

**It's Impossible**



# Prologue

There are moments that mark you - not with fireworks, but with quiet gravity. Like the hush before a storm. The breath before a confession.

For me, that moment was - her.

I won't say her name here. I don't need to.

If you've ever loved someone in a way that reshapes your understanding of what love even is, then you already know her.

She's the one you don't try to possess.

The one whose absence lingers more deeply than most people's presence.

I was a man of routines. Successful. Respected. But Professor Remembers Roadhouse & Bakery Café, that's not just a business.

It's my soul's offering to the world.

Every corner of it hums with the music I didn't just grow up loving - it saved my life.

The menu was a composition. Curated with the care of a man who remembered every bite that ever meant something.

Each dish earned its place. Drawn from cafés and kitchens across the world, where food had stirred something in me, comfort, longing, wonder, gratification.

Nothing made the cut unless it came with a story. Like Professor Remembers Unforgettable Brownies, born from a moment that deserved to be tasted again.

Every dish held a memory worth savoring, or a lesson worth sharing. Because at Remembers, the food isn't just nourishment, it's narrative.

And the stage? That's sacred ground.

Built for the ones who have to sing, who cannot, not sing.  
Their pain. Their joy. Their truth.

Remembers was the closest thing I ever made to a mirror.

A place where people who felt unseen could finally feel  
heard, cared for... and never forgotten.

And then she...walked through the door.

I didn't recognize it right away, but something in me did.

A stillness. A kind of spiritual leaning.

Not attraction the way most people mean it, though she  
was stunningly beautiful, this was deeper.

Stronger. Unearned. Inexplicable.

It puzzled me. This quiet, insistent longing to give to her,  
without needing anything in return.

Where did that come from?

That's the thing about love when it's not self-seeking.

It doesn't calculate the odds or wait for permission.

It just gives, sometimes to its own undoing.

And if that giving is real, if it's rooted in something greater  
than self, then it echoes a deeper truth.

The kind of truth you don't always quote, or wear on your  
sleeve, but you try to live.

What happened between us wasn't a love story in the way  
people expect.

No promise of forever. No tidy ending.

It was something deeper. Something that transcended time,  
labels, and expectation.

What it became...

That's the story you're welcome to read.

And maybe, if you're ready, it'll stir something in you too.

# 1

## Oasis - Aaron



Scan when ready to listen

*In the reach of your gaze, my heart  
finds its place, and heaven comes  
near, from that look on your face.*

YOUR FACE

Professor Remember and the  
Unforgettables with the Sweet  
Memories

I used to think regret faded with time. It doesn't. It just grows quieter, like a hum under the hood, constant, low, impossible to turn off. Not loud enough to make you stop. Just loud enough to keep you from ever feeling peace. The morning sun crept above the horizon, splashing warm, golden light across my rearview mirror as the gates to The Everlasting Farm faded out of sight.

I navigated the winding back roads with one hand gripping the leather steering wheel of my Lamborghini, the fingers of my other resting idly, twitching with thoughts that wouldn't quit. The hum of the engine was the only sound in the world, steady, familiar, like a soundtrack to the thoughts in my head. The air was crisp, earthy with dew-kissed grass. Normally I'd marvel at it. Not today. My mind was somewhere else.

Ahead, the parking lot of Professor Remembers Roadhouse & Bakery Café waited. Built her with my own hands. My sanctuary. A haven where music still flowed through the walls, where young hopefuls and seasoned pros alike came to chase the spark.

I adjusted my grip on the wheel, narrowed my gaze on the road, and felt myself pulled backward into a memory I hadn't let

myself think about in years.

It was 1980. I was in my office. Behind me hung a giant framed photograph of Steve McQueen from The Thomas Crown Affair. Forty-five years later, it now hangs in my office at my first Remembers.

The room was more shrine than workspace. Natalie Cole smiling from the night I produced her first Boston concert, February 8, 1976 at Symphony Hall. Ray Charles at the Lynn Manning Bowl in '77. That show ended that chapter of my life. Thanks a bunch, Queen Elizabeth II. *Long story.*

Framed handshakes with legends. Frozen smiles on glossy paper. Linda stood by the window, her silhouette outlined by streetlights. She'd been quiet all evening, a rarity.

Dark hair cascading over her shoulders. Outside, the city sparkled with possibility. Inside, the air was heavy.

"You're working late again," she said. Not angry. Just tired.

"This is important, Linda," I replied, barely glancing up. "We've got a shot at being the first Boston magazine to sit down with Bruce Springsteen on his River tour. We break this before the Globe, our ad rates go where we want them, up."

She turned to face me, arms folded.

"That's what you always say. Our big break. Grand slam, home run. Aaron, you've been swinging for the fences all this time, but have you ever stopped to ask what game you're actually playing?"

Her words landed harder than I expected.

"What's that supposed to mean?" I said. "I thought you liked this life. The dinners, the clubs, the backstage passes. Now it's ... not enough?"

