Alternative Season 7

by captainswanseven

Summary

Canon divergence. Set after 6x22. Two new mysterious women in town catch Sheriff Emma Swan and Deputy Killian Jones’s attention. One of them is Killian’s mother, but nobody knows it, not even Killian himself. She has an agenda. And an enemy. Are Emma and Killian able to protect Storybrooke once the truth comes to the surface?

Notes

AN1: This fanfic is my attempt at creating an alternative OUAT season 7 that (hopefully) can help Captain Swan shippers get over the real season 7 in the same way writing it has been helping me. This is a continuation of season 6 and follows the adventures of sheriff Swan and deputy Jones. Visit my blog (https://captainswanseven.tumblr.com) for more info. Every week I will be posting casting news, episode descriptions, episode stills, script teases and title spoilers.

Chapter Summary: In the aftermath of their wedding, Emma and Hook sail away on the Jolly Roger to celebrate their honeymoon. Having four magic beans to use, the newlyweds decide to go on an unforgettable adventure where they come across many familiar faces and a potential new threat.
It was a particularly sunny day when Emma Swan rose from the bed she shared with her husband, warm toes touching the chilly wooden floor. Approaching the window, she pulled the curtains aside and let the rays of light fall on her face. The neighborhood was quiet and everything seemed peaceful, something she never forgot to be thankful for—after all, it was still Storybrooke. After opening the window and taking a quick breath of fresh air (a quirk she had acquired from Killian), she left the bedroom to make some pancakes for breakfast.

Killian had gotten up early and gone to the docks, as he usually did on Saturdays, and Henry was staying at Regina’s for the weekend. That meant she could take all the time in the world to make the tremendously popular pancakes her two boys loved so much (although for different reasons, that is). Sure, they were from a box, but Emma had never been a particularly skilled cook and those things still took some precious time away from her. Once she was done, pancakes carefully put in the oven not to get completely cold, she carefully picked up the photographs she and Killian had been selecting the previous day to hang around the house. If she was going to wait for her husband to arrive so they could have breakfast together, she may as well be productive.

Emma was about to climb the stairs when she stopped dead in her tracks, staring at the top photograph on the pile she was holding in her right hand. The blissful, bright smile plastered on Killian’s face as he hugged her from behind brought on a grin of her own. She remembered that perfect day of their honeymoon all too well: hairs wet, bodies full of sand, passionate making out sessions and absolutely amazing s-

“Hello, wife.” Killian’s voice suddenly interrupted her extremely good thoughts, his chin resting on her right shoulder as she shivered at the contact of his cool bearded cheek with her hot skin.

“Hello, husband.” She barely whispered, turning around and putting her arms around him, photographs still in hand.

“Uhm.” She watched as he moved his head to take a look at the photographs. “Reminiscing about our honeymoon already?”

She chuckled while playing with the small hairs at the nape of his neck. He just knew her so well. With how unbelievable their honeymoon had been, how could she not reminisce about it?

Two weeks ago…

It seemed as if everyone in Storybrooke was gathered together at the docks, ready to watch Emma and Killian get on the Jolly Roger to leave for their much deserved honeymoon. After yet another curse and the final battle against the Black Fairy, the couple finally had the chance to enjoy their fresh marital bliss.

Just as Emma was going through her bag, checking once again if she had brought everything she needed, Ashley pulled her aside.

“Enjoy your honeymoon and, you know… your husband.” She giggled, winking at Emma.

“Oh, I plan on doing plenty of that, trust me.” If there’s something Emma was sure she was going to be doing this honeymoon was to get as much sex as she possibly could. Wasn’t that the purpose of a
honeymoon anyway?

“You should. You deserve it.” At that, Emma hugged Ashley, thankful for having built an unlikely friendship with her over the years.

“Honey, are you sure you didn’t forget anything?” Emma felt Snow’s hand on her shoulder as her parents, Killian and Henry joined them.

“Don’t worry, mom. We have everything we need.” Emma reassured her.

“Including this tiny device Henry was kind enough to offer us.” Killian then held in the air a digital camera, the crowd cheering in response. Some of them had probably never seen such a thing before in their lives, especially the people who came from the Land of Untold Stories and had decided to stay in Storybrooke.

“I wanted to make sure you take a lot of pictures of mom.”

“You needn’t give me a machine for that, lad.”

“Killian, you still don’t know how to use your phone. At least with a camera, the only thing you have to do is–”

“Press the side button for it to get started and then press the top one to take the picture. Aye, you have demonstrated it plenty of times.” Killian interrupted him, a goofy grin on his face as Henry smiles in return.

“Enjoy your honeymoon. We’ll take care of everything while you’re away.” David said as he approached the couple, softly patting Killian’s shoulder and then hugging Emma. “Be careful”, he added.

Emma carefully put one of the bags on the floor so she could properly hug her father. “Thanks, dad. We will.”

“Have you chosen the realms you’re going to visit?” Regina’s voice echoed in the crowd as she put her arm around Henry.

“Not really, but we have a lot of time to decide.” Emma’s gaze rested on Killian, hoping he would agree with her.

“Indeed. All that matters is that we’re together.” They heard some “aww’s” coming from the bunch.

“Thank you so much for the magic beans, Anton.” Emma said as she and Killian started moving in Anton’s direction. Besides the usual wedding gifts they had received (they now had an endless amount of kitchen appliances and all sorts of household items), Anton had given them four magic beans from the plantation he had started growing again.

“We’ll make sure to give them the best use, mate.”

“You’re welcome. Luckily, the beans grew steadily.”

“It helped that Queeny here didn’t destroy them this time around.” Leroy’s sarcasm had Regina rolling her eyes in annoyance.

“Get over it.” she snarled.
“Alright, we should probably get going.” Emma interrupted their bickering, picking the bag up from the floor. She started waving at everyone as she felt Killian’s hook picking her right hand up so they could properly get on the ship as husband and wife, hand in hook. She was suddenly grateful that he finally seemed to be comfortable enough with her to the point he didn’t have any problems using his hook on her, knowing very well that she loved every single part of him.

Once they were on the ship, Killian started doing his visual check and determining the wind direction.

“Ready to set sail, love?” he turned to Emma, a dashing smile spreading across his face. Just him and Emma. Captain and Quartermaster. Alone. On their honeymoon. On the Jolly. Life couldn’t get any better than this.

“Always.”

The ship started to move sluggishly through the water, the docks slowly getting smaller in the distance.

“Good lass.” Emma turned to watch Killian gently pat the wheel as the ship’s movements grew faster and gentler. The way he loved that ship so much never failed to put a smile on her face, happy that he had a chance to get it back after having almost lost it because of her. “Where to, love?” Killian was holding one of the four magic beans in his hand. “We only need to save one bean to return to Storybrooke.”

“Which means we can choose three realms to visit.” Emma finished his thoughts. “Is there any place you really want to go to?” her hand softly caressed the arm that was still carefully holding the ship’s wheel.

“I recall our last adventure in the Enchanted Forest being quite entertaining.” His tone was flirtatious, left eyebrow immediately shooting up. “I would love to go there again with you.”

“I would love it too.” She had assumed that visiting the Enchanted Forest was a safe bet from the moment Anton had given them the magic beans. Not surprisingly, Killian seemed to have thought the same. “I was also thinking… maybe Arendelle? I really miss Elsa. And I think it’d be fun to see them again.”

He doesn’t answer right away, grabbing her hand in his and dropping a soft kiss on it instead. “As you wish.”

“You’re quite the charmer.” She murmured, letting her fingers tease the exposed bits of his chest hair.

“Careful, love. I have a ship to steer.” Emma laughed at the way he suddenly gulped the moment she started getting flirty with him.

“Oh, okay. You do that. I’ll just stay here looking at the mast.” She knew that sounded awful as she clearly lacked his natural charm to throw innuendo around, but the hell with it. She wanted to tease him just a little bit more and it was their honeymoon after all. She didn’t have to wait more than a couple of seconds for Killian to react, almost instantly letting go of the ship’s wheel and grunting as he firmly pushed his body against hers until she couldn’t step back any longer, trapping her against the side of the ship. She could feel his hot breath on her neck, the gentle friction of his beard on her cheek making her close her eyes in anticipation.

“You’re not looking at the mast, Swan.” She opened her eyes at the unexpected loss of him,
watching him making his way back to the ship’s wheel, suddenly all too focused on steering the ship and pretending that he hadn’t looked as if he was ready to take her right then and there. “The quartermaster should never distract the Captain.” Killian then added, a proud and smug smirk appearing on his face. So that’s what it was: he had purposely left her hanging, to tease her himself. Oh, but two could definitely play this game. She strolled in his direction, leaning in to look over his shoulder as she let her left breast brush against his back. Before Killian even had a chance to say something, he felt Emma’s right, warm hand resting on the cold skin of his neck.

“We should…” she whispered, letting her hand slowly travel down his body, a wide grin across her features as she saw him clenching his jaw – a sure sign that what she was trying to do was working. Emma kept running her hand down his body, not so innocently letting her pinky finger brush against his groin. He heard a soft gasp coming from his mouth, letting her know that now was the perfect time for payback. Catching him off guard, Emma quickly removed her hand from his belt. “… go to Arendelle already.” She sniggered as her fingers skillfully grabbed the magic bean he was holding in his own hand. Killian instantly felt the loss of her body pressed against his back, turning around to see her sporting a pompous grimace, her eyes carrying a glint of delight at having retaliated in much the same manner.

“Very well…” Killian started, making sure that she saw him biting his bottom lip as his eyes wandered up and down her body. “But do know, my lovely wife, that this isn’t over.”

Laughing in response, Emma held onto him as she watched him throw the magic bean into the restless waters, a light blue portal forming in the middle of the sea.

“Hold on tight!” Killian yelled as she felt the ship start being sucked into the portal. She had only done this once before, but she knew that things were going to get a bit shaky. None of it mattered, though. As long as she had Killian by her side, everything was going to be okay.

Soon after the violent upheaval, they found themselves in the middle of the calm ocean again, the Jolly gently rocking back and forth with the movement of the waves. It was so quiet that the seagull’s cries were the only sounds capturing their attention over the sigh of the wind. Emma felt her lips suddenly dry with the cold as the icy breeze lashed at her skin. Killian, however, seemed to be completely unaffected by the harsh weather, merely taking in the view.

“How are you not freezing?” she blurted, her voice trembling. He only had a shirt on under his modern leather jacket and yet he looked as if they weren’t in the coldest realm of them all.

“My body had two hundred extra years to adapt to low temperatures, Swan.” He replies absently, more concerned with serving as a human shield to his wife, protecting her from the cold. “Haven’t you brought warmer garbs?”

“I have.” Emma stepped back from his embrace to reach for one of her bags, quickly pulling out a hooded long sleeve woolen cape coat in tones of pearl. Killian looked closely, not recognizing that particular item of clothing of hers. Once she put it on, he could do nothing else but stare at her. She looked absolutely beautiful in it, the furry hood delightfully complimenting her features as she sighed in relief. “Much better.”

“You cut a fine figure in that coat, love.” And there was that eyebrow of his, with a life of its own.

“Thanks. This was what I…” she started before she shook her head and corrected herself “…or what that stupid version of myself was wearing in the wish world. Trust me, my clothes were the only good thing about that ridiculous place.” She shrugged, trying as hard as she could to ignore the memories of that awful day. At least she had learnt from that nonsense that she could really use one
of those fluffy cape coats for the winter, an item that had been missing in her wardrobe.

“A realm in which I’m not a devilishly handsome scoundrel mustn’t be taken seriously, Swan. Don’t let it upset you.” Killian was now going through one of the many chests on the ship.

“Oh, I don’t. The less I think about it, the better.” She watched him pull his old pirate leather jacket with a red vest. “So you are cold.” gushed Emma, assuming he was going to wear his old clothes because they were warmer.

“The clothes from your world may be more varied, love, but these are far better for this slightly chilly weather.”

“Slightly chilly?” She asked with a chuckle. She definitely wasn’t going to complain, though, especially when that meant she got to see him wearing that sexy red vest again.

It wasn’t long until they reached the harbor, docking the ship and hoping they would find an easy way to get to Elsa’s castle. As they walked along the road ahead, they noticed there were plenty of people walking around, busy with their daily tasks. Despite the bone-chilling cold, Arendelle seemed to be an extremely green realm, full of trees and plenty of other plants, now being bent out of shape under the weight of the snow that had recently started to fall.

“Next time, remind me to give Elsa a cellphone.” Emma sighed, wishing these realms from Fairytale land would just adopt some of the really good and useful technologies from the real world. It would be so much easier to find someone.

“No need, Swan. We’ll get there.” He moved his right arm from around her shoulders and grabbed her glove-covered hand in his. “Bloody hell, your hands are freezing.” He didn’t waste any time in shoving her hand in one of his pockets.

“Thank you.” She tenderly kissed his cheek, the tiny snowflakes caught in his beard wetting her lips. All she wanted right now was to find Elsa’s castle and to take a long, hot bath. As much as she wanted to see Elsa again, she never thought Arendelle was this cold.

They kept walking for a long while, hoping they would eventually come across someone or something more than just trees and bushes covered in snow.

“Ugh, my feet hurt.” Emma huffed out in annoyance.

Killian took her hand and pulled her to what seemed to be a small bank of snow on the side of the road. “It’s not quite the honeymoon we had in mind, but we’ll find our way to Elsa, love.” He muttered as he encouraged her to sit. Feeling her feet aching, Emma did as he suggested but as soon as her butt touched the bank of snow, a loud “oww!” coming from it had her standing up right away.

“What the hell?!” she gasped, eyes fixed on the piece of snow moving and turning into a weird shape. Killian was just about to pull his sword out of the sheath when the thing turned around and… was that… “A snowman.” Emma’s tone of voice was a mix of amazement and acceptance at the same time. Of course enchanted snowmen were a real thing too.

“Please don’t hurt me!” the poor thing cried out in despair, the sticks it used as arms all up in the air in surrender. Killian looked at the creature with suspicion, left eyebrow raised in curiosity as he tried to understand what he was looking at. Never before in his centuries-old life had he seen anything like that. The snowman was divided into three balls of snow, three black rocks on his body and a carrot nose. He even had eyebrows, teeth and… were those three twigs on his head
“When you think you have seen it all…” Killian purses his lips together, eyes widening and his head shaking in disbelief as he puts down his sword. Whatever this creature was, it clearly wasn’t threatening.

“Please, have mercy!” the thing shouted again, this time covering its eyes with its arms.

“We’re not going to hurt you.” Emma took a small step in its direction, trying to let him know they didn’t have any ill intentions. Emma watches as the snowman slowly lets his arms fall down, a glint of fear in his large eyes that turns into relief after a couple of seconds analyzing Emma and Killian.

“Oh, thank goodness! Not that I know if you could really hurt me, but I get nervous at times and then I don’t know what I say and I tend to talk a lot and people complain sometimes because I really do talk a lot but I like to think of myself as a very nice snowman.” As he tries to catch his breath, having said all of that as quickly as possible, Emma and Killian just stare at him, their brows furrowing in sync. “Hi, I’m Olaf! And I like warm hugs!” exclaimed Olaf, eyes widened and happiness rushing through as he stretched the sticks that served as his arms.

Emma and Killian exchanged an odd yet amused look between them, until Emma finally said something. “Hi, I’m Emma. And this is Killian.”

“Hi, Emma! Hi, Killian!” Killian simply nodded at him. Whoever this fellow was, he was clearly an adept of having a constant goofy grin on his snowy face. “Isn’t it a beautiful day?! You can tell the weather is getting warmer! Which means…” he paused, expectantly looking at both Emma and Killian to see if they could complete his thoughts. “Summer is almost here!!”

“Eh, Olaf, is it?” Killian starts, trying to wake the snowman from what looks like a daydream. “Perhaps you can assist us. Do you have any idea how we can get to Queen Elsa’s castle?”

“Queen Elsa??” that seemed to have brought him out of his thoughts.

“Yes. She’s an old friend.” Emma added, taking in the absolute joy with which Olaf kept nodding at her the whole time.

“Elsa is your friend?? How wonderful!” Olaf exclaimed, “She built me! And her sister, Anna, gave me this beautiful nose!” he gushed, proudly brushing one of the sticks against his carrot nose.

“You think you can take us to them?” Emma asked. She really hoped they would finally find their way out of that endless road that appeared to lead nowhere.

“Of course! Follow me!” Olaf starts moving, two small snowballs serving as feet. Killian and Emma follow him, happy that finally they’re closer to finding Elsa’s castle.

The journey up there didn’t take too long, it seemed they were closer than they initially thought. Neither talked too much while Olaf kept babbling about his life in the castle, enjoying to tease Kristof’s reindeer and a bunch of other things they didn’t fully grasp. Here and there, Emma would steal a glance at Killian and she could tell he wasn’t exactly thrilled to listen non-stop to Olaf’s ramblings in his sort of shrieky voice. Clearly, her pirate didn’t have a whole lot of patience for some things. Or people. Or snowmen.

With the castle in view, they crossed a beautiful stone bridge, before finally arriving at the castle’s wooden gates.
“Oh, that’s right. You should probably wait here first so I can talk to the guards. Not to worry, it’s a standard procedure. Elsa never lets anyone in without talking to the guards first because of Hans and the thieves and some trolls who don’t like us and we don’t know why because we never did anything to them or at least not that I know of and it’s really unfair and….” He then pauses to catch his breath. “…anyway I’ll talk to them. You will be in there in less than two minutes! Olaf’s word!” Emma smiled at him as Olaf walked away towards the guards.

“Peace for my ears, at last.” Killian sighs as he closes his eyes to enjoy the moment more fully.

“Oh, c’mon. He’s cute.”

“I may as well have a parrot.” Emma could only laugh in response, amused at her husband’s mild annoyance.

Olaf kept talking to the guards, judging gazes sent in their direction.

“I hope Elsa is here. It’s so cold.” Emma huffed out in frustration. All she wanted to do was to get inside and to take a nice, hot bath, of possible.

“I can keep you warm.” Killian murmured suggestively, pulling her to him, her back against his chest as he rested his chin on her shoulder.

“You’d better.” The way Emma’s voice dropped to sultry whisper didn’t go unnoticed by him and he suddenly just wanted to go the nearest place where he could properly ravish his wife. The first day of their honeymoon was almost over and they still didn’t have the chance to spend quality time together.

Not resisting the urge to touch her, Killian used his right hand to tickle her side, her giggles suddenly echoing in the air.

“Emma?” a familiar voice sounded in the distance. Emma and Killian turned around immediately, the sight before them leaving them with wide grins across their faces. On the other side of the bridge, there were Elsa, Anna and Kristoff.

“It is Emma!” Anna shrieked in the distance, still pulling one of the sleigh’s reins Sven was pulling.

“Hi!” Emma waved at them as Elsa started running in her direction, hugging her as soon as she crossed the bridge.

“I can’t believe you’re finally in Arendelle!” exclaimed Elsa, moving to hug Killian as well. “And congratulations! I’m sorry for not being able to make it to the wed-”

“Emma!” Anna interrupted her sister as she arrived near them, not wasting any time in hugging Emma as well. Kristoff joined in all the cozy greetings, not minding when Killian gently patted Sven’s antlers. “Congratulations! It’s a shame we couldn’t make it to the wedding, but trolls can be really annoying.”

Emma shrugged, a gentle smile on her face. “It’s okay, don’t worry about it.”

“Ah, you’re back!” Olaf made quite the entrance, joining the group with his arms holding his head up in the air not to feel so small. “I tried to convince the guards to let your friends in but I still don’t have enough authority. Why is that? Do you think it’s my nose? My hair? My feet?”

“You know each other?” Kristoff wondered, his gaze settling on Olaf, Killian and Emma.
“Olaf brought us here, actually.” Killian replied, some of his previous annoyance gone now that they had found their friends.

“You must be cold, we should get in.” Elsa blurted as soon as she noticed Emma starting to shiver. “But tell me, how are you? How is everyone in Storybrooke?” with a simple nod from Elsa, the guards immediately opened the wooden gates, revealing a big, beautiful cobblestone square with two impressive water fountains. The castle itself was no less stunning, its four intimidating towers turning it into a staggering attraction in the kingdom’s landscape.

During the next hour, Elsa guided them through the castle’s interiors, showing them every single nook and cranny. Not having many friends, Elsa wasn’t going to miss this chance to spend the most time she could with Emma, now that she was there. At a certain point, bored with the guided tour of the castle he already knew by heart, Kristoff managed to convince Killian to go to the stables with him, luring him with the promise that he would feed Sven would let him feed him a bowl of oat bran.

The castle was simply beautiful, its long halls and massive rooms with extremely detailed and elaborate ornaments a seamless reflection of Arendelle’s grace. The stateliness of it all could easily be overwhelming for Emma, but if she were being completely honest with herself, she would take a small, cozy apartment over a big ass castle any day. Castles were beautiful and pretty and all of that, but not to spend more than a couple of days there. So when Elsa and Anna finally finished the tour and took her to the bed chambers where she and Killian would be spending the night, Emma thanked the Gods above.

“On the door to your right there’s a hot bath waiting for you.” Wait, had she heard Elsa right? A hot bath?? “After what happened in Storybrooke, I promised myself I would never see you shaking from the cold again.” Elsa pointed out, the memories of a barely conscious Emma in that ice cave invading her mind.

“Thanks. It’s like you were reading my mind. I’ve been thinking about a hot bath the whole day, trust me.”

“Enjoy it then! Oh, and dinner is in an hour. You won’t want to miss it, it’s roast beef!” Anna’s enthusiasm talking about the meal had Elsa chuckling.

“Anna has been particularly fond of roast beef ever since she was a child.” Elsa informed Emma, her hand waving dismissively.

“Can you blame me? It’s so delicious and juicy and the way the meat melts in your mouth… Too descriptive?” she paused, glancing at Emma and Elsa in search of any repulsed faces, “Sorry, but I really love roast beef. Alright, I’ll shut up now.”

As soon as the two sisters left, Emma went straight to the bathroom, the sight of the steam drifting above the bathtub full of hot water practically making her whimper. Now all she needed to do was be brave enough to take all of her clothes off and face the momentaneous cold before she let herself sink into heaven. There was only one thing missing: where the hell was her husband? He could be here with her right now, about to enjoy a wonderful hot bath (and maybe other things, who knows?) and yet here she was, all alone. Taking a glance at her watch, she realized she had exactly fifty six minutes until dinner. Waiting for Killian to arrive could mean not having enough to enjoy her bath. A bath especially prepared for her. And it’s not like Killian couldn’t bathe later… Without thinking twice, she quickly got rid of her clothes and entered the bathtub. The hot water on her skin felt absolutely invigorating, reveling in the comfort and peace taking over her drained body.
Several minutes had passed when the sound of a door opening and shutting startled Emma out of her moment of tranquility.

“Swan?” Killian’s voice erupted in the bedroom.

“In here.” Emma replied, repositioning herself in the bath tub.

Following his wife’s voice, Killian opened the door to his right, hand falling from the crystal doorknob once he saw a very naked Emma relishing a hot bath.

“Bloody Kristoff.” It’s not that Killian disliked the man, but if it hadn’t been for him taking him to the stables, he would have been able to bathe with Emma.

“So I take it he was the one kidnapping you?”

Stepping inside, he closed the door, eyes never actually leaving hers as he started by taking off his boots.

“Aye. Lady Anna’s birthday is next week and he had no clue as to what gift he would be offering her. It figures he needed the help of a professional.” He wiggled his eyebrows at her, his fingers quickly opening the buttons of his black vest.

Emma chuckled at his cockiness, enjoying his little strip tease at the same time.

“Now…” Killian kept talking, his bare chest now in full view as he approached the bath tub, falling on his knees to rest his forehead against hers. “May I join you?”

Emma closed her eyes, pouting at his lateness. “I really wish you would. But dinner starts in fifteen minutes now, we have no time for that.” His face suddenly fell, disappointment setting in. But still, he tried his luck.

“A lot can be done in fifteen minutes, love.” His tongue darted out and licked his lips suggestively, eyes dropping to stare at her naked form.

“Not when I still have to get dressed.” She pointed out, her wet fingers gently caressing his hair. “Later, okay?” she then pecked his lips as she grabbed the white bath towel from the towel rack next to the tub.

“Bloody Kristoff”, he repeated, this time in an even more annoyed tone. Emma laughed in response as she got up from the bath tub, very well aware of Killian’s hungry eyes on her dripping naked body. As she dried herself, wrapped in the wooly towel, Killian went to pick up her bath robe from a wooden armchair, not wanting her to catch cold. He then stood in front of her, eyes fixed on her own, offering to help her putting the robe on. Emma conceded, dropping the towel on the floor and turning her back to him so she could slip into the robe.

“Thank you”, she whispered, turning around in his arms as she kissed him, gentle at first and then progressively getting more frantic. He tasted of rum and a mix of spices she couldn’t identify, but delicious nonetheless. A sudden urge to have him invaded her senses, longing to touch him. She started kissing his neck, her tongue expertly grazing his skin on the spot that never failed to make him gasp. Killian’s fingers grabbed her head while he pressed his hook against her ass, pushing her more against him. Her stomach leaped at the feel of his erection digging into her hip, turning her on even more.

Knowing fully well that Killian was right and that a lot could be done in fifteen minutes, Emma trailed her lips down to his chest, a smile on her face as his chest hair lightly scratched her nose.
God, she loved his chest hair and how he had just the right amount of it covering his well-defined and slightly toned torso. She then took one of his small nipples in her mouth and stroked it with her tongue, already knowing of his hyper sensibility there. The shudders that she felt running through him incited her to keep going further down, getting on her knees.

“Emma…” his voice a husky whisper as he looked down at her in anticipation.

Biting her bottom lip while meeting his lust-filled gaze, Emma returned to her ministrations, this time pressing soft kisses to his belly as she gradually got closer to his happy trail. Her hands provocatively caressed his tight, delaying the touch on the place he needed it the most, his eagerness to feel her mouth on him growing stronger at each passing tease. Remembering she didn’t have a whole lot of time for foreplay, she finally cupped him through his leather pants, trying to unfasten the strings with her teeth, something she had become quite an expert at. Killian suddenly clenched his jaw when her tongue seductively slipped inside the waistband of his underwear, her hungry eyes seeking his as she started stroking him. He hissed at the sensation, slipping his hook around the belt of her robe so he could keep his balance. With one swift move, she hooked her right fingers under the waistband of the boxer briefs she had bought for him and frantically pulled them down, his erection springing free and resting high on his belly. There was a sight she would never get tired of. She felt him throbbing as she kept stroking him, her own eyes a shade darker, paying close attention to his erratic breathing. Emma rubbed her thumb over the tip of his cock in slow, languid movements, just as he loved it, a guttural moan coming out of his lips in return.

“By all that is great and good, lov -” Killian began his plea but couldn’t finish it, feeling her luscious lips dropping kisses all over his flesh. Not wanting to torture him any longer, she slowly took him in while scraping her teeth over his sensitive skin. She bobbed her head up and down a couple of times, sucking him gently while she simultaneously used her tongue to massage him. That alone was enough to drive him crazy, his groans filling the room as he buried his fingers in the strands of her hair.

