

Honorable Decisions

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Rating: PG / K+

Summary: It is the first night after Belle has been freed from the asylum and the Curse has been broken; after she's regained her memories. And now she has to make a decision.

Disclaimer: This fantastic show is all ABC's, but more importantly, it's Edward Kitsis' and Adam Horowitz'.

Author's Note: Inspired by something that was revealed in 2x04 The Crocodile, though it is set in/after 2x01.

It was something she had never expected herself to do. It was wrong - and yet strangely right. She had been taught differently; had been brought up with the sense that this was anything but an honorable thing to do. And yet she couldn't think of single reason why she should deny it to herself now.

It had just been an offer. Nothing else. She could have said no, and it would have been accepted, without any questions. It still would be if she said no now. She knew that. She had no reason to doubt it. Doubt the promise she'd been given.

That feeling of insecurity plaguing her was born solely out of her memories of what she'd once learned was suitable for a woman like her. She was of noble descent, after all.

Nonetheless she stood in the room now, having taken in her surroundings repeatedly for countless times, familiarizing herself with the interior that, for some curious reason, was anything but new and alien to her - even though she'd never seen it before - all the while she did her best to conjure up... courage. While she still considered changing her mind and following what her upbringing thought of as right. But then, when had she ever listened to it since she'd grown up and become a woman capable of making her own decisions?

"Belle, love?" His voice startled her; twenty-eight years the only voices she'd heard had been those of indistinct memories in her mind, and rarely the one of a nurse who had never spoken more than two or three words. And suddenly there was his, so familiar and close-by, sounding so wonderfully real, almost tangible even, and for a moment she wondered if this was only a dream - because it was too good to be true. But it was. It was true that she was with him again; it was true that he was now the one she'd always wanted to be with, back when she lived with him before the Curse.

"Yes," she smiled at him, taking another step into the room and towards him. It was only a weak smile she could give him then, but at least it was there, and she could read in his eyes that he was glad to see her trying to chase away the sadness and defeat from her features, and her soul.

"If you rather have your own room, I will not hold it against you. You only need to tell me." He looked at her reassuringly, and the gentleness and honesty she saw in that moment enwrapped her whole being in a cocoon of warmth like nothing else before.

Seeing Rumpelstiltskin, the man she loved, the man everyone else only knew and deemed to be the Dark One, sitting there on the bed and in his dark pajamas, was the most surreal picture she thought she'd ever lay eyes on. She wasn't so naïve to believe that he'd changed from one minute to the next; she actually feared that there were many moments still awaiting her, them, in which he'd resort to use his magic again, and for questionable causes. But at least when he was with her, she felt, she knew, that he was nothing more than the man she loved, and who loved her in return. Right now, she wanted this to be enough.

The decision to share the bed with him hadn't come naturally to her. He had offered her an own room; a beautifully decorated one she'd almost accepted just because she felt at home within seconds there. But then he had also given her the choice to stay with him instead; in his room, and his bed. Not for any indecent reasons; she needn't to be reassured of that, even if he voiced a promise not to touch her in any way she didn't want him to. It was just to be close; something they both, being in love as they were, having been separated for such a long time, and having

never had the chance to be this close before, desired. And if Belle knew one thing for sure, then that she wanted to be as close to him as possible, now they they'd finally found each other again.

"No, it's all right," she replied, breathed in deeply, and approached the bed. Her thin silk nightgown caressed her skin, something she became aware of only now, in the quiet of the room and the expectancy that weaved itself into the air. It was in every sense so different from anything she remembered of the last years and decades.

When she sat down on the bed, reveling in its heavenly softness for a moment, and then slipped beneath the covers, she couldn't help but sigh contentedly. The light chuckle coming from her side made her turn her head and open her eyes she hadn't realized she had closed, only to be met by the warm smile Rumplestiltskin looked down at her with. He too had found his way under the sheets, and watched her with an amount of love and adoration that made her heart beat faster.

On an impulse, she shifted over and kissed him, finding him too surprised at first to return the gesture. Only when she was about to pull away, his arms encircled her and he held her close to deepen the kiss.

"Good night, love," he whispered against her lips when they parted eventually, and Belle smiled.

"Good night," she replied, and instead of returning to her side of the bed, she rested her head on his chest - letting the sound of his heartbeat and the warmth of his body and embrace carry her over to the land of dreams.

And in that moment Belle knew that, whatever you were once told and taught: following your heart's desire would always be the most honorable thing to do.

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