She stepped closer, her eyes steady.

"It was never about the life, Aaron. It's about you. You're smart. Generous. Driven as hell. But you're always chasing something, some win, some recognition. And I've spent years wondering when you'd stop chasing long enough to choose us."

She exhaled, her voice softer now.

"I don't mean gifts or gestures. I mean presence. Stillness. Intimacy. You give in order to be needed. To be admired. You live life like it's a pitch. But I never feel peace with you, the kind that comes when love just *is*. No convincing. No proving."

I shifted in my chair.

"I take care of you. I make sure you have everything you need."

"That's not the point." She pulled out the chair across from me and sat. "You treat life like a transaction. You think dinners, gifts, money, access, are love. You keep score. You expect something back."

I stood, pacing.

"So this is an attack now? You know how hard I work. For you. For us."

"I want you to stop living for the payoff," she said evenly. "Until you figure out what kind of life you actually want, you'll keep giving everything to some shining future, and never learn what it means to build a life with someone standing right beside you."

I turned back to my desk, pretending to study papers.

"You don't understand."

"No, Aaron," she said quietly, rising. "You don't understand."

There are moments when I think back to that night. Not often. But sometimes, when the deals don't matter, when no one's watching, her words return. Not as accusation. As invitation. A whisper asking me to listen more than speak. To *be* rather than *do*. I read somewhere we're a *being* not a *doing*.

I didn't have words for it then. But something in me winced. Like part of me already knew she was right and couldn't face it. It took years to understand what she meant. Longer still to admit how much I needed to hear it.

She wasn't asking for a bigger life. She was asking for a deeper one. Stillness. Presence. The kind of quiet that doesn't come naturally to men like me.

I wasn't ready for that then.

The tires gripped the pavement as I pulled into Remembers' parking lot. Its familiar silhouette stood against the morning sky, weathered, steadfast.

I shifted into park and rested my hands on the wheel. Linda's words lingered, faint but persistent.

Maybe she was right. Maybe I never understood, but the past is dead. The future unborn. All I have is *now*.

Time to get to it.

The morning rush was in full swing at Remember's. The clatter of plates, the hiss of the espresso machine, and the low hum of chatter filled the air, blending into a chaotic symphony I usually found comforting.

I stood just inside the kitchen doorway, leaning against the frame, arms crossed over my chest. My gaze drifted toward the coffee station, not really seeing it. My mind, still tangled in the long-past memory of that night with Linda, her voice echoing in my thoughts: "You don't understand."

"Boss!"

The word snapped me back to the present. I blinked and turned to see Trigger, my General Manager, standing a few feet away, his hands shoved into the pockets of his apron.

Trigger was tall and wiry, with sharp features and a perpetual scowl that made him seem older than his thirty-something years.

He'd started as a young bartender and had now been with me for about a decade. He ran the day-to-day operations at Remember's with precision, though not always with tact.

I straightened. "What do you need?"

Trigger tipped his head toward the front of the café. "New hostess is here. Figured you'd want to meet her."

I raised an eyebrow. "Isn't that why I pay you?"

He shrugged, a faint smirk tugging at the corner of his mouth. "Suit yourself. But I think you'll want to meet this one." He nodded toward the café entrance again.

There was something in his tone, just shy of insolence, that made me narrow my eyes. "What's that supposed to mean?"

Before he could answer, movement near the café entrance drew my attention. A young woman was standing there, her posture relaxed but poised, one hand resting lightly on the strap of her bag. She was wearing a hunter green dress that fit her athletic frame perfectly, modest yet effortlessly elegant.

Her skin caught the light, warm brown with red and gold beneath. A stylish uplift framed high cheekbones and deep, observant eyes.

One look and I thought, Wow, she's beautiful, no, no that doesn't cover it, she's stunningly beautiful. No still not there, she's gorgeous... that's it.

I quickly pushed the thought aside, masking it with a cordial but detached smile. New hires were routine, part of the churn of running a restaurant. I stepped forward and extended a hand.

"You must be the new hostess," I said, keeping my tone polite but distracted. "Aaron Rizzer. Welcome to Remember's."

"I'm Belle, Belle Belizaire," she said, her voice smooth and measured, definitely Southern melodic, and it felt so familiar to me, yet I've never met her before, *right*?

The touch of her hand was warm, firm and seemed so comfortable in mine. It made me look at her left hand gently holding on to the strap of her shoulder bag. My God, her hands are so beautiful, I thought, how do I stop my stare?

The look in her eyes made me realize I've held on way too long. I refocused, pulled my hand back and glanced toward Trigger, who I noticed had been watching our exchange, bemused.

"Belle comes highly recommended, knows her way around a restaurant. Thought she'd be a good fit here".

I nodded, keeping my tone neutral. "Good to hear."

Belle glanced between us, sensing the undercurrent of tension. I could see it in the way she subtly assessed Trigger, or the way she noticed my gaze flickered before settling back on her eyes.