“By Gods, Swan.” He cried out, trying to control himself not to thrust into her mouth. Just then, he felt the sudden loss of her warm mouth as he watched her withdraw entirely from him, only to take him almost fully in right away. His eyes rolled to the back of his head, feeling the familiar rush of pure bliss build inside of him.

“Emma…” it was a low, prolonged gasp but enough to let her know that he wasn’t going to last much longer. It didn’t take long until she felt his cock twitching in her mouth as she focused on licking the head while tightening the grip on his shaft. The pre-cum she had been tasting all along started dripping out even more. Right hand still stroking him, Emma used her left one to caress his balls and increased the pace of her movements, sucking him into heaven. His groans grew in intensity and he went over the edge, his muscles spasming in a convulsion of delirium as Emma kept bobbing her head up and down to quickly swallow him up, some of his sperm falling on her cheeks. Determined to completely finish him off, she kept her mouth on him, this time using more gentle movements and lifting her gaze to meet his. When she felt his cock quivering with involuntary aftershocks, she finally withdrew from him, not wanting to hurt him when he was overly sensitive. After letting go, she placed a soft kiss on the head of his cock, licking the last remaining drops of fluid as he groaned one last time.

Killian’s breathing was uneven, his eyes practically shut as he fought to keep his balance, reveling in the absolute euphoria she had driven him into. This woman was bloody fantastic at everything she did and his love for her knew no bounds. So when he watched her go up his body, dropping kisses all over until she reached his lips, he put both of his arms around her body and pulled her to him, holding her as tightly as he could. All he wanted was to show her how much he loved her and to make her feel as good as she always made him feel. Wanting to properly kiss her, his tongue laved
her lips until they parted and he could feel himself in her mouth, but before the kiss could deepen, she pulled away.

“Sorry, babe, I don’t think I can do much open mouth kissing right now.” Emma stated while massaging her jaw, telling him without words that her jaw was sore after her previous activity. She gave him one final peck on his lips before playfully shooing his hands away from her so she could go wash her face.

“It amuses me that you think I can move after this, love.” Killian chortled before letting his body slump on the armchair, his face still red and beads of sweat on his brow. “So I wrecked you, uh?” she teased him as she opened the door to the bedroom to go get dressed.

“You always do.” He stayed there for a couple of minutes, just looking into nothing with a happy, foolish smile on his face, still enjoying the aftermath of his orgasm. He was completely spent and the last thing he felt like doing was to go to a fancy dinner. Would Emma get too mad if he suggested they stayed in their room until tomorrow?

“We need to hurry, c’mon.” she then barged into the bathroom, taking a look in the mirror and brushing her long, blonde locks before her eyes fell on his naked body sitting on the armchair. “You should probably put some clothes on.” She said chuckling.

“Sure. But first I need to learn how to breathe again.”

When Killian felt he could walk comfortably he finally walked out of their bedroom, meeting Emma at the top of the stairs. The bloody minx was sporting a mischievous, sultry smile on her face, knowing very well the effect she had on him. That wouldn’t be a problem, though, for after dinner he would show her the effect he could have on her.

“You’re two minutes late.” She taunted him jokingly.

“Well, if my wife hadn’t decided to suck my-“

“Killian”, she interrupted him, looking around to see if there was anyone close by.

“We’re all alone, Swan.” He bit back, raising his eyebrows suggestively.

Emma locked her fingers with his as they started climbing down the stairs. “You’re unbelievable.”

“I will have you know I intend on returning the favor as soon as this bloody dinner is over.” Emma’s only response a naughty look directed at him. If only they could skip dinner and stay in their bedroom until the next day.

Unsurprisingly, dinner seemed to last forever. The dining room was far too big for the amount of people actually sitting at the huge mahogany table taking up most of the space, their voices echoing in the room as everyone engaged in parallel conversations. Killian knew that he should probably be paying attention to whatever Anna was telling him, but he simply couldn’t stop staring at Emma, who was sitting in front of him. His eyes fell on her lips, moving with their usual grace as she cheerfully talked to Elsa. Those same lips that had been wrapped around him only a few moments before, hungry and relentless, determined to utterly rock his world. He longed to feel those lips again – soft feather kisses on his neck and chest as she was so fond of doing while they made love, or perhaps a lecherous kiss on his hook as his tongue brought her to the brink of pleasure. If only he could have her right now. He would go straight to her, not giving a damn about anybody else in the room, only caring about pushing her on the table and pounding into her until neither could take it
anymore. He had always been a highly sexual being, but Emma brought out an animalistic side of
him he wasn’t even aware existed. So when his dark, lusty eyes met hers over the dinner table,
Emma did a double-take, her voice gradually stopping as he kept focusing on her lips, her mouth
slowly opened. Killian’s jaw clenched, trying to hold in the groan that instinctively formed in his
throat. He let his teeth bite his bottom lip before his tongue teasingly wet it. Watching Emma gulp in
response, he smirked at her. If, until now, she had somehow missed all the obvious signs that he
wanted to fuck her, now he had made it pretty clear. Feeling his body heating up at his lascivious
thoughts, Killian straightened himself in his seat, careful not to let his leather-covered crotch in view.
As much as he had always been a fan of creating an impression on people, showing his prominent
erection in the middle of a royal dinner probably wasn’t the best of ideas.

After dinner, Elsa and Anna moved their guests to one of the living rooms, a massive window and
countless of paintings adorning the walls and classic chandeliers hanging from the mosaic ceiling.
After beverages were served, Killian stroke conversation with Kristoff, Anna and another guest as
Elsa presented Emma to one of the maids. After a long while of noticing the glances Killian and
Emma kept stealing at each other, Elsa dismissed them, telling them they needed to get a good night
of sleep for their trip to another realm on the following day. Or at least that’s what she had said, but
the wink she had sent their way definitely looked as if she had other reasons in mind.

When they were finally alone, Killian pinched Emma’s butt, eliciting a shriek from her as she started
running up the stairs. He followed her, laughing all the way up while trying to catch her. Being able
to escape him, she entered their bedroom and left the door opened, knowing he was right behind
her. With nowhere else to go, she stopped dead in her tracks, catching her breath and smiling at the
way he was practically eating her with his eyes.

“You can’t escape me now, Swan.” He said, his voice as low as it could be before hurryingly
closing the door, Emma’s loud laugh a pleased prelude to everything that would happen for the rest
of the night.

It was funny how the mornings in Arendelle didn’t seem to be as cold as the afternoons, Emma
noted as soon as they stepped outside. Elsa had promised them a quick guided visit through some of
Arendelle’s attractions before leaving them at the harbor so they could proceed with their journey on
the Jolly Roger. So far they had been through the North Mountain, where Kristoff used to live and
work as an ice harvester, and some really beautiful forest locations, full of species of plants neither
Killian and Emma had ever seen. Right now they were walking through their last stop before going
to the harbor, the Valley of the Living Rock. There were these really cute trolls disguised as stones
who had promptly welcomed them, quickly striking a conversation with both Emma and Killian.

“One has to admit this place has very interesting creatures.” Killian whispered in Emma’s ear as
they sat in a fallen tree trunk, watching Elsa, Anna, Kristoff and Olaf load Sven’s sleigh with some
firewood.

“I still like Olaf the best.”

“Yes, love, but maybe it’s best you don’t tell him that. He’s been rather quiet today and we don’t
want a compliment to change that.”

“I think you spoke too soon.” Emma chuckled, watching Olaf run in their direction.

“Mr. Pirate!” Killian fought the temptation to roll his eyes. For some reason, the snowman had
taken to call him that when he had learnt Killian was a pirate. “You have to see something
incredible Kristoff and I found! This way, Mr. Pirate!” Killian looked at Emma, mentally asking for
help, but all Emma could do was giggle at the exchange as Killian followed Olaf.
“He loves Killian”, Elsa said as she approached Emma, sitting next to her.

“He’s so cute.”

“Olaf or Killian?” Elsa teased.

“Both.” Emma quipped as they both laughed. It had been a long time since the two of them had been able to spend time together without a looming threat in the horizon.

“But tell me about yourself. It’s been so long since we’ve last seen each other. I’m sure plenty has happened since then.”

“Whoa, there’d be way too many things for me to tell you, we’d be here for weeks, trust me.”

“So life in Storybrooke is still hectic, I see.”

“Oh, yeah, definitely.” Emma added without hesitation. “Let me see, just to scare you: there were three crazy women who tried to kill us all, an author who wanted to turn us into completely different people in an alternate universe, then I became the Dark One –“

“You what?!” Elsa exclaimed, interrupting her friend. Emma stood still for some seconds, her sudden discomfort not oblivious to Elsa.

“You don’t have to talk about it, if you don’t want to.” Elsa offered, sensing Emma’s distress.

“We went to Camelot, to try to take the darkness out of me…” Emma insisted, for some reason it had always been easy to talk to Elsa. “I did some things… And then Killian did some things because of what I did…” her voice was now barely a whisper before she shook her head, sending all those ghosts away. “But anyway, we ended up in the Underworld.”

“The Underworld?!” poor Elsa. Emma could tell by the faces she was making that she was having a hard time taking it all in.

“And then when we returned to Storybrooke there were all the people from the Land of Untold Stories, the Evil Queen tried to kill my parents –“

“Regina is evil again?!” Elsa was really trying hard to understand everything that had happened. When she had left Storybrooke, Regina was one of the heroes, why had she turned evil again all of a sudden?

“No, not Regina, it was her clone.” Elsa furrowed her eyebrows in confusion and Emma explained further. “She drank a magical serum.”

“Oh… I see.” Elsa muttered, still not really understanding a thing.

“And then Belle and Rumple’s son tried to kill me, but we later found out he was actually being controlled by the Black Fairy.”

“Wait, Belle and Rumple had a son? I don’t think I ever met him.”

“Oh, he hadn’t been born yet. He was a grown up when he tried to kill me, but now he is actually some months old.” Elsa then looked at her as if she had three eyes. “The Evil Queen sped up Belle’s pregnancy and then the Black Fairy kidnapped the kid when he was born, took him to a place where
time moves differently and he became a grown-up. And then he came into Storybrooke to try to kill me.” Yeah… Elsa was still looking at her as if she had three eyes.

“Oh…” being her only response to everything Emma had just told her.

“And then I got married. But the Black Fairy cursed us all on the day of the wedding and I got separated from my family. Again.” Emma sighed as she realized how all of this sounded so ridiculous when put like that.

“Oh no. But… why did this Black Fairy want to kill you?”

“You know what? We never really understood why.” Emma shrugged. “But we’re here now. And it feels great to spend a day without feeling your life as you know it is doomed.”

“I can only imagine. You would probably die of boredom in Arendelle. I spend my days visiting villages and collecting firewood with Anna and Kristoff.”

“Sounds nice.”

“But how are you? I mean, you’ve been through so much.” Elsa looked genuinely concerned, softly rubbing Emma’s back.

“I’m fine.” Emma assured her, before going on. “I… think I still haven’t taken any of it in, you know? And now I’m on my honeymoon and I just want to have fun and enjoy my husband and our time to ourselves.” Emma laughed for the first time ever since she started telling everything that happened to them for the past two years.

“I’m proud of you. You’re here, putting yourself and your happiness first. You have to keep doing that, Emma.”

“I know.” Emma nodded at her. “Thank you, for welcoming us and for such a nice stay.”

“You know you’ll always be welcome in Arendelle.” Emma smiled at Elsa, putting her right arm around her shoulders and giving her a side hug. “And what will the newlyweds’ next stop be?”

“We still haven’t talked about it.” Emma then shifted in her improvised seat on the tree trunk. “I would like to go back to Camelot. To sort of erase all of the bad memories associated with that place, you know?”

“It seems like a wonderful idea to me.” Elsa approved.

“Yeah, I just don’t know if Killian is ready to go back there.” Emma’s eyes drifted to the floor, conflicted as to whether or not she should talk about that with Killian or if it was just better to leave it be.

“And you’re afraid to ask him?”

Emma thought about Elsa’s question before she let out a sad sigh. “Yeah, I guess I am. It’s just… not easy to talk about it.”

“It will never get any easier if you keep avoiding it altogether.” Elsa encouraged her, trying to be as supportive as she could, but also a voice of reason she sensed Emma was looking for at the moment. “Besides, if you tell him about it and he makes you walk the plank, with a few strokes you will be back in Arendelle and we will take you in again.” She added, trying to lighten the mood. It seemed to have worked because Emma bursted laughing.
“Thanks, Elsa. For everything.”

They didn’t have to wait for too long until Killian, Anna, Olaf and Kristoff returned. Apparently they had found a red fox with a hook shape in her patch of white fur. Olaf and Kristoff had named it “Captain Fox” and thought it was only appropriate for Killian to get acquainted with his animal counterpart.

Soon enough they were on the harbor of Arendelle, the Jolly Roger majestically standing among other much smaller and dreadful ships. They all said their goodbyes to each other, Olaf hugging Killian’s right leg as Killian patted the twigs on his head, smiling down at him. As annoying as the snowman could be, he had to admit he had grown fond of him. Emma and Elsa shared another hug, thanking each other again and promising one another that would have to meet soon.

After the goodbyes, Killian and Emma got on the Jolly once again, sailing away to their still undefined next destination.

“It was fine seeing these fellows again.” Killian turned to Emma as he tried to keep the ship in his control, the water somewhat more agitated than usual. Emma didn’t hear him, though, thinking about what Elsa had told her. She should tell Killian that she would like to go to Camelot again. If he didn’t want to, then they would just choose another realm.

“Emma? Are you alright?” she finally looked at him, realizing that she hadn’t been paying attention to what he said.

“Yeah, sorry. My mind was elsewhere.” She was going to talk to him, she just needed to work up some courage first. He looked at her unsurely, doubt taking over his face.

“Are you alright?” she returned his question, knowing all too well what that look meant – he wanted to tell her something.

“Aye, love. But I need to tell you something.” He then let go of the ship’s wheel, moving towards her and getting hold of her hand, “I’m not certain if now is the appropriate time, but considering we have to decide soon on which realm to visit next, I’m going to take my chances.”

“Okay.” She nodded, looking expectantly at him. “What is it?”

“Before you answer, this is merely a suggestion. You don’t have to accept it.” He could tell she was starting to feel anxious over that much suspense, so he decided to just say it. “What would you say if we paid Camelot a visit?” Opening her mouth slightly, Emma felt a sudden onset of relief take over her, a slow smile building on her face as the surprise sank in. She then smiled at him, a chuckle escaping her as she grabbed his face in her hands.

“I take it you’re not opposed to the idea.” Killian stated, his cheeks dimpling as the corner of his eyes wrinkled.

“I was going to suggest the same thing.”, she admitted.

“You were?” Killian wondered, but it shouldn’t come as much of a surprise. They had always been in sync, understanding the choices each had to make and the place they were coming from.

“Yeah. But I wasn’t sure if you were ready to go back there.”

“Neither was I.” he admitted, his hook pulling away a strand of her hair that the wind had blown into her face.
“But I really want to go back. To-“

“Replace the bad memories with joyful ones.” He said, finishing her thoughts.

“Exactly”, she agreed, the backside of her right hand caressing his chin. She then felt him reaching for his pocket, taking one magic bean out of it before throwing it into the water.

“Camelot, here we go.” He shouted as they prepared for the now familiar portal to engulf them once again, swallowing them into the realm where everything had changed forever.

This time around, the trip through the portal seemed way smoother and calmer and, for some reason unbeknownst to them, they were already docked on Camelot’s harbor. Killian looked around, checking if everything was alright with the ship.

“I kind of thought it would be nice to get here and already have the ship docked.” Emma confessed. “Maybe that was it?”

“Perhaps.” Killian replied, “Everything’s alright. A technically perfect thought, Swan. Like a true quartermaster.” He smirked at her as they grabbed their bags from the floor and started going down the ramp of the ship. The first thing they noticed was how poor and empty the kingdom’s harbor seemed to be, definitely not a place that resembled any of the fast-moving elegance of the Camelot they had known. The people, dressed mainly in rags, seemed to not care at all about their presence, carrying on with whatever they were doing.

“Wait, isn’t that Lancelot?” Emma pulled on Killian’s arm as they both looked in the distance. Standing next to a couple of horses, around the harbor’s corner, there was a tall, dark man accompanied by a female figure. Every single passer-by would bow down to them as they walked by.

“I’m not sure it is him, love.” Killian countered before they started walking towards the man. As they grew close, they could clearly make out Lancelot and Guinevere, now happily talking with two old women. Emma and Killian kept to themselves, not wanting to interrupt the conversation, but soon enough Lancelot spotted them.

“Emma! Killian!” he exclaims, quickly saying goodbye to the two ladies before making his way to them.

“What a wonderful surprise.” Guinevere gushed after joining them, Emma and Killian noticing the way she locked arms with Lancelot, a big diamond ring on her left ring finger.

“We didn’t know you were visiting Camelot. How are you? Your parents?” Lancelot inquired, his mouth curved into a smile.

“We’re okay, thanks. And so are my parents. They stayed in Storybrooke.” Emma replied before adding, “We are actually here in our honeymoon.” She then smiled at Killian, his arm proudly going around her shoulders as Lancelot and Guinevere’s faces lit up.

“You got married? Congratulations!” Guinevere gushed, hugging the two of them.

“It looks like we weren’t the only ones.” Emma pointed out, dropping her eyes to Lancelot and Guinevere’s wedding rings.

“Thank you. It’s all very recent, to be entirely honest.” Lancelot stated as he turned to look at his wife, contemplating her passionately. “We got married in secret just the previous week.”
“Congratulations.” Emma said sincerely.

“My best wishes.” Killian added, feeling awkward if he didn’t say a thing.

“The people are slowly finding out about it, but I think they’re fond of the idea of welcoming Lancelot as their new king.” Guinevere asserted, her right hand caressing his back. “After everything that happened with Arthur, the people of Camelot need someone they can fully trust.”

“I hope that wasn’t the only reason you decided to marry me.” Lancelot’s quip had everyone laughing as Guinevere gently swatted his arm. All the while more people kept passing by and insisted on greeting the king and the queen.

“We’re happy to see you here, but I’m afraid the timing isn’t the best. We’re reconstructing the kingdom and the castle right now, we won’t be able to provide you with lodging.” Guinevere informed them as she grimaced. She went on to explain that the effects of the Sands of Avalon were completely wiped away when Arthur died. The kingdom went back to the way it was before, poor and uneventful.

“Not to worry, your majesty, we will explore our possibilities.” Killian replied, not too concerned with the threat of having to sleep in the open air.

They proceeded to talk about Lancelot’s never-ending journey to meet his mother and how he and Guinevere reunited once she returned to Camelot. With Arthur gone, there were no reasons why they couldn’t be together, deciding to give their love a chance.

Not wanting to disturb the newlyweds’ honeymoon any longer, Lancelot and Guinevere then finally said their goodbyes, encouraging Emma and Killian to explore anything they would like and to let them know if they needed any assistance.

“They’re nice. I hope they can restore the kingdom.” Emma stated, watching the couple walking away, pulling their horses by the reins.

“I am certain they will.” Killian assures her, but his attention was elsewhere as he took in his surroundings.

“Are you looking for something?”

“Aye. And I think I found it.” He said, the corners of his mouth quirking up as he stared at what looked like a big straw shed. “Wait here, love.”

She did as he told, watching him walk away in the shed’s direction. While waiting for him, Emma decided to wander around a bit, careful not to get too far away. A wooden carriage standing still behind a thicket of bushes caught her attention and she decided to explore that secluded, but more inhabited area. There were more wooden sheds with ceilings made of straw, benches, rag sacks and barrels lying around near each door. A small, but charming well sat in the middle of that area, the bucket in it full of blooming middlemist flowers. A bittersweet feeling suddenly took hold of Emma, recalling all too well all the memories connected to them. Not all were bad, but in her mind those flowers were still deeply associated with Killian’s death and her definite surrender to the darkness.

The sound of a horse trotting brought her out of her sad thoughts as Killian arrived next to her, a beautiful light brown horse on his side. His lashes fluttered as he looked at her, a proud smile forming on his features.

“You borrowed another horse without anyone noticing?” Emma teased him, moving to softly pat the horse’s nose. This time around, the horse didn’t get scared at her touch, letting her trace her
“Not quite. This time I had to pay in doubloons.” He clarified, hook resting on his satchel.

“You bought a horse?” clearly, Emma was finding this all too amusing.

“As much as I would not disapprove such an acquisition, no. I borrowed it for a day.” Killian uttered, grabbing Emma’s hand in his and eyes gleaming with joy. “Can I still make your heart race? No darkness in tow this time.”

His words instantly took her back to that time in the barn, when he was doing all he could to help her stop listening to the Dark One’s voice inside her head. She remembered the excruciating anguish and the overwhelming fear she had felt then, constantly scared that the slightest thing would tip her off, making her lose the battle against the darkness. Killian and Henry had been the only people who had helped making her feel better, giving her the strength she needed to beat the darkness. She didn’t always succeed, the image of Violet’s heart in her hand immediately coming to her mind, but she would have fallen way sooner if it hadn’t been for them. If it hadn’t been for him.

So when he asked her if she wanted to ride a horse with him in Camelot once again, but this time celebrating their marriage and their love instead of trying to push the darkness away, her answer could only be one, “Of course you can.”

During the entire ride, Emma felt that new feeling of excitement as if it was her first time actually riding a horse. She wondered if maybe having the darkness in her had affected her enjoyment of the previous ride. If she had already loved it back then, now it had simply been amazing, almost impossible to describe. As the wind blew in her face and she held onto Killian’s body, she felt free, reinvigorated… Happy.

They trotted around in circles for some time, trying to find the middlemist field but it seemed to be nowhere in sight. Camelot looked so different now that very little was recognizable. The more time it passed, the more they believed that the field had been nothing but a creation of the Sands of Avalon, vanishing when Arthur died.

“I’m certain it was here.” Killian said, stopping the horse as he looked at a field in front of them. He helped Emma off the horse before jumping off it himself. If they started walking and exploring the place by themselves maybe they would be able to find it.

“I think you’re right. Look.” Emma startled him, pointing her finger ahead. Right in front of them there was a big field full of partially dried grass, some trees and small bushes, but what called their attention was one radiant and solitary tree, blooming with pink flowers. The tree’s liveliness contrasted with the dormancy of the rest of the field, some of the flowers having fallen and giving color to the dull grassed floor.

As Emma and Killian approached the tree, Emma picked up one of the flowers.

“They don’t really look the same. They have a different form and shade of pink.” She noted, letting her fingers feel the texture of one of the petals. “But this has to be the place.”

“I’m fairly certain this is the place, love. They’re still middlemist.” Killian added, picking a flower for himself and bringing it to his nose. Certainly it had been the Sands of Avalon turning the place into a beautiful bed of middlemist flowers, while in reality there was only this charming tree adorning the stale field. Emma wasn’t too bothered by any of it, though. As much as the previous enchanted field made incomparably more of a romantic scenario, that hadn’t been the reason why
they had decided to come here.

“You okay?”, Emma inquired and Killian knew right away that she intended to talk. He could see it in the way her eyes glinted with doubt. Taking her hand in his hook, he pushed her as he started walking towards the tree trunk, sitting on the grass. She didn’t follow him right away, letting him sit as comfortably as he could, his back resting against the trunk, legs wide opened so she could sit in between them. Suddenly loving the idea he had, Emma joined him, her back against his chest as she felt his hand going around her waist.

“It’s strange being here after everything that happened.” He started speaking, resting his cheek against her head. “Ever since we got here, I haven’t stopped thinking about Merlin.” She could sense the melancholy in his voice, knowing fully well that he still felt guilt over it.

“You may have killed Merlin, but you would have never done it if I hadn’t turned you into a Dark One.” She pointed out, her fingers caressing his leg, trying to soothe him. “We’re both responsible for his death.”

“You had no other choice, Emma.”

“What do you mean?” His determined declaration had her shifting in his arms, slightly turning around so she could look him in the eyes to see if she could understand what he was talking about.

“Turning me into a Dark One.” He replied, his mouth set in a hard line, “I now know I would have done the same. In fact, I have.” She kept looking at him, sensing that he still wasn’t finished. “When I learnt that the Shears of Destiny could be the only way to keep you alive, I couldn’t dispose of them, not even when you asked me to. That was the moment I fully understood why you did what you did when I was about to die, right here in this place.” Emma caressed his face with her hand, resting her forehead against his. “As much as I loathed the consequences of it, I want you to know that I don’t blame you for turning me into a Dark One.” She closed her eyes, taking in everything he had just said and the relief it brought her.

“I don’t blame you either, for keeping the shears.” Emma quickly added as she pressed a soft kiss to his chin.

“I know. If there’s one thing I’ve learnt with you lot is that there is nothing you can’t come back from.”

“That’s why you shouldn’t be so hard on yourself. You changed and you’ve always taken responsibility for your actions. It takes a hero to do that, you know?” her brows rose as she looked at him, trying to cheer him up.

“Aye. For the first time in my life, I’m starting to believe it.” Killian’s admission put a grin on her face, his hook resting against his cheek as he chuckled. She loved how he was progressively showing her a softer side of him. He had always been very sweet and affectionate with her, but after their marriage he had been even more caring and attentive towards her. And she didn’t mind one bit.

“What is it, love?” he wondered, noticing that her mind had drifted away for a while.

At the sound of his voice, Emma’s eyes drifted from the top of the tree to his beautiful, chiseled face, “I was thinking that...” she started, drawing her lower lip between her teeth, “…we came here to make some good memories and all we’ve done so far was talk about sad stuff.” Killian smirked in response, feeling her hand resting on his thigh.

“And what do you suggest, Swan?” he practically groaned, leering at her cleavage as she purposely pushed her breasts into his chest. “Was last night not enough for you, love?” he whispered in her
ear, his voice low as a flush crept up her face.

“Not even close” Emma answered suggestively looking at his lip. And before she could do anything else, she felt his body pushing hers against the middlemist covered floor, her contented giggles echoing in the wind as bad memories from the past gave way to happier ones.

It was only a few hours later that they finally decided to dress themselves again, the sun setting in the distance behind the trees and the hills.

“I must admit, you excel at making good memories, Swan.” Killian smirked at her, his hook holding the strap of her bra.

“Well, it takes two to make good memories.” Emma replied in a sultry voice, taking the bra from his hook. “And that was some pretty damn great memory making.” Killian kept buttoning up the buttons of his vest still staring at her now partially naked form.

“Aye. We should make good memories more often.”

“Even more often? We’ll end up dying before our one year anniversary.” She jokingly said, now fully dressed and waiting for Killian to put on his coat. She picked his satchel from the floor and, all of a sudden, a strong smell started invading her senses.

“Is it just me or… does it smell like cheese?” she questioned him, wanting to know if he could smell it too. Why in the world would it smell like cheese? Was this some weird kind of post-sex hallucination or did it really smell like cheese? Although there wasn’t an immediate reply on Killian’s part, she watched him as he took his satchel away from her and started fumbling with it. Seconds later, he was taking out of it something covered in a white cloth. So that’s where the smell came from, Emma concluded right away.

