she made.

“I was able to narrow it to Lenox but not any further. But don’t worry Belle, Grandpa will be alright… we’ll find him. My mom was able to find my dad in New York City easily.”

Belle held Henry’s hand and smiled. She admired his confidence and his belief, something she needed right now.

Emma looked behind at them for a moment. “Henry’s right, we’ll find Gold. But it’s late and we won’t get anywhere trying to locate him tonight. Lets get some rest and we’ll start in the morning.”

“Alright. I don’t want to waste an hour of sunlight tomorrow. Let’s devise a plan on where, and how to look for him.” Her voice didn’t hold the strength she had hoped. Belle wanted to take charge and let everyone know just how much Rumple meant to her, and the they should also matter since they are family as well.
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

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Drea had brought breakfast up to Rum at 7am deciding it would be good to have their mysterious guest be greeted by a friendly face. As soon as Rum opened the door Drea took the tray over to the table and sat down pouring herself some tea.

“Come sit Mr. Gold. I have some matters I’d like to discuss with you.”

“I don’t recall asking for company this morning, just breakfast, and really Mrs. Cartwright I believe we finished all the details regarding my long term stay. I’m sure you have much business to take care of downstairs, so if you don’t mind” Rum gestured towards the door, however Drea didn’t move. Her smile at him as she started getting his plate ready was unnerving. Rum was not used to people who were above his ability to intimidate.

Sighing Rum accepted the plate of food as he sat in the chair across from her. “Alright Mrs. Cartwright what matters shall we discuss?”

“That’s a good lad, eat up. You’re too thin.” Drea paused to take a sip of tea looking at Rum with seriousness. “My wife and I run this establishment and the tavern for many years on our own. As we are getting older it’s become a bit of a burden for our day to day operations. And since you had mentioned being a lawyer as well as having owned properties back in Maine, I thought it might suit both of our needs to have you manage our properties.”

Rum look at her incredulously. “How exactly would this benefit me?”

“Oh come now Mr. Gold. You are a man running even if you don’t realize it, but your past will always be there to haunt you. You suddenly decide to stay here indefinitely. Here is as good a place as any to hide from the world, except perhaps during tourist season. If you are staying here for some time you might as well work. I don’t see you as the type to sit and be idle.”

Drea waited for Rum to finish eating and think of what she had said. “Think it over Mr. Gold.”

Rum rose from his seat as Drea did and walked with her to the door. “Thank you Mrs. Cartwright, I will give your proposal some thought. In the meantime I was considering trading in my car for something more practical for the area.”

Drea smirked at him. “You mean less conspicuous? The closet dealerships are in Pittsfield. I suggest getting a Subaru; you can’t go a block in this area without seeing about twenty.”

Rum smiled and nodded. “Thank you again for your hospitality.”

“I’m not done yet. Jennifer would like you to join us for dinner. She doesn’t like to see anyone alone. Prays on the mind she says. Take care of your business and we’ll see you around 7pm.” With that Drea walked to the elevator not giving Rum a chance to refuse.
After he finished breakfast Rum mapped out his plan for the day, getting to know the area and what to expect from the locales. But first he would take the 30 minute drive to Pittsfield. As he drove off in his Cadillac he didn’t notice the yellow VW bug parked at the Eaglegate Inn.

Belle and Emma were already seated in the dining area for breakfast when both Henry and Regina arrived. It was 7am and Belle was already restless. Her husband was out there with a fake memory if Regina’s spell worked. Regina was less than forthcoming about the details of Rumple’s fake memories except to say they were not good ones. His memories would be bad enough for him to despise them…her and for that he wouldn’t want to see us. It made Belle insides hurt with the thought of Rumple being out there hating her for something that was false when there was plenty reason enough for him to despise her. Stop beating yourself up over the past, he loves you and forgave you. He understood.

Sensing Belle’s thoughts Henry reached over to hold Belle’s hand. “Grandpa will be fine. We’ll start asking around at hotels if they had a Mr. Gold registered in the past 24 hours.”

Regina added “We should probably come up with a story however. Telling people that we are looking for Rumplestiltskin who we banished from our town upon our return from the Underworld because we thought he betrayed us by becoming the Dark One again probably won’t get us very far.”

“Well we could just say that we’re looking for Mr. Gold, that he’s family and we think he may be in trouble.” Emma shrugged at the obvious story. “We don’t need to give much information just that we’re looking for a family member.”

“Do you think he could use an alias? You said his memories he still would remember being Mr. Gold and that you gave him the first name of Rum for the outside world. But if he’s angry and wants to be nowhere around us how easy is it to use a different name?” Belle looked at her companions. She didn’t know much of this world but she did know enough to understand what efforts people will go to avoid others.

“I don’t think we need to worry about that Belle. Rumple doesn’t believe we’ll be coming for him. According to Regina he thinks we hate him as much as he hates us. Fake identities aren’t that easy to come by anyway unless you have connections. I can’t imagine there’s much of a demand in this town for fake id’s so I doubt there’s anyone working that racket here.” Emma pondered that, thinking of her time as a bail bonds woman. “Of course we’re talking about Rumplestiltskin too. If anyone is cunning and resourceful it’s him. We should keep all options open.”

“Right, so we all have cell phones, and Belle gave all of us a picture of Rumple. I say we inquire at the hotels, bed and breakfasts in the area and call each other by noon. Unless of course one of us finds Gold then we should probably devise a strategy before we go to him. In case my memory curse worked.” Regina looked over at Belle feeling very contrite as she stood to leave with the others. “Let’s go into two groups. Belle, you go with Emma and Henry and I will go…”

Henry stepped up before Regina could finish. “No mom. I’ll go with Belle. I think it’s a better idea if you and my mom go together. I love you both but neither of you have been very supportive in the past to grandpa or especially Belle. I’m still angry about what happened after you returned from the Underworld so I think its best that I clear my thoughts. And if Belle comes across grandpa she’s going to need me.”