She was sharp. I could tell she was filing this moment away. There was a guarded quality in her eyes, but something thoughtful too.

"You'll report to Trigger, he'll get you set up and show you the ropes." "Understood," she replied. Her tone was professional, but there was a flicker of something in her eyes, curiosity, perhaps, or even a hint of skepticism. I couldn't tell. Trigger clapped his hands. "Alright, let's get moving. I'll show you where to stash your things and give you a quick rundown."

Belle nodded and turned to follow him toward the staff area, but as she walked away, I found my gaze lingering for just a moment longer, wondering. I shook my head, clearing the thought, and turned back to the kitchen.

Over the years, I've met dozens, maybe hundreds, of employees. First impressions are fleeting, often dissolving as quickly as they form. But Belle Belizaire? She lingered. Her presence pressed at the edges of my thoughts, uninvited but persistent.

Mark Twain's words floated through my head: "*You only get one chance to make a first impression.*" Was Belle trying to impress me, or was there something else at play, something innate, effortlessly magnetic? Not "attraction" in the typical sense. Quieter. Softer. Deeper, something more compelling.

"Belle," I said her name experiencing how the tip of my tongue made a little pop as it slapped down from the top of my mouth to the bottom when vocalizing the second syllable,

"Belle, Belle, Belle, interesting!"







# 2

## Oasis - Belle



Scan when ready to listen

*And you were standing right there. Like time slowed down between the air.*

Right There

Professor Remember and the Unforgettables with the Sweet Memories

I didn't want the job. Well, that's not exactly true. I need the job. Rent doesn't pay itself. But want? No, that wasn't in the equation. I showed up at Professor Remembers because my sister practically shoved me out the door with a printed copy of the job listing and that tone she gets when I'm drifting too close to the edge.

"You can't just... exist, Belle," she had said. "You need something to keep you steady."

So I showed up. Slid my résumé across the counter to some guy named Trigger, who barely read it before hiring me on the spot.

"When can you start," he said. No questions about experience. No polite smile. Just: "When".

I didn't care. Work is work. I figured I'd stand at the hostess station, smile at people, lead them to tables, clock out, go home. Repeat. Keep it simple. Keep it surface. The usual.

But then he went to get Aaron Rizzer.

I knew he was the owner the second I saw him.

Not because anyone told me, but because of the way the room seemed to shift when he walked through it. He carried himself differently. Not cocky, not loud. Just... settled. Centered. Like someone who's seen enough of the world to stop being impressed by it. He had this quiet intensity about him, like he knew exactly who he was. That's rare. Most people spend their whole lives figuring that out.

But none of that threw me. What threw me was how he looked at me. When he extended his hand, I felt it, the weight of his gaze. Steady. Direct. Not like he was sizing me up, but like he was, *listening*, somehow.

I'm used to people noticing me. This wasn't that. It was quieter. Sharper. Like he was looking past all of it, searching for something underneath.

And for a second, I wasn't sure what to do with that. Because I've spent a long time making sure no one looks too closely.

Aaron shook my hand, and his grip was steady, warm, but not intrusive. It didn't feel like he wasn't trying to own me, or charm me, or impress me like most men. He was just... there. Present. That was new too.

"You must be the new hostess," he said.

I didn't miss the hesitation in his voice. Like he was trying to keep something contained. Trying not to... feel something. I told him my name, Belle Belizaire, and when he repeated it, there was this softness in his voice that made the air between us feel heavier. Like my name tasted different to him. He lingered too long, his hand still holding mine. I let him.

I watched his eyes flick toward my other hand, the one on my bag, and he hesitated like he was trying to figure out why he couldn't look away. Like maybe it made him feel something he hadn't felt in a long time, or maybe never.

I could've teased him about it. Could've let him know I noticed. But instead, I just stood there, letting him figure it out for himself.

"You'll report to Trigger, he'll get you set up and show you the ropes." I smiled, "Understood."

Then I turned to follow Trigger. But I couldn't help myself. I glanced back. Aaron was still standing there, looking at me with this expression like he was seeing something he didn't expect to find. And the thing is, I was looking at him the same way.

It's not like I believe in that soulmate crap. I don't. People come and go. They show up when it suits them, leave when it doesn't.

That's how it works. That's how it's always worked. But something about the way Aaron looked at me... it didn't feel fleeting. It felt steady. Present. Like maybe, just maybe, he wasn't in a rush to leave.

And that made me pause. Because when someone doesn't look like they're already halfway out the door...that's when it gets risky. That's when you start to wonder if you're safe, or if you're standing right where the next ache is going to land.

I don't do heartache. It's not in my DNA.

I grew up watching my mom put herself on the line for a man who never bothered to catch her when she fell. I watched her unravel, piece by piece, until there was nothing left.