“I took the liberty to buy us food.” He told her, sitting on the grass. He then removed the cloth, revealing a stunning bread with solid melted cheese coming out from the sides and what looked like small pieces of ham on top. “Are you hungry, love?”

“I wasn’t, but now I am.” Emma sat down next to him, eyes watering at sight. The damn thing looked really delicious.

“They were selling these on the shed next to where I paid for the horse. I had a feeling you would like it, seeing as it had melted cheese.”

“You’re the best, this looks really delicious!” Emma gushed, using her hands to break the bread in two, passing him his half before taking a bite of her own. “Yum.” She finally mumbled, taking her time to enjoy the flavors. “I never thought I’d be saying this, but this is better than grilled cheese.” She said as she took another bite.

“It’s decent.” Killian countered, not too impressed after trying it.

“Oh, c’mon, it’s so good!” Emma protested, almost offended that he didn’t think that bread was the eighth wonder of the world.

“Perhaps it will taste better with a drink.” Killian’s entire face lit up as he took his flask out of the satchel.

“Rum?” she teased him, laughing at his husband’s predictability.
“Not rum, love.” Wait, what? Had she heard correctly? Was that not rum in his flask? “You try it.” At his invitation, Emma took the flask from his hand, opening it to smell it first. It didn’t smell like anything she could identify so she had no choice other than to take a sip from it.

“Is that… beer?”

“Ale, to be exact.” He corrected her. “Do you like it?”

“I do. It tastes like beer but with this really good fruity flavor.” She uttered, taking another sip as Killian watched in delight.

“Then I know exactly where to take us next, love.” She then looked at him in curiosity. “There’s a tavern in the Enchanted Forest known for its exquisite ales. I used to go there when I was in the Royal Navy.”

“Then let’s go there.” Emma beamed, handing him the flask. “I’d love to know more about your beginnings.” She said, repeating the words he had once told her as he nodded in approval.

The next morning saw them in the waters of Kinsale, one of the many kingdoms in the Enchanted Forest. With no place to stay in Camelot, they had agreed to spend the night on the Jolly Roger and, as soon as they woke up from a peaceful night of sleep, they used another magic bean to get to their destination. They spent most of the morning watching the few active ships of the Royal Navy, Killian explaining to Emma all the drills and exercises. Witnessing her genuine interest in wanting to know more about his life as a Lieutenant, Killian inevitably ended up sharing new stories of Liam, ones that Emma had never heard.

It was noon when they finally entered the tavern as Killian guided Emma through the crowd and advised her to sit in one of the hidden tables around the corner while he went to grab their drinks. The first thing Emma noticed was the name of the tavern, “Ale O!”, largely carved on the wooden counter in a sloppy way. Other than that, the place looked pretty much the same as any other tavern. The floor was paved with stone and there were wooden tables of all sizes spread through the entire room, supporting the weight and drunkenness of most people in it.

“Ready, love?” Killian joined her again, dropping a massive mug of ale on the table with a thud.

Emma was still staring at the mug that was about the size of her forearm. Was it even humanly possible to drink all of that? “For what? An alcoholic coma?” she blurted.

“You don’t have to drink it all, Swan.” Killian pushed the mug in front of her, challenging her. Oh, what the hell. Even if she got drunk, it was her honeymoon and she had Killian with her. Emma grabbed the mug’s handle, expecting it to be heavier than it actually was, before bringing it to her lips.

“It tastes like passion fruit.” She said in a disbelieving tone, eyebrows shooting up. “It’s really good.”

“I’m glad you like it.” Killian smiled, watching her enjoying her drink as he took out his flask from under his coat. “I prefer some good ole’ rum.”

Emma almost dropped the mug on the floor. “Wait, this is all for me? Are you trying to get me drunk, captain?” Her gaze lingered on him for longer than usual, her sudden flirting demeanor making him raise a single eyebrow.

“Not quite.” He whispered, darting his tongue out to wet his top lip, before leaning over the table
and closing the distance between them. “You see, there are other more enjoyable activities for us to do instead of getting intoxicated.”

“Stop it.” Emma laughed, putting her hand on his chest and pushing him away. They seriously needed to slow down on the sex. She had been spreading her legs so much recently that her hips were starting to hurt even when she wasn’t walking.

“You started it, love.” He pointed out, that smug look on his face making an appearance yet again.

“Whatever.” She chuckled, rolling her eyes in amusement. “I’m still not drinking all of this, it’s insane.” She had been taking some sips the whole time and the thing still looked as if she hadn’t touched it. “Are you sure you don’t want a bit?”

Killian shook his head in response. “Thanks, love, but I fail to see the appeal.”

“So when you came here you always ordered rum?”

“Aye. And I was also fond of the sprightliness of the place.” He added, remembering the old days when he and Liam used to go there, enjoying the loud cheers and liveliness of everyone in it.

“I like it, it feels cozier than most taverns.” Emma agreed. It was easy to understand why Killian and Liam had liked to spend time there, relaxing after a long day at work.

“And it holds great tales, too.” Emma looked at him curiously, wondering what he meant with that.

“Like what?”

“Legend says that many years ago its original owner fell in love with the port master’s daughter, who happened to be married to a prince. They had a torrid affair and when her father discovered his daughter’s betrayal, he burned the tavern down, to get revenge on the man who had dishonored his family. The two lovers ran away together and they were never seen again.” Killian explained.

“So this isn’t the original tavern?”

“Not according to legend.” He replied, taking another chug from the flask. “And I believe it to be true, because the lad who owned the place back then told Liam he had restored the tavern after the previous one had burned down.”

“So the legend is true.” Emma concluded.

“Aye, or at least the part about the tavern burning down is.”

Emma took a good look around once again. She liked feeling that she was sitting in a place with that many history, wondering about all the people that had stepped foot there over the years: the stories they shared, the secrets they held.

“Speaking of running away together…” Killian said, interrupting her thoughts. “I have a proposition to make.” Emma’s brows shot up right away as she directed her attention back to him. “Why don’t we spend the rest of our honeymoon on the Jolly Roger, sailing the Enchanted Forest’s seas?” Emma found it impossible not to smile at the way his entire face lit up while conjuring up images of his heavenly scenario.

Emma’s fingers tapped the mug before resting them over his hook. “With all this portal opening business we haven’t really sailed properly, have we?”
“Aye. And we can still dock her whenever we feel like, if you wish to visit other places.”

“I can’t think of any places I’d like to visit.” That wasn’t entirely true. She would like to visit her parents’ castle again, but she wanted them to be with her when that happened, so there was no point in thinking about doing it now. “I prefer sailing with you on the Jolly.” She whispered, a gentle smile on her face as she squeezed his hook. Killian’s thrilled eyes devoured her beauty as a whole new rush of excitement coursed through his veins.

“Blimey! If it isn’t Captain Hook!” a hoarse voice interrupted their quiet moment. Emma’s eyes shot up at the male figure, surely a pirate by the way he was dressed, standing next to them. She had no idea who he was, but he looked absolutely ridiculous. She could feel Killian slightly tensing up as he fought the urge to roll his eyes in annoyance.

“Blackbeard.” Killian greeted him with fake enthusiasm, more to let Emma know who they were dealing with than anything else. At that point, Emma wasn’t sure what to do. She knew Blackbeard could be dangerous, but so far he wasn’t showing off any signs of aggressiveness. His sword was in the sheath and he was simply smirking at the two of them like an idiot before his eyes started perusing over her.

“So I take it this is your woman…”

“The name’s Emma.” She was quick to stop Blackbeard’s nonsense, flashing him her trademark ‘fuck you’ smile.

“Hmm, I can see why you were so desperate for those magic beans, Hook.” Blackbeard’s eyes were still traveling up and down her body, leering at her one last time before glancing over at Killian. "And that reminds me, you still haven’t honored your end of the deal.”

“You left me to rot in Neverland, the deal’s broken.” Killian snarled in response. “But you look tired, have a drink with us.” Emma’s eyes searched his as she watched him happily pull out a chair for Blackbeard. What the hell was he doing?

“You’re awfully nice today.” Blackbeard pointed out, accepting his invitation. But as soon as he sat down on the chair next to them, Killian got up, smile vanishing from his face.

“Let’s go, Swan.” Emma followed his lead, trying her best not to crack up at what Killian had just done.

At Hook’s humiliating trick on him, Blackbeard got up in one swift movement.

“Ye rotten blaggard!” he gnarled, turning everybody’s attention on him, curious eyes now carefully watching the scene. “You’re nothing but a fraud!”

Blackbeard’s body was now in front of them, trying to stop them from leaving. Killian raised one eyebrow in annoyance as he scratched his forehead with his hook, not giving a damn about whatever insults Blackbeard was sending his way. Lately, he was all talk. Perhaps the age was getting to him.

He then turned to Emma, his lips drawing in a snarl. “And you’re a pitiful waste of beauty by being with him.”

Emma quickly sent him a dirty look as Killian fought hard to control himself, the muscles in his jaw twitching from the tension. Their angry and irritated looks didn’t seem to stop Blackbeard, though.

“I’m the most treacherous pirate in all the realms! I’m going to take your ship and your-“
Before he could finish, Emma punched him right in the face, his eyes rolling to the back of his head in pain, his mouth opening as he started to lose his balance, his head hitting one of the hard wooden tables on his fall to the floor. Awe transformed the faces of everybody in the tavern as they gazed at Emma, a mix of fear and admiration in their eyes.

“Let’s go”, Emma said, opening the door and lifting her feet one at a time so she didn’t step on Blackbeard’s somewhat unconscious body.

With a smile plastered on his face, Killian shrugged his shoulders to the amazed people in the tavern as he followed Emma, incredibly proud. And aroused.

When they got back to the Jolly Roger to start their sailing adventure, Emma went below deck to take all of their clothes out of the bags. If they were going to spend the next days mainly on the ship, there was no use in keeping them all crumpled inside. She had just finished putting her underwear in one of the drawers when she suddenly felt the ship tilting harshly to the left side before a loud and scary creak came out of its guts. Emma only had time to reach for the bed, to keep her balance, the sound of glasses and candle holders shaking against the wood of the desk filling the room. Then, as soon as it had begun, it all came to a stop with a heavy bang.

“Emma!” Killian shouted from the upper deck. “Are you alright?” Emma saw his head peeking through the ladder and breathing a sigh of relief when he realized nothing had happened to her.

“What happened?”, she inquired as she climbed up to the main deck. The view stopped her dead in her tracks. Just about one, two hundred feet from them, there was an island, a stunning beach in the horizon. The rays of sunshine reflected on the golden sand in an almost magical way. The sea looking like a rippling blanket of jewel-blue as the waves crawled gently to the shore.

“I have no bloody clue. I lost all control of the ship.” Killian’s growls brought her out of her enchantment over the island, focusing on trying to soothe his frenzy. “I’m afraid we’re aground, love.”

Emma watched him pace back and forth, his fingers rubbing the nape of his neck.

“Hey, it’s okay. It’s not your fault.” she rubbed his back in comfort. “We’ll find a way out of here.”

“We will. But only if the ship’s hull isn’t damaged.” And with that, Killian started taking his clothes off until he was only in his boxer briefs. Not wasting any time, he grabbed a rope to pull himself down into the water.

“Do you need any help?”

“No need, love. This should only take a minute.” He replied, flawlessly making his way down. If the situation wasn’t so serious, Emma would appreciate the sexy view of her almost naked husband holding onto a rope, his bicep bulging with each movement as he hurriedly lowered himself down. Instead, she prayed that the ship’s hull was intact, not only because it would be way easier to get out of there, but also because there was no way Killian could lose the Jolly Roger. Her chest tightened at the thought.

Once he got down there, Emma could see the water was to his shoulders. He then disappeared from the surface as she watched the shadow of his body moving in the clear waters. After what looked like a lifetime, he finally resurfaced. Emma watched him expectantly as his fingers pushed the wet hair away from his forehead.

“She’s in one piece.” He beamed, smiling up at Emma as she sighed in relief. “Good lass.” He
slapped the hull of the ship before pushing himself up.

“Everything okay? Emma asked once he got on the deck.

“Aye. Luckily, we aren’t too buried in the sand. We should be able to go once the tide is high and the water rises.”

Emma nods at him, her mouth set in a hard line. “And when will that be?”

“Taking our position into account, by sunset, most likely.” He then pushed his boxer briefs down, taking them off and carefully putting them over the shrouds so they could dry under the burning sun. Emma couldn’t help but wander her eyes down to his naked butt and flaccid cock, enjoying the way neither of them had any issue walking naked around each other when sex wasn’t even on their thoughts.

Turning around, Killian caught her eyes on him and he winked at her, a flush creeping up her face as she diverted her gaze. He smiled to himself as he kept himself busy with putting the rope back in its place.

“So, does that mean we have to stay here until the sun sets?” Emma asked him coyly as she leaned over the rail where he was folding the rope in a neat circle. His bare ass a wonderful view.

“Indeed. Why, love? Any ideas on how to pass time?”

Exploring what they now realized was a desert island hadn’t exactly been what he’d had in mind, but Emma had insisted on spending a day on the beach and he hadn’t hated the idea either. The truth was that the island looked like an absolute paradise. The sand felt like powder on their feet and the sound of the wind blowing in the palm trees a soothing pleasure. Knowing they were all alone was the cherry on top. So far, they had explored the upper part of the island, nothing but a deep forest with plenty of coconut trees and what looked like tropical plants. Killian had taken the chance to put the camera Henry had given them to use, subtly snapping pictures of Emma whenever he could. He just hoped he was doing it properly.

“Let’s take one together.” Emma told him as they finally arrived on the beach.

“Who will press the button, then?” he asked, narrowing his eyes and tilting his head in confusion.

“I will.” Emma replied with a chuckle, taking the camera from his hand and turning the camera around. Killian put his arms around her waist, hugging her from behind as they both grinned into the camera, Emma snapping the shot. Bless Henry. Thanks to him, they would have some really photos to hang around the house.

“I’m still trying to understand why your swim wear looks exactly like your underwear.” Killian mumbled as she watched Emma lying down on the sand, taking Liam’s ring necklace from around her neck not to leave a tan line. She had fantasized about this moment so many times while they had been in Arendelle that now she wasn’t going to miss this chance.

“So does yours.” Emma giggled, taking a glance at the red swim shorts she had packed for him.

“Not quite, love. My underwear is slightly tighter.” He said, lying down next to her and trying to understand the purpose of willingly letting the sun burning your skin.

“That’s because you prefer boxer briefs. If you wore boxers, they would look the same as your swim shorts. And there are square leg swimsuits that look exactly like boxer briefs, too.”
“You’re an expert in male garments, aren’t you, Swan?”

“Yeah, well, someone has to be.”

“Are you mocking my fashion sense?” Emma didn’t even have to open her eyes to know that he was teasing her, his flirty voice filling her ears as she grinned.

“Maybe.”

When the sun became too hot to bear, they went in for a swim. The water was at a perfect temperature, refreshing their skin as they moved smoothly through it. Catching Emma off guard, Killian swam towards her without her noticing him and he tickled her left foot, earning him a kick right in the nuts. It was only when Emma saw him behind her, with pain overtaking his face, that she realized what she had just done.

“Oh my God, I’m so sorry!” she swam to him, holding his face in her wet hands.

“Bloody hell!”

“I thought it was some animal, I didn’t know it was you.”

“I’ll be alright, Swan.” He murmured, slightly more relieved as the pain seemed to be fading away.

“Sorry.” Emma whispered, placing a soft kiss on the top of his nose before she felt his arm going around her waist, his hook pulling her to him as he started dropping soft kisses all over her neck. Her distinct scent evoked an all too familiar tension in him, the perfect mix of sweat and smoky vanilla that he would recognize anywhere driving him as mad as it always had. He ran his tongue over the damp, salty skin of her neck, the low gasp coming out of her throat letting him know that she was most definitely welcoming his sudden need of her. He felt her left hand holding his head in place, her fingers caressing the hairs at the nape of his neck at the same time. Feeling the need for more, Killian moved his lips from her neck to her jaw, brushing them lightly against her skin. That soft touch alone was enough to send shivers through her nerves, his mouth curving into a smile as he felt her body trembling against his. Her fingers grip his hair, pulling him closer, telling him without words what it is that she really wants. Impatient as always, his Swan. Not interested in going against her wishes, his tongue darted out to gently touch her lips, one particular move that she had once confessed to love. Moaning in return, Emma’s lips wrapped around his tongue, gently sucking him into her mouth. After that, his hand and hook were everywhere around her body as he kissed her harder, deeper, an urgent need to taste her overwhelming him. They remained that way for a long while, simply kissing and tasting each other as they balanced with the waves. Moments where they got to simply make out with each other as two teenagers, without any of it leading to sex, were all too rare now. They may as well enjoy it.

Eventually getting colder, they decided to swim some more, discovering some really pretty grottos underwater. Not resisting the curiosity, they decided to explore them further. Down there the water looked even clearer, the stalactites and stalagmites the homes to thousands of fungus, parasites and seaweed communities. Getting out of breath, they returned to the surface.

“We should get back, love.” Emma followed Killian’s gaze, the sun almost setting in the distance. As they were swimming back to the shore, a bright light erupting from the sand had them squinting their eyes, trying to identify where the glow was coming from.

“What the hell?!” Emma hurried her step, the water slowing down her movements. Killian followed suit, the two getting out of the water at about the same time before running to the exact spot where
the light was coming from.

As their wet bodies damped the sand, they spotted a wooden chest sitting there. The bright flash of light appeared to be coming out of a small, circular hole in the middle of its lid.

“This definitely wasn’t here before.” Emma stuttered as she felt the urge to touch the chest, but Killian stopped her just in time.

“I don’t think we should touch that, love. I’ve heard far too many stories of unknown cursed objects. It’s best we don’t take our chances.” Emma nods at Killian’s words, agreeing that it’s better to leave the mysterious object alone, but she wasn’t about to leave empty handed. Kneeling on the sand, she brought the camera in her left hand closer to the chest, taking a picture of it. Just then, the box starts shaking, the light coming out of the hole in the lid becoming brighter and brighter until it’s almost impossible for them to see anything ahead.

“Let’s go, Swan!” Killian shouted at Emma as he helped her up and the two started running towards the water, swimming as fast as they could until they reached the Jolly Roger. When they finally got on deck and looked back at the island, the bright light was gone, nothing in sight other than golden sand.

“That was really creepy.” Emma mumbled breathlessly as she scratched her left wrist, trying to soothe the sudden intense itch.

“Perhaps we weren’t alone after all.” Killian took one last look at the island, before he prepared the ship to sail away. This time the Jolly perfectly obeyed to her captain’s commands, an obvious signs they were no longer aground.

“Do you wish to go back to Storybrooke, love?” Killian asked her as Emma dried her hair with a towel.

“Not a chance in hell. We still have a couple of more days to sail.” She insisted, dropping a kiss to his cheek. No matter what, they weren’t going to let this incident ruin their honeymoon. “So… what do I need to do, captain?”

With a grin on his face, he pulled her to him, guiding her body so she could hold the ship’s wheel. They were going to keep sailing, but she would be the one captaining the ship under his supervision, a privilege no one before her had enjoyed. His hands and hook covered her hands on the handles, his chest rubbing against her back as his hot breath blew in her neck. Yes, their honeymoon was just getting started.

“Swan?” after what felt like an eternity, Killian’s voice brought Emma out of her memories.

“Yeah?”

“You were reminiscing about our honeymoon.” He teased her, crinkling his eyes and nose at her, but her mouth is still set in a hard line. Clearly, she wasn’t thinking about any happy thoughts anymore.

“Do you ever wonder what that chest we found on the island was about?”

Her question catches him off guard. He hadn’t given any extra thought to that chest after they left the island.

“It was likely another magical object out of the endless magical objects there are in all of those realms.” He replied. “I’m certain we’re better off not knowing more about it, my love.”
“Yeah, probably.”

Sensing she was still thinking about the intriguing chest, he nibbled her ear playfully.

“I’m more interested in remembering what happened before we found that bloody thing.” His voice was low in her ear and she felt his hook pressing her butt.

“It was a pretty damn great honeymoon.” She whispers, her mood suddenly shifting. He never failed in cheering her up. “I wish we could go back in time and relive it all again.”

“We could always get married again and go on a second honeymoon.” He promptly offers as Emma’s giggles feel the hall. “After all, there are still plenty of more realms for us to visit. And as far as I know, Anton’s beanstalks are growing vigorously.”
Second Chances

Chapter Summary

Emma and Hook’s responsibilities as Sheriff and Deputy of Storybrooke are put to test when they have to deal with a mysterious intruder with unclear intentions. Meanwhile, in Enchanted Forest and Maine flashbacks, two young couples struggle to adapt to unexpected circumstances, facing life-altering decisions.

Chapter Notes

AN1: This fanfic is my attempt at creating an alternative OUAT season 7 that (hopefully) can help Captain Swan shippers get over the real season 7 in the same way writing it has been helping me. This is a continuation of season 6 and follows the adventures of sheriff Swan and deputy Jones. Visit my blog (https://captainswanseven.tumblr.com) for more info. Every week I will be posting casting news, episode descriptions, episode stills, script teases and title spoilers.

AN 2: This chapter includes many flashbacks related to new characters. With this being a Captain Swan story, these flashbacks featuring other characters will ALWAYS be relevant/connected to Emma, Killian and their storylines. Therefore, it is important to keep track of all the information the flashbacks give us.

Enchanted Forest - 250 years ago

Trekking the deep woods, careful not to let the branches of the bushy trees hit their faces, Nicholas and Isabella fastened their pace, twigs crunching under their feet. After their very long and unsuccessful journey, all they wanted to do was to go home and properly take in the heartbreaking news they had just received.

“We will find a way,” Nicholas said, his arm resting on his wife’s shoulder in reassurance, “I promise.”

Tears shimmered in her eyes as she nodded at him weakly, apathy taking over despite Nicholas’ best efforts to comfort her. His shoulders hung low in defeat, knowing that there was nothing he could do to change any of it.

Irate at the fate thrust upon them, they kept walking until the sound of feminine cries stopped them. Nicholas looked over his shoulder, trying to identify the exact place where the sobs were coming from. Isabella followed her husband as he turned back and then right, taking the moss-veiled trail. The cries intensified as they kept walking, an undeniable sign they were on the right path. Just then they found an old woman kneeling on the leaf-carpeted forest floor, her arms wrapped around the trunk of an impressively large tree. Neither of them had ever seen anything even remotely similar.

“No!” the old lady sobbed.
The young couple was quick to approach her, helping her off the floor. Their presence startled her, a loud shriek coming out of her mouth at the feel of their hands on her.

“Are you alright?” Nicholas asked.

At his question, the old lady started shaking her head, wrapping her arms around herself.

“Can we help you?” Isabella insisted.

“This large tree,” the lady finally said, pointing her finger at the tree that stood beside them, “is quite hollow inside and my precious tinder box is in there. Perhaps you could help me getting it back?” She then leaned over the couple, regarding them expectantly.

Nicholas hesitated at first, but he eventually decided to help the woman.

“How did it get in there?” he wondered as he dropped his knapsack to the ground.

“Some witch… She wanted to punish me for something I did,” she replied. “I watched her as she sent it there with her magical powers. It was terrible.”

“Magic is terrible.” Isabella corrected her in an instant.

“The world would be a far better place without magic,” Nicholas added to his wife’s thought. “But none of that matters now, let’s get you your tinder box.”

Fear taking over him, Nicholas started trying to climb up the tree, but the tree branches kept breaking whenever he put his feet over them. Afraid to climb any further and fall, he quickly gave up.

“I’m sorry, but I’m afraid it’s impossible.” he said, brushing his hands against his trousers.

“That’s quite alright. I understand.” the old lady said, faking a smile. Feeling somewhat guilty for having been unable to help her, Nicholas and Isabella insisted in accompanying her home. When she declined, they offered her some food.

“You have a good heart,” the lady said as she approached Isabella, resting her crinkled hand on her stomach, “but I sense great despair in you.”

The old lady’s eyes were fixated on Isabella’s stomach, a tight-lipped smile on her face as she seemed to be deeply concentrated on her hand rubbing the younger woman’s belly.

“We should go.” Nicholas said, pushing Isabella away from the old lady and her sudden disturbing behavior.

Ignoring the woman, they started walking away, but they weren’t fast enough to avoid the last words uttered towards them.

“Worry not. Soon enough a very special child will grace your lives.”

Feeling as though a knife was being twisted inside her, Isabella looked over her shoulder, but the old lady was nowhere to be seen anymore. How did she know?

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

“That’s so good.” Emma whispered into the bedroom as her hands gripped the headboard above her,
knuckles turning white as she threw her head back in pleasure. She absolutely loved these kind of mornings, waking up to Killian going down on her quickly becoming one of her new favorite parts of married life. Nothing could compare to the feeling of his warm, wet tongue on her, moving back and forth in gentle strokes that paralleled the movements of his body under the sheets.

Wanting him deeper inside her, Emma dropped her left hand to his linen-covered head, pushing him towards her. As soon as he felt her wedding ring softly pressing against his head while she gripped his hair through the sheets, Killian picked up his pace, determined to bring her over the edge. A loud moan escaped her lips when she felt one of his fingers slide inside, his tongue rubbing circles around her clit while simultaneously pulling on it with his lips. Her life had been far from easy but someone or something had definitely made up for it by blessing her with a husband with an insanely talented tongue who loved to worship her whenever he could.

“Fuck.” she moaned even louder this time, biting her bottom lip to muffle the sounds coming out of her mouth. Henry was probably still sleeping, but the last thing she wanted was for him to hear her mother being eaten out by Captain Hook. The kid had already had enough traumatic events in his life, he didn’t need an extra one.

She then felt his hand travelling up her body to cup her left breast, his wet fingers damping her white tank top as he tweaked her erect nipples through the cloth. He could tell by the way her body was shuddering that she was close, just anot-

A cellphone ringing.

How wonderful.

The sound of Emma’s cellphone buzzing against the wooden surface of the bedside table had slowed down their movements.

“Ignore it.” Killian groaned from under the sheets before bringing his tongue back to her.

She wanted to kill whoever was calling her this early and interrupting the mind-blowing orgasm her husband was just about to give her, but she somehow managed to remember she was the sheriff and that maybe something bad had happened.

Ungripping her hand from the headboard, Emma turned the lamp on and grabbed her phone. She could hear Killian’s grunts of disapproval, but judging by the way his tongue was still all over her, that didn’t seem to discourage him. Her lips parted slightly as her brain fought against the idea of throwing her phone away to succumb to the pleasure and all the amazing things Killian was making her feel instead. Resisting temptation, Emma glimpsed at the screen of her phone.

“It’s… Granny?” - why the hell was Granny calling her at five thirty in the morning? Only Killian was allowed to wake her up that early – “Hello?” her voice almost came out as a squeal, not being able to control herself when she felt Killian’s tongue rubbing circles in a particularly sensitive spot.