Emma looked over at Regina knowing it would be pointless to argue with their son. Henry was a true believer, and a stubborn one at that. He was upset and she couldn’t blame him. This was their test to show they cared about all their family, not pick and choose who they helped. Something she would need to discuss with Regina to be certain she was on board and understood. “Alright kid, your mom and I will start with the ones on the outskirts of the village. You and Belle can start on Main Street. We’ll all check in at noon or sooner if we have any luck.”
Belle reached for both Emma and Regina’s arms, placed a hand on both. They needed to be united, and couldn’t let the situation divide them. “Thank you Emma. And thank you Regina. This banishment was as much as my fault as anyone’s. He changed, and I think we all realize now what the Dark One curse does to a person now that you experienced that. I have forgiven you Emma for using my life as collateral to make Rumple a hero. He forgave you. I think it’s time we forgive him of his past and when we do find Rumple, please be when we find and he’ll want to come back. I want us to be there for him. He took this curse back because he loved his grandson and couldn’t bear to see Henry lose another parent. I think we all owe him for that.”

They group set off, Emma and Regina heading towards the car to start the search farther out as Henry and Belle walked the distance to the center of the village. Loaded with small hotels, inns, bed and breakfasts for when the busy tourist season hits.
Chapter 6

“Belle are you alright?” Henry stopped at the next Inn concerned at how pale his grandmother looked.

“I’m fine Henry.” Belle smiled opening her purse to grab a hard candy offering him one. “Just a little nauseous…it happens from time to time. I’m still in the first trimester so it’s to be expected.”

“As long as you’re ok Belle. I know grandpa would rather have you and the baby well than for him to be found. That’s how much he loves you.”

Belle felt near the edge of tears again. She loved Henry so much but at times he would say something so bittersweet that her heart broke. “I know Henry, and I’ve always loved him. I wish I had listened to him. That seems to be our problem. He didn’t talk with me before when he felt the darkness taking over, and I didn’t listen and reacted without letting him explain.” Belle sighed looking up at the next inn they were at. “I just want him back. Maybe this time it will work out, no obstacles, just find Rumple and bring him home.”

“Hmm the Summer White House Inn, our last stop before we meet your mom’s for lunch.” Belle opened the door as she and Henry entered.

“Well that was a pointless, driving around all these places and most are closed for the season. Unless Gold is squatting I think we should stay in the village with Henry and Belle.” Regina was frustrated and Emma understood why. Regina had a difficult time owning up to what they all had done to Rumple. She knew they were wrong and she agreed that Henry needed them to prove they cared about family and both Belle and Rumple were included in that. Regina’s problem was guilt eating at her. She wouldn’t discuss what memories she gave Gold just that they were not good and she hoped that it wouldn’t come down to them finding out just how bad they were. She hoped for a miracle that she made some error and the curse didn’t take. Grinding her teeth she looked over to Emma.

“I hope we find Gold quickly and get him back to Storybrook. I’m really worried Emma.”

“I know. I don’t know what you did exactly. But I’ve known you long enough to know that whatever you screwed up Henry will not be happy.” Emma quickly glanced at Regina. “Hey listen; I’ve screwed up majorly since Camelot. I have a lot I need to sort through. No one had abandoned me, no one will abandon you.”

It was 12:30 by the time the four of them met at the Old Heritage Tavern. They all sat in the small dining area having ordered basic pub food.

They all discussed their progress or rather lack of progress and with so many hotels in the area it could be sometime before they found Rumple. They couldn’t even be certain he was still in the area. An option all chose not to discuss.

“Is there anything else I can get you?” The waitress; Amy she had told them came to the table as she filled their water glasses.

“Actually, can you tell us about the inns, and other places to stay within walking distance? We saw many of them on your Main Street; can you tell us where else we can look?” Belle wanted to make progress and walking around going door to door seemed pointless.

Amy took a moment before responding. “There are quite a few between Old Stockbridge Road and Walker Road. A few are well hidden too for those that like being here during the summer for Tanglewood but like privacy. One of the most popular is the Village Inn. It’s not easy to see from the road, it’s behind Rumpy’s Tavern…”

All eyes shot up at that. “Rumpy’s Tavern...?” The four chimed in unison.

Amy laughed at their expressions. “Yes I know it’s an odd name. The tavern is one of the oldest in the Berkshire Mountains. Built in the 1700’s, there’s history to why it’s named that but to get an accurate account you’d probably best talk to the Innkeepers.”

“And what street is this tavern on?” Emma smiled as they all did. Feeling they hit their first breakthrough.

“It’s on Walker, and the inn is behind that on Church Street.” Amy collected their dishes and at their request hurried back with their check.

“Belle!” Henry was ecstatic “This has to be it. Grandpa has to be there. Why else would he be drawn here?”

Belle hugged Henry grabbing her things ready to run to the inn herself and find Rumple. “I hope
you’re right.”

The four of them walked quickly over the 3 blocks towards Walker Street. The tavern’s sign its bright red and yellow colors standing out. The little man with the jester hat in the silhouette came into view causing an amused chuckle from Regina.

Down the path past the tavern was the inn behind it, sitting cozily in its own small garden hidden away from the bustle of summer crowds.

Belle and Henry both made the entrance to the inn first rushing to the reservations desk.

“Can I help you…?” Jennifer Cartwright looked at the group noting how out of breath they all seemed.

Belle answered quickly. “Yes, we’re looking for my husband. We believe he may have checked in here.” Belles looked at the innkeeper with pleading hopeful eyes. “His name is Rum Gold.”

Jennifer masked her surprise at the mention of their newest guest but was quick to respond. “Let me check with my wife and see if anyone by that name has checked in.”

“Thank you. It’s very important that I find my husband.” Belle added hoping that anyone knowing Rumple’s whereabouts would see that her intentions were honest.

Jennifer walked to the back of the office to speak with Drea, as she did; Emma and Regina looked at the stairwells, the lobby and the main room all decorated with antiques. The place wanted to make you feel like you were in the past. The spinning wheel in the far corner with a sign to not touch caught Belle’s attention as she pointed them to it. Smiling Belle knew that he had to be here, looking over at Henry she knew he felt it too.

After a few moments Jennifer came out with Drea following behind. Both giving pleasant smiles as Drea looked over the four people at the desk. Belle especially had her attention. Jennifer spoke being as contrite as possible. “I’m sorry. We both looked and neither we nor any of our staff have checked in Mr. Gold.”