My father left, I was seven. My mother never recovered. She poured herself into men who gave her nothing. I learned early that trusting someone is just giving them a weapon to use later.

I promised myself I'd never be her. So yeah, Aaron Rizzer might've felt different, like someone I could trust, but trust isn't currency. Trust is debt. And I don't owe anyone anything. Fact is, too many times I've given too much, with nothing in return.

Still... I couldn't stop thinking about the way he said my name. Or the way his eyes stayed on mine even after I turned away. Or how, for a split second, I wondered what it might feel like to let someone see me for real.

Somehow, Aaron's eyes didn't carry the hunger I've seen in most men. They weren't sizing me up or trying to claim something. It was more like... like he was listening.

Even in silence, it was like being heard. That should've made me feel comforted. Instead, it made me feel exposed. And being exposed is dangerous because it leads to people knowing you.

When they know you they can hurt you.

But I didn't seem to get that from Aaron. It was a different feeling, not like pressure, more like space. Maybe sometimes, real strength is quiet. That's what made me glance back after I turned away, just to see if he was still watching.

Then I reminded myself why I'm here, to do a job. Show them to their table. Smile. Clock out. Rinse and Repeat. Collect my pay.

And yet... as I walked past the kitchen, I thought I heard him say it again, soft and quiet, to himself?

“Belle!”

My name never sounded like that before. And maybe that's the most dangerous thing of all.







# 3

## Rebirth - Aaron



Scan when ready to listen

*I didn't hold her, didn't plead  
my case, still her sadness  
bruised my face.*

Grace - Aaron

Professor Remember and the  
Unforgettables with the Sweet  
Memories

I buttoned up my blazer and rolled up the collar as I stepped out of Remember's back door into the crisp evening air. The lot behind the café was unusually quiet, save for the distant hum of traffic. I needed a breath of fresh air from the endless tasks of running a successful eatery.

That's when I saw her.

Belle, my new hostess was standing by the open trunk of her car, her back toward me. Her shoulders slightly hunched as she was shifting a couple of mismatched boxes. Her motions were slow and deliberate, as though each lift took more energy than she had to spare. Her hunter green top clung to her as the wind picked up, catching strands of her black hair.

The sight stopped me in my tracks. Something seemed wrong.

Belle always moved with long determined, poised strides of someone who knew exactly where she was headed. But today, her usually confident demeanor seemed to flicker, as if she were fighting to hold herself together.

Suddenly it was as if I was gripped in a massive vice that was pushing on me from all sides. There was a darkness, a weight clinging to her like a shadow, I wanted so much to lift it from her.

What should I do? I felt an overwhelming desire to help her with whatever it was that was digging at her. But what right do I have to intrude on her private life? She looks like she needs space, I thought, but my feet carried me toward her almost involuntarily.

“Belle,” I called softly.

When she turned, she was filled with such sadness I wasn’t sure it was Belle. The look in her eyes commanded something within me to take her in my arms and just hold her, protect her from whatever had done this to her. It took everything I had not to.

The composure Belle wore so well, the armor that made her seem unshakable, had cracked. Her eyes, dark and glossy, betrayed a storm of tears had barely passed. She moved her head back almost imperceptibly surprised she was not alone. She quickly attempted to straighten and offer a smile.

“Oh, hi, Mr. Rizzer,” she said, looking in my eyes her voice steady but fragile. I could barely raise my hand to wave, my heart crushed to see the effort it took for her to project the Belle that I met a few weeks ago.

“Everything okay?” I asked gently, keeping my tone light, though I knew everything definitely was not “alright”. Belle glanced at the boxes in her trunk, then back at me, her smile faltering. “Just moving some stuff. Nothing major.”

I looked at the boxes as I said: “Moving can be rough, need a hand?” She shook her head quickly. “No, no I’m fine. Really, just another ‘regular, degular, shmegular’ day.” The words were firm, but her body betrayed her. She gripped the edge of the trunk like it was the only thing holding her up.

I wanted to say something, anything, but the right words evaded me. I was stabbed with a pang of helplessness, sadness as I searched my mind for something to say or do that would erase whatever was burdening her. I stepped closer and spoke softly. “Belle, it’s okay not to be fine.”

She turned her head quickly and I thought for a moment she was going to argue my point, but then, something shifted. Her shoulders sagged, and she exhaled shakily, as if releasing a breath, she’d been holding for far too long. “I’m moving in with Elena, my sister in Charlotte,” she confessed, her voice barely above a whisper. “I can’t....it’s... so much right now.”

That started my mind racing. I heard the defeat in her words, I saw the weight she was carrying. The urge to protect her surged through me, but “boundaries” I thought. Respect her privacy.

“That’s a big decision,” I said. “Sometimes it’s hard knowing when to let go and when to push through.”

She blinked, as though surprised by the genuineness in my voice and words. “Yeah,” Belle murmured, with a hint of gratitude in her voice.

It was all I could do to resist the instinct to reach out, to gather her into my arms and remind her God is with her, everything would be okay.