“How wonderful.

‘Am I interrupting something?’

“It’s just my sleep.” Emma replied as her left hand kept pushing Killian’s face to her even more. She heard him moan in contentment as his gifted tongue curled around her nub. He really wasn’t going to stop while she talked to Granny, was he? “Uh…” she mumbled, trying to pass her whimper for an interjection, “everything okay?”

“I’m not sure, honey. I just got to the diner and I see a shadow moving inside the bakery. And you know that place is closed until seven.”
“Maybe it’s Glenda in there.” Emma suggested numbly. Glenda was the owner of the bakery and there were times when she arrived earlier than usual to prepare everything for the day.

“Yeah, except I called her and she told me to shut up because she was still sleeping. She hung up and didn’t even let me finish.”

“Ugh.” Emma grunted in response, not even knowing if it was because of what Granny had just told her or because she would have to stop Killian just when he was hitting all the right spots.

“I can go there if you want to. I still have my harpoon. And I bought a new cast iron griddle pan. Really solid. If anyo-“

“No, don’t. Save your pans for the grilled cheese.” Emma quickly interrupted her. “We’re on our way.”

Feeling the warm loss of his tongue on her, Killian’s head peeked out of the sheets, his lips and facial hair glistening with her arousal. His smug grin soon vanished from his face as soon as he watched the annoyed look on her face.

“Another crisis?”

Yes, of course there was another fucking crisis. It was Storybrooke after all.

---

**Maine, 1984**

“I can’t believe she’s finally with us.” Jeremy Peters didn’t hesitate to open the door for his wife, Veronica, letting her in as his eyes stared at the little girl in her arms. After two miscarriages, a series of infertility treatments and a painfully slow adoption process, they had finally been able to bring a child home. Their daughter. “You’re so pretty! Oh yes, you’re so pretty!” Veronica cooed, placing a kiss on the little girl’s left hand. It was only then that she noticed a small, black circle on the inside of the girl’s wrist.

“What is it?” Jeremy asked at watching the concerned expression on his wife’s face.

“Is this a birthmark?” – she pushed the girl’s arm down so her husband could see it for himself.

Closely inspecting the black mark, he brushed a finger against his daughter’s skin, rubbing it over the small, black circle.

“I think it is. Or at least it looks like one. But maybe we should show it to the doctor next week.” he offered, just before the little girl started crying in Veronica’s arms.

“Shh, baby. It’s okay.” Veronica tried to calm her down, but it had the opposite effect. The little girl was now flailing her arms and kicking her legs, trying to push Veronica’s body away.

Jeremy took the girl from his wife’s arms and held her in his own. Much to their surprise, she stopped crying right away.

With a loving gaze and a smile plastered on his face, he whispered, “No need to cry, Emma. You have a family now.”

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**
Emma felt like crying, she really did. As if it hadn’t been enough that Granny had interrupted her intimate moment with Killian, she’d also had to get her ass out of bed before sunrise, something which happened like… never. The only reason why she let Killian wake her up to fool around at the crack of dawn was because she always got to sleep a little longer after they were both satiated. And of course the orgasms helped, too. But today she had gotten neither.

So here they were now, crossing the street in full Sheriff and Deputy mode as they rushed to the bakery. On the other side of the street, they spotted Granny inside the diner as she waved at them, pulling a pan up in the air and pointing at it with her finger. Emma shook her head, nothing like good old widow Lucas to cheer her up this early in the morning.

Reaching for the bakery keys in her pocket, careful not to make any sound that could alert the intruder to their presence, Emma opened the door as gently as possible. At a first glance there seemed to be no one in there. Except for some bread crumbs, the showcase was empty, the street lights reflecting over the glass.

Hands down, the best thing about their teamwork was that they didn’t even need to talk to understand each other. So when Killian looked at Emma and pointed his head to the right, she knew right away that he was silently encouraging her to go check the cashier area while he inspected the lounge. Despite the fallen over ship’s wheel near the window, nothing seemed to be out of place, not even the cash register showed any signs of tampering. Clearly, whoever had been in there didn’t have any interest in money.

Just when they were starting to think that maybe Granny had been seeing things, a loud screeching noise erupted from the door behind the showcase. With sword and gun in hand, Emma and Killian immediately ran to the kitchen. There, they spotted a figure unsuccessfully trying to win a fight with the back door’s lock.

“Hey, stay right where you are,” Emma shouted, her gun pointing straight at the shadow she could make out amidst the dark. Killian just stood still, flicking one of switches on the wall with his hook. As the entire kitchen lit up, they quickly realized the figure was a woman. With her back to them, her shoulders fell and they heard her whisper. When she turned around, she didn’t face them right away, her gaze fixed on the floor in shame. Then sea green eyes met Emma and Killian’s perusal, almost in awe, a shy smile slowly gracing her features. Her long, light brown locks wreathed her face as she nervously pushed it aside with her right hand. Taking her appearance in, she was very obviously older than they were, but not more than fifty.

“I’m afraid it’s awfully early for breakfast,” Killian said as he walked towards her, sword in hand, “But I hear the sheriff station has marvelous teas. Perhaps you’d like to join us?” Killian’s tone was sardonically amused and the woman chuckled at his quip for a second, surprising Emma and Killian with her audacity to laugh at him. At their glares, she quickly stopped chuckling, looking back down at her feet.

As Killian grabbed her arm and pushed her out of the kitchen, his eyes met Emma’s, the two of them with only one question plaguing their minds: who the hell was this weird woman?

---

**Enchanted Forest - 250 years ago**

“Dear God, Nicholas. Are you alright?” Isabella asked her husband as he took his dripping wet cape off. Outside, the rain pattered against the wattle walls as the thunder rumbled in the distance.

“What matters is we have enough food for a week.” – he then handed her over two burlag bags – “Potatoes, fava beans and dark bread.”
“No meat?”

“I’m afraid not.”

Isabella knew meat was too expensive for them, but that still didn’t stop her from shaking her head in disappointment as she grabbed the bags and prepared to cook something for dinner.

Nicholas was about to put more firewood on the fire when baby cries echoed nearby, unbelievably perceptible even in the midst of the shattering sounds of thunder. Was that some kind of sorcery or were the sounds coming from just outside the hut’s door?

He and Isabella shared a glanced, then ran towards the door. With shaky hands, Isabella turned the knob and cracked the door open, the sight before her making her screech and hands instinctively going over her mouth.

Nicholas was quick to take the baby from the straw crib sitting by their door. Who had been the mad man leaving a poor baby out in the rain and thunder?

“How could you do this to me?!” - Isabella grabbed her husband’s arm, tears forming in her eyes as her hand caressed the baby’s soft cheek – “It’s so cold... Bring it inside!”

“Don’t you see? This is a miracle,” Isabella said, not letting him finish, “We have tried to have a child for so long... And now one magically appears at our door?”

Nicholas looked at her intently, his eyes then travelling down to the baby in his arms. The poor thing was still crying and a sudden, strange feeling suddenly invaded him. It was as if he had been born to protect that innocent, defenseless being. Maybe Isabella was right. Maybe this was God’s gift to them, after all the hardships they had been through the years, after all the years of searching for ways to get Isabella with child.

“Let’s keep it,” – her eyes were shining with joy, every fiber of her being hoping that just this once she would be able to convince her husband to do something she wanted – “please.”

Fixing his gaze on the child, Nicholas nodded his head in agreement, bringing the baby in and shutting the door behind him. He had kept his promise to Isabella after all. He had found a way.

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

“We’re still waiting for your name,” - Emma’s cold and demanding voice echoed through the station. The woman hadn’t spoken a word on the short way there and they’d had no other choice but to bring her to the interrogation room.

There was something about her that Emma couldn’t quite put her finger on. She had shown signs of fear but also absolute resoluteness in a matter of seconds. Was she genuinely like that or was she trying to play them? Just a minute ago, she had been looking at the two of them sitting in front of her, a shade of fear in her eyes. But now there was a somewhat proud smile on her face as she stared at them, not saying a word.

“My name is Morgana,” she finally murmured in her raspy voice, “I’m one of those who came from the Land of Untold Stories.”

“And you’ve just now decided to make an appearance?” Emma inquired her, noticing the way
Morgana started shifting in her chair.

“I was scared. I had no clue if the people of Storybrooke were trustworthy,” Morgana explained, “as soon as we crashed in the woods, I hid myself. Now that things seemed to be calmer, I figured I could explore my chances in this town.”

“It seems we have a differing definition of the word ‘explore’,” Killian quipped, lips curved upwards in provocation.

It seems we have a differing definition of the word ‘pirate’, Morgana thought, amused at his recognizable sarcasm, but managed to hold her retort in.

“I know what you saw me doing looked like, but I was simply trying to understand how the bread business works in this world.”

That answer certainly caught Emma and Killian off guard. Bread business?

“Seriously? That’s your excuse?” Emma asked, frowning at her.

Morgana gazed at Emma, somewhat annoyed that Emma didn’t believe in her. Her mouth opened slightly to better breathe before she finally started talking. “Back in my land, I used to be a baker. I sold and distributed bread among the villagers.”

“What land is this?” Killian wondered, not fully believing her tale.

“Elasnik,” Morgana answered, not taking her eyes away from his.

“How did you get in?” Emma was quick to ask her, “The door had no signs of forced entry.”

That question seemed to surprise Morgana, her gaze suddenly avoiding Emma’s before she cracked a smile.

“I am fully aware that I shouldn’t be telling you this, but I praise honesty above all: it was a trick I learnt a long time ago. Fortunately, your land’s lockers aren’t too different from the ones in Elasnik.”

“Okay, so let’s say you were trying to understand how the bakery works,” - Emma got up from her seat and leaned over her - “why breaking in? Why didn’t you just wait to talk to the owner?”

“I am in dire need of a job. I figured I had better chances of getting one if I showed up already knowing everything there is to know about this world’s bread baking processes.”

At that Emma leaned away from her, tilting her head and pressing her lips together. Why couldn’t she tell if Morgana was bullshitting them or not? And worst of all… Why was she feeling kind of sorry for this woman?

**Maine, 1984**

Veronica had been trying everything for the last hour, from checking the diaper and body temperature to snuggles and singing, but nothing seemed to make Emma stop crying. And to top it all, after a long period flickering, the lights went out completely.

She had never thought being a mother would be this hard – there was nothing she did that ever worked and Emma didn’t seem to like her one bit. She was either constantly crying or pooping or barfing and, honestly, she would never not be utterly disgusted with it all. She missed her peaceful
nights of sleep, her freedom, her life without having to worry about diapers, baby food, dermatitis and other millions of things that would only end up making her cry. She was slowly losing her patience with Emma and sometimes she truly wished she could turn back time. A part of her did feel guilty, but no matter how much she tried to tell herself otherwise, during the past eight months she never got to feel that Emma was her daughter.

“What happened?” Jeremy’s voice brought her out of her thoughts, not even realizing that the lights had come back on.

“She doesn’t stop crying, I don’t know what else to do,” Veronica blurted out in desperation as she put Emma in her husband’s arms. As usual, she instantly stopped crying, her big, hazel green eyes focused on her father’s face as her tiny fingers curled around his nose.

“Hi, honey!” he said as he placed a kiss on her forehead. Holding her still in his arms, he reached for the remote and turned the television on, “Look, Emma, it’s Inspector Gadget!”

As soon as the cartoon’s theme song started playing, Jeremy began whistling the theme at the same time he danced funnily. Baby Emma started giggling and throwing her arms up in the air as Veronica watched it all.

“Inspector Gadget always does the trick,” Jeremy chuckles as he kept dancing with a happy Emma in his arms. Jealousy took over Veronica as the feelings of being an utter failure as a mother began invading her senses. Not being able to control her tears, she stormed out of the living room.

“Veronica!” Jeremy called out for her, wondering what had happened. Knowing Emma’s eyes would be glued to the screen the entire time, he carefully sat Emma down on the floor before running after his wife. “Honey, why are you crying?”

“I never thought it would be this hard. I’m a terrible mother!”

“Hey, don’t say that,” he said, trying to comfort her.

“Sometimes I just wish we…” she paused to wipe the tears from her eyes as she took a deep breath, “we could… give her back.”

---

**Storybrooke - Present Day**

“She’s lying,” Emma said as she paced back and forth in the station, Morgana now alone in the interrogation room as Sheriff and Deputy discussed her fate.

“Then we know what we have to do,” – Killian picked up the cell’s keys from the table, but the way Emma sighed in response caught his attention. “What is it, love?”

“I don’t know… There’s just something about her, I can’t explain what,” Emma huffed out in frustration, “What do you think?”

“Her tale is quite odd, but it could be true. We weren’t exactly paying a great amount of attention to all the folks from the Land of Untold Stories. Perhaps she got scared and desperate.”

Emma nodded at him, but she was still pensive.

“I’m not entirely sure she’s lying,” Emma finally admitted. “And I feel sorry for her, but I don’t even know why.” she added, wondering if that could be related to the fact she knew what it was like to get caught breaking and entering.
“Perhaps it’s the kindness in your heart”, Killian murmured as his hand rested over her heart, “your compassion is overwhelming, Emma.” He was looking at her with such love and adoration that her heart skipped a beat, a smile etching on her lips as she admired his handsome facial features.

“Okay, you really need to stop saying those things and looking at me like that when we’re working.”

“Why, afraid you can’t resist me?” he was teasing her now, keeping his chin slightly up as he bit his bottom lip.

“Please. I’m a professional,” she deadpanned, “and the Sheriff, which means all of this is very inappropriate and I will not allow it, Deputy Jones.”

Killian smirked at her, ready to say something in return, but Emma swatted him on the chest and pushed him away.

“One of these days you will not be able to resist me, Swan.”

Taking her light brown leather jacket off and dropping it on her chair, Emma looked back at him, a fake authoritarian expression on her face.

“I mean, Sheriff Swan.”

---

**Enchanted Forest – 248 years ago**

“So, what do you think?” - Nicholas barged into the hut, holding the small wooden bluebird house he had just finished building. He wanted to know if his wife approved it, but she didn’t answer him – “Isabella?”

*He found her sitting in one of the corners of the small hut, her hands over her mouth and wide eyes staring at the two year-old infant on the other side of the room. Nicholas didn’t waste time asking her what was wrong, his gaze falling immediately on their daughter. And then he saw it: yellow, bright flashes were coming out of the child’s hands, a grin on her face. The candles lit up by themselves as she walked through the shed, leaving a trail of sparks underneath her feet.*

“Does she…” Nicholas muttered, gulping in fear, “have magic?”

With her hands still over her mouth, Isabella nodded, “Soon enough a very special child will grace your lives.”

Nicholas recognized those words, but he couldn’t bring himself to say anything in response.

“That woman was right. She said-“

“No!” he shouted, not letting her finish, “I refuse to accept that my daughter has magic!” – his eyes were now dark pools of panic as his body started shaking – “Magic is the worst power one can have, it corrupts the soul. It’s for the weak! I will not allow anyone with magic to step foot in my home!”

“She’s our daughter. Does it matter if she has magic?” Isabella tried to reach for him, but he was still so tense that he shoved her hand away from him.

“She may be dangerous. They all are.”

“Then we’ll be careful,” Isabella suggested, knowing very well that she had to try to find a
consensus. She knew about the story of a wizard having been the responsible for his father’s death, scarring Nicholas to the point where no one could ever mention magic in front of him without a hateful rant against magic following through.

“I swear to God, Isabella… If she ever does something to us…”

“We’ll then decide what to do. But until then, we’re going to take care of her.”

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

“Sorry, lass, but breaking and entering is still a crime in Storybrooke,” Killian said in his most professional voice, dragging Morgana into one of the jail cells. After a somewhat long talk, they had finally agreed to lock Morgana up, at least for now.

“I understand, you do what you must” - Morgana didn’t put up any resistance, willingly entering the jail cell while flashing an innocent smile at Killian - “I feel honored to be the first person you arrest as Storybrooke’s new deputy.”

That caught their attention as they shared a look of suspicion between them. How could Morgana possibly know that?

“It’s a small town,” Morgana clarified, her arms resting on the bars, “everyone already knows about the Savior and her reformed pirate husband who became her deputy. You two are as adorable as the rumors make you to be.”

Emma wasn’t sure whether she would glare or smile at the woman, while Killian locked the cell and walked away in Emma’s direction.

“It’s time for my daily patrol. Do you need any help here, Swan?”

“No, I just have to go through some papers. You can go,” she answered, eyes focusing on one of the folders she had grabbed from one of the drawers as she sat down by the desk in front of the cell.

Killian had simply winked at her before he left. They had agreed that while they were working they would be acting professionally and not show any signs of affection. It just seemed like the right thing to do.

“He’s a nice, young man.” – at the sound of Morgana’s voice, Emma’s eyes shot up to the woman, now lying on the bed, arms crossed under her head.

“I know,” Emma answered sharply, not really sure what she had meant with ‘nice’.

“Oh, please, don’t take that the wrong way,” Morgana was quick to add, getting up from the bed, concern written on her face, “I have no interest in your husband. I just like to make random observations.”

“Yeah, well, I have to work so I won’t be able to comment on your random observations,” Emma said, hoping she would get the hint.

“Yes, of course. I’m sorry. I won’t say a thing.”

Good. She did get the hint. Emma went back to reading one of the papers, some weird document about a-
“It’s just…” – Emma sighed in frustration and fought the urge to roll her eyes as Morgana started talking again. “Thank you.” Morgana muttered, not an ounce of deception in her heart.

“Thank you? For what?” Emma furrowed her brows at the unexpected thanks, wondering if she had missed something. She had just arrested the woman and she was thanking her?

“For keeping me company.”

---

**Maine, 1985**

“No, Emma, don’t paint on the table!” Veronica yelled as she put away the brown bag she was preparing to open.

“Fun!”

“Emma Peters, drop that crayon right now,” Veronica insisted, but to no avail. It was as though Emma wasn’t even listening to her.

“I said drop that crayon right now, you brat!”

“Hey, why don’t you go rest a bit and I’ll take care of her, huh?” Jeremy suggested as he entered the kitchen and sat on a chair next to Emma’s. Veronica grabbed the brown bag and walked away in a hurry.

A couple of minutes had gone by when Jeremy heard Veronica screaming from the upper floor.

“Veronica!” he shouted, getting up in one swift move, but stopped when he watched her running down the stairs, straight into his arms. There were tears in her eyes and she was sobbing as she held a pregnancy test in front of his face.

“I’m pregnant!!” she squealed as she kissed his lips.

“You what?!?” Jeremy put her body down, taking the pregnancy test from her hands as an instant smile formed on his face. He looked down at the two lines on the test stick. “Oh my God! You’re pregnant!” his heart was about to burst out of his chest, pulling her into him and hugging her as they held onto each other for a long time.

Veronica kissed him again, not really believing the treatments had worked after all this time. It was a miracle. A miracle that would finally allow them to have a real family. A family of their own.

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

Emma’s favorite part of the day was undoubtedly dinner time. Usually, dinner meant that another day of work was over and that she would be spending some well-deserved time with her family. Sometimes that came in the form of a dinner at home with Killian and Henry, a romantic dinner with Killian or some mother-son bonding as she supervised Henry’s adventures on the kitchen. Other times, such as today, it meant a family dinner with her parents, at Granny’s.

Soon after her marriage and their parents’ move to the farm, they had agreed to have at least one family meal per week. Not really feeling like making a mess out of her kitchen, Emma had suggested the diner (truth be told, she also wanted to find an excuse to eat more onion rings).

“This tiramisu is an absolute marvel.” – Killian was practically drooling as he shoved another spoon
of the dessert into his mouth.

“It has rum, of course you love it,” David pointed out as he tried to make baby Neal eat a slice of banana.

“Mate, I will have you know I have had plenty of rum flavored desserts and this is still the most exquisite of all.”

“Just go easy on it, I could do without you having a heart attack, okay?” Emma chuckled, letting the hand of her hand softly brush against his trimmed beard.

“Don’t fret, Swan. As your husband, it is in my best interest to remain a healthy and vigorous man for a long time,” Killian murmured, the innuendo not escaping his father-in-law as he suddenly stopped looking at Neal and fixed his serious and unamused gaze on Killian. As if that hadn’t been enough, he then felt Emma’s leather-clad boot lightly step on his toes, a movement that was now part of the secret code language they had established between them. Stop it was what stepping on his toes meant (if only she had tugged on his jackets’ lapels, a sign that meant she wanted a very different thing).

“She’s the sheriff and I’m her deputy now. Saying I should be an energetic man is but a deductive exercise,” Killian tried to save face, hoping that would soon make the prince go back to feeding his son.

“Yes. Of course.” David bit back as he shoved another slice of banana into Neal’s mouth, his gaze never leaving Killian’s.

“This pie is amazing.” Emma blurted out, trying to change the subject as quickly as possible.

“Wow, you two really love dessert, don’t you?” David’s awkward laugh quickly faded once he realized how that could be interpreted. Judging by the smirk on Killian’s face and the way Emma was guiltily avoiding his gaze, it seemed like his attempt at following Emma in changing the subject had only made things worse, “Where’s Snow?” - hopefully, that was innocent enough to work.

“She’s still talking to Ashley,” Emma said, pretending the last minute of conversation hadn’t happened. “I’m going to get her,” she then stood up and went to the counter where Snow and Ashley seemed to be so deep in conversation that they didn’t even notice Emma’s presence. “Hey, why don’t you two loners join us at the table?” Emma suggested with a warm smile as she sat in one of the booth benches next to Ashley.

“Oh, honey, I’m sorry. I was talking to Ashley about tomorrow. I’ll probably have to leave Neal at the daycare earlier than usual.”

“It’s alright, I’ll be there at 7,” Ashley reassured her, picking from one of the waitresses the bag of take-out she had ordered, “Sorry for not joining you, but Thomas and Alexandra are waiting for me. Call me later?” Ashley asked, turning to Emma.

“Sure. Say hi to Thomas and Alexandra for me;” – Emma nodded at her, watching her wave at David and Killian.

“I will. Have a nice night!” – and then Ashley was out the door, leaving Snow and Emma alone in the booth.

“Your dad and Killian seem entertained,” - Snow’s words had Emma turning her head to their table and both men were laughing at something, “So, how was your day?” - Emma knew that look. It meant her mother was going for the mother-daughter bond moment of the day and she wasn’t going
to waste it, especially when the whole Morgana ordeal was still bothering her.

Emma told Snow everything from the beginning, from Granny’s phone call (carefully not mentioning what she was doing when Granny called) to arresting Morgana.

“She didn’t even flinch when we said we were going to arrest her. She just smiled and said she understood.” Emma said, taking a sip from a bottle of beer Granny had brought her in the meantime, “Oh, not to mention how she thanked me for keeping her company. I actually felt sorry for her.”

“Poor thing. She must have felt really lonely around here for jail to be something she’s thankful for.”

“Yeah, the thing is I don’t even know if she’s telling the truth. But if she is, it’s just sad because she has no one to pay her bail and she has to stay arrested. There’s no other option.”

“Maybe there is,” Snow whispered, lost in thinking, “Why don’t you give her a second chance? She says she only wanted to get a job.”

“Yeah?” – Emma waited for her mother to keep thinking loudly.

“So if you get her a job, you will know if that’s the only thing she’s really after or-“

“If she was lying and wants something else,” Emma concluded, approving of her mother’s way of thinking.

Just when she was starting to think about possible jobs she could find for Morgana, she felt Killian’s hook on her back.

“I’m going to check in on the Jolly, love.”

“No need. You stay with your family,” – he didn’t want to steal any of the time she had to spend with her brother and parents.

“Oh, I’ll see you at home,” she said with a soft smile on her face as he leaned down and pecked her on the lips, before wishing Snow a good night.

After he left, Emma and Snow joined David and Neal at the table. Unsurprisingly, for the rest of the evening, the main theme of conversation revolved around job vacancies in Storybrooke.

**Maine, 1986**

It was a nice summer day and the Peters decided to spend the afternoon on their yard. The grass was long and unkempt but Emma and Camilla still enjoyed being there. Enjoying their extremely comfortable garden chairs, they watched over the two little girls. Camilla was sitting on the grass, pulling some pieces out in curiosity. Emma was trying to call her sister’s attention by throwing a ball to her, but Camilla kept playing with the grass. Not understanding why she was being ignored, Emma approached Camilla and poked her in the head.

“Emma, leave Camilla alone!” Veronica shouted, quickly getting up from the chair and pulling Emma away from the one-year-old. Ever since Camilla was born, Veronica had become increasingly protective of her and dismissive of Emma.

“You don’t need to yell at her. We’ve talked about this,” Jeremy called her out, watching his wife
take Camilla in her arms and sitting her on her lap as she went back to the chair. Emma sat down on the grass, bored and looking at the three of them.

“She always wants the attention on her!”

“Of course she does, she’s a child!”

While they kept yelling at each other, Emma got up from the floor and walked towards Veronica started pushing Camilla’s arm, “Play wid me!”

“Get away from her!” – Veronica pushed Emma away, her harsh words making Emma take several steps back as she went back to sitting on the grass.

“Emma…” Jeremy called after her, his heart breaking at the way her face had fallen in disappointment at Veronica’s scolding, “Do you really need to talk to her like that?”

At his angry words, Veronica started shaking her head, resting her forehead against Camilla’s hair, “I can’t do this.”

“What are you talking about?” he asked, watching her get up from the chair as she got in the house with Camilla still in her arms. He went after her, not exactly sure what was going through her mind as she paced back and forth in the kitchen.

“I want to send Emma back,” Veronica finally admitted, stopping right in front of him. Her eyes narrowed and her lips pursed slightly before she looked down at the floor.

“What?” Jeremy couldn’t quite believe what he had just heard, but he knew his wife long enough to know that she had meant every word she’d said.

“The only reason why we adopted her in the first place was because I couldn’t get pregnant. But now we have a baby of our own.”

He scoffed in disbelief, slamming his fist on the counter as he squinted his eyes at her, “You can’t be serious.”

“We’re not abandoning her, okay? She’ll go back into the foster system and find a family who truly cares for her.” – the distant way Veronica was talking about Emma, as if she was talking about a lost shoe on a sidewalk or a broken household appliance made his blood boil.

“She’s our daughter,” was the only thing he managed to say. His voice weak, already predicting the worst.

“No. Camilla is our daughter,” Veronica corrected him right away, “You and I both know we should have done this a long time ago.”

“No, don’t put this on me. I never wanted this!”

“If you had agreed to give her back one year ago, we would’ve been better parents to our actual child.”

Jeremy closed his eyes, her words cutting him like razors. He pulled a chair out, slumping his body on it before smacking his palms against his forehead before gaining the strength to whisper, “We already had a child.”

“I don’t want to do this. I won’t do this,” she said in a threatening voice, “It’s either her or us. You
choose.”