“It’s possible he used an alias.” Emma said to Belle, but then placed her attention back to Jennifer. “Has anyone at all checked in the past night or two? He has sandy shoulder length hair, is about 5’7” and slim build.”

“No. Again, I’m sorry but no one has checked in. It’s slow this time of year, and I’m certain unless you are law enforcement.” Jennifer noticed Emma pulled out a badge. “And have a warrant I’m under no obligation…”

“I’m not sure who all of you are, except that you claim to be his wife, you two…”Drea pointed to Emma and Regina “look like a posse.” Drea spoke up suddenly feeling very protective of Rum. “But if he left and doesn’t want to be found then you should leave him alone. He’s probably hurt enough by all of you.” Drea was about to continue as Jennifer shook her head placing her hand on her forehead.

“Sweetheart…stop before you dig the hole deeper.” At Jennifer’s words Drea stopped and looked at the other’s realizing she gave away her guest’s whereabouts.

“So he is here…”Regina started but Emma pulled her back whispering to let Belle and Henry handle this.

Belle fought tears as she looked at both of the innkeepers. “I need to see him please. He’s not himself and I need to help him.”

“Seeing that he’s not here and we don’t keep tabs on our guests we can’t help you.” Jennifer saw the pain in Belle’s eyes and the worry in Henry’s. “You can leave a message that I can give to him, but that is as far as I can extend our hospitality. Since you are not guests here I will need you to leave less I have you arrested for trespassing.”

“Then we’ll register as guests.” Henry stated flatly trying to keep calm in the innkeepers refusal to help.

The other three looked expectantly at them.

Jennifer and Drea looked at each other and Jennifer shrugged. “If you wish, the only rooms I have that aren’t being renovated are two bedrooms that are at the very end of the building.”

“It’s a maze trying to find those rooms too, and don’t ask what room Mr. Gold is in. It’s a restricted floor. You can stay but you cannot give our guests any grief or you will be removed from the premises. I don’t know what this is all about but the man I saw was broken and I won’t take kindly to seeing him harassed.”

Just as Drea was about to finish giving the rules out she heard a noise coming from the behind.

“Mrs. Cartwright, if you have a moment I’d like to discuss…Belle?” Rumple had entered through the side of the lobby looking down at his trade in papers as he stopped suddenly at the sight before him.
“Rumple…” Belle said softly as she went over to hug him.

His eyes narrowed at the name in confusion. He took a step back not welcoming the advances of his ex-wife.

Emma kept her grasp on Regina hoping she wouldn’t interfere unless absolutely necessary. Henry was not too far from Belle hoping that his grandfather would remember, but ready to aid Belle if she needed. Both Jennifer and Drea watched confused as the drama unfolded, Drea especially ready to jump to Mr. Gold’s side as she caught the pained expression he gave this Belle.

“Rumple…please don’t.” Belle took another step forward as Rumple took a few steps back, keeping a good distance between the two of them.

“Why are you calling me that? You never called me that…Rumple. Rum is bad enough.”

“I’m sorry. I just wanted to see you and talk.” Belle was cautious realizing that Rumple did indeed have Regina’s cursed memories.

“You talked enough in front of the judge didn’t you? You said enough to everyone at the diner. You said enough to have even my shop taken from me and leave me humiliated while you took to your lover.” Rumple’s anger was rising at the thoughts that went through his head.

“No Rump…Rum, that’s all a lie. Please believe me, I’ll help you remember.” Belle was crying now wanting to hold her husband but knowing he wasn’t remembering.

“There’s nothing I want to remember…not with you anyway. And I’m curious as to why you would bring Sheriff Swan, the Mayor and her son all the way here. How did you find me anyway…” Rumple wanted to charge at her and scream at what she had done.

“Grandpa, please listen to us…to Belle.” Henry stepped forward hoping to somehow get through to his grandfather.

“Grandpa? What are you playing at?” Rumple demanded more confused than before. Before they could answer Jennifer and Drea both stepped in.

“That’s enough!” Jennifer’s voice rose and startled them all. When she was sure she had everyone’s attention she continued. “Not here…not in my establishment. You…” Jennifer pointed to Belle and the others. “Are to leave these premises immediately.”

“Without saying a single word.” Drea added

Jennifer looked at Drea nodding she went on. “You.” This time she point to Rumple. “Are to go to your room and please don’t come down until dinner.”

Rumple felt insulted and angry at being treated as a child but the look that Jennifer gave reminded him of being scolded by his Aunt. He only once challenged her as a child, something he knew not to repeat. “Yes of course Mrs. Cartwright. I apologize. My personal matters should not have been laid at your doorstep. Hopefully my ex-wife and her cohorts will leave without incident.” With that Rumple turned, heading down the hall towards the elevator.

Belle wanted to call out to Rumple as he turned and walked away. Instead of tears Belle felt her blood boil. Seething she went over to where Emma and Regina stood, grabbed Regina forcefully and pulled her out of the building. Ignoring Regina’s protests and effort to get away Belle dragged her up the path not letting go until she reached the sidewalk. Belle let go of Regina’s arm and pointed at her. “What the hell did you do to Rumple? And no evading the question. Tell me now what he thinks I did or I won’t hesitate to knock you back to the Enchanted Forest.”

The threat of physical harm by Belle took all of them by surprise. Both Henry an Emma wanted to keep things calm but knew this had to be aired out.

Regina bit her lip in worry. Not knowing how to explain. Belle was feeling impatient however. “Tell me now Regina!”

She nodded knowing that she needed to come clean even if it meant her son, Emma and Belle angry with her. “I gave Rumple the memories of a man that went through a bitter divorce. You dragged him through the mud, tarnished his name, he lost all his properties even the pawn shop.” Regina wanted to end it there; she knew she wasn’t that lucky.

“Well go on. There’s more to the story than that. He looked livid, implied that I was sharing sordid details about him.”

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“Well go on. There’s more to the story than that. He looked livid, implied that I was sharing sordid details about him.”

Henry saw his mom was ashamed of whatever memories she gave his grandfather. But they needed to know. “Please mom, we know that you regret it. But we can’t fix this unless you tell us.” Henry placed his hand on his mom’s arm.