But I held back, sensing that such a gesture might convey I did not see the strength and independent spirit Belle clearly possessed. I respected her too much to risk implying I thought she couldn’t ably make her own decisions and take care of herself.

There was a time I might have pushed past that boundary, convinced myself it was kindness, not control. But something in me whispered: love mercy, act justly, walk humbly. And maybe for the first time, I actually listened.

“If you ever need someone to talk to,” I said, “I’m here. No strings attached.” Belle’s eyes softened, and for the first time, she let the mask slip. “Thanks, Mr. Rizzer,” she said quietly and sincerely.

There was a level of honesty in her eyes, the way she looked at me, something impossible to describe. As if she was wondering, assessing, measuring if I truly cared.

“Anytime,” I said trying not to make too much of it.

As Belle turned her eyes back to her car, I took a step back, giving her space. Yet, as I walked into Remember’s, I couldn’t shake the image of her standing there, fragile but resolute, burdened but unbroken. She wasn’t just moving boxes; she was moving pain, disappointment, a thousand unshed tears packed tightly into cardboard.

And for the first time, helping didn’t feel like a performance. It didn’t feel like one of my grand gestures that masked some deeper hunger for validation. I’m not sure, but I wondered is this what is known as “grace”.

Standing just inside the doorway, I thought to myself, there are so many things I’ve gotten wrong in this life, ambitions that cost me people I cared about, choices I explained to myself until

there was no one left to explain them to.

But standing there, watching Belle carry her struggle with such quiet strength, I felt something unfamiliar. Not pride. Not ego. Just this restless pull I couldn't quite name, didn't understand. Maybe it was nothing.

Maybe it was just another passing impulse, the kind you notice, then forget. Still, I found myself lingering, as if leaving too soon would mean missing something I needed to understand. Sometimes silence isn't a choice so much as the only thing that makes sense.

A part of me wondered where this was coming from at all. It didn't feel like attraction the way I'd known it before. It didn't feel like pity either. It just felt... different.

It was unsettling, because the truth is, I have more years behind me than ahead. There's really no time in my life for another. I know better than to trust sudden feelings. I know how easily men lie to themselves. I'm the easiest guy in the world for me to fool.

But standing there, I couldn't shake the sense something in me was different, even though I had no idea what.

What I did know was that it made me uneasy. Whatever it was, it hadn't been there before. Now it is.







# 4

## Rebirth - Belle



Scan when ready to listen

*Holding on tight, trying not to break,  
but in the rumble of my ache, did I  
catch signs of grace?*

Grace - Belle

Professor Remember and the  
Unforgettables with the Sweet  
Memories

I don't cry. It's not that I don't feel things, I do. But crying is weakness, and weakness is dangerous. My mother taught me that. Not directly, but in the way she would fall apart over men who weren't worth it. In the way she let herself be wrecked, hollowed out, and left broken in pieces without the strength to gather herself back together.

So no. I don't cry. I compartmentalize. I shut it down. I keep moving. Clamp it shut.

But that day... standing by the trunk of my car, it took all I had to resist the tears pressing at the back of my eyes like they were trying to tear their way out again. No, not again, no.

It was the moving boxes that did it. Mismatched and messy, just like the life I was trying to pack up. I was supposed to be better than this. I was supposed to have it together by now. But here I was, cramming the pieces of my life into the trunk of my car like I was trying to outrun a failure that was already catching up and sailing past me.

The wind picked up, tugging at me and pulling strands of hair across my face. I tucked them behind my ear and gripped the edge of the trunk like it was the only thing keeping me

upright. My arms felt weak, my legs unsteady.

I didn't hear him approach.

"Belle."

I knew the voice instantly. Low, steady, the kind of voice that could calm a storm or pull you straight into one, depending on how he used it.

I turned, already pulling my mask into place, but I knew he saw right through it. Because Aaron Rizzer always sees through me.

"Hi, Mr. Rizzer," I said, keeping my tone light, steady. Like I wasn't unraveling.

His eyes softened, but his mouth tightened just enough to let me know he wasn't buying it.

"Everything okay?"

I glanced at the boxes, then back at him. "Just moving some stuff. Nothing major."

He looked down at the boxes and back at me. His expression was careful, like he knew how close I was to breaking.

"Moving can be rough," he said. "Need a hand?"

I shook my head quickly. Too quickly. "No, no. I'm fine. Really. Just another regular, degular, shmegular day."

He smiled faintly at that, but his eyes didn't match the smile. He knew. Of course, he knew.

The thing about Aaron is... he pays attention. In a way most people don't.

"Belle," he said softly. "It's okay not to be fine."

My head snapped toward him, and for a second, I wanted to push back, to tell him to mind his own business, to remind him that I can take care of myself.

But I didn't say any of that.

Because the way he was looking at me, steady and calm, like he could hold the whole weight of me without it breaking him, made something in my chest loosen.