Storybrooke – Present Day

After leaving Granny’s, Emma made her way to the station. Talking to her parents and Granny had proved to be extremely productive, her mind a little more at peace for having found such a great solution for Morgana. She just hoped that this wouldn’t come back to bite her in the ass and that the woman was telling the truth. She knew there was a chance that Morgana wasn’t who she said she was, but they would be keeping a close eye on her after this. Even if she ended up being a psychopath, they would be onto her before she even had a chance to do anything.

When she parked the bug in front of the station, she pulled her phone out. She hadn’t talked to Killian about any of this and even though the Sheriff didn’t need to consult the Deputy before making such a dire decision, she still wanted to know what his thoughts were on the matter. Leaning her body against the door of the car, she called him. He had gotten better at working with his cellphone (and by better she meant he now knew how to answer and make phone calls), but he didn’t answer.

After that, Emma tried to call him two other times, telling herself that nothing had happened to him when she got no answer. He probably just didn’t hear her calls, everything was okay. Shaking her head at her negative thoughts, she pondered on whether she should go home or do what she had come here to do. She was pretty certain that Killian wouldn’t be opposed to any of it, but she still didn’t want to do this without his approval. When she had already decided to go home, her phone started ringing, her favorite picture of Killian coming up on the screen.

“Sorry, love, the bloody keys of this talking device don’t seem to work with moist hands. Everything alright?”

She chuckled into the phone, letting him that everything was okay, but that there had been a change of plans. Not wasting another second, she told him all about what she intended to do.

Some minutes later, she was entering the station, turning the lights on as she entered the room. Morgana jumped up in surprise as she gasped, Emma’s unexpected visit startling her.

“Sheriff… I didn’t know you work night shifts,” she said as her eyes examined Emma’s figure approaching the cell.

“I don’t,” Emma clarified, taking the jail keys from out of her pocket before joining her inside the cell. Morgana looked at her as if she had bugs coming out of her ears, her eyes then focusing on the red piece of cloth Emma was holding in her right hand.

“Everything alright?” Morgana asked her, a genuine concern in her voice.

“You said you wanted a job,” – Emma threw at her the red piece of cloth she was holding - “It’s not at the bakery but it’s the next best thing.”

Morgana quickly unfolded the cloth, realizing it was an apron.

“It’s pretty!” she exclaimed with fake enthusiasm, her furrowed eyebrows indicating that she still wasn’t getting what all of that meant.

“Granny is needing a waitress,” – Morgana’s mouth opened as a chill of realization hit her – “If you say you accept the job, you can go,” Emma said, taking a step to the side and leaving the cell door cleared for Morgana to leave.
Morgana froze in her tracks and stared wide-eyed at Emma before she sighed in relief, the corners of her mouth turning up, “Of course I accept the job.”

“Good. You start tomorrow. 8am sharp.”

Morgana then approached Emma, taking her hands in hers as Emma eyes her with reluctance, “You have a good heart. Thank you,” – and then Emma watched her walk out of the cell, not looking back before she disappeared from view.

God, she really hoped she wasn’t going to regret this.

Maine, 1986

Jeremy tapped his feet frantically on the carpeted floor, massaging his temples as he barely registered what the social worker was telling them. He had a vague memory of Veronica getting up from the chair she had been sitting on for the last half an hour, shaking hands with the lady in front of them before making her way to the exit door. The entire time he simply hadn’t been able to stop looking at Emma in the playing area next to them. She’d been playing with a stuffed dinosaur, looking so happy and carefree, believing she was simply waiting for her parents to finish another boring task.

Too lost in thought to follow Veronica, he kept sitting on the chair, propping his elbows up on the desk and resting his head in his palms.

“One again, we’re deeply sorry that Emma wasn’t able to adapt to the newest member of the family,” the social worker said, realizing that he was having a hard time making this decision.

“Please…” he sobbed, slowly taking his hands away from his face, “Just promise me she will be okay. That’s all that I want.”

“We will do our best to find Emma a family, but I can’t promise you something that is out of my control,” - at that, Jeremy gazed longingly at Emma, who was oblivious to what was about to happen - “You can still go back on your decision. I can pretend this has never happened and that these papers were never signed. You can still let her have a chance.”

God, that’s what he wanted the most. He wanted Emma, he wanted to give her the family she deserved, the family she already had. But he couldn’t let Veronica or Camilla go, he just loved them too much. He couldn’t lose them either.

“Jeremy,” Veronica’s demanding voice echoed in the room, reminding him of everything he had to lose if he didn’t get up from that chair.

With tears in his eyes and lips quivering, he looked at Emma one last time, “I’m sorry, Emma.”

And then he left.

They left.

As Emma watched them through the big glass door, confused as to why they were leaving without her, she thought that maybe they were going to get her some ice cream before they finally went home. After all, it was Inspector Gadget day.

Storybrooke – Present Day
As soon as she arrived home, Emma went straight to the kitchen to take her pill. She had always taken it after dinner time, the only downside being that she often forgot to take it when they didn’t have dinner at home.

“Killian?” she called his name while she took a glass out of the cabinet, but heard no answer, which meant he probably hadn’t arrived yet. With her glass still in hand, she started climbing up the stairs, stopping when she reached the top.

“What the hell?” she mumbled to herself as she leaned over to grab what looked like a white piece of paper on the floor. When she turned it over, she realized it was a photograph of her, Neal and her parents. It had been taken not too long ago, the three of them hugging each other tightly over baby Neal’s crib. Emma smiled to herself, letting out a sigh of contentment. Sometimes she still couldn’t believe she had found her real parents and that they had always loved her, even when she thought nobody gave a damn about her.

“Nice photo,” - a voice brought her out of her thoughts as she almost jumped out of her skin.

“Henry… you scared the crap out of me,” she said, relaxing once she realized it was only her son, “I thought you were staying at Regina’s tonight.”

“I was, but baby Robyn’s got head lice and she infested the whole house.”

“Oh no. We need to check your hair right now,” - Emma dropped her glass and the photo over the entryway table, her hands going directly into his shoulders, trying to push him into his bedroom.

“Mom, I’m fine, don’t worry. I’m really tired and I just want to sleep.”

“Henry, you ha-“

“Swan!” Killian’s voice interrupted their conversation, the two of them going quiet as they heard Killian closing the front door downstairs before he kept shouting, “as good as that tiramisu is, you are still my favorite dessert.”

Emma’s eyes shot down to the floor, a flush creeping up her face as she felt Henry’s repulsed gaze on her. She could only hope that Killian would keep his mouth shut until he made his way upstairs. But of course he didn’t.

“Perhaps we can finish what we started this morning before we got rudely interrupted,” - his voice was even louder this time and Emma closed her eyes, embarrassment taking over as she missed the chance to see a very happy Killian climbing up the stairs in a hurry.

He still hadn’t climbed the last flight of stairs when he spotted Henry standing next to Emma, his nose slightly crinkled and eyes squinting in his direction. The color practically drained out of Killian’s face when he realized what Henry had just heard.

“I’m sorry, lad,” was the only thing he managed to say, not wanting to upset the boy even further, “I thought we were alone.”

“Ugh, whatever,” Henry shrugged, disgust still written all over his face, “I don’t know what’s worse: this or the head lice.” – he then went to his bedroom, shutting the door behind him before nodding at them, “Good night.”

“Good night, kid,” Emma said, her cheeks still pink from embarrassment.
“My apologies, love. I thought the boy was staying at Regina’s,” Killian lamented, following Emma into their bedroom.

“Yeah, it looks like a head lice infestation changed his mind,” – Emma explained as she started taking the two decorative pillows off the bed and turned back the navy blue white striped bedspread – “But maybe we should leave the innuendos and the sex talk for when we’re completely sure we’re alone, just in case.”

“Aye. Better safe than sorry,” he agreed, pushing the covers back, “How was it with Morgana?”

“She accepted the job. I just hope this is really the best thing to do,” she sighed, her body slumping into the mattress.

“If she’s nothing but a lonely soul looking for occupation, you will have done the right thing and feel good about yourself,” he reassured her, taking his vest off and grabbing their pillows from the closet.

“And if she’s a psychopath who wants to kill us all?”

“We’ll deal with her later.”

The downtown streets were practically empty, Morgana’s footsteps the only sounds echoing about. The night was cold, the light coming from the street lamps enshrouded with an eerie glow as she kept walking through the lonely street.

Spotting Granny’s diner from afar, Morgana spotted the old woman still inside, sweeping the floor. Deciding to take her chances, she crossed the street and walked up the stairs to what she had concluded was Storybrooke’s favorite meeting place.

Not expecting anymore guests past closing time, the tinkle of the doorbell startled Granny and she suddenly pulled the broom up in the air, ready to use it as a weapon.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to scare you,” Morgana told her as she raised her hands in peace, “I’m Morgana. Emma Swan… the sheriff said that you needed a waitress.”

Granny put the broom down, realization hitting her face right away as she recalled her conversation with the Charming clan earlier that night.

“I do. The other girl who was here said she loved us and her job, but at the first chance she got, she quit. Left us all hanging,” Granny muttered as she went back to sweeping the floor, “And this stays between us, but I heard she’s doing nothing now. Or at least nothing productive or useful to society. I’ll never get these people who quit jobs they claim to love to do nothing instead.”

“It’s truly a shame,” Morgana nodded in agreement, trying to say what Granny was expecting to hear.

“Anyway, sorry, dear, but we only open tomorrow morning.”

“Oh, I know. I just wanted to thank you. For giving me this opportunity.”

“You’d better show you deserve it.”

After wishing Granny a good night, Morgana left the diner. When she was certain there was no one watching her, a triumphant smile flashed across her face. Her plan was starting to get on track and she would finally be able to do what she’d been longing to do for a very long time.
“Thank you, Emma Swan.”
Two of a Kind

Chapter Summary

In Enchanted Forest flashbacks, an unlikely friendship blossoms between two young girls with nothing in common. In Storybrooke, while Snow White and Prince Charming welcome a new enigmatic couple in town, Emma struggles to find a balance between her personal and professional life.

Chapter Notes

This chapter includes many flashbacks related to new characters. With this being a Captain Swan story, these flashbacks featuring other characters will ALWAYS be relevant/connected to Emma, Killian and their storylines so I advise readers to keep track of all the information the flashbacks provide.

“Mom, you do know I’m old enough to take care of my hair, right?” Henry’s slightly annoyed tone barely noticeable to Emma as she went through his wet hair, tweezers in hand in case they were needed. She had managed to wake up earlier than usual to buy a specific product to kill head lice.

“Sorry kid, but not when you have lice. Hold on a second, I’m almost done.”

“It’s ironic how magic can destroy powerful sorcerers but not kill bugs.”

“It’s a parasite, actually.”

“Did you ever have them?”

“Having lived on the streets and in orphanages for most of my life, those little guys were practically my best friends,” - as soon as her answer left her mouth, Henry cringed, realizing how dumb his question had been, but it was too late now. Thankfully, his mom hadn’t seemed too bothered by it.

“Sorry, that was a stupid question.”

“That’s okay,” Emma said, squinting at a tiny, white speck on his hair before trying to remove it with the tweezers, “the good part is that I now know exactly how to kill these bastard boys.”

Henry laughed at her sudden change of vocabulary, “people swear all the time at school, mom. Besides, I’m almost 14. I can handle it.”

“You turned 13 last week,” she muttered matter-of-factly as she playfully messed up his hair before getting back to using the tweezers to get the suckers out.

“Ow, that hurts!”

“Sorry,” she apologized, “just think about the waffles you’re about to eat.”
“Waffles, really?!”

“Yup. Killian’s cooking them for breakfast,” – Emma then took the hair dryer from one of the cabinets and plugged it into the outlet. His hair needed to be dry for the product to work.

When they finally climbed down the stairs, leaving behind a bathroom filled with the lemony fragrance of the head lice killer, they found Killian already sitting in one of the kitchen chairs. The table was all set, but there were no waffles anywhere to be seen.

Emma and Henry’s disappointed expressions were so evident that Killian got up from his chair right away as he started justifying himself, “I read the carton, Swan, and those bloody things have a ridiculous amount of sugar. It’s as if you’re ingesting poison on the first and most important meal of the day.”

At that, Emma and Henry shared a knowing look. Being married to Killian was easy, but their absolute opposite views on healthy eating habits was proving to be a major pain in the ass.

Uttering an exasperated sigh, Henry moved to sit in one of the chairs as Emma grabbed Killian’s arm and pulled him aside.

“I asked you specifically to cook the waffles,” – the annoyed tone in her voice let him know right away that she wasn’t too happy with his insistence on making porridge for breakfast instead.

“I know, love, but I told you –“

“Yes, I know they’re a sugar bomb but Henry really loves them and they’re really good and,” - she was almost out of breath by now, pausing to think about what to say next – “he has lice!”

“I’m failing to understand your logic, Swan,” he said, tilting his head and furrowing his brows in at him.

“I wanted to give him a treat, to make him happy,” she blurted out, hoping that would be enough of an explication, but seeing he kept sending her way a confused look, it clearly wasn’t, “because he has six-legged parasites clawed to his scalp sucking the blood out of him.”

“And eating waffles makes them stop?”

“No! But it makes him happy.”

“So eating unhealthy food serves as consolation for having insects in his hair?”

“Yes!”

Killian looked away from her, his lips pursed together as he struggled to make sense of their exchange, “food is simply food. It shouldn’t be a reward or a consolation prize.”

“Okay, fine, I’ll remember that next time you’re devouring a tiramisu,” Emma bit back as she crossed her arms in a defensive pose.

“I don’t consider eating tiramisu a reward.”

“I… ugh”- she wanted to say something more, but she suddenly stopped, shaking her head and thinking there was no point, “okay, here’s the thing, the next time I ask you to cook something in specific, can you please just do it? We can have your healthy meal on the next day.”

Not really believing he would ever understand her train of thought, Killian simply nodded at her,
guiding her back to the kitchen table so they could eat.

“So how’s your head, my boy?” Killian asked, pouring some orange juice in Henry’s glass.

“Bitten.”

“Well, not for too long. You should be okay by tomorrow,” Emma reassured him, putting a spoon of porridge in her mouth.

“You should have just washed his hair with rum, Swan. The nasty little things would be gone in a second.”

---

**Enchanted Forest - 238 years ago**

Sitting on the top of a hill, the Grammar School overlooked the entire village below, strategically positioned to keep the lower classes and the peasants away from its surroundings. A privilege only for sons of wealthy families, the school was mainly composed of boys with fancy clothes (and less than stellar manners) and three young girls who had been fortunate enough to have influential fathers who had convinced the monks to accept them in their grammar, logic and rhetoric classes.

Every day the students had a total of two recesses, where they could use the school’s vast courtyard for their playtime. The monks had established strict rules for boys and girls, keeping both genders separated: the girls should spend recess in a small space on the right side of the courtyard as the rest belonged to the boys.

Anne, one of the three young girls, sat in one of the old benches near the wooden palisade delimiting the area around the yard, her eyes fixed on the boys running after a rag ball on the other side of the field. Never one to abide by rules, the 12 year-old was always trying to find ways to sneak into the boys’ area so that she could play with them. To her, running after a ball was infinitely better than playing with dolls. As soon as she spotted one of the monks turning his back on them, the girl jumped from the bench and started running in the boys’ direction until she joined them in running after the ball. They never welcomed her, not shy in letting her know that her presence wasn’t wanted.

“We don’t want you here.”

“You’re a girl, go away.”

“You don’t belong here.”

But none of that had ever stopped her. Her mother had taught her to always fight for what she wants and what she wanted was to simply play with the boys. She didn’t understand why she couldn’t be there and she would keep insisting until they finally accepted her.

“We won’t play until you leave!” one of the boys with ginger hair shouted at her as the others did as he said and stopped running after the ball.

“You only want me to leave because you know I’m better than you,” Anne said, her voice reeking with confidence as she crossed her arms over her chest.

“Shut up!” - her words clearly affected the ginger boy, who was now trying to push the girl off their playing area. When she was about to return the boy’s push, one of the monks stopped her,
separating the two right away. After yelling at her for having broken the rules, the monk dragged her to the table where the other two girls were playing with their dolls.

Sighing in frustration, Anne dropped her head in her hands as she stared blankly at part of the palisade in the distance. It was only when she spotted another girl looking at her through the other side of the fence that she set herself straight, wanting to better inspect the unfamiliar girl. She was dressed in rags and her mouth was set in a hard line, a blatant sadness in her expressions. Curious as always, Anne got up from the table, keen on making her way to the palisade and talk to the other girl. Before she could take one step further, the monk ordered them inside, his threatening eyes falling on the girl, not having yet forgotten her earlier trespass.

Knowing she had already gotten herself in enough trouble for the day, Anne decided to obey, turning her back to the girl who was still staring at her from the other side. Whoever she was, she would have to wait.

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

“Have you brought your lunch?” Killian asked Henry, looking at the dark blue schoolbag the boy was carrying. After breakfast, Killian had volunteered to take Henry to the school bus station and they were now waiting for it to arrive.

“I do. I wouldn’t forget it when mom bought me scones.”

“Aye, she woke up quite early to get them and that lice liquid for you,” Killian added, knowing Henry would understand that waking up early to buy him whatever he needed was a very serious proof of Emma’s love for him.

“I know, mom’s awesome,” Henry said, just seconds before the school bus arrived and stopped in front of them, “bye, Killian!”

“Have a good day, lad,” – Killian’s voice was barely a whisper as he watched Henry get in. When the school bus left, Killian stood still in the same place, his eyes following the vehicle disappearing in the distance while his mind went somewhere else. Watching Emma and Henry’s close bond warmed his heart in a rather strange way that he could barely explain, but at the same time he would find himself consumed by a wave of sadness.

Whenever he saw Emma kissing Henry on the cheek before he went to bed, or when she playfully ruffled Henry’s dark locks, or when she agreed to watch the movie she knew he wanted to see (even when she actually preferred another one), Killian couldn’t help but be reminded that he had never known what a mother’s love was like. He had never been fortunate to have a loving and caring mother who let him know he was her whole world, that she would do anything for him. He had never known that kind of love and, as much as he tried to ignore it, that scar remained with him.

It was only when the town clock’s chimes brought him out of his daze that he remembered it was time to start his daily patrol as Storybrooke’s deputy. Shoving his hand in his pocket, he turned around and started walking, determined to push away from his mind thoughts of his long lost mother. He had a wonderful life now and he wasn’t going to allow himself to waste time thinking about people who weren’t worthy of his attention.

Emma looked at the watch on her wrist and she cursed to herself. It was 8:15 and she still wanted to
pay Belle a visit at the library before going to the station. After dropping all the dirty dishes on the sink, she grabbed her jacket and her keys and put her boots on. When she opened her door to leave, ready for another day of work, she found a pair of light green eyes staring at her.

“Morgana?” – Emma’s eyes widened when she spotted the woman on her front porch, looking like a deer caught in the headlights as soon as she heard Emma’s voice.

“I… uh…” Morgana muttered, blinking her eyes a couple of times, her cheeks flushing in response to Emma’s weary gaze, “I was just about to knock.”

“Do you need something?” Emma asked her, locking the door behind her before climbing down the porch steps to get Morgana to accompany her.

“I wanted to thank you again,” – Morgana then handed her a small white box – “they’re muffins. They used to be my specialty back in my land, albeit with a different name.”

“Oh… thanks.”

“Are you going to the station right now? Perhaps we could go together,” Morgana suggested as a delighted smile lit up her face.

“No, I actually have to go somewhere else first,” – Emma quickly shut her down – “but thanks for the muffins.”

“Oh, okay,” Morgana said, nodding her head as her eyes fixed on the white fence gate, “Well, I’ll see you at Granny’s.”

As Emma watched her leave, a sudden shiver ran through her body. There was something still not quite right with this lady.

Enchanted Forest - 238 years ago

Another day, another recess she had to spend watching the boys having fun as Anne almost died of boredom. Taking yet another chance, the young girl ran from one side of the courtyard to the other, hoping this time the boys wouldn’t push her away.

She was wrong.

As soon as she got near them, the boys stopped playing and started taunting her again.

“Go away!” the ginger boy shouted at her with an anger in his eyes she hadn’t yet seen. Before she could do anything, he started kicking her as she groaned in pain, the rest of the boys surrounding her and laughing at her.

Just when Anne was about to defend herself, the ginger boy stopped kicking her. His whole body was shaking and he fell to the ground before the inexplicable happened: his screams of horror echoed in the courtyard while the lower part of his body started dissolving into gooey, blue and green scales. The rest of the boys ran away, crying out in shock, but the girl froze in her place, feeling as though she was unable to move and do nothing but watch the boy’s legs and feet turn into a merman tail. It was only when one of the monks dragged her away from near the boy’s body that Anne spotted the same girl from the day before on the other side of the fence. She looked scared, panic swirling in her eyes the moment she realized Anne had seen her. Anne started walking in the
“Emma, hi!” Belle greeted Emma, watching her entering the library with a couple of books in her hand.

“Hey, how are you doing?” Emma asked as she approached Belle behind the counter, spotting Gideon sitting on his baby chair next to Belle, “How are you two doing?”

“So so. Lots of sleepless nights.”

“I can only imagine,” Emma said as she waved at baby Gideon who was currently smiling at her. Who knew just some months before his grown up version had actually tried to kill her? It all sounded so insane now.

“How’s Killian? And Henry? I haven’t seen them in a while” – ever since the Final Battle, the things between Emma, Killian, Belle and Rumple had been a little awkward. Killian and Belle maintained their friendship, but with Belle taking care of Gideon and Killian becoming the new deputy, they hadn’t spent as much time together as before. Emma had thought more than once about inviting Belle to come over for dinner, but she probably wouldn’t accept to go without Rumple and inviting him over simply wasn’t an option. So lately it felt as though they were in this kind of weird limbo, not really knowing how to handle that situation.

“They’re fine. Killian is doing his morning patrol, so I’m the one returning these,” Emma answered, stacking the books her husband had borrowed on the counter.

“He read them all already?” Belle wondered as she read the titles to confirm they were the same ones Killian had borrowed just a week ago.

“Trust me, he’s a fast reader.”

“That’s really impressive. Not even Rumple is that fast and he’s” — the words died down on Belle’s lips as she hesitated, knowing very well that Rumple and his darkness had become somewhat of a taboo subject for them — “a dark one.”

Emma nodded in response, not knowing what else to say. Yes, Belle’s husband was still the most powerful dark one of all dark ones to have ever dark oned, what was she supposed to say? She still didn’t trust the guy and she never would for as long as the darkness was in him.

“How are things going between you two?” Emma decided to ask, still wanting to know if Belle was okay.

“We’re… good. I know Rumple is still Rumple, but he’s been very sweet lately. I really want to believe Gideon has changed him.”

“As long as you and Gideon are happy…” – Emma didn’t finish her sentence, knowing that Belle would understand that no one would judge her for staying with Rumple as long as he didn’t hurt her or their child. For Emma, it was simply impossible to pretend that he had never tried to kill her, Killian and everybody else she loved multiple times in the past, and without ever showing any ounce of regret for it. She had learnt her lesson over and over again: never trust Rumplestiltskin. But for everyone’s sake, she really hoped that this time Belle was right.

The morning patrol had quickly become a habit Killian had grown deeply fond of. The mornings were usually quiet in Storybrooke, with most residents about to open their businesses and on their
way to work. A vast majority of the people would nod at him with a smile on their faces, letting him know that they not only accepted him as the deputy, but also recognized his authority. It was a feeling that never failed to uplift his spirits, taking him back to the time when he was one of the most respected sea captains. But unlike before, he hadn’t needed to resort to violence or other gruesome methods to impose respect. No, this time around, he had actually earned it, simply by having chosen to become a better man and to atone for his past mistakes.

When there were no signs of any problems, he started making his way to the station, but the unexpected feel of someone pushing his shoulder had him quickly turning around, his hook up in the air, ready to fight. Just when he was expecting to find some bizarre monster or creature, as it was usually common in Storybrooke, he saw a tall man he had never seen before standing in front of him.

“I… He…” the man gasped as he tried to speak and catch his breath at the same time.

“Calm down, mate,” Killian said as he watched the man bending to rest his hands on his knees, “What happened?”

“A woman tried to rob me! She ran in that direction,” the man answered, pointing towards the street that led to the docks.

“Do you know who she is?”

“No. She… She was wearing a blue dress.”

Hoping he would still be able to find the woman somewhere, Killian took off running towards the street the man had pointed to, but he had no such luck. There was no one in sight.

“Sorry, mate, I’m afraid we’ll have to file a report at the station,” Killian informed in his best deputy voice when he made his way back to the man.

“No, please, there’s no need. She took nothing from me and I’m in a hurry.”

“So you don’t want to press charges?”

“Ugh…” – Killian looked reluctantly at the man, who all of a sudden seemed agitated, his gaze fixed on a black car passing by – “no, there’s no need. But thank you for your help, deputy.”

And then, just as quickly as he had appeared, the man started walking away in a hurried step, leaving a rather puzzled Killian behind. The people in this town were progressively getting madder.

The first thing Emma did when she arrived at the station was to examine the box Morgana had given her. She couldn’t deny that the muffins smelled delicious and resisting the urge to eat the things was going to be particularly difficult, especially after a breakfast of porridge. However, no matter how much her stomach tried to control her brain, she wasn’t going to be dumb to the point to eat right away something a stranger (and a suspicious one at that) had given her.

Carefully opening the box, a rich fragrance of raisins flew in the hair as she crinkled her nose in distaste – she had always hated raisins – before she peeked inside. Were those… oatmeal and raisin muffins? Bringing the box closer to her nose, she almost rolled her eyes when her suspicions were confirmed. Of course they were oatmeal and raisin muffins. Because God forbid she ate anything unhealthy these days. Taking one muffin out of the box, she took a small bite at first, wanting to be sure that they were safe to eat and weren’t poisoned or something.

Sitting on the chair of her office, Emma decided to get some work done while she waited to see if
she felt anything unusual. After ten minutes of waiting, nothing seemed to be wrong with her. She felt good and perfectly normal.

“Good morning, Sheriff,” Killian greeted her with fake cordiality as he walked through the opened door of her office.

Emma wasn’t sure if she was more sensitive to smells today, but as soon as he got in, all her nose seemed able to register was Killian’s delicious scent: a mix of leather, crisp, salty air and a spicy hint of citrus of the cologne she had bought him months ago. She was unable to fight against the sudden urge to close her eyes and breathe in the familiar odor she loved so much, a whimper escaping her lips before she could quell it.

“Swan?” – Killian asked, his eyebrow shooting up at her in curiosity. The slight concern she sensed in his voice had her opening her eyes and her heart skipped a beat when she took in his appearance. She had already seen him today, but there was something to him now that made him even more irresistible. He had left his leather jacket on the coat rack outside the office and his vest was unbuttoned (something he had grown to do whenever they were alone at the station, claiming he could move more freely). Her eyes then fell on the dark red shirt he was wearing and the mesmerizing way it hugged his lean torso, exposing a small amount of chest hair that insisted on peeking out from under the collar and… was it just her or was it getting really hot in there?