“Aright…Alright, I’ll tell you. Belle, Emma Henry, I am truly sorry about this. What I’m going to say is not good. I did it because I thought it was the best. Make Rumple so hurt and angry that he wouldn’t want to come back should he take off the bracelet and have his power again.” Regina looked at the three of them. “I’m not trying to justify it because I can’t. I took the fact that Neal died, you were with Will for those short weeks following Rumple’s banishment and your pregnancy.” She saw all their eyes widen with fear of what she would say next. “I took the
banishment and made it a humiliating divorce where he lost most everything. I made him to believe that while he was mourning his son’s death you were with Will in the bed you shared. I made it as bad as I could so he’d never want to see any of us again. I made him believe that you told him in front of everyone that the baby you were carrying was Will’s.”

As Regina ended that sentence the slap she felt was swift and hard.
Chapter 7

It had been two days since Regina revealed just how badly she screwed up with the memory curse. Two days since Belle slapped her and stormed off. The first day Belle spent it inside her hotel room refusing to talk to anyone. Tears and misery over the fact that her husband thinks she betrayed him, cheated on him, was carrying another’s baby, and generally just hated her.

It wasn’t until the next day that Belle finally let someone come in. Oddly enough it was Regina. Regina herself was miserable. The guilt of what she did, the cruel memories she gave Rumplestiltskin, even if he was never to come back he didn’t deserve that. The pain she caused Belle, and that baby she was carrying. Regina listened that first day to both Emma and Henry tear her down for this. Both rightfully angry; Henry more so, Regina listened to him question whether she really changed, calling her selfish. She didn’t want to hear this, seeing the disappointment on Henry’s face, but Regina realized that she deserved it, and probably much more.

She knocked on Belle’s door asking to please let her in. When Belle did, Regina saw how pale and withdrawn she looked. She’d rather have Belle angry and yelling at her than to see this woman so heartbroken.

They both sat there silently, Belle on the edge of her bed, Regina taking the chair next to the desk. It took a few moments but Belle looked up at Regina not anger just devastated and broke the silence. “What do you want Regina?”

“I came to talk…to apologize for…”

A flash of anger crossed Belle’s face. “Save your apologies Regina. You always apologize; thinking it makes what you do automatically forgiven, after a while apologies lose their value… Especially yours.”

“Listen Belle I know you’re angry. You have every right to be. Hell, even Henry and Emma are angry. I listened to them tell me what I did was terrible, that I was terrible…I can’t make it right if no one will let me.”

“This isn’t about you or your feelings Regina. You crossed the line, anything Henry and Emma said you deserved. Anything I feel you deserve. Don’t act like people should take pity on you because your feelings are hurt. You need to grovel more.”

“That’s why I’m here Belle.” Regina was fighting back tears now; she had been trying to mask her guilt. But now she sounded contrite. “I’m truly sorry Belle. I can’t undo what I’ve done. I won’t burden you with my issues and why I tend to go to extremes. It’s what I will need to work on when we get back. But I want to fix this. Please let me.”

“And just how are you going to be able to do that?”

“I’m not sure. I think if we can get the bracelet that would be a start.”

“What…get the bracelet? Even if we did, how do you expect we’d get it on Rumple?”

“Well let’s find the bracelet first and we’ll cross that bridge we come to it.”

“We will locate it, as in Henry, Emma and I; but not you. I don’t want your involvement.”

“Belle, let me help. How else can I assist and make amends…”

“You can’t make amends. Even if we somehow get Rumple home and set things to right, you still won’t make amends.” Belle stood giving Regina a hardened stare. “Thank you for that piece of information, we can take it from here.”

Regina stood wishing there was something she could say, but the wound she caused Belle was too fresh and deep at the moment. “I understand. I’ll leave you then so you can get ready then. Henry and Emma are downstairs in the dining area.”

Belle felt a twinge of guilt forcing Regina to stay away. For a moment Belle was going to tell her to join them for brunch, but that would make it too easy for the queen and Belle wanted Regina to learn something from this.

When Belle finally made it down and joined Henry and Emma for breakfast they didn’t question where Regina was. She must have told them our conversation Belle thought and found she was correct.

They had been talking about where the bracelet could be. Did Rumple have it in his room, the car? He may have even discarded it somewhere in his travel. A distressing thought that wasn’t mentioned at the table by either Henry or Emma.

Henry said that today he would go to the inn and hang far enough to not get caught and hopefully see his grandfather and see what he was doing. A distressing thought that wasn’t mentioned at the table by either Henry or Emma.

When Belle saw he was going to be busy she went to the room where she was staying and got her things together, and then she went to the bathroom and got ready to get on the road and search for the bracelet.
Rumple spent the next day in his room. A bit shaken up after seeing Belle and the others, and he still couldn’t figure out why they were there. It made no sense. Henry’s comment, calling him grandfather didn’t sound foreign when he said it, but he knew Henry wasn’t his grandson.

Then the dinner with Jennifer and Drea that evening, they made meat pies and it reminded him of a small cottage his aunts had. How on special occasions his aunts were able to serve him a meat pie, and even dessert during more fortunate times. It brought back odd feelings and memories that were not possible.

Neither Jennifer nor Drea prodded him about what happened in the lobby. Not that night anyway. When he joined them for dinner the next night however Jennifer asked him if things might not be what he thinks. Drea added her voice to the discussion, agreeing with Jennifer but reassuring Rum that they were concerned for him and wanted to help. “They did come all this way and Belle seemed very sincere in wanting to see you.” “It doesn’t sound like people who don’t care.” “The blond had mentioned you may need help.” Rumple listened to the back and forth of both women as he ate. Annoyed that they were prying, he knew he had it right. “They are trying to play some game. I don’t what it is, but I assure you both I am not in need of help.” That ended the conversation and the rest of dinner was a discussion of him managing the operations of their properties.

This morning, Rumple decided he wasn’t going to let his ex-wife being in town deter him. Whatever game she was playing he will find a way to diffuse and send her home. In the meantime though Rumple wanted to purchase some items he could use if he was staying long term.

Rumple was cautious as if he left building to go to his car. As much as he wanted to avoid Belle, something also wasn’t feeling right.

The three of them met back at the hotel. Sitting in Belle’s room to discuss what they found out if anything. The only person who had news was Henry.