My shoulders sagged. My grip on the trunk weakened. I let out a shaky breath I didn't even realize I'd been holding.

"I'm moving in with Elena, my sister," I admitted, my voice barely above a whisper. "In Charlotte."

Aaron's eyes darkened a little, like he was measuring the weight of that statement.

There was a pause, just long enough to make me wonder

what he was thinking.

I glanced away, but not before catching that look, the kind that made you feel like maybe someone could see past your mess.

A phrase drifted through my mind, soft and uninvited. I'd listened to one of his songs the night before. I don't even know why I hit play. Curiosity, maybe. Boredom. But as I sang along I found myself changing the line to: "*Maybe strength is in letting go, Maybe love is letting one see. Is that what's known as grace?*"

Was that what I was seeing in Aaron's eyes?"

"That's a big decision," he said. His tone was light, but there was an undercurrent of understanding beneath it. Like he knew exactly how hard it was to admit you need to start over.

"Yeah," I murmured. "It's... so much...right now."

Aaron's gaze sharpened, and I felt him studying me. Not prying, not pushing, just seeing me.

"Sometimes it's hard to know when to let go and when to push through," he said.

My eyes flicked toward him. "That sounds like experience talking?" He smiled faintly. "Maybe."

I forced a small laugh, but it came out thin. "You don't seem like the 'letting go' type."

"I'm not," he said. "But sometimes you don't have a choice." I let that sit for a moment. Because he was right.

Aaron Rizzer doesn't talk just to fill the silence. When he says something, it means something. And that's why it scared me, how much it meant that he was standing there, looking at me like that. Like I was worth figuring out.

Because most people don't look at me that way. Most people see what they expect to see, the pretty face, the easy smile, the girl who's always got it together. That's the mask.

The mask I've worn so long it feels like a second skin. But Aaron wasn't looking at the mask. He was looking underneath it. And I hated that it made me feel... seen.

"If you ever need someone to talk to," he said, "I'm here. No strings attached."

I could've brushed it off. Could've smiled, made some joke, moved on. That's what I normally do.

But instead, I held his gaze. And for once, I let the mask slip. Just a little.

“Thanks, Mr. Rizzer,” I said softly. I didn’t say his name. I couldn’t. Maybe because saying it would’ve made everything too real. And I wasn’t ready to owe reality that much.

Aaron smiled.

I smiled back.

A strange stillness settled over me, not weakness, not surrender, but something quieter. Stronger. Like maybe trust didn’t have to mean losing control. Maybe, like I’d heard once in church, there was a kind of strength that only came through stillness.

Through choosing to trust, just a little, even when everything in you screamed not to. I turned back to the trunk, closing it with a soft thud. My hand lingered on top of the trunk for a second . By the time I straightened, my armor was back in place.

But I felt his eyes on me as I walked toward the driver’s side door. “Sir,” I called over my shoulder. He turned, “Yes?”

I met his gaze, steady this time. “I know you meant it. That part about no strings attached.”

“I did,” he said.

And that’s when I knew I was in trouble.

Because I believed him. And believing someone, trusting them, is dangerous.

But I got in the car and drove away before I could think too hard about it. And as I pulled out of the lot, I caught a glimpse of him in my rearview mirror.

Still standing there. Still watching me. Still waiting. And that scared me more than anything.

Because Aaron Rizzer wasn’t going anywhere. And maybe, just maybe, neither was I.





# 5

## Longing - Aaron



Scan when ready to listen

*When I whispered your name,  
it trembled the breeze.*

Leaves

Professor Remember and the  
Unforgettables with the Sweet  
Memories

Belle, I had this really unusual dream. Unusual firstly because I seldom remember my dreams. And Secondly because I think you were in the dream. I saw an elderly man, maybe about my age who was in a Garden of Eden like place. The man was reaching out with his right hand toward a stunningly beautiful, twenty something woman with brown skin with red and gold overtones.

That's pretty much how I would describe your skin color. I hope I'm not over stepping any boundaries, by saying so. But your skin tone has become my favorite color. The woman in my dream was walking out of the garden, away from the man toward a path lined with huge trees each with an abundance of leaves.

As she walked, she looked back over her shoulder at the man with a combination of kindness and perplexity in her eyes.

The man's side of the garden was very dark and the woman's side had bright rays of sun shining through the leaves. When I awakened, I wondered about the contrast between the sides in the garden. Is that my mind trying to process the physical and symbolic separation between us? Is that me focusing too much on our differences rather than on what we share in common.

Watching the woman walk away through those trees filled me with a longing that, in my dreams brought me to my knees.

As I awakened, I thought of what I would write on the leaves of the trees to express the feelings developing in me for you. It hit me that, though the leaves seemed countless I'm not sure there would be enough to express all that I feel and wish to say to you.

