**S3E12**

Summary: The townspeople of Storybrooke find themselves back in the Enchanted Forest. Emma tries to juggle her son, her relationship, and Neal's reappearance in her life.

– one year ago –

– The Enchanted Forest –

In the middle of a dense forest sat an old, rundown castle. Parts of the castle had been destroyed by fallen trees and violent storms. A single tower with a single window remained standing and overlooked the lush vegetation. The tower’s room was filled modest furniture – a canopy bed with a chest at its foot, a wooden dresser with a tarnished mirror, and a chaise in front of a bookshelf. On the chaise reclined a young, blond haired woman wearing a flowing white dress that looked like it was made of feathers. She stared blankly out the window at the surrounding landscape as she languidly turned the pages of the old book in her hands. The crinkling of the turning pages seemed to keep time.

There was a knock on the door and the perpetrator gently pushed it wide. The door’s annoying creaking synced up with the turning of the pages, creating a small symphony of noises. An old and frail woman stood in the doorway one it cleared. Her clothes appeared to be as worn and ragged as she was, unlike the elegant tray in her hands. The tray held a teapot accompanied by two teacups and some pastries. The fine china looked like it should be in hidden away in a dragon’s lair instead of gracing such a place with its presence.

“Would you like some tea, dear?” the white-haired woman crooned in a thick Irish accent.

“Perhaps in a little bit. Thank you,” the younger woman responded listlessly in a Russian accent. Just then, lightning struck and thunder clapped. Dark purple storm clouds rolled across the horizon in all directions. Wind howled through the room and the young woman rose from her chair, not noticing the book fall from her hands and drop onto the floor with a *thunk*. She stood at the window and her dress billowed around her. She looked like a bird about to take flight.

“Bridget, tell my father they’ve returned,” she commanded, fear tinging her voice. The old woman nodded and hurriedly hobbled out the room while the other woman tried to gauge the distance to the storm. She gripped the window’s ledge, cracking the ancient stone beneath her hands. “Oh, Rumple, why did you come back?”

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– one year later –

– New York –

Emma walked down the hallway to her apartment and searched her purse for her keys. Finally finding them, she unlocked the door and the sounds of lasers shooting and ships crashing emanating the TV greeted her. She knew she shouldn't have bought him that new game.

"Henry, did you finish your homework?" she inquired as she shuffled through the mail on the counter.

"It's the weekend, Mom. Just a little break. Please? Plus, I've almost finished this mission." Henry's begging made her smile.

"Fine, but I want proof of at least one finished homework assignment when I come tonight. Give me two and I'll take you out tomorrow," she acquiesced. Her hands stopped when she saw a plain envelope with only her name written on it.

"Deal,” he agreed. “Oh, yea, there was a letter for you in the door when I got home. Left it on the counter with the rest of the mail." He then groaned in time with the game over noises.

"Thanks, Henry. I see it." She'd recognize that handwriting anywhere: Neal.

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