“Grandpa didn’t have the Cadillac; he was stopped at a light. He’s driving a blue Subaru; here’s the license plate.”

Belle and Emma exchanged looks, they needed to find his car.
Two more days passed with no more leads about where Rumple’s Cadillac was. The Subaru was never around when they looked for it, and the only time they saw it was once as Rumple drove by. Nothing on the back revealing where it was purchased.

They decided they had to break in; into his room and into his car. They needed to plan a time when Rumple wouldn’t be in his room and the Innkeepers were not around. The trouble is, it seemed like neither Jennifer nor Drea ever slept.

Early the third morning Henry had enough. He saw Belle getting paler and was worried for his grandmother. Both his moms reached a truce which even though he was still angry at Regina was glad she wasn’t completely estranged from them. He hoped that somehow his mom would make up for this and when they returned he could have a whole family; as whole as it could be without his father.

Henry looked at the time, 4:30am. Scribbling a quick note that he left on the desk, he carefully dressed and as quietly as possible left the hotel room. Once out, Henry bolted for the backstairs and exited the building; determined to get into his grandfather’s car.

It was quiet and Henry walked around the small parking lot for the inn hoping to find Rumple’s car quickly. There it was in the corner of the lot blending in with other similar cars. Henry pulled on the handle, of course it’s locked. He tried to find a way to work the locks but it was impossible. Instead Henry pressed his face to the glass hoping there might be something he could see that would give him clues. He saw the agreement of sale to a dealership in Pittsfield. Henry wrote the name of the dealership, happy at least to have this lead.

As he turned to leave, Henry bumped right into a figure leaning on the car; she was blocking his retreat.

“And just what are you doing out here so early in the morning?”

Henry trying to hide his notebook looked down and muttered. “I wanted to see my grandfather.”

“And it took you five minutes of jiggling the door handles and looking through the window to see he wasn’t inside the car?” Jennifer said wryly, pushing off the car to stand straight, crossing her arms in the process. “Is Mr. Gold really your grandfather?”

“Yes.”

“Then why is he having no recollection?”

“You wouldn’t believe me if I told you?”

“Try me” Jennifer was firm in her tone and Henry hoped that she’d listen; however he couldn’t really tell her the truth.

“My grandfather was in an accident and hit his head. He has amnesia.”

Jennifer’s face was expressionless, mouth thin and straight, the only movement was the blinking of her eyes. She stood there for what seemed an eternity just blinking at Henry and he knew she didn’t believe that.

“You’re really going with that story? Not even going to try and be creative?”

“You wouldn’t believe me if I told you the truth. But he is my grandfather, and he really doesn’t remember. What he does believe is all a lie that someone convinced him of.”

“So what you’re telling me is that he’s under a spell of some sort.” Jennifer said it as more of a fact than a question but the disbelief was still evident.

“Umm you could say that.”

Jennifer inclined her head slightly as she looked questioningly at Henry. She turned and motioned her hand towards the tavern. “Did you know how this place came to be called Rumpy’s Tavern?” Not waiting for a response she continued. “An ancestor of mine wrote in her journals that she befriended two elderly women that told her a story of how they came from another place, one that had magic. Apparently they had become parted from a child they raised as a son; well he was older I guess when they lost track of him. My great, great, great... well too many to really say, aunt offered them a place to stay at her inn if they helped out in the tavern. The tavern was just opening to serve soldiers mostly and was in need of a name. The women, who felt that their son would someday find them in this world, convinced her of the uniqueness of naming it Rumplestiltskin’s. The name wouldn’t fit and needed to be shortened. And it was…to Rumple’s Tavern. The woodworker didn’t get the spelling correct and it became Rumpy’s Tavern. “

Jennifer turned and looked at Henry who was staring at the tavern like it had a connection to his grandfather’s past. She smiled as he took in her story, “Kind of farfetched wouldn’t you agree? Another place, magic, and a name like Rumplestiltskin.” She paused. “But there were people back then that believed in other worlds and magic…even today some do.”
Henry walked to her side, eyes still on the tavern. “Do you believe that story?”

Jennifer let out a laugh. “Of course not.”

“Then why tell me that story?”

“Drea believes it, and besides your grandfather’s eyes betray him.”

Henry moved in front of her and looked at Jennifer confused. “How so…has he said something?”

Shrugging Jennifer motioned Henry to walk with her towards the front of the buildings. “He doesn’t sound convinced of the things he has said. As if his memories don’t make sense to other memories he has. This is especially true when he speaks of you or his wife.”

“How do you know all this? My grandfather isn’t the type to really talk and share, especially to strangers.”

“Perhaps we don’t feel like strangers to him; he also eats dinner every night with us. We have a special dining room at the tavern we use.”

Henry gave her a confused look. Jennifer rolled her eyes and smiled at him not understanding what she was offering. “Yes…every night he has dinner with us. As he will tonight…around seven…making his room unoccupied.” Jennifer smiled again and started to walk back towards the tavern. “An extra key to the floor and his room may even be inside the table at the back entrance…left accidently of course.”

Beaming at the unexpected help Henry was quick to thank her and rushed back towards the other hotel.
Chapter 9

Henry hoped it was still early enough that he could make it back to the hotel without anyone knowing he had left. As he walked into the lobby Henry found his moms and Belle talking frantically about where he could have possibly went.

Walking up as casual and innocently as possible Henry tapped both his mom’s shoulders. “Hi mom…Hi Belle, are you guys looking for me?” Henry grinned already planning how they would go about the day.

“Henry Mills…what is this? You cannot just leave a note and run off trying to find information on your own. You could be hurt.”

Belle nodded and placed her hand on Henry’s shoulder. “Regina is right. Henry I know your heart is in the right place but I don’t want you to risk anything. Rumple wouldn’t want you too.”

Henry looked between Regina and Belle. They were actually standing together and had been talking. “Wait, why are you two talking? Aren’t you still mad at my mom?”

Frowning Belle gave Regina a glance. “Yes, I am. That is going to take some time, however you went missing so that trumps my anger.”

“I’m sorry, but I’m glad you two are in the same room, even if temporary,” Henry pulled out his notebook and motioned them to sit. “I have news you are going to want to hear.”