I see so much in you Belle that reminds me of me. Is that why I feel so connected to you?. On the surface, one would think we have little in common. But, as I come to know you better, that is, to the extent you've allowed me to know you, I think we will both be very surprised to discover how much we are alike.

The woman in my dream, I think was inspired by you. I'm not trying to unsettle you by saying I'm dreaming about you, but we are all impacted by the people around us and of course, since you work here at Remembers, we are around each other.

Does that explain the woman in my dreams having an athletic physique like yours? While she clearly had, "sex appeal", it was underplayed much in the way I think you intentionally downplay that aspect of your physicality.

I suspect you dress very modestly and rarely show any "skin" because your beauty attracts a lot more attention to you than you're comfortable with. But the more I see you, Belle, the more I wonder if your modesty isn't just about privacy and protection. There's something sacred about the way you carry yourself, something that says, "I'm more than this 'body'."

I've started to realize that true beauty, the kind that lasts, has less to do with skin and more to do with soul. The world sees the surface, but I want to know what God sees when He looks at you.

*"Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."* I think that's in the Bible and it's what I'm drawn to. Not just the outward beauty, but the quiet depths beneath it.

As the dream unfolded, the woman drifted further from view, her back to the man, except for that one moment when she looked over her shoulder and the look in her eyes was the same look you have given me, sometimes when we talk. Almost as if you are trying to figure something out.

I don't know what any of it means, Belle. I really don't. But maybe love like this doesn't need to be returned to be real. Maybe it just needs to be offered, gently, truthfully, without expectation.





# 6

## Longing - Belle



Scan when ready to listen

*Branches, bending, bending, afraid  
to break, still trembling from the  
storms I've faced.*

Branches

Professor Remember and the  
Unforgettables with the Sweet  
Memories

I don't know why his words got to me. I sat with them for a long time. Longer than I meant to. Aaron's dream about a Garden of Eden, a woman walking away, a man reaching out. He said he wasn't sure the woman was me, but come on. It was me. He knows it.

I know it. Even the way he described her, the red and gold overtones in her skin, the athletic build, the modesty, that's not something you just imagine. That's observation.

That means he's been watching me.

I don't get the sense he's watching me in a creepy way, not even intentionally watching. More like he's tuned in. But it's hard to ignore because he notices things about me most people miss.

And that's the problem. Because I don't like being seen that clearly.

When I read his words, in what he calls an "imagining", I could picture it perfectly, the garden, the light on my side, the darkness on his. Me walking away, but looking back over my shoulder. I know that look, kindness and perplexity.

Yeah, I've felt that way around Aaron more than once.

And the fact he dreamed about it? That's what unnerves me. Because, like Aaron said, he seldom remembers his dreams. He's not one of those people who lives in his head. He's grounded, present. He doesn't get lost in fantasy. So if he's dreaming about me, if I'm getting under his skin like that...

What does that mean? I'm not sure I want to know.

But the part that stuck with me the most wasn't the dream itself. It was what he said afterward. "I want to know what God sees when He looks at you." That's what hit me. Because no one has ever said anything like that to me before.

It's not like he's trying to get me, or get something from me, it's like he's trying to know the real me. That's what unsettles me most. Because that's a level of interest that doesn't vanish even if I don't have that kind of interest in him. What do I do with that?

There's a look in his eyes, I've seen it many times, the way he watches me, pays attention to what I say, how I say it. It's not like he's trying to game or play me. He's trying to understand me. He's really listening, and that's dangerous.

Because if someone understands you, really understands you, that means they can hurt you, real bad. And I'm not in the business of getting hurt.

But the truth is...I feel it too. That pull. That connection. It's not romantic, not in the sense I've felt for boyfriends. It's deeper than that. Stranger than that.

It's like Aaron knows things about me that I haven't even admitted to myself. He said we have more in common than it looks like on the surface. I hate how much that feels true.

Because Aaron isn't wrong about me. He knows I downplay things, my appearance, my body, the way men look at me. I dress carefully because I know what happens when you don't.

You get attention you didn't ask for. You get labeled. You "invite" the uninvited. Worse, you get followed. Sometimes it's easier to blend in, to make yourself small. I learned that early.

So yeah, I'm intentional about how I carry myself. And the fact Aaron sees that, the fact that he knows it's intentional, makes me feel naked in a way that no short skirt or low-cut top ever could.

And then there's the part about longing.

Aaron doesn't want anything from me. Not in the way other men usually do. That's the confusing part. He's not trying to get close so he can take something. He's not angling to "have" me.

He doesn't seem to be playing some conquering game.

It's like, he just wants to know me. That's the part that scares me. Because when someone genuinely wants to know you, that means they care. And if they care, and then walk away, they have the power to hurt you. Or worse, to stay and disappoint you.

I don't know what to do with that. So yeah, in the dream, I walked away. Because it's easier that way. It's safer.

I know what it's like to have someone reach for you and then let go. I know what it feels like to let yourself believe someone will stay, and then watch them walk out the door.

