

## Mated to the Werewolf King

### Lost Memories

*Who are you?*

I had looked into my lover's eyes and found a stranger peering back.

He couldn't remember a single thing about me.

Our time spent together, the journey we'd endured that had changed us both so much, was now completely nonexistent to him.

Tessa and I gave him privacy to change as we gathered in the kitchen for a meeting.

"Could you see into his mind? Find anything from his memory?" I asked her.

"I can't tap into anything that he isn't aware of, Belle. That would make me a Goddess," she sighed. "I am far from one."

"Well, what do we do?" I asked her. "We can't just keep going like this."

Tessa took a moment to sip more of her tea. Moon Goddess' sake! This woman and her tea!

I tried to hold back the concern bubbling up inside me as I watched her steep and stir.

The herbs wafted from her cup and drifted into my nostrils. Hints of cardamom and cinnamon and something else I couldn't quite decipher.

It was lovely and soothing, allowing me to calm my nerves slightly.

"I believe Keith must go back to his throne," she said. "Being there might jog his memory."

"But all the memories he's made with me were far from his throne!" I said.

"He needs to be in a place he feels comfortable in first. Keith has a connection to the throne that could break the power of the spell. I'm hoping that will be enough for the magic to wear off. You should go with him," Tessa said.

"But he doesn't remember me!" I said.

"He is your mate. Soon enough, that pull will come back, if it hasn't already. Be patient," Tessa said.

"What about Tannon? And the gateway to the underworld? Who'll protect that?" I asked, feeling more and more overwhelmed.

Tessa smiled at my questions and held up her hands to slow me down.

"Tannon will be okay under my watch. I'll ask Daisy to guard the barrier," Tessa said.

I rolled my eyes and mumbled, "Make sure she actually does her job."

I hated the way Daisy made me feel. The atmosphere she gave off was toxic, and I had doubts she would help at all.

There was something sinister that she held just under the surface. Like a ripe red apple rotten at its core.

"What was that?" Keith's voice called from behind me.

"You are going to take Belle back to the castle," Tessa explained. "I think this will help you recover your memories."

I wanted to remember everything. I wanted to know why this young woman who I was giving a free ride in wolf form claimed to be my mate.

I don't remember why I was in that room, or why I was even at the witch's coven.

Was this girl a witch?

How could a witch be my mate?

I tried to think back and piece together images that might help make things coherent.

I had awoken in an unfamiliar room in my wolf form, ready to fight anything in my path. I was angry and frightened, but nothing from my memory elicited such a reaction.

There had been pain. A dark source had tried to suck me inside, and I had resisted.

Or, tried to resist...

I ran for hours. The more I searched for my memories, the quicker they escaped me. It infuriated me to have no recollection of those around me.

Was this some sort of cruel joke?

But something about her felt warm. I wanted to be around her, even though I barely remembered her name.

*Annabelle.*

I could feel her on my back, gripping for her life as I sped up.

The sun's descent had raced me for the past hour and disappeared beyond the horizon. We had to find a safe place to sleep.

As we moved through a small forest, my nostrils picked up a damp scent. I moved through the trees and across a small stream as if by instinct.

There was a cave nearby, I could almost feel it.

"I don't think I'll ever get used to that," Belle murmured, clutching her stomach after getting off of me.

For a moment, I lost myself in her eyes. They were like magnets, pulling in my energy, and I was helpless to stop it.

Something in me didn't want it to stop...

She broke eye contact first and looked around the area. "This does not look like your castle."

"You've been to my castle?" I asked her.

She stepped closer. "You really don't remember anything," she said sadly.

"No matter how hard I try. It's no good being a King when you can't even remember your kingdom," I conceded.

I could see her wanting to move closer, but she kept herself at an arm's length.

"You must be tired. We can rest in the cave for the night. There are still a few hours before we reach my home," I grumbled.

"It's going to be cold. We should make a fire," she said, as she walked toward the opening of the cave and glanced at the surrounding trees.

"There should be enough kindling to get us through the night."

A breeze blew in from the opening of the cave, and I picked up her scent. Sweet and savory.

A deep longing pulled at my chest, affecting my breath. I couldn't believe the pull she had over me.

Who was this creature? Would I ever remember?

It took us a short amount of time to gather twigs and branches for a firewood.

We made our way into the cave and found a spot deep enough to stop the wind from blowing out the fire.

Keith started the fire without much trouble at all. It roared up, causing him to land on his ass.

I tried to hide my laughter, but it escaped, bellowing throughout the cave.

"Is there something you'd like to tell me?" he asked gruffly.

"Relax. I was just watching your wonderful survival skills. Even if your memory is gone, your ego is far from shot," I said with a sly smile. "After all we've been through, it's not a surprise you'd be afraid of flames."

I wanted him to feel regret for not remembering all we had done together, but all it did was annoy him.

"After all we've been through... How is it that a witch could even be my mate?" he asked.