The four of them sat in the corner of the lobby and listened as Henry told them about what he found on the car seat, the dealership in Pittsfield where the Cadillac was traded. He told them about Jennifer and what she said about Rumple’s mixed memories and confusion. That she agreed to let them look in his room while Rumple had dinner with them.

“Why does she have this change of tune? Something doesn’t seem right about this.” Emma wasn’t sure if she was comfortable with how easy this was.

“I don’t know mom. Mrs. Cartwright seemed genuinely concerned for grandpa. She said he doesn’t sound convinced of what he remembers, especially when it comes to you Belle.” Henry knew that this small bit of truth would give some hope to his grandmother and he wanted nothing more than to see her smile. Henry was rewarded when he saw Belle light up knowing that there was a chance of the memory curse breaking.

They agreed they would travel to Pittsfield and find Rumple’s car and be back in time to get a look into Rumple’s room.

Rumple was standing in front of the judge. This should be a quick, no mess divorce proceeding. Belle standing across from him, a smirk on her face as the judge awarded her all his assets. Rumple wanted to argue but was too defeated to take up his cause.

“Belle…” Rumple turned to look at her, his eyes glistened with unshed tears.

“I should have told everyone the baby was yours, that way I’d get child support from you as well.” Belle laughed and rubbed her belly as she saw the pain it caused Rumple.

He ran from the diner to the town line. Everyone was standing there, but this time Belle had the tears.

“I wanted to love you again, have faith again. You just keep breaking my heart.”

Rumple reached out for her but she was too far away. “Please Belle it’s not what you think…let me get Henry…”

Regina appeared from the crowd “No…you leave my son alone. I won’t let you manipulate him as you have everyone else.”

“Please…please. Don’t do this. You have the bracelet on me, you know I am powerless.”

“We know how you are Gold, you are far from powerless. You are still a master at manipulation. You’d find a way… however we won’t let you this time.” Emma said as she and David grabbed Rumple and took him to the edge of the town line.

Rumple saw Emma glance at Belle as she nodded her approval. David and Emma placed Rumple in the car pushing it over the line into the lake.

Rumple was trying to find a way to escape as the car sank. He pressed himself to the ceiling of the car trying to gasp for air; turning he saw Belle and Bae next to him…he wanted to plead with them. As they came and took his hands Rumple felt he would be safe when suddenly they both pushed him under the water and held him down.

With a frightened gasp Rumple bolted from the bed almost falling to the floor in the process.
Shaking, sweating and breathing heavy Rumple looked around the room frantically. After a few moments his body relaxed as the fear and adrenaline that was coursing through him faded.

He collapsed on the chair and wept.

Calming down Rumple went over to the windows in need of air. He started to open it when he saw Jennifer standing next to his car talking with Henry Mills.

Suspicion rose inside as he watched them. Well this is unexpected. Rumple frowned as he saw Henry leave looking very satisfied at whatever was the result of their conversation. Something wasn’t right he knew it, but Rumple wasn’t certain what it was.

Rumple grabbed his clothes for the day while glancing at his car keys; contemplating what his next move should be.

The drive to Pittsfield gave Henry a chance to talk to Belle about something Jennifer had mentioned.

“Belle, what do you know about the aunts that raised grandpa? Did he talk about them?”

Belle looked questioningly at Henry; it was an odd question, but Belle considered it and thought about what she knew. “Rumple doesn’t speak much about his past as you can imagine. He did tell me that they were the only people that loved him growing up. They encouraged him at spinning the only thing Rumple said he was good at. I think they tried in vain to improve his self-esteem. Why are you asking Henry?”

“It was something Mrs. Cartwright said. Does grandpa know what became of them? Were they around when he became the Dark One?”

“No they weren’t around then. If they were I think Rumple would have had the support to find an alternative to becoming the Dark One.” Belle paused wondering what Mrs. Cartwright could have possibly said to cause Henry to bring up Rumple’s aunts. “When Rumple came back from the war to be a father to Baelfire his reputation as a coward had preceded him. Rumple was distressed when his aunts disappeared, but being scorned the villagers wouldn’t tell him what they knew, if anything. Rumple told me he had heard rumors that a seer visited them; he thinks it was the same seer that vanished from the front lines. The rumors he heard were that they left to find him in another realm, that they would need to help him when the time was right.”

Henry looked out the window going over what he was told about the history of the tavern.

Belle watched Henry wondering if he would explain the reason for the questions about Rumple’s aunts.

After a moment Henry turned back to Belle with the grin he gave when he knew things were falling into place. “Grandpa’s aunt came here Belle… this is what drew grandpa to this place. So they could help him. They’re helping him remember Belle I know it!”
Chapter 10

Rumple walked straight into Jennifer and Drea’s office. He was hoping for answers to why Mrs. Cartwright and Henry Mills were talking.

“Good Morning Mr. Gold you’re looking very well this morning. Join us for some tea and pastries.” Drea grabbed a cup already pouring tea for Rumple.

“Thank you Mrs. Cartwright I won’t be staying long this morning. I’m here to speak with the other Mrs. Cartwright.”

“Oh?” Both Mrs. Cartwright’s said in unison.

“Yes, I wanted to know what you were discussing with young Henry Mills so early this morning.”

“Oh.” Jennifer had hoped to avoid this. She wanted to help Rum Gold out but she knew he wasn’t ready to trust the others yet. Or believe that what he’s recalling may not be true. “I saw Henry walking in our parking lot and confronted him.”

“What did he want? You were both standing at my car, and it didn’t look like you were having an unpleasant discussion.”

“He wanted to find out some information; what your plans were, things of that nature. He is worried about you. I asked him if he was really your grandson and he said yes.”

Rumple nodded not sure what to think. “Do you believe him?”

“Actually I do. He bears some resemblance to you and I genuinely didn’t feel any dishonesty in his countenance.”

“Don’t you think I’d remember if I had a grandson? My son died; if I had a grandson I’d do all I could to have a bond and love him as I did my Baelf…Neal.” Rum stopped for a moment knitting his brows together in confusion, not certain why he almost called Neal a different name.

“Mr. Gold, I do believe you, but I also believe that something is wrong, and that Henry, Belle and the others came here to fix it.”

“That makes no sense. How can you believe me and think they are here to fix anything?”