Emma could see Killian’s lips moving as he approached her, but she wasn’t listening to anything he was saying, focusing instead on his very kissable mouth as she fantasized about grabbing his face in her hands and french kiss the hell out of him. Her cheeks flushed when her thoughts quickly became even more obscene, her body going numb all over from the familiar tingling sensation that needled at her from underneath her skin. Heat coiled in the pit of her stomach when she caught a glimpse of his tongue darting out to wet his lips. She had no idea what he was doing at this point and she didn’t really care. All she cared about was the sudden rush running though her body, an incessant need to have him becoming her number one priority. She just really needed to fuck him. Right here, right now.

“Swan, are you –“ she didn’t’ let him finish, pulling him down by the lapels of his shirt and smashing her lips against his, her tongue plunging forcefully into his mouth as Killian moaned in response. Before he had a chance to return the kiss, she got up from the chair, an undeniable glow of arousal in her eyes.

By now, Killian was quite familiar with the many different versions of a libidinous Emma, but he had never seen this one in particular. There was a confident sway to her hips as she made him walk backwards, unbuttoning his shirt in the process. His mouth went dry when Emma let her fingers brush against his crotch, feeling himself stiffen at her touch. He opened his mouth to say something, but before he could even mutter a word, her hands traveled up his body, her nails softly scratching the skin exposed by his now fully unbuttoned shirt.

“Fuck me,” she whispered with a husky voice, making them both walk out of the office before gently pushing him against the fire escape door. She knew no one would find them there since they were the only ones with the keys. Groaning in response to her hunger, Killian pulled her body towards him, her happy shrieks echoing in the station as he opened the door behind them and pulled them inside.

---

*Enchanted Forest - 238 years ago*
The mysterious girl was nowhere to be seen for the rest of the day. Anne had paid close attention to the same spot on the other side of the fence where she had seen the girl, but she had no such luck. Something about the girl had intrigued her, she was almost certain she had been the one responsible for what happened to the ginger boy. As she wondered about who the girl could be, Anne saw her father, William, walking through the school’s wooden gate with Father Lancaster by his side. What was he doing there? The school day wasn’t over yet.

The monk’s simple, brown robe contrasted with the opulent linen suit Anne’s father was wearing, making it rather obvious the two men belonged to different social classes. Anne watched as they walked towards her, lost in conversation as her father shook her head at whatever the monk was telling him. When she noticed the angry glare her father was sending her way, she realized that she was in trouble. The monk had probably told him about her lack of discipline. Again.

Shrinking back into her seat, Anne prepared for what was to come: an endless roar of shouts and yells about how she was dishonoring the family and his good name. He was always saying the same entitled things over and over again. So when the monk left and her father walked towards the table she was sitting in, she told herself she wasn’t going to be afraid of him and of the awful things he was going to say to her.

“I expected you to have listened to Father Lancaster the last time,” her father bellowed as he kneeled in front of her and took his silk top hat off, “my darling, you are part of high-class society, you shall not behave like an uneducated peasant.”

“I just wanted to play with the boys, father.”

“Boys and girls are not allowed to play together.”

“But why not?”

“Because that is the rule, Anne,” he said in a snarl, scowling at her.

“But –“

“You must not question it, you must obey! You will not shame me nor our family name” – she could feel his fury as he slammed his fist against the table - “You will do as you are told. Because that is how a princess would behave.”

At that, Anne narrowed her eyes at him, “but I’m not a princess.”

“You will be someday,” he said confidently as he stood up and put his hat on, “I hope it’s the last time your insolence interrupts my working commitments. If not, I’ll have great pleasure disposing of those silly books you are so fond of.”

Tears started forming in her eyes as she thought about losing the one thing she kept from her mother, but she wouldn’t allow herself to cry in front of him. He wasn’t worth it. Sometimes she wished she had never been born in a wealthy family, perhaps then her father wouldn’t have this obsession of turning her into a flawless princess.

She watched as William walked away, greeting every monk he met on his way out. Of course. As her mother used to say, he had been a bootlicker and a coward his whole life.

William had grown up in a small, quiet village to a very humble family. He had always been a shy, insecure and morose kid who was made fun of because of his slightly awkward behavior, but anyone who actually got to meet him was surprised to see how ambitious he was. For a long time, he struggled to find the success he had always strived for, his need to reach the top and to become a
respected and accomplished noble man turning into his main goal. He quickly let money and recognition get to his head, turning into a conceited, egotistical and shallow man hungry for status and power. There was simply one problem: no matter how much he accomplished, his old insecurities would never leave him. He was still someone with no backbone because he sought validation from anyone who could help him climb up the social ladder, wanting to please the right people around him. Plenty of ill-informed people who didn’t truly know William, blinded by their own low-key disturbing admiration for the humble village kid who had made it big, failed to see how much he had changed and kept kissing the floor he walked on, but those who knew him were entirely aware of the attention seeking man he truly had become.

Greeting all the monks on his way out with a fake smile plastered on his face was simply a game of appearances. The clergy was powerful and it was in William’s best interests to be on the monks’ good side.

When Anne’s eyes were following her father’s body disappearing in the distance, she suddenly caught a glimpse of someone hiding behind one of the trees on the other side of the fence. Something told her that she knew exactly who it was. Looking around to make sure none of the monks were paying attention to her, she walked towards the fence. Once there, she spotted the same girl from before, curled up in a ball as she sat on one of the big roots of the tree.

“Hi,” Anne said and her voice startled the girl who instinctively stood up and hid even more behind the tree, “You don’t have to be afraid. I’m not going to hurt you.”

The girl stood still, slowly peeking her head from behind the tree. Anne could see the look of fear in her eyes as she was clearly reluctant to move.

“I’m Anne,” she insisted to see if she could get the girl to trust her, “would you like to play with us? I could help you get to this side.”

Anne could swear she saw the girl giving her a half-smile, but just when the girl was about to move from behind the tree, Father Lancaster called out Anne’s name, oblivious to the other girl’s presence. Anne quickly turned to look in his direction, worried that she was going to be scolded again, but all he did was shout at her to go inside. When Anne turned back around, she found no one hiding behind the tree. She had ran away again. If only she had seen the girl sooner.

---

**Storybrooke – Present Time**

Emma didn’t know how any of this had happened. When she hired Killian as her deputy, she promised to herself that they would always be professional and would never ever, ever have sex while on duty. And yet here they were, fixing themselves after a nice romp at the top of the station’s indoor emergency stairs. At freaking nine o’clock in the morning.

“I don’t know what’s gotten into me,” Emma said in a low voice as she closed the fire escape door behind her, “we can’t let this happen again.”

“We? I played a rather passive role in all of this, love,” Killian teased, feigning offense.

“I don’t think passive is a word that can be used to describe what just happened there,” – Emma looked at him over her shoulder, trying to fight the amused smile that started forming on her face – “But I’m serious, Killian. As much as I love this and don’t regret it for a second, it’s really unprofessional.”
“Love, we’re still responsible adults doing their job. We’re hardly the first people to have –“

“Hi, honey! Hi, Killian!” Snow’s voice had Killian shutting up right away as the two of them stared awkwardly at Snow, David and the two strangers that had just walked in. Her parents and their amazing timing should be a case study, Emma thought to herself.

“You again, mate?” Killian’s inquisitive look fell on the man standing next to David. It was the same strange man from earlier that morning. He appeared to be calmer by now as he held hands with a woman neither Killian nor Emma had ever seen before. She had long dark brown hair and her sea blue eyes attentively perused Emma and Killian. A cold shiver ran down Emma’s body as soon as their eyes met, but the woman quickly looked away.

“It seems Ethel and Scott are two more victims of Hyde. We found them outside looking for Hook,” David clarified, introducing the strangers to his daughter and son-in-law.

“My husband would like to apologize for what happened this morning,” Ethel said as she gripped Scott’s hand even tighter.

“Yes, I’m sorry if I made you feel as though you were wasting your time, Deputy. I was very nervous and not thinking clearly,” Scott added.

Not understanding one bit of what they were talking about, Emma looked questioningly at Killian, hoping for a clarification. Never one to ignore his wife’s requests, Killian explained that weird incident during his patrol and how the woman who had attempted to rob Scott still hadn’t been caught.

“Can you give us a detailed description of this woman?” Emma asked Scott as she took a blank piece of paper out of a drawer, preparing to write down any information he could give them.

“I can try, but it was all so sudden… I remember she was wearing a blue dress. And her light brown hair was tied back in a ponytail,” – at the mention of light brown hair, Emma’s eyes shot up, fearing the worst. She kept asking Scott for more details, but he didn’t remember anything too relevant.

“Okay, there isn’t much else we can do now. If we do get this woman, we may have to ask you to come back here to confirm she was the one who tried to rob you,” Emma said, crossing her arms and leaning her butt against the desk.

“Honey, I was thinking,” – Snow then approached Emma, “perhaps we could help Scott, Ethel and everyone in the same situation go back home. We could use Anton’s magic beans.”

“That’s very kind of you, but Scott and I are actually thinking of staying in Storybrooke, if that’s okay,” Ethel said, reacting to Snow’s proposition.

“No, of course not! You’re welcome to stay,” Snow reassured her, not wanting her to think she wanted them both out of town.

As they the rest of them kept talking, Emma was lost in deep thought, oblivious to the stolen glances Ethel kept taking at Killian.

Working at Granny’s was more stressful than Morgana had expected. There were always plenty of clients and endless orders to take care of.

“Table 9, sister,” Granny told her, handing her a pen and a notepad.
“Thanks,” she nodded at Granny as she searched for table 9. Everything was still pretty new to her and she still wasn’t very familiar with the diner.

“That’s table 9,” Granny said, pointing to the table that Belle and Rumple had just sat in. Once Morgana saw them, she dropped her notepad, a soft gasp escaping her mouth, “You alright, dear?”

Morgana didn’t answer right away, her mouth still gaping open as she kept staring at the table and its occupants before she quickly picked the notepad from the floor and laughed, “yes. I’m so clumsy. It must be first day nerves!”

Adjusting her skirt, she walked towards the table, determined to act as normally as she possibly could. When she got to them, she leered at Rumple, almost as if she was challenging him.

“Are you here to stare at us or to take our orders?” Rumple sneered, not quite enjoying Morgana’s assertive gaze. It was only at his remark that Morgana realized she was being too obvious. If any of what she had planned was ever going to work, she had to look as if she didn’t know much about the man in front of her.

“Sorry. What can I get you?” she asked as her eyes traveled to Belle and baby Gideon before she wrote down their order, trying to control her trembling hand the best she could.

A couple of minutes later, she came back with their French toast, a cup of white tea for Rumple and coffee for Belle.

“Enjoy your meal,” Morgana said with a smile, but waited until they started eating. Her eyes followed every single movement of Rumple, watching him take a sip of his tea. Belle practically jumped from her seat when Rumple suddenly spit part of the tea on the table as he calmly turned his face to Morgana.

“Who put pepper on my tea?”

“I’m so sorry,” Morgana apologized as she started cleaning the table, “I must have mixed up the jars and put pepper instead of cinnamon.”

“I didn’t ask for cinnamon either,” – Rumple pointed out as he started wondering if the woman had done this on purpose.

“Rumple, it’s okay,” Belle tried to break the tension that had settled between Morgana and her husband, “could you please bring him another cup of tea?”

“Of course, I’m sorry,” – Morgana grabbed the cup of tea and dropped it on the sink behind the counter.

“If I were you, I wouldn’t upset that one,” Granny advised, looking at her over her shoulder.

“So I heard…” Morgana muttered, her lips curving upwards in a victorious smile when she was sure no one else could see it.

---

*Enchanted Forest - 238 years ago*

Anne had to react quickly. She had been waiting for the girl next to the fence, but when she finally arrived and saw Anne waiting for her, she turned around and started running. Anne could make out
her body becoming progressively smaller as she ran deeper into the woods. Without thinking twice, she nimbly jumped to the other side of the fence, running after the girl and trying her best to go unnoticed. After running for a little while, careful not to step on any prominent tree roots that could make her fall, she hid behind a couple of bushes as the other girl sat down by a giant rock. Anne had no idea where they were, but the place was absolutely beautiful. The end of the tall cedar trees all around opened up into a secluded lake. The water was impressively still and she could make out the black shapes of fish moving in it. As she got closer, Anne realized that the rock the girl was sitting on was just above the water, the familiar position she found the girl in letting her know that it wasn’t the first time she was there.

Anne stood there for a while, part of her was afraid that the girl would do something to her, but another part of her was curious to know more about her, almost as if she sensed the girl needed help.

“Do you like water too?” Anne eventually asked, deciding that she hadn’t come this far to not say anything. The girl jumped in surprise at hearing Anne’s voice, observing her carefully and trying to see if she was a threat. After some seconds of close visual inspection, the girl stood still on the rock and simply nodded her head in response.

“We could do something,” Anne carried on, picking some stones up from the lakefront, “like this” and then she threw one of the stones into the water, skimming the silver-blue water three times. The girl watched almost in awe, a shy smile gracing her lips.

“How do you do that?” the girl finally asked, the first words Anne ever heard her utter.

“My mother taught me. You need a flat, round stone. You try it,” Anne said, joining the girl on the rock and offering her the stone in her hand as she started exemplifying with another stone she was still holding, “put your finger here, on the edge of the stone. Now throw it as far away as you can.”

The girl did as Anne said, but her stone sank right away.

“I can’t do it,” the girl sighed as she got up and prepared to leave.

“And you’re going to give up without trying again?” Anne’s insistence had the girl looking back at her, finding Anne with her arm stretched, offering her another stone, “my mother used to always tell me that the moment you stop trying is the moment you start failing.”

The girl looked reluctantly at Anne but she eventually picked the stone from Anne’s hand and tried again, smiling from one ear to another when the stone skimmed once.

“See, that was better!”

“Thank you,” the girl said, eyes still on the ripples of the water’s surface where her stone had fallen.

“I do love water,” she said after some seconds of silence, answering Anne’s initial question.

“I do too. I’m going to have my own ship someday.”

The girl laughed in response, “A ship?”

“Yes. I will travel the world on it, find the most brilliant treasures and explore unknown places. That’s what I have always fancied to do.”

“Like a pirate?”

“Perhaps.”
“Are you sure?” Emma asked into the phone as Killian’s divided his attention between Emma’s conversation with Granny and the files he had looking at, “Okay, thanks.”

“The woman who tried to rob Scott couldn’t have been Morgana,” Emma told Killian as she put her phone down on the desk, “Granny says she was already at the diner by the time the mystery woman tried to rob the guy.”

“Back at square one, it seems.”

“Yeah. Why am I not surprised?” Emma sighed in frustration as Killian got up from his desk to take other files from one of the file cabinets.

“Some kind soul offered us little cakes?” he asked, taking a peek at the box on top of the cabinet.

“They’re called muffins,” Emma chuckled, correcting him, “Morgana went by the house this morning as I was leaving. They’re totally safe, you can eat them, if you want to.”

“I figured it had to have been a gift. I would have found it highly unlikely if you had purchased oatmeal cakes.”

Emma playfully rolled her eyes, “Yeah, you’ll love them, they’re super healthy.”

“And bloody delicious too,” Killian said after taking a bite.

“There’s still something about her that doesn’t really feel right. But I don’t know if I’m just being paranoid, because I got suspicious of Ethel and Scott, too.”

“Aye, he appears to be a very awkward man,” Killian agreed.

“And she seemed really uptight and…formal, I don’t know.”

Killian’s gaze fell on her and he studied her for a second before he put his muffin down, and walked towards her desk, pulling a chair and sitting next to her.

“What’s bothering you, Swan?” Emma smiled to herself, he really could read her like an open book.

“It’s just… After everything we went through, I feel like something bad is always about to happen. I see threats everywhere, it’s ridiculous!”

“It’s not ridiculous, love,” he reassured her in that soothing voice of his that always managed to calm her down.

“But it’s stupid because of course not every single new person in town is a mighty villain who wants to kill me or those I love.”

“With Storybrooke’s track record, I don’t think anyone could blame you for thinking that.”

“I know, but I hate feeling like this. It’s as if I’m always on the edge and expecting the worst,” she sighed, letting a momentary wave of sadness affect her as Killian put his arm around her, trying to comfort her as best as he could.

“Why don’t you talk to Archie again? He helped you quite a lot when you were having those bloody visions.”
“I’ve thought about that,” Emma confessed, resting her head on his shoulder, “I think I will.”

Killian could tell that Emma was about to say something else, but her phone started ringing, interrupting their conversation. He watched as Emma uttered nothing more than happy “uh-huh’s”, “great’s” and “thank you’s”, a beaming smile on her face throughout the entire phone call.

When she hung up, he was about to ask her what had happened, but before he could say a thing, she was pulling him off the chair with an excitement he didn’t witness often.

“C’mon, let’s go!”

“Go where?,” Killian said, a little confused with what was happening.

“I have a surprise for you,” she whispered in between giggles, wiggling her eyebrows at him. If there was something she felt certain of was that he was going to love what they would be doing next.

With one hand covering Killian’s eyes, Emma opened the door to the street, carefully guiding him outside.

“We should try this more often, Swan,” he said, fully trusting Emma to take him where she wanted. He could hear the seagulls crying and the faint sounds of footsteps in the distance. They were definitely outside now.

“Just keep your eyes closed, don’t peep,” Emma said, taking her hand away from his eyes so she could take the cover off her surprise, “Alright, you can open them.”

Killian furrowed his eyebrows as looked everywhere, trying to find something worthy of a surprise, but all he could see was Emma’s yellow contraption parked in front of them. He suddenly felt really awkward. His Swan had prepared him a surprise and he couldn’t even identify it.

“Sorry, love, but I think I’m missing something,” he said, feeling embarrassed.

“The car is the surprise,” and that left Killian even more confused, if that was possible.

Emma grabbed his hand and dropped the car keys in it, “Get in,” she insisted, nodding her head in the car’s direction as she smiled at him. He did as he was told, still not sure what she was trying to do.

She opened the passenger door and sat on the seat as she waited for him to get to the other side and slide into the driver’s seat. Once inside, he noticed there was a control column and a knob fitted to the steering wheel. Emma could tell by the hilarious expressions on his face that he was trying to be graceful, but he also looked like he had seen a pig flying because he had no idea what was the purpose of any of those things.

“Remember how you once said you’d like to learn how to drive?” she asked him as his lips curved upwards almost instantly, “I decided to adapt the car so you can drive it.”

It took him some seconds for Killian to process what she had just told him, but once he did, he slowly turned his face in her direction, his fixed gaze on her as utter devotion swirled in his eyes. He loved this woman with all of his heart and yet she managed to make him fall in love with her just a little bit more at each passing day.

Emma could tell that he was moved by her attentiveness, staring at her in slack-jawed wonder as he blinked in disbelief.
“Do you want to try it?” she asked him, running one of her fingers up and down his arm.

“Thank you, my love,” he finally said as he caressed her cheek with his hook.

“You’re welcome,” she whispered with a soft smile before he pecked her lips, “There was the option of buying a new car that already had all of this built-in, but we had agreed we don’t really need two cars right now so…”

“It’s perfect, Swan. It’ll be an honor to captain your vessel.”

“You have to know how to sail it first,” she chuckled, getting ready to explain how the new equipment worked, “You grip the knob this way, you see, and you can easily turn the wheel. I really loved this one because it’s not just a common knob.”

“What else does it do?”

“Do you see these buttons here?” – Emma pointed to the upper part of the knob where there were various small, light grey buttons – “they allow you to use a lot of functions when you press them: left and right indicators, the horn, wipers, screen washers and a couple of other things.”

“Uh, I see. And how do we use this?” he asked, looking at the gear shift.

“Yeah, that one’s a little bit more complicated,” she said, putting her belt on and ordering Killian to do the same. It was going to be an interesting afternoon.

“I think I’m getting accustomed to this, Swan,” Killian gushed as he kept driving her bug. They had been driving for about one hour now and he had proved to be a natural, “Of course, having a brilliant teacher like your-“

“Killian, stop!” Emma shouted, but it was too late. A loud bump was heard inside the car as they saw a big, black mass hitting the hood of the bug before falling on the floor in front of them, “Oh my God.”

“What the hell?!” they heard someone cursing and was it… Regina? Emma and Killian quickly got out of the car, finding Regina getting up from the floor with one swift move before she shook the dirt off her black jacket.

“Regina, are you alright?” – she had a bleeding lip that Regina was quick to heal with a magical flick of her wrist.

“Now I am. Not thanks to you,” she snapped, glaring at Killian. “If you plan on killing me, please let me know in advance so I can kill myself first.”

“I’m sorry. I must’ve hit the wrong pedal,” Killian apologized, his brows drawing together as he scratched his ear with his hook.

“You drive now?! Without a license?” – Regina’s judging gaze fell on Emma, demanding her explanations.

“I’m going to get him one soon, but he needs to learn first.”

“In that case, perhaps I should order everyone to stay in while you’re having your lessons and ensure the people of Storybrooke are safe and *alive* by the end of the day,” Regina said in a snarl that didn’t go unnoticed by Killian.
“Perhaps we should order everyone to stay in while you’re the mayor… to ensure the people of Storybrooke are safe and alive by the end of the day,” Killian bit back in a similar mocking tone as Regina glared at him.

“Guys, please…” Emma finally said, trying to stop their bickering, “Killian’s a fast learner, this was only his first lesson and he was actually doing great until…” Emma’s words died down as she looked at Regina.

“Until he almost killed me. But great first lesson! Congratulations, guyliner!”

“How’s the lice, your majesty?”

“Good, thank you. It’s a great thing I have two hands to scratch my head.”

“Okay, you need to stop with the hand jokes already, Madame Mayor,” Emma was now scowling at her, daggers practically shooting out of her eyes as she instinctively positioned herself between her and Killian.

“Yeah well, he needs to be more careful and you need to teach him better, Miss Swan.”

“It was an accident. At least he didn’t mean to hurt you,” Emma snapped, the words coming out of her mouth without even thinking.

“What is that supposed to mean?” Regina asked defensively, looking just about ready to punch Emma. The funny thing was that not even Emma herself knew what she had meant with that.

---

Enchanted Forest – 238 years ago

“Do you go to the lake often?” Anne asked the girl as the two walked through the woods. After about an hour of throwing stones into the lake, the girl had said she needed to head back home and Anne insisted on going with her. She had never had many friends in her life, and the two other girls at school were far too different for her to even be able to talk to them. This girl currently walking by her side was the first person of the same age that hadn’t made Anne feel stupid for not enjoying the conventional things girls were supposed to like.

“Practically every day. My parents let me wander around,” the girl answered without any hesitation. The hour they had spent together had managed to make her feel more comfortable around Anne.

They walked in comfortable silence for a couple of more minutes, until a small hut came into view between the tall trees. Anne was astonished when the girl told her that was where she lived. She couldn’t even understand how it was humanly possible to live in such a small and fragile structure. The walls were made of wattle and daub and the roof was of straw, nothing else adorning the exterior of the hut except for the small wooden bluebird house hanging from the tree right next to the door.

“Do you think we can go to the lake again tomorrow?” the girl’s voice interrupted Anne’s quick inspection of the hut in front of her.

“Yes, now you have to keep practicing.”

“Good. See you tomorrow.”
Storybrooke – Present Time

Morgana was starting to realize that dinner time at Granny’s was the busiest one. It seemed as if the entire town decided to eat at the diner, which turned the kitchen (and Granny’s humor) into a living hell. She was lucky enough that now it was her turn to take care of all the orders of the clients sitting on the counter chairs.

“So you’re Morgana!” Snow exclaimed, looking at the name tag on Morgana’s uniform. Morgana widened his eyes at the unexpected visit, not exactly sure of what she would say or do before such remarkable figures, “Sorry, I’m Snow, Emma’s mother, and this is David, my husband and Neal, our son.”

“Oh… hi! Pleased to meet you,” she greeted them with a warm smile, “This is a nice surprise. I must admit I was curious to know what it was like to finally be face to face with Snow White and Prince Charming. You hear so many things…”

“Only good ones, I hope,” David said in between chuckles as he pulled a counter chair for Snow to sit down.

“Yes, we hope we aren’t a huge disappointment,” Snow said, sitting on the chair her husband had pulled for her.

“Not at all. Is there anything I can get you?”

While they decided what they were going to drink, Morgana let her eyes wander over them. They were so loving towards each other that she couldn’t help but smile tenderly at them. A few minutes later she returned with their drinks – a pumpkin spice tea for Snow and a coke for David.

“So… are you enjoying working here at Granny’s?” Snow asked, taking a sip from her tea.

“I am. Everyone is just so nice. I will never forget what Emma did for me.”

“We’re very proud of her. She has a big heart,” David muttered.

“How is she, by the way? I haven’t seen her today,” –

“She’s okay, enjoying a little bit of the fleeting peace Storybrooke has to offer and… life as a newlywed,” Snow answered, unaware of the fact that Morgana had just blatantly lied to them.

“That’s right. I heard she recently got married to…” Morgana’s voice trailed off as she held in a smirk. This was going exactly the way she wanted, “…I believe his name is… Hook?”

“His actual name is Killian Jones. But he’s also known as Captain Hook, yes,” David explained.

“I never really heard of him in my land. He used to be a pirate, right?”

“He did. But thankfully he has changed his ways. He’s a good man now,” – as soon as the ‘now’ left Snow’s mouth, Morgana’s smile instantly vanished from her face, her mouth set in a hard line.
“Forgive me for my forwardness,” - Morgana changed the subject - “but I am curious: how do Snow White and Prince Charming feel about having Captain Hook as their son-in-law?” - at Morgana’s question, Snow and Charming exchanged a knowing look. That probably wasn’t the first time someone had asked them that question.

“We focus on the present,” Snow started talking, “Killian is the man our daughter loves. And he loves her back and makes her happy.”

“As parents that’s the only thing that matters.” David added, “and he’s also proven many times before that he’s a changed man and deserves to have someone who loves him as much as Emma does.”

“He has definitely taken a liking to him, in case you couldn’t tell,” Snow said in a fake whisper to Morgana, who laughed at the princess’s attempt to tease her husband.

“Easy now, I’m just trying to be fair,” David warned her, pouring more coke into his glass.

“I’m glad… The world could use more forgiving and welcoming people such as you two.” Morgana’s words were sincere as her mouth curved into a smile. She truly couldn’t have been luckier, she thought to herself.

Coming home after a long day at work had never felt better. Henry had decided to order Chinese take-out and Emma had skipped cooking dinner, something she would always be thankful for.

After making sure Henry’s head was now lice free, Emma and Killian wished him a good night and went up to their bedroom. Picking up one of the books she had borrowed from the library earlier that day, Emma put it on her nightstand before going through her closet to pick the clothes she would be wearing on the next day. When she was going through her sweaters, her phone buzzed with a text message.

“Dinner tomorrow night? Please bring your chocolate mousse! Xoxo,” Emma smiled at the screen. Ashley’s obsession with her chocolate mousse was never not going to be funny. The truth is she had to admit her chocolate mousse was pretty great, even though that was probably the only thing she cooked or baked that tasted amazing.