So walking away is survival. But the part that messes with me is that in the dream, I looked back. That's the part I don't understand.

Because if I really wanted to leave, why would I look back? If I really wanted to protect myself, why would I give him even that much? But I think I know the answer. I just don't like it.

Aaron Rizzer makes me feel safe. That's the real problem. Because when you feel safe, you take off your armor. When you let your guard down...

That's when you get hurt.

But what if safety isn't the problem? What if fear is?

I've never believed in a kind of perfect love that drives out fear. A love so powerful it could push fear out of the room.

But sometimes, when Aaron looks at me like I'm already enough, I wonder... what if that kind of love does exist?

So yeah, I walked away in the dream. And I probably would in real life too.

But the fact that I looked back? The fact that I'm still thinking about this dream? The fact that I'm sitting here wondering what it would feel like to stop walking and let him catch up to me?

Yeah, that's a problem. Because I'm not supposed to want that. And yet...Here I am wondering, is our love lost, in another time?

Maybe that's the real reason this "imagining" won't let me go.

Because it's not just about Aaron. It's about me. About the parts of myself I've never really faced. The girl who still believes she's too much and not enough at the same time. The woman who's spent her whole life calculating how close she can let someone get before she has to push them away.

And Aaron, he didn't just imagine me in that garden. He imagined me hesitating. Pausing. Looking back.

Like some part of me wanted to believe. To hope. And the worst part? He saw that. He saw through all the armor I use to protect myself. My tone, my boundaries, even my silences, and he didn't flinch. He didn't try to force the moment or shame me for my distance. He just told the truth and left space for mine.

That's what makes this dangerous. Not love. Patience.

Because patience waits. Patience hopes. Patience leaves the door open without begging you to walk through it.

And I'm not used to that.

So now I'm left wondering...is walking away strength, or is it fear wearing a mask? And if it is fear, then what am I really running from?

Because maybe the reason I looked back... is that I don't want to run anymore.







# 7

## Goodbye - Aaron



Scan when ready to listen

*Still my love endures through the letting go, because “goodbye’s” the kindest truth I know.*

Goodbye (Aaron)

Professor Remember and the Unforgettables with the Sweet Memories

**B**elle, I owe you an apology. I never should have so openly confessed my feelings for you and I promise, to the best of my ability, this is a “goodbye” to my prolonged visits at the hostess station.

A “goodbye” to me spending time standing near you trying to hide a hunger emanating from the very marrow of my bones. It is a level of pain I must stop putting myself through.

It’s not kind to do that to myself and especially unkind to ask you to witness how, not being able to express my love torments me. I sense you know how much it hurts to love someone completely and your love is not returned.

I hope you know there is no blame whatsoever on your part. You never asked for my love; indeed, you never asked anything of me. I could never will the love I feel for you into existence; it just is.

I neither sought this nor ever expected it. Just as an infant instinctively reaches for its mother, you touched my soul and gave birth to the most compelling desire I’ve ever experienced. It’s impossible for me not to want you.

When I think of you, the same thought always comes to me: I've waited all my life for you. And now I see how cruel it would be to burden you with the knowledge of a love you do not feel in return.

It's cruel to give what cannot be received, because what are you supposed to do with that? Please know I never intended for you to feel any discomfort.

You will never be absent from my heart. I will always be grateful beyond my ability to express it. You awakened in me a kind of love I didn't know existed, and certainly never considered it was something I was capable of experiencing or expressing.

The better outcome for me would be to have more of you. The best would be to have all of you. But going forward, I'm going to reach deep within myself to find the strength to deny what I desire most, being with you, because the best thing for you is likely to have less of me.

To keep putting us through this would be an act of selfishness my love for you cannot abide. Words will never fully express how thankful I am to discover, after all life has thrown in my path, that this kind of love was in me at all.

And maybe that's the mystery of it, how love, even when unreturned, can still redeem the one who gives it. Maybe that's what's needed: not passion, not possession, but courage.

And knowing that God has not given me a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind, helps.

So I will no longer come to you for long stretches unless you invite me. I know how hard it is for you to ask anything of anyone, and I admire the strength of your independence. I've seen it. I love that about you.

And because I'm trying to be mindful of how it looks to others when the "boss" spends so much time talking with you, any significant time we share from here on must be initiated by you.

To my overwhelming fear, I understand that may never happen. But please always know this: all you ever need to do is call, text, email, or stop me and say, "Let's talk."

I'll be there.

PROFESSOR  
REMEMBER'S  
ROADHOUSE  
& BAKERY CAFE





## THANK YOU FOR READING

*Thank you for spending time with these pages.  
I hope something here stayed with you.*

You've just read Aaron's goodbye.  
Belle's answer comes next.

*But before she answers, listen to what she's  
carrying inside—what she cannot say aloud.*



Listen to Belle's Goodbye

<https://ITSIMPOSSIBLENOVEL.COM/GOODBYE/>