“Because Rum, even you aren’t sure of what the truth is. I’ve seen it in your eyes when you speak about your wife.”

Rumple wanted to argue, he wanted to run, most of all he wanted to stop feeling conflicted.

Drea placed her hand on Rumple’s arm giving him a small squeeze. “Here Rum, take a seat and have some tea. Tea always helps.”

Rumple nodded lamely and sat as a feeling of uneasiness washed over him. The cup Drea handed him fell to the floor, the contents spilling. Rumple bent, apologizing as he picked up the tea cup prepared to clean up the mess. He noticed the cup was chipped now.

“I’m sorry I’m afraid it’s chipped.” Rumple heard himself say as Drea’s response shook something inside of him. “Don’t you worry…it’s just a cup.”

Rumple started to lose his balance, staring at the cup he starting to shake as some distant memory surfaced. Leaning towards the chair Rumple sat back down going very pale and sweating.

Jennifer and Drea were at his side immediately speaking to him. However Rumple couldn’t hear them, he felt like he was underwater, he couldn’t breathe. Rumple kept shaking, holding his chest as his heart raced. He vaguely heard them discussing a panic attacks but, he couldn’t focus as too many images were clouding his head. Drea ran and grabbed a wet towel and placed it behind his neck, as Jennifer kept rubbing his back trying to slow his breathing down. After a few moments Jennifer had a few of the staff members help Rum to his room. Once they had Rum settled Drea decided she’d stay for a little while to watch over him as he rested.

Once in Pittsfield it didn’t take long to find the dealership. It had only been a few days since Rumple traded the car in. The Cadillac was an older model that the dealership wouldn’t sell on site but because of its condition it was prepared to be detailed and brought to auction. At Emma’s request a sales rep brought the owner, Mr. Haddad to where she and the others were waiting.

“I was told you wished to speak with me.” Mr. Haddad held out his hand to shake Emma’s

Emma having grown up in this world was the obvious choice to navigate any conversation with Mr. Haddad. “I was informed that you recently sold a car to a Mr. Rum Gold from Storybrook
"If my sales people told you that, then it would be correct. What is this about Miss?"

Emma showed him her badge. "It’s Sheriff Swan. The reason for the question is that we believe he traded in his car and that your dealership is planning to put it up for auction."

"If the car was in excellent shape and the year and model would be of interest to a collector than we would be send it to auction."

"Well we need it back. Or more, she needs it back." Emma gestured to Belle. "Mr. Gold is suffering from a medical ailment and sold his car; their car, when he has not been of mind to make such a decision."

Emma could see Mr. Haddad was not going to give them the car without some legalities of her claim checked out. "He cannot back out of a contract if this is what you are trying to accomplish Sheriff Swan."

"Of course not, we just want you to sell us the car for what you gave Mr. Gold in trade. Which we saw according to the contract was two thousand. I realize that this would cost you money that you would have earned in auction but, a sterling reputation intact for your dealership is better than the local news finding out that you shunned a pregnant woman, as she tried to help her husband."

"If you excuse me for a moment, I need to make a few calls." Mr. Haddad didn’t appreciate being put on the spot which was easy for Emma to see.

"What do you think he’s going to do?" Henry stood next to his mother as they watched Mr. Haddad go into an office.

"First he’s going to see where the car is. Then he’ll most likely call his attorney and bring his mangers in to go over our offer and the consequences if he refuses."

"Why would he refuse?"

Emma turned to Belle, her question barely above a whisper. "He could easily call our bluff believing that we’re lying, or that the businesses reputation won’t be tarnished, then he would refuse. However the fact that he’s in his office is a good possibility that he may agree."

"Well I for one hope so, that will be one last thing we need to concern ourselves with.” Regina was blunt as ever. "If this works out then the next step will be getting Gold to Storybrook."

It was almost an hour later when Mr. Haddad approached them with two men in tow, which Emma could only assume were some type of upper level management.

"Miss…Sheriff Swan, Mrs. Gold. The car Mr. Gold traded us is still on the lot, it is scheduled to be detailed. I will accept your offer; adding another thousand to cover our expenses. Which will cover taxes, and other fees; we will sign the title back over to Mrs. Gold and get her temporary plates that will need to be returned to the DMV when it is registered again in Maine."

"That is very generous of you Mr. Haddad."

"Yes it is, thank you so very much, my husband and I are both grateful."

By the time they were finished with paperwork, and waited for the car it was close to four o’clock. Now with two cars they split up and headed back to Lenox.

Rumple drifted off to sleep almost immediately following the panic attack he had. Drea having given him some water and a sedative to relax him and hopefully give him some much needed rest. After she felt that he would be fine Drea wrote him a note stating to come see her and Jennifer when he woke.

It was two o’clock when Rum woke. He was famished, but that was secondary to what he was feeling inside. He still saw flashes of something that seemed real; Belle in a yellow gown very nervous around him, while he didn’t even look human. Sitting at a large table wearing leather, gold-rough skin, unruly hair and making a quip that caused Belle to startle and drop a tea cup.

How could any of that be real though? Rumple felt raw and needed to go clear his head.

Walking around the small town seemed to do little to help. For Rumple there were too many unanswered questions, too many conflicting memories. Finally after an hour he found himself at the Eastgate Inn, entering he went over to guest services desk.

"Welcome to the Eastgate Inn bed and breakfast. How may I assist you?" A man behind the desk asked.

"I’m looking for Belle Gold; I believe she’s registered here with three others. The reservations
may be in their names, Emma Swan or Regina Mills.” Rumple could tell that the man wasn’t sure if he could reveal this information. “I’m Mr. Gold, Belle’s husband. I was told I could find them here.”

The man nodded and proceeded to call both rooms. “I’m sorry Mr. Gold there is no answer in either room. It appears they are out. I could take a message.”

“No...No that’s alright. It wasn’t important.” This had been a mistake and he was thankful that she wasn’t around. Rumple didn’t want to be tricked or lied to anymore. Talking to Belle would be a mistake he knew that.

Once Belle had parked her car Emma and Regina came over. “I already beat you too it mom.” Henry smiled at both of them holding up the bracelet. “It was in the glove box, good thing they didn’t clean the car out yet.”