“Ashley’s inviting us for dinner tomorrow. Is that okay with you?” Emma shouted so that Killian could hear her. He was currently on the bathroom, doing his daily routine before going to bed.

“Sure,” he replied as he flushed the toilet.

At Killian’s approval, Emma started texting Ashley back, letting her know they would definitely go and she would make the chocolate mousse Ashley loved so much.

“Bloody hell,” - the bathroom’s closed door muffled Killian’s slight groan, but Emma still heard it.

“Are you okay?” Emma called out, as she moved towards the closed door.

“Aye,” Killian answered but he didn’t sound too convincing, a hint of frustration in his voice that Emma caught right away. Throwing her phone on the mattress, Emma warned him she was going to come in.

“What’s wrong?” she asked him as she saw him standing in front of the toilet, his bare ass turned to
her.

“It’s only a small cut, love,” he replied, turning around with his flaccid penis in his hand, letting her know the cut was there.

“How did that happen?” she wondered as her eyes darted down to his member.

“I’ve no clue. I am quite certain this wasn’t here this morning,” he added, remembering their illicit activities on the emergency exit stairs.

“Can I?” – with this being the first time she was going to be touching his penis for entirely non-sexual reasons, she felt the need to ask for his permission. Something he clearly found amusing, judging by the smirk that suddenly formed on his face.

“I will never deny you access to my penis, Swan,” - she gave him a look, before she bent over him, gently touching his penis. When she carefully pulled the foreskin back, she spotted a small cut just below the head.

“Yeah, it’s cut. Does it hurt?”

“Slightly.”

“I could try to magic it away, but we don’t know why it’s there, it could be something serious,” she told him, concern filling her voice, “You need to see a doctor.”

“I don’t think that’s necessary, love, it’s only a tiny –“

“You’re seeing a doctor tomorrow, Killian.”

“My love, it’s a small cut in an otherwise immense area,” he joked as he put his dirty underwater in the wicker laundry basket, “I will live.”

“Sometimes small things can be a sign of serious issues. No, you need to have someone check that out.”

“Swan…” he sighed in protest, watching her leave the bathroom.

“Is this because of your fear of hospitals?” she asked him, knowing very well how much he had always hated to even get in the hospital, even though he had never admitted he absolutely loathed going there.

“I’m a pirate, I’m not afraid of anything.”

“Really, you’re pulling that card on me? We’re way past that, buddy,” she chuckled, folding her arms across her chest.

“I wouldn’t call it fear, love. I’m simply not fond of the place, particularly its rather distinguishing smell,” he mumbled, following her into the bedroom as naked as the day he was born.

“Okay, we don’t have to go to the Storybrooke General Hospital if you don’t want to,” she said as her eyes traveled up and down his naked form, distracting her momentarily. She had always loved looking at his naked self. Even when he wasn’t sporting an erection he was simply beautiful, “we could go to this private clinic I used to go to in Boston. It’s really good, it smells a lot nicer and nobody knows you there so the whole town wouldn’t immediately know about your… injury.”

“I still think this offers no concern,” - he’s now going through his underwear drawers, taking out his
favorite black trunks and preparing to put them on.

“No, don’t wear those,” Emma warns him and he frowns at her in confusion, “wear boxers.”

“I may as well not wear a thing, they’re very loose and provide no support.”

“Which is exactly why you should wear them. You’re hurt, wearing tight underwear may make it worse,” – that seemed to convince him. Smiling at her thoughtfulness, Killian put the trunks back in the drawer and pulled out some boxers instead.

“See,” he started talking in a low voice as he approached her by the closet and hugged her from behind, dropping soft kisses on neck, “why would I need to go to the hospital when I have such a marvelous and caring wife who is always so concerned about my penis’ well-being?”

“Your well-being.”

“But you cannot deny you’re partial to the penis,” he insists in between kisses.

“You cannot deny that you’re trying to get in my pants for the second time today to see if I let the hospital thing go.”

“Is it working?”

“No,” she laughs as she playfully swats him away, “and even if it was, we can’t have sex with you like this.”

“Why not?”

“It will hurt you and the friction could make it worse. So no sex until you’re healed,” – she casually said, paying close attention to him and trying not to laugh when his face suddenly dropped at her words, his eyes rolling in annoyance, “but you know… if you went to a doctor, he’d probably prescribe you something that would accelerate your recovery...” she suggested with fake innocence.

“Very cunning, Swan. I am aware of what you are trying to accomplish here, pirate.”

“Is it working?”

Killian playfully glared at her, knowing that she had clearly won this exchange. He’d rather go to a doctor and be able to have sex than to skip the doctor but be celibate for an undetermined period of time. Not when his wife was Emma Swan.

“Good. First thing in the morning I’ll call the clinic in Boston,” - she pecked him on the lips as he put on his plaid flannel pajama pants.

“And what exactly will they do to me?” Killian asks her, getting under the covers as Emma walks to the bathroom.

“A doctor will look at it and examine it.”

“Sounds truly delightful.”

“Hey, is this a first for you?” - she emerged back in the room, her toothbrush in hand.

“Aye. I don’t recall ever sustaining such an injury.”

“It can’t be an STD,” she said before going back to the bathroom, “we’ve taken care of that when
we started sleeping together and we were both clean.”

“Don’t fret, Swan. I’m fairly certain it’s nothing.”

She didn’t respond right away, the sounds of her brushing her teeth coming from the bathroom door next to her side of the bed. While he waited for her to return, Killian picked up one of his books from the nightstand, flipping through it.

“First Henry with the lice, now you with this. What more will happen? We really can’t catch a break in this place, can we?” – he heard her among the sound of the water running in the sink – “Magic sucks.”

She then left the bathroom, turning the lights off and closing the door behind her. Her hair was in a loose bun and she was wearing her horn-rimmed black glasses, which meant she was planning on reading. Killian already knew that she were her contact lenses during the whole and only put her glasses on when she either wanted to read before bed or when she had to work at home. A part of him wished she would wear them more often, enjoying how they reminded him of Emma’s younger self, a version of Emma he had never met.

“There are worse things than magic, Swan,” he said as he pulled the covers up for her, inviting her to join him, “I have dealt with plenty of hardships in my life and a great deal of those had little to do with magic.”

“Do you want to talk about it?” – Killian’s features had suddenly gained a melancholic look and Emma could easily tell that he was referring to painful moments of his past. She rested her head on his t-shirt covered chest as she waited for him to answer. She always loved to know more details about his centuries old life, but opening up to her about it was ultimately his decision and she was going to respect it. If he wanted to share more of his past with her, he would do it on his own time and when he felt ready to do it.

He kept silent for a while, his gaze fixed on the end of the bed as his jaw muscle twisted, until he finally spoke, “I found myself thinking about my mother this morning. I seldom do whenever I see you and Henry, and how your love for him is written in your eyes,” – he then turned to look at her, a brittle smile falling from his lips - “I do wish I could be like your boy and have beautiful reminders of my mother, of how much she loved me.”

Emma’s heart broke at his words and how his soft smile was nothing but an attempt to hide the anguish that had never left him. She already knew about the mother who had abandoned Killian, Liam and their father long before the two boys had been sold into servitude. Killian had only been two years old when she fled, but he had never shared much more than that.

“I don’t even have any memories of her,” he continued, “all the images I have conjured up in my mind are based on what Liam and my father told me about her,” – images of a lively young woman who had always desired her freedom more than she had desired a family - “But I do remember one question that kept plaguing me: why?”

Emma nodded at him, her fingers gently caressing his chest, trying to comfort him as most as possible. She knew better than anyone that there was nothing she could say that would make the pain in his heart go away, but reminding him that he wasn’t alone now did help. She never had many memories of the Peters, what with being so young when they sent her back to the foster system, but she had looked them up while she worked as a bail bonds person. Just like Killian, she had grown up with that question in the back of her mind: why had her parents abandoned her, why had the Peters given her up?
“I’m so sorry” she finally said, pressing a kiss to his cheek, but Killian still seemed enthralled by his own thoughts.

“And despite everything, I remember growing up and still being concerned about her because I did not want to believe she had willingly left us behind.”

“You didn’t want her to be capable of doing it.”

“Aye. But time proved me wrong – she never came back. No magic involved. She simply decided we weren’t worth it,” he mumbled, welcoming resting his head against Emma’s when she dropped her head on his shoulder.

“Have you ever tried to find her?”

“No. There was a letter, she wrote it before she left,” he answered, before he scoffed and then shook his head, “she didn’t even care to mention me or Liam, all too concerned about making it clear that the invitation to be a servant in the king’s court was far too irresistible for her to decline.”

Emma thought about how hard that must’ve been for him and wondered if his despise for kings and royalty also had to do with the fact that his mother left him to join the court instead, but Killian was pouring his heart and now wasn’t the right time to bring that up.

“I only knew about its existence after Liam passed away. I found it hidden in one of his drawers. I suppose he didn’t want me to ever read it, to protect me.”

“It sounds like something he would do,” she said, managing to put a sincere smile on Killian’s face. She knew how protecting his little brother had always been Liam’s main goal.

“Aye,” Killian said, melancholy taking over his voice as they fell into a comfortable silence. Emma was the only person he would ever share these feelings with and he was grateful by how caring and supportive she always was. No matter how much he had suffered in the past, he was grateful that he now had a family and that they would never be alone again.

“Thank you,” she said in a tender voice as she kissed his cheek, “you are a wonderful man. And I love you.”

“I love you too,” – his nose and eyes crinkled before he booped her glasses with his hook - “especially when you have those glasses on.”

Emma just laughed in response, “really, why? They’re so ugly!”

“They make you look like the Emma I envision in my mind whenever you share tales of your past.”

“Oh, so the glasses do to you what your ponytail does to me,” she states and he suddenly furrows his brows at her before she clarifies, “c’mon, ever since you told me about your Lieutenant days I can’t picture you any other way.”

“I’ll have you know that lasted for a very short period of my life.”

“Still long enough for me to never let it go.”

“That ponytail is certainly something that magic could have decimated for all eternity,” he pointed out, wishing that he had never worn the bloody thing.

“Okay, I get your point: magic doesn’t suck.”
“It doesn’t have to,” he said, his fingers toying with the strap of her tank top, “the truth, love, is that not all taxing and unpleasant events can be blamed on magic.”

“I know. People don’t need magic to be complete assholes.”

“Indeed. That’s why thoughts and threats that make you feel utterly powerless and concerned over the welfare of those you love will always be on your way, regardless of which realm you are in,” he murmured, finishing his thoughts from earlier.

“Yeah, if it’s not a grown-up baby trying to kill me, it’s a cut in my husband’s dick or parasites in my son’s hair,” she scoffed as she rearranged herself on her seat on the bed, her ass starting to hurt from being in the same position.

“Both enough to make you distressed. Which reminds me, shouldn’t your appointment with the cricket take priority over my visit to the doctor?”

“No, you need to check that as soon as possible. I wasn’t going to see Archie tomorrow anyway.”

“As you wish,” – Killian watched her taking off her glasses, maybe she had given up on reading, after all – “So this means I will finally get acquainted with the town you used to live in…”

“Yeah, I think you’ll like it,” Emma said, turning off the lamp on her side and laying down on the bed, “I’ve always preferred it to New York. It’s smaller and cozier.”

“I enjoyed New York,” Killian retorted, following Emma and turning off his lamp as well, the bedroom plunging into darkness.

“Oh crap!” Emma exclaimed, turning the lamp on and picking her phone up from the nightstand, “I need to tell Ashley we can’t make it to dinner tomorrow. We may have to spend the night in Boston depending on when the appointment is.”

“As much as I appreciate Ashley and Thomas’ company, I definitely approve this sudden turn of events,” Killian hinted, a suggestive grin on his face before an exasperated sigh escaped his lips, “if it weren’t for my injury, that is.”

Enchanted Forest – 238 years ago

It had been months since Anne and Calypso had met, the pond becoming the place where they secretly met. They enjoyed any time they could spend together and tried to find new things to do together. Sometimes they would trek down the woods, collecting all sorts of uncommon tree leaves, but today Anne had suggested they tried to swordfight, pointing at two pointy tree sticks.

“I prefer the stones game,” Calypso hissed as a happy Anne bashed her fake sword against Calypso’s, “you are very good at this.”

“I should be. One of my father’s guards has been teaching me since I’m little.”

“A future pirate has to know how to wield a sword…”

Then, when Anne was about to poke her stick in Calypso’s stomach, her wood sword broke down in two before it could even touch Calypso.
“Whoa!” Anne shrieked, eyes widening as she looked at the broken stick on the ground, “How did you do that?”

“I… I don’t know. I just thought about it really hard and then it happened,” Calypso replied, but her voice was barely audible as she stared at her own hands, dropping her stick without even noticing, “please don’t stop being my friend! I won’t hurt you.”

Anne didn’t understand what had suddenly gotten into Calypso, but her voice was trembling and her eyes were looking everywhere, almost as if she was looking for places to hide.

“Why would I stop being your friend?” Anne said in her calmest voice, “because you have magic?”

“My parents are always scared that I will hurt them. They don’t tell me but I know they wished they could change that about me.”

“I don’t know why, I think it’s wonderful you have magic,” – Calypso’s mouth gaped open at Anne’s honesty. The thought that someone could even think that having magic was a good thing was so rare that she didn’t even know how else to react – “And I already knew about it. I saw you turning that boy’s legs into a fin.”

“I didn’t mean to do that. I don’t know how I did it,” Calypso lamented.

“Why? It served him right.”

“He did look funny,” Calypso agreed as they both started laughing, “please, don’t tell anyone that I can do these things. Please.”

“I won’t, I promise. You’re my best friend, Calypso.”

Calypso smiled at her in response, happy not only to have finally found someone that wasn’t afraid of her and everything she did, but also a best friend. Perhaps her life could be different from now on.

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

It was already past ten when Snow and Charming left Granny’s, baby Neal already fast asleep in the baby carrier on David’s chest. When they were about to walk past the bakery to get to the truck, they spotted a female figure standing still a few meters ahead of them, the light from the street lamp casting a shadow on the sidewalk.

“Ethel?” Snow whispered as soon as they reached the woman, recognizing her from earlier, “What are you doing here? Do you need a ride home?”

Ethel seemed surprised to see them, slightly startled at their presence, “Hi. Uh, no, thank you. I… I’m just waiting for Scott.”

Snow and Charming waited for her to elaborate, but she didn’t say anything else, smiling awkwardly at them instead.

“Okay, good night then!” Snow exclaimed and David nodded at Ethel before getting in the truck.

Ethel sighed in relief as she heard the engine starting, the truck a mere spot in the distance in a couple of seconds.
“Oh, there they go,” - Scott joined her in watching Snow and Charming driving away - “I had to go to the bathroom and lost track of them for a moment.”

“Forget about them,” Ethel scolded him, rolling her eyes at his stupidity, “how is she doing?”

“I didn’t notice anything unusual.”

“Good. I want you to keep your eyes on her. I will not let her ruin everything. Not again.”
Chapter Summary

When Emma and Hook go to Boston, Emma reminisces about the past as the newlyweds are forced to deal with an unexpected surprise that puts a strain on their relationship. Meanwhile, in Enchanted Forest flashbacks, Anne and Calypso’s friendship suffers a devastating blow with shattering consequences.

Storybrooke - Present Day

“I will cover for you at the station, don’t worry about it,” David guaranteed his daughter, putting a handful of dry food on Wilby’s bowl.

After dropping Henry off at school, Emma decided to pay her parents a quick visit before she and Killian went to Boston. She had encouraged and supported their move to the farmhouse, but she would be lying if she said she enjoyed the bumpy roads full of cracks and potholes that she had to drive through to get there.

“Are you sure everything’s okay?” Snow asked her with motherly concern.

“Mom, it’s just my annual check-up. I missed it for the last two years. I don’t want to make it three,” Emma felt slightly bad for lying to them, but what else could she say? That they were going to Boston because Killian had a cut on his penis? That was something far too personal and they had agreed on keeping things discreet.

“We’re aware that we’ve been less than stellar parents, but you do know that we’ll always be there for you, no matter what, right?” – David’s eyes fell on Emma’s as he turned away from the stove.

“I do... Guys, I’ll be back tomorrow, okay? It’s not like I’m going to the battlefield.”

“Of course. We just want to make sure you know we’re here for anything,” Snow said, sending her way a big grin and quizzical look that Emma didn’t understand at all, but she had no time for any of that at the moment.

“Okay… Thanks,” Emma said as she opened the farmhouse door, “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Boston – 2009
Ugh, what is it with all this light, Emma thought to herself as she slowly peeked her eyes open. The bright sun rays barging in the room practically blinded her before realization hit her: she was most definitely in an unfamiliar bed, alone, and the events of last night came rushing back to her at once: after catching the woman she had been looking for for some time, she had gone to a bar, had met a really attractive guy and then had gone back to his place. And then, instead of sneaking out in the middle of the night as she usually did, she had fallen asleep and ended up staying there the whole night. She would make sure she would slap herself on the way home.

In one swift move, Emma got up from the bed and gathered her clothes from the floor. It was her lucky day that the guy wasn’t actually there, but it was still his place and he was bound to come back at some point, so she should just get the hell out of there as soon as possible.

Just when she had finished putting her shoes on, a rush of panic went through her when she heard the sound of keys rattling in the lock of the front door, before an athletic, auburn-haired man carrying two paper bags entered the small apartment.

“Oh, good morning! I just went to get breakfast,” the man beamed, lifting the paper bags in the air as if they were some sort of prize. He kept looking at her expectantly but she ignored him, her eyes darting away from him, looking for her purse that should be somewhere on the floor.

“I remember you mentioning you love waffles?” he insisted, trying to get her attention, but not exactly in the way he was expecting. Emma was now frozen in her place and staring at him with wide eyes as she instinctively took a step back. Before anything had happened, they had both agreed that this would be nothing more than a one-night stand and that neither of them would try anything else afterwards. What the fuck was he doing now?

“Uh, I really need to go,” she mumbled as she walked past him but he grabbed her arm.

“Wait. Here’s my card, my number’s on it. Call me?”

“Okay... Here’s the thing,” Emma snapped at him, “I don’t know what you’re trying to do, but we haven’t agreed to any of this.”

“I know, I know. But I felt something last night,” he sighed, “there’s something between us, Emma. Didn’t you feel it too?”

If she wasn’t so uncomfortable, Emma would have actually laughed at him. The sex was okay but other than the physical pleasure she had felt nothing for this guy. She found herself hoping he was being a dick and saying that to woo her again and not because he had actually felt some sort of connection between them.

“I felt it was sex. That’s it.”

“Wait. Can’t you really give me a chance? I swear I’m relationship material,” he said with a smirk on his face.

Was this guy even for real? She wasn’t going to take any of this shit, they had made an agreement and she had kept her end of it. She didn’t have to stay here listening to any of this.

“Sorry, I don’t do relationships,” – she shoved his hand away and stormed out of the apartment.
“Everything ready, husband?” Emma asked with a beaming smile as she approached Killian on their front porch. No matter how many times she said it, she would never get tired of calling him her husband.

“Everything’s ready, wife,” he said, smiling back at her as he welcomed her eager kiss on his lips, only breaking apart when they heard someone clearing his throat.

“Thomas, hi!” Emma greeted him, watching him close the front door behind him. She had no idea he was there.

“Sorry to interrupt,” Thomas apologized, “Ready for your trip?”

“Yeah, it just sucks we can’t make it to dinner tonight,” Emma lamented.

“Ah, that’s okay. We’ll just leave it for another day.”

“Did you find the books you were interested in, mate?” Killian asked him as Emma noticed the three books Thomas was holding in his hands.

“I did, yes. Are you sure I can borrow these? I’ll warn you right now that I’m a slow reader.”

“As long as you eventually return them, you are free to take all the time you need,” Killian answered, oblivious to Emma’s proud eyes narrowing on his face. Witnessing Killian and Thomas’ friendship grow during these past months had been a joy to watch, a proof that her husband was creating important bonds with other people in town.

“Okay, great. Thanks.”

“I would start with 117 Days Adrift. It’s the best of them all,” Killian suggested, picking one of the bags up from the floor.

“He loves that book,” Emma told Thomas in between chuckles.

“It’s the true story of a couple whose yacht was struck by a whale, leaving them adrift in a raft and exposed to perilous sea creatures. What is there not to like?” Killian countered, feigning indignation while Emma and Thomas laughed, amused by his maritime geekiness.

“Alright, we should get going. A four-hour drive awaits us,” Emma said, picking up one bag herself, “Say hi to Ashley for us?”

“I will. Have a nice trip!”

“Farewell, Tommy!” Killian enthused, patting Thomas on his back, “Good readings.”

“Please don’t call me that,” Thomas murmured as he rolled his eyes at Killian, who was now following Emma towards the bug. He knew very well how Thomas wasn’t particularly fond of that diminutive, but it had become their own way of teasing one another.

Thomas waved at them before walking away, leaving Emma and Killian alone on the driveway as they put their bags on the bug’s trunk.

“Lead the way, captain Swan,” Killian encouraged her once they were both inside. Emma would be
the one driving since Killian still had a lot more practice to do and, more importantly, still didn’t have a license.

“That sounds really nice – captain Swan,” Emma said, grinning as he watched her reaching for something in her pocket, “Before we go, I have something for you.”

Killian watched as her fingers tried to hide away from his view a round, golden object, but once he saw the all too familiar chain, a smile slipped across his lips.

“The enchanted compass,” he murmured, not taking his eyes away from it.

“I want you to keep it,” Emma said, determination written across her face. It had been a long time since she had last seen the compass, but she knew where it was, carefully saved in one of the office’s drawers.

“Thank you, love,” Killian said, looking down at the compass, “It’s pointing at you, which means it still works,” he added and Emma’s heart picked up a bit at his subtle way of telling her she was his home, “I didn’t know you had kept it.”

“I did. Even back then, I just couldn’t get rid of it,” she answered, shrugging her shoulders.

Killian’s eyes immediately shot up, raising his eyebrows almost right away, “it made you think of a certain dashing rapscallion?”

“Yes. It made me think of the heartwarming memories of our very romantic moment at Lake Nostos,” – her tone was mocking and full of delight as Killian leaned over her, careful not to let the gearbox poke his ribs.

“You were bloody brilliant.”

“Yeah, well, it helped that you were more concerned about dropping innuendos on me than in actually killing me.”

“I was never out to kill you,” Killian quickly added, “I simply wanted the compass.”

“And now you have it.”

“But do know, captain Swan,” he said as his voice got progressively lower, “that the only reason as to why I didn’t get to keep it in the first place is because your virtue was fairly distracting.”

Emma giggled in response, slightly lifting her chin as an amused smile formed on her face, “my virtue?”

“Aye. The way you were so determined and confident that you were going to get this compass, even though it was quite apparent you had no idea what to do with a sword. It was very endearing.”

“Hey, I knew how to use a sword,” she protested, swatting his shoulder.

“Barely.”

“I still beat you.”

“But before that, your arse was on the floor,” he pointed out smugly, “Who knew some years later I would still be marveled by your grunts but this time from much more pleasant activities?”

Emma closed her eyes at his blatant innuendo, not knowing if she wanted to slap or kiss him, “Oh
“My God.”

“Aye, there’s a perfect demonstration!”

“Whatever, buddy,” she muttered, the slight redness on her cheeks growing thicker by the moment, “I still bested you and got the compass.”

“Mainly because you were a beautiful, strong lass for whom I was partial to ever since we climbed that beanstalk,” Killian said, sincerity taking over his voice.

“You couldn’t handle it from the start,” Emma teased him, pushing him away so they could finally get on the road.

“I still can’t, my love.”

And, Lord help her, but neither could she. Dropping a soft kiss to his lips, Emma started the engine and steered the yellow bug down the drive, clueless to a pair of eyes watching them leave.

---

**Enchanted Forest – 236 years ago**

It had taken her a while to catch her father’s guards distracted, but eventually Anne had managed to sneak out of the mansion and went to Calypso’s hut. It had now been two years since they had become best friends and they always tried to find ways to be together, despite their remarkably different backgrounds. They usually met at the lake, but this time Anne decided to surprise Calypso.

The screams and shouts she had been hearing in the distance became clearer as she approached Calypso’s hut. Stopping in front of the door, Anne held her breath, trying to understand what was happening inside.

“Is it possible that you never do anything right?” Nicholas yelled at his daughter, his angry voice echoing in the small hut, “You’re worthless.”

“We asked you specifically for goat’s milk,” Isabella added harshly, “what were you thinking?”

The words hit Calypso like blows. No matter what she did or how much she tried, nothing was ever enough for her parents. To them, she would never amount to more than a hindrance. And all of this because she had brought the wrong milk home. Her stomach twisted, tight with pain, and she felt the urge to yell back at them, but nothing came out of her mouth. Instead, with tears forming in her eyes and fists clenching, she turned around and stormed out of the hut.

As soon as she closed the door behind her, she found Anne staring at her, anger billowing in her eyes.

“I will talk to them,” Anne snapped, taking one step forward to knock at the hut’s door.

“No, please don’t!” – Calypso stopped her, grabbing her arm - “It’ll be worse,” she said, slumping her shoulders in a resigned posture before walking away.

“You shouldn’t let them talk to you like this,” Anne insisted, going after her friend, “you are not worthless!”
“That’s not what they think.”

“Have they always treated you like this?” - at Anne’s question, Calypso suddenly stopped walking, one of the many twigs crunching underneath her weight – “it’s alright, you can talk to me.”

Calypso turned around, her eyes fixed on the forest floor as she slowly nodded, confirming Anne’s suspicions, “They hate that I have magic. They’re scared of me,” she whispered, “and I don’t understand why. I would never hurt them.”

“I know,” Anne said, surprising Calypso with a comforting hand soothing her back, “I’m sure they still love you.”

Calypso scoffed, “they don’t.”

---

**Storybrooke – Present Time**

It had been a long time since David had set foot in the station, but he would swear he had never dealt with that much amount of paperwork in his rather short run as Sheriff of Storybrooke. He was looking over a pile of files when Regina suddenly walked in.

“Good, you’re here,” she said, crossing her arms while standing upright, “I’m going to need all the recruitment files you can find.”

“Recruitment files? What for?”

“Having a total of two people, three on occasion, as the only law enforcement agents in Storybrooke isn’t enough,” Regina answered, “especially after everything that’s happened lately. I’m opening a job vacancy.”

It wasn’t a bad idea, David thought, “Have you talked to Emma about it?”

“I’m the mayor. I don’t need the sheriff’s approval.”

“But it would still be nice to let her and Hook know about it,” David advised but Regina simply looked away, annoyed, “let me see what I can find.”

---

**Enchanted Forest – 236 years ago**

Calypso hadn’t said a word since they had walked away from her hut, her eyes glued to the floor the entire time. She had wanted to go to the lake, but Anne suggested going through a moss-veiled trail they had never seen before. Perhaps that way Calypso would stop thinking about the incident with her parents and focus instead on one of the many forest places they had yet to explore. Finding nothing but fallen leaves and broken tree branches ahead, they kept walking, hoping to find some hidden, idyllic place.
“Calypso, are you alright?” Anne asked her friend, who had stopped dead in her tracks for no apparent reason.