"I'm a witch-demon hybrid. The first, to be exact. That means I could be your mate, the Demon Lord's, or the Vampire King's," I explained half-heartedly.

I could tell he was jealous by hearing the name of my other suitors, but again, he kept his calm.

"That's ridiculous," he said.

"What? That I could be your mate?" I asked.

"It's ridiculous that I would fight over a mate who isn't a werewolf with two other kings. It's not ridiculous that it's you," he retorted.

I couldn't tell if it was the flames or his own desires, but something in his eyes was alight. Hearing these words from Keith made me blush, but I tried to hide it.

Maybe we could make something from all of this, even if we had to make new memories.

Keith took a few rabbits he had hunted while searching for wood and placed them on a spit above the fire.

Within minutes, the scent from their cooking bodies caused my stomach to grumble.

"I don't understand it either," I admitted. "Just a few days ago, I was a normal person with a normal pack. Now...you're stuck with me."

I tried to smile but it felt fake, so I looked at my feet instead.

"How did we meet?" he asked.

I thought back to the chaos of that first day, when my family warned me of my future. He was gruff and stubborn, bordering on violent.

It wasn't exactly Prince Charming meeting his princess...but then again, what is?

"I had no choice. You came to my house and took me away from my family," I said with sadness.

"Oh," he replied.

"It's because of the pull," I added. "You felt me and wanted to claim me before the Demon Lord could. You pretty much saved me in a way, I guess."

I smiled at him. "So, I should thank you."

He did not respond immediately, but after some time, he looked up and met my eyes.

"From what I've heard, you've saved me as well. And for that, I should thank you."

I was taken aback by his kindness. Had our trip earlier caused something in his memory to clear up?

He did not say anything else and instead removed the steaming rabbits off the spit. We ate in silence and then lay down to rest for our upcoming journey.

\*\*\*

"Belle..."

I wasn't yet asleep but could feel it pulling at my consciousness.

The cave had gotten colder, and the goosebumps on my flesh told me as much. I sat up on an arm and looked at Keith.

"Is something wrong?" I asked.

"It's getting cold," he said. "And there's nothing left to burn."

I was about to stand up and begrudgingly make my way to the entrance of the cave when I felt a hand grasp my arm, stopping me.

I looked at Keith's face, and there was a softness I had not seen in a long time.

His hand moved down my arm and slipped into my hand. He looked almost ashamed, which was an emotion I did not think he could feel.

"Would it be all right if we were to lie together? Maybe we could stay warm..." his voice trailed off.

I remembered what had happened last time we lay together and thought better of it.

But that imaginary pull was back and stronger than ever.

I found myself scooting closer to him and was not the least bit surprised by how well our bodies fitted together in this position.

He placed an arm over my body and pulled me in tight. I could feel his warm breath on my neck and could sense him taking in my scent.

It was intoxicating, knowing he could feel the pull as well.

My body tingled with anticipation of what might happen next.

I felt him raise up to look over my shoulder.

"Belle."

Our eyes met, and I noticed a clarity in him that had never really been there.

Did he remember me now?

We lay on the cold, rocky ground, body pressed against body. My arm, wrapped around her, kept pulling her closer and closer.

I didn't care. It felt right.

Like her body was native to mine, and all I could feel was that she was the oxygen feeding my fire.

I looked over her shoulder and spoke her name.

"Belle."

When she looked at me, it was like a flash of lightning before the crack of thunder.

Then, I remembered.

*Mark me.*

Her voice ringing in the back of my head.

I took in her scent again only to realize that I could not identify her as a part of me.

"Why didn't I mark you?" I asked.

I felt her body deplete into a sinking feeling and tense all at once.

"I don't know," she said.

I wanted to learn more but decided not to press.

When I thought our feelings had been lost, she grabbed my hand in hers and pressed it close to her chest.

I could hear her breathing hasten, and I wanted nothing more than to kiss the nape of her neck.

My memories wouldn't allow me to remember her now, but given time, new memories would form, and we could start all over.

She turned over onto her back and looked at me with hidden passion. I was so lost in her eyes that I almost missed the sound...

A faint gurgling echoed up from the ground.

"Sorry..." she called out nervously. "I'm still a little hungry."

I laughed, my entire body shaking hers as I held her, causing her to laugh. We filled the entire cave with laughter, and it felt so wholesome.

Then, another gurgle sounded.

This time, from behind me.

"Are you hungry, too?" Belle asked jokingly.

I immediately got up and held my breath. I could see very little, and I squinted to try and see through the darkness.

"Oh, I'm hungry...but your blood is not for me to drink," an unknown voice called out from the shadows.

Belle screamed, and I jumped up.

"Who are you? SHOW YOURSELF!" I growled.

Footsteps were heard all around us when a second voice called out, "Our queen! Our vampire queen! We have come for you!"

I snarled loudly, feeling every ounce of my body coiling in anger.

There was more than one, and judging by their disgusting, vinegary scent, I didn't need any more insight to know who was surrounding us.

It was only a matter of time before the vampires came for her.