Belle walked slightly in front of the others turning briefly as they discussed tonight’s plan. As they turned the corner Henry bumped into Belle who had come to a complete stop.

“Hello Rumple.”

Rumple had been leaving the inn as they approach was staring at Belle unable to move, feeling as paralyzed a she did.

“Hello Belle...I was wondering...could we.” Rumple looked at the others and tried to keep his frustration and anger in check. Finally he set his gaze back at Belle. “Can we go somewhere and talk?”
Rum and Belle walked over to a nearby café choosing a more secluded section to sit and talk. Rum was tense; he could feel his hands getting clammy and felt like his body would implode if touched. His mind was playing tricks on him, he just couldn’t figure out which was the reality and that pressure made him feel as if he’d collapse.

Belle easily recognized that Rumple was in a fragile state and she needed to handle the situation carefully. She watched him trying to get settled. As calm as he seemed she knew him enough by now that on the inside he was falling apart. Allowing him to lead the conversation Belle sat across from him and waited as Rumple just sat and stared.

“Why are you here Belle?”

“Well I’m here because I was wrong. I’m here because what you think is true - isn’t. And I cannot bear the thought of you suffering, because I love you.”

Rumple looked at Belle trying to gather if she’s speaking the truth. He frowned with worry and irritation.

“I don’t get this Belle. You left - you hated me. You divorced me and left me without anything. You’re with another man...You’re carrying his child.”

Belle shook her head slightly fighting back her tears. She wanted to reach over and reassure him that none of this was true, that he was the only one, but waited for him to finish.

“Belle – I don’t remember events. Just that they happened. You called me Rumple; which is not my name, but it felt like it was always my name. Henry called me Grandpa which cannot be true. It’s not a lie though is it?”

“No, Rumple it’s not.”

“Then what is real and what is not?”

“What’s real is that I love you, the baby I’m carrying is yours…”

Ignoring Belle’s words Rumple went on. “I dreamt that I was forced out of town. That you didn’t believe me about something and that I was banished – again. But that makes no sense. You accused me of lying never caring for anything except power. You told me that you no longer could trust me - that I kept hurting you. I wanted to have Henry speak for me” Rumple paused shaking his head -this was surreal, why would this dream feel real? “You, Sheriff Swan, Miss Mills and the Nolan’s for some reason placed a bracelet on me and forced me over. It doesn’t make sense. I feel like I’m going insane.”

Belle reached over to take Rumple’s hand but he withdrew it quickly. He didn’t want her touch. She was the enemy he remembered, and if he was wrong – well then she pitied him. He wouldn’t let her pity him or expose himself to more pain.

“Rumple, you’re not crazy. Would you believe me if I told you that it wasn’t a dream, but a memory of a painful event that should not have happened? We were wrong – I was wrong. I will never forgive myself for not listening and not having Henry talk to us.” Belle stretched her hand out again in hopes that he would see her sincerity. “We were wrong Rumple, but that is what happened. I regret that moment more than anything. And if it wasn’t for Henry we would never have come out here for you.”

Rumple swallowed as if he just drank something vile and felt nothing but distain. He looked at her very unhappy about that. “So if that was the truth then how come I am recalling other events? And if you hated me so much that somehow you could even force me from the town then why would you take Henry’s word and look for me? Either way both memories come to the same conclusion.” Rumple stood regretting that he told his ex-wife these details, fearing that somehow she’d use them against him, that he just gave her more ammunition to pull him down further. “I don’t know what to think except that the end result is the same. I’m not in Storybrook, whether by choice or forced. The fact remains that you no longer loved me.”

Rumple looked at Belle and didn’t know if he should yell or beg her to be honest with him. He was miserable and he could see she was. This was not the Belle that laughed at him in the courthouse. That humiliated him at the diner. He couldn’t tell if this was a trick and he feared that if he gave in he’d get hurt further. Rumple shut out those thoughts – this had to be a trick to weaken him.

“I should go. I don’t believe there is anything more to say.”

Belle stood this time grabbing his arm. “No Rumple this can’t be it. You’re not the man that would leave a child, or the wife he loves. I believe that you do love me and that we can figure this out. I am going to remain here as long as it takes to make you believe - I will never give up.”

Rumple nodded as he removed her hand from his arm. He looked at her belly wishing that he could believe that this baby was his. That he would give all of himself to Belle and their child, but everything inside of him was telling him differently.
His voice became low and thick as he looked in her eyes. “Belle – I uh.” *I’m being played. I must be. I need to go…I’m sorry I can’t do this right now.*

“Can I at least see you later? If not tonight then tomorrow, I love you and I won’t give up.”

Looking at Belle just made Rumple feel more confused. He needed to think and maybe talk to a neutral person. “I need to think, but I’ll be in touch. Soon…I promise.”

As he walked out Belle started to cry. He made contact and they talked, but Belle wished that more could have happened. More progress, more communication, but at least Belle was confident that he’s now open to the idea that things are not what they seemed. It saddened her that Rumple had one thing right. How is either memory better? Basically he was unwanted and believed unloved.

Belle headed back to the hotel knowing the others would want to hear what happened. Maybe talking to them would help her get ideas on how to get Rumple past this.

~

Rum stayed in his room contemplating everything until it was time to go to dinner. He walked over to meet Drea and Jennifer for dinner. He took his seat after both ladies were seated. Drea smiling at him warmly; she was already concerned about him after this morning’s events, but seeing his tired face caused her worry.

“Oh my dear Mr. Gold, I don’t like seeing you this way. I should have postponed dinner and just had you served in your room until you were well enough again.”

Jennifer glanced over at Drea quickly remembering that she placed a key to Rum’s room near the back door. She wasn’t certain if Henry would use it, but having the occupant still inside would not be convenient.

“I’m certain Drea darling that Mr. Gold would probably like that company.” She turned towards Rum and nodded to him unspoken acknowledgement of their earlier conversation. “I know much has happened and I would never pry, but honestly Mr. Gold don’t keep it bottled in. I think you need us and we want to help.”

Sifting uneasily in his chair, Rum grabbed his glass of wine and took a larger sip than he planned. He just stared at the glass as he placed it down. Rum found it easier to collect his thoughts as he kept his head down and his focus on his wine glass. “I saw Belle today…”

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