“Do you hear it, too?” – Calypso’s words were barely a murmur as she hastily looked over her shoulder, her fear palpable in her suddenly darting eyes and shaking hands.

“The birds?”

“No,” - she then frowned and put her hands on her temples – “it’s like someone’s whispering in my ears.”

Anne had truly no idea what to do, she heard nothing but birds chirping and the wind blowing in the trees. She was about to tell Calypso that perhaps it was better for her to rest a bit when her friend started walking again.

Calypso increased her pace, the whispers intensifying as she went further through the trail. It was as if she felt this inexplicable pull that she could not fight back, the need to follow the whispers turning into an obsession.

“Calypso?” – Anne was starting to worry, not having ever seen Calypso act in such an odd way. Anne didn’t think twice about going after her, picking a stick up from the floor and using it to pull away the vegetation on the trail. She would be lying if she said she didn’t feel a rush of excitement run through her body as she hit the shrubs with the stick. It was easy enough to pretend she was a mighty pirate on a quest.

Too absorbed by the increasingly louder whispers, Calypso didn’t even hear Anne calling out her name. All she cared about was the impressively large tree in front of her. Calypso stopped and stood in front of the thick tree trunk, closing her eyes at the now deafening sounds as an unexpected sense of fulfillment consumed her.

“Calypso!” Anne shouted, just before she found Calypso standing still and gaping at the enormous tree in front of her, “What a strange tree.”

Calypso didn’t mutter a word, her widened eyes ogling the sword shape engraved in the wood of the tree. She knew right away that was the source of the whispers, calling out to her like sirens call out to sailors. Not able to resist the pull, Calypso instinctively touched the wooden engraved shape and the moment her fingers brushed against it, a sharp flash of light sliced suddenly through her vision, blinding her momentarily. Not even a second later, the flash of light was gone and she felt an unfamiliar weight on the hand that had touched the tree.

“It’s… it’s a real sword,” Anne stuttered, looking at Calypso’s hand and still not fully believing what she had just witnessed.

With her hands trembling, Calypso stared at the blade that suddenly appeared on her right hand. The sword was so heavy she could barely hold it, but the way the metal shone in different lights had her reaching for it. Its golden guard was slightly curved in the direction of the sword’s point, the round pommel decorated with a deep blue jewel. Calypso’s fingers tingled as she traced the odd symbols on the blade’s fuller, even though she was lost as to what they meant.

“It’s beautiful,” Calypso said in awe, before the sound of footsteps had her and Anne turning around in a swift movement.

“Well, well...” - a man who came out from behind the bushes, clapping as he made his way towards them – “I’ve been looking for the person who would finally be able to pull that enchanted blade
from out of the tree,” he sniggered before smirking at the two girls, “it seems today is my lucky
day.”

“We won’t give you a thing,” Anne shouted back as she put herself between the man and Calypso,
not intimidated by the man’s menacing glare.

“Give me the sword,” the man demanded in a calm yet threatening voice. With Anne’s body
shielding hers, Calypso watched the man’s every move, trying to think about what to do next.

She didn’t have to think for too long. Before they knew it, the man pulled his own sword out and
moved to hold it at Anne’s throat, but Calypso pushed her friend’s body out of the way and lifted her
left hand in front of the man’s face.

“I am not the one who pulled the sword out of this tree,” Calypso said as a dark blue cloud of magic
started emanating from her hand, “but if you go back to where you came from, you will find the
man who did.”

The man froze in his place as Calypso talked, his eyes turning into an eerie shade of blue and going
back to normal once she finished talking. Anne and Calypso stood still, breathing heavily as they
stared at the man earnestly. Once the man started moving again, his eyes blinked twice before he
rowned at them, looking as if he had forgotten why he was there.

“If you’ll excuse me, ladies,” he said, putting his sword down as he looked over his shoulder to
where he had come from, “I have a man to catch.”

Calypso sighed in relief as she watched the man running away from them, determined to catch
someone who didn’t even exist.

“Please, don’t tell anyone about this,” Calypso pleaded, “this stays between us.”

“I won’t, I promise,” Anne assured her, still dumbfounded at how the man had done exactly what
Calypso had told him, “You enchanted him. How did you do it?”

“I don’t know. It just… felt right,” Calypso shrugged, slightly scared at what all of that meant.
Could she really enchant people? And why had she been able to pull that sword from the tree?

“You’re amazing. You can actually enchant people!” Anne was thrilled, thousands of ideas already
running through her mind and what uses they could both give to Calypso’s magical abilities, “Your
parents. Why don’t you enchant them?”

It seemed easy enough: Calypso could tell them to stop yelling at her and to love her and be
supportive of her. She would deserve it after everything she had to endure over the years and yet,
Calypso wasn’t too sure of it.

“I don’t know…”

“Why not? They shouldn’t be treating you like that.”

“I know,” Calypso sighed, “I just wish I didn’t even have to think of doing it.”

Boston – Present Day
“Are some of your possessions still in there, Swan?” Killian asked, curious to know more about Emma’s old apartment as they walked through the streets of Boston.

After a four hour drive, they had dropped off their bags at the hotel and Emma had mentioned visiting her previous apartment building, even if it was just to see if it still looked the same. Back then, she hadn’t expected to drop Henry at home never to return and a part of her did wonder what happened during her very long absence. As much as she didn’t regret her permanent move to Storybrooke, Boston was possibly the only city she had truly enjoyed living in during her days as a bail bondsman.

“No, I didn’t actually have much in there. It was a furnished apartment,” – she laughed at Killian’s sudden frown at her, before clarifying – “which means all the furniture in it belonged to the real owner, the landlord.”

“Hmm, I see,” Killian nodded as he felt Emma holding his hand tighter, turning right in one of the streets.

“I had to pay the rent until the contract expired, which was about a year ago. My guess is they threw away the few things I had in there and rented it to somebody else.”

To be entirely fair, Killian wasn’t all that interested in understanding how real estate worked in this world, his main focus on knowing some more about Emma’s past and what her life used to be like in the city they were only beginning to explore.

“We’re here,” Emma murmured as she stopped them in front of a tall tower that Killian assumed was the apartment building she had been talking about, one that looked quite similar to the structures he had seen in New York.

When the building’s door opened and a woman stepped out, Emma didn’t let it close, walking into the entrance hall. Everything was as she remembered: the familiar walls covered in light wooden panels and black and white tiles making her take a trip down memory lane.

“Getting emotional, Swan?” Killian asked, following her inside.

“It’s funny. It’s been two years since I’ve been here and yet it feels like a lifetime ago.”

---

**Boston - 2009**

What a wonderfully shitty day. Of course on the only day Emma had forgotten to take her umbrella with her was the day it started raining like cats and dogs. Not to mention that she was actually supposed to have gotten home like three hours ago, but the traffic had been cut due to pruning works and she had to make a detour to go to the grocery store. So when she finally got in her apartment building, all she wanted to do was to get out of her soaking wet clothes, lie down on the sofa and eat her chicken noodles soup while watching one of her favorite TV shows.

When she reached the first floor (she had to take the stairs because the elevator was out of service, of course), she found Mr. Nielsen, her landlord. He was a nice, old man who always tried to crack a joke whenever he saw her.

“Good evening, Emma.”
“Hi, Mr. Nielsen. I’m sorry, I know I haven’t paid this month’s rent yet. Next week, I promise,” Emma apologized, wishing she hadn’t come across him now.

“Oh, it’s fine, kiddo,” he shrugged as he opened the door to his apartment, “I was just about to make a hot chocolate. Would you like to keep me company?”

And that was why she hadn’t wanted to see him: he was always kind enough to invite her to have a hot chocolate with him and she actually accepted his offer a lot of times, knowing that he appreciated her company after being all alone in the world. Still, although that was most certainly a feeling she could relate to, today she just really wanted to go home.

“That’s really nice of you, thanks. But I’m exhausted and I just really want to go to bed,” Emma explained, partially feeling bad for the slightly disappointed look on his face, “maybe tomorrow?”

At her suggestion, Mr. Nielsen’s mouth curved into a broad smile, “Sure, I’ll be waiting ya! Maybe you could watch some favorite show of yours at my place too… to help with the ratings,” he said, winking at her, but Emma didn’t really understand what he was trying to say, “you know, because you’d be watching it in Nielsen’s box!” – he was a kind man, but his jokes weren’t always good.

Not knowing what else to do, Emma simply chuckled at him, “right…”

“Oh, before I forget. A nice, young man passed by this morning and left something for you. He knocked at my door looking for you,” he said, before going inside his apartment.

Emma’s body went rigid, wondering who the hell it had been. It could’ve only been someone from work, but nobody knew where she lived.

“Here you go,” Mr. Nielsen said, handing her a white envelope, “he seemed like a good catch…”

“Oh no, I’m not…” Emma replied, shaking her head at his insinuation, “I have no idea who you’re talking about, actually.”

“Your life, kiddo. Make sure you enjoy it,” he said calmly, before winking at her once again, “Have a nice night.”

“You too,” – she didn’t even wait to see him close his door, walking in a hurried step towards the stairs.

As soon as she entered the apartment, she dropped the grocery bag on the kitchen island counter, her clinging wet clothes suddenly not bothering her anymore. Not wanting to wait another second, she ripped open the envelope and started reading the ugly scribbles.

“Hi, Emma,

I hope you don’t think this is too forward but I really would like to know you better. Call me crazy but there’s something about you that makes me lose all my dignity. If by any chance you change your mind, here is my number: 617-555-0106.

I hope to hear from you soon,

Chris Miller”

She had no idea for how long she kept staring at the letter, not sure if that had really happened or if she was having a really awful nightmare. When after a couple of minutes she realized that was actually happening for real, she felt like punching a wall. So she had a stalker now? And how the
fuck had he found out her address when she had never mentioned it to him? Sighing loudly in frustration, she tore the letter apart before throwing it in the garbage. Was it possible that not even one night stands were safe anymore? The entire purpose of it was to get laid and then move on and not have to deal with that person anymore, what was so hard to understand about it? And who the hell writes a letter like this to someone they barely know? One thing was for sure: whoever he was, she wasn’t going to let him get away with it, but she would worry about it tomorrow. Right now, she just really wanted to have a peaceful evening with her chicken noodles and her pint of Ben and Jerry’s.

Boston – Present Day

“Please, stand clear of the closing door,” Killian practically jumped at the sound of the elevator’s automatic voice announcement as they got on the building’s elevator. Emma couldn’t help but start laughing at the horrified look on her husband’s face as he looked at the panel buttons.

“Bloody hell, someone’s trapped,” he hissed as he started hitting the bonded metal door with his prosthetic hand.

“No one’s trapped, Killian,” Emma said as she pressed the button for the second floor, “it’s the elevator talking.”

“Going up,” the female robotic voice echoed in the cabin again.

“Ah, so I take it this woman is somewhere behind these walls and that’s how she knows we are going up?” Killian asked as he kept knocking at the walls.

“It’s not a woman, it’s a recording,” Emma chuckled, “and please stop doing that before someone arrests us for aggravated assault to an elevator.”

“Second floor.”

“Fascinating,” Killian mumbled, his gaze so intently fixed on the elevator that Emma had to push him out of the cabin once the doors opened.

There had been no name on the mail box that corresponded to the 205 apartment, so that either meant that no one was actually living there at the moment or whoever was there had forgotten to put a name in the mail box. Either way, they didn’t want to take any chances and so, as soon as they stood in front of the light yellow door, Emma wasted no time in ringing the bell.

Emma and Killian exchanged a glance as they waited for someone to answer, but no one ever did. Emma started reaching for the keys in her pocket even though she was well aware that her old keys probably wouldn’t open the door anymore - whoever had rented it afterwards had probably changed the locks - but it wouldn’t hurt to try now that they were there.

She put the key in the lock and turned it, surprising the two of them when the door actually opened. A sudden smell of mold filled their nostrils as they walked inside, scrunching their noses at the unpleasant smell. Luckily, no lights were needed, the daylight lighting up the kitchen through the big glass windows.

“I don’t think anyone’s living here,” Emma said in disbelief as she looked at the thick layer of dust on the kitchen island counter, “how’s it possible?”
She wondered if something had happened to Mr. Nielsen. She had noticed there was a different name on the mail box that used to be his, but she had hoped that simply meant he had moved out. He had always refused to have a cellphone, so the moment Emma left Boston he had been pretty much unreachable. She wished she had somehow been able to warn him about her move, to let him know that he could rent the place to somebody else, but it’s not like she had a lot of time to deal with any normal things from the normal, non-magical world.

“None of these things are mine,” Emma said while looking around and finding unfamiliar objects, “someone must have been here after me.”

“Whoever that was, love, I don’t think they’ve been here in a while,” – he let his finger run through the dust on the table, before blowing it away.

Emma nodded her head in agreement, “we should go.”

Killian couldn’t help but let his mind wander, trying to think about what her life had been like when this tiny appartment was the place she called home. What would she do after a long day at work? In which chair did she sit when she was eating? Would she fall asleep on the armchair while watching her favorite shows? Had she ever brought any man over?

At that, Killian walked towards her, standing behind her just enough for his hot breath to make her skin damp, “But why leave, Swan? We’ve only just arrived.”

Emma knew that husky voice all too well by now and she couldn’t help but smile as she felt him pushing her against the kitchen island counter. He couldn’t seriously be thinking about sexy times in a stranger’s apartment.

Except of course he was.

And she loved it.

“Tell me, Swan,” he whispered, this time against her neck as his fingers traced her wedding ring, “when you were here all alone, did you ever think that someday you’d be here with your husband?”

Killian felt her shiver under his touch, leaning in to him as she shook her head weakly, waiting for his next move.

“Did you think about him kissing you like this?” – as if to prove a point, Killian dropped sloppy kisses on her shoulder blades as his hand ran up and down the side of her body, a shaky breath escaping Emma’s lips while her hands gripped his hair. There was nothing that he loved more than feeling her gentle fingers gripping his hair tightly during the deepest moments of intimacy.

He loved her fingers.

He loved her arms.

He loved her hair.

He loved every single nook and cranny of her body.

He loved her.

And being here, in the apartment that had once been hers back when she was all alone in the world and hurting, had raised in him an overwhelming need to show her just how much she was loved now. How much all of those wounds belonged in the past and that the future was nothing to be
afraid of. He had promised her that once and he would do the possible and the impossible to keep that promise.

“We can’t,” Emma said with apprehension, but her body seemed to have a different opinion as Killian felt her ass rubbing against his groin.

“We aren’t even looting a thing,” he said as his hand now grazed her right breast, her breath caught in her throat, “we’re simply trespassing private property.”

“You can’t,” Emma clarified, reminding him of his incapacitating injury.

“Who said anything about me, Swan?” he teased into her ear as he forcefully kneaded her breast through her green cotton shirt, but gently enough not to hurt her. Emma couldn’t contain her moan of pleasure, arching her body against his so she could feel his hardness pressing against her back. Killian kept dropping kisses on her neck, moving up to nibble at her ear, Emma’s head falling back against his shoulder as he languidly licked the sensitive shell of her ear.

Her harsh pants filled the room, getting more erratic as his hand traveled down her body while he fondled her other breast with his prosthetic hand. She felt his fingers opening the button of her jeans, the feel of his warm tongue caressing her ear together with the anticipation of what was to come making her heart flutter, a smile etching on her lips. She was so, so lucky for having Killian God in the Sheets Jones as her husband.

She closed her eyes when she felt the tips of his fingers slide under her panties, making her skin melt.

“Did you ever think about it, love,” he insisted, teasing the small patch of curls between her legs, “Of your husband touching you like this?”

A loud moan escaped her throat as he finally slipped one finger inside her, finding her wet and ready for him. Emma pumped her hips back and forth, not really interested in making this last for too long. Killian could sense the desperation in her movements, her fingers gripping his hair even more tightly.

“Quick,” she grunted, putting her hand over his, pleading him to start moving his fingers. Not wanting to make her wait and knowing he would have plenty of time to tease her and go slow later, Killian complied. This time, he rubbed two fingers around her throbbing clit, circling it and stroking her just the way she loved whenever they were in a rush: fast and hard.

Emma gripped the counter as the sensations he was eliciting within her grew stronger, making it harder for her to maintain her balance.

“Killian,” she panted as his fingers thrusted relentlessly into her, his own groans of pleasure at watching her about to come undone loud in her ear. Needing to feel as close to him as possible, Emma craned her neck around to kiss him, welcoming the frantic clash of mouths and tongues. Killian growled into her mouth, knowing that it wasn’t going to take much more to tip her over the edge. A loud cry escaped from her when Killian sucked her tongue into his mouth as her entire body seized up and she shuddered while her orgasm washed over her. It was a good thing he had already been holding her, because she wouldn’t have been able to stand, her legs feeling as solid as jelly.

Killian kept peppering her neck with kisses, waiting for her to catch her breath and gain her composure. It was in times like these that he felt that he had been born to make Emma Swan writhe with pleasure, a task he would happily undertake anytime, any day.

“That was amazing,” she finally found the strength to say, turning around in his arms and hugging him, “thank you.” – it was a shame she wasn’t able to return the favor, but they weren’t going to take
any risks.

“Trust me, Swan, it was my pleasure.”

“You know what, I’m starving,” she mumbled before catching the sly, suggestive smile forming on Killian’s face, “for actual food.”

“I’m rather hungry too,” he said, the double-meaning in his words not going unnoticed by Emma. She was going to make sure she would make it up to him when the doctor told them that she was totally free to bang her husband in whichever way she wanted. For now, however, they could only take care of his literal hunger. And Emma knew exactly where to take them next.

---

**Enchanted Forest – 236 years ago**

When they got back to Calypso’s hut, Anne made sure to go with her, figuring that her parents would be in their best behavior when visits were around.

Calypso had introduced Anne to them and they seemed to like her, being kind to her and offering her a piece of cheese and a slice of wheaten bread. If she didn’t know any better, she wouldn’t believe that they treated their own daughter in such a poor way.

Calypso hadn’t told them about the sword, having buried it near one of the trees surrounding the hut where only she and Anne could find it. In all fairness, she had never liked swords, but there was something about that one in particular that made her change her mind. She didn’t know what it was, but she knew that she wanted to learn how to sword fight so she would be able to put her magnificent blade to good use. Knowing Anne’s skills as a sword fighter, she had asked for her help, hoping her friend would be able to at least teach her how to wield the sword properly.

So far, Calypso seemed to be doing fine. She and Anne were outside the hut, sword fighting with sticks. Perhaps one day, when they were older, they would be able to use real swords.

“Always keep your feet flat on the ground,” Anne told her as she swung her fake sword with a twirl of her wrist, “keeping your balance is crucial.”

It didn’t take long for Calypso to conclude this was going to take her a lot of time. No matter what she did, Anne always found a way to best her. She fought not to let her envy of Anne’s skills take control of her, but that proved to be harder at each passing jab Anne threw at her.

“I’m thirsty,” Calypso finally said, finding an excuse to stop their training. She really didn’t want to feel any resentment towards her friend who was kindly helping her. After all, it wasn’t Anne’s fault to have been born in a wealthy family that could give her everything she wanted instead of living in a tiny, rotten piece of wattle walls and hay.

Shaking those thoughts out of her mind, Calypso ordered Anne to wait for her as she went to the hut to get some water. She saw her parents at the back of the hut, completely unaware of her presence, as usual.

“It’s good she has a friend. At least she isn’t around and we have more time for ourselves,” she heard her mother’s voice in the distance.
“That Anne girl is a gift. So kind, so energetic. If only she was our daughter…” – the moment the words left Nicholas’ mouth, Calypso felt as if a knife was being twisted in her heart as years of torment and abuse flashed through her mind all at once, anger filling her entire being.

Anger that her parents didn’t love her.
Anger that she would never be enough.
Anger that Anne had everything and she had nothing.
Anger that she would never be as good as Anne.

She felt like screaming at the top of her lungs, her fury lending power to her legs as she walked out of the hut without her parents noticing her. With tears rolling by her cheeks, she hurriedly approached Anna, taking the stick from her hand and throwing it away without a care in the world.

“Leave!” Calypso shouted at Anne, her face flushed and the veins in her neck throbbing.

“What happened?” Anne asked surprised, not understanding Calypso’s sudden change of mood, “What did they do?”

“I don’t need your help! Leave!” – Anne had never seen Calypso like this. Her once sparkling eyes now looked like balls of hatred piercing through her as though she wasn’t looking at her best friend but at an insect that had to be squashed – “I said, leave.”

Not recognizing the person in front of her anymore, Anne decided there was no point in trying to get Calypso to explain what had happened or what she had done to upset her. If she changed her mind, Calypso knew she could find her at the lake. Not putting up a fight, Anne simply nodded at her, sadness clouding her features as she walked away.

Calypso didn’t look back, trying to stop the tears from breaking free, knowing she wouldn’t be able to control the unbroken stream that would follow. She could still feel her body shaking, her lips quivering as her glazed eyes fell on the hut while she responded to her body instead of her brain. She had never tried to use her magic on her parents, but where had that gotten her? They hated her and wished that somebody else was their daughter. They were lucky she had never tried to do something worse. That’s what they deserved for everything they had done to her.

Not thinking twice, she walked back towards the hut, slamming the door open so they could notice her presence at least once in their lives.

“What is it?”, Isabella asked from where they were sitting, but Calypso didn’t bother to answer. They didn’t even deserve that.

Calypso lifted her left hand and opened it, her palm turned to her parents as she started speaking, “from now on, you will love me. You will not yell at me anymore and I will be the child you have always dreamed of having.”

The dark blue magic left her hand, a contented smile on her lips as she felt the power within her. Soon enough, everything would change and she would have the life she had always wanted. She waited for her parents’ eyes to turn into that shade of blue that signaled her success, but that never happened. Instead, her parents were now staring at her with wide eyes, deep fear swirling inside them as their mouths opened in shock at what she had just tried to do.

“Did you try to use your magic on us?” Nicholas yelled at her as he got up from the floor and stomped towards her angrily.

“How dare you?” Isabella growled, joining her husband.
Fear suddenly took over Calypso, not understanding why her magic hadn’t worked on them. With panic taking in, she stormed out of the hut, lost as to what she would do now that she knew she was never going to be able to make her parents love her.

Storybrooke – Present Day

Regina was going through the recruitment files David had given her when Snow and a woman she had never seen before walked into the mayor’s office.

“Can we interrupt?” Snow asked her while the woman closed the door behind them.

“You already have,” Regina replied with a hint of annoyance in her voice as she closed one of the files.

“David told me you’re opening a job vacancy for someone to help Emma and Killian at the station,” Snow started talking enthusiastically, “and I thought Ethel here would be the perfect choice! She used to be a watchwoman back in her land, right?”

“Yes, that’s right,” Ethel confirmed, smiling at Regina, “and my work was very much appreciated if I say so myself.”

Regina looked skeptically at Ethel, her eyes studying her attentively.

“See? I think she would make a great officer, especially in times like these when Emma leaves town,” Snow added.

“Wait, Emma left town?” Ethel asked in what looked like a slightly panicked tone as she frowned at Snow, not believing what the princess had just said, “Did the deputy go with her?”

“Yes, they went to Boston, but they’ll be back tomorrow,” Snow answered, not understanding why Ethel looked so concerned while Regina eyed Ethel even more suspiciously when she saw the woman appearing to be relieved at Snow’s answer.

“And why would you be so interested in knowing that?” Regina inquired her with an inquisitive look on her face.

Ethel, however, didn’t flinch, “it’s silly, but after what happened with Hyde, not having the sheriff and the deputy around makes me anxious.”

Enchanted Forest – 236 years ago

As soon as Anne got home, she found her father and one of his guards waiting for her. She had thought she had managed to escape their intensive supervision, but apparently she hadn’t been able to fool them this time around. The tight look on her father’s face said it all – she was in major trouble.
Just when she was preparing herself for another lecture, her father surprised her, simply ordering her to go to her room. She had no idea what had gotten into him, but she wasn’t going to complain. Hurrying inside, she left her father and the guard alone on the mansion’s garden.

“Did you follow her?” William asked the guard.

“Yes, sir. She’s been meeting with another girl named Calypso,” the guard replied, “and from what I saw her doing with my very own eyes, I have enough reasons to believe this girl is a witch.”

“A witch?!” William yelled before he looked around and lowered his voice, “what did you see her doing?”

“She enchanted a man, made him believe the lies she told him,” the guard stuttered, shivering at the memories, “and she... she used her magic to take a sword out of a tree.”

“My Lord...” William whispered into the cool air, “my daughter is friends with a witch?”

“That’s what it looked like, sir.”

“No, I will not allow it,” William said, keen on stopping that from happening, “I will make sure my daughter never sees that filthy wretch again.”

After running away from the hut, Calypso went to the only place where she still felt safe. The soothing effect the lake’s water had in her just what she needed after what was now the worst day of her life.

Sitting down on her rock by the lake, she finally allowed herself to cry, the muscles of her chin trembling like those of a small child who didn’t understand why she wasn’t enough. She had always been an obedient daughter, had always done everything her parents asked her to do, even if, at first, she didn’t always do it the exact way they wanted. But was that reason enough to make her feel like a failure?

Curling herself into a ball, she started feeling guilty for the way she had treated Anne. She couldn’t deny that she had always felt slightly jealous of her friend’s life and the way she was strong enough to stand up for herself and those who were close to her. Anne had been the only person standing by her side and helping her, keeping her promise not to tell anyone about her magic. And still, Calypso managed to ruin that by sending her away.

Her tears were beginning to soak her chest when she suddenly heard a strange noise coming from the water. She got up, getting off the rock before walking to the lakefront, watching a cloud of smoke forming in the water as a smudged figure appeared on the surface. She blinked her tear-heavy lashes to make sure she wasn’t imagining things and, sure enough, she wasn’t. There was a reflection of someone in the water: a beautiful, young woman’s face staring right back at her.

“My sweet child...” – the voice echoed from the water and Calypso took a step back, fear taking over her, “don’t be frightened. I could never hurt you, Calypso.”

At hearing her name, Calypso slowly stepped forward, trying to touch the face in the water, but nothing happened.

“For now this is as close as we can get,” the woman told her.

“Who are you?”
“I can tell you’re in great despair,” – the vision avoided her question – “you are special, Calypso. You always were. But as strong as you are, you cannot use your powers to make people love you.”

Terror overtook Calypso’s face, wondering how the woman could possibly know about her powers. Had Anne told anyone about it? Or her parents?

“And why would I believe you?” she decided to counter, not wanting to give away that the woman was right about her powers.

“Were you successful in attempting to make your parents love you?” – Calypso’s face went blank, feeling as though someone was rubbing salt in the wound – “I know everything. Your magic is powerful but, as all magic, it comes with limitations.”

“What limitations?”

“You cannot force people to love someone,” the woman said as her voice momentarily trailed off, “but you can force them to hate one another.”

Calypso frowned at the water, “What do you mean?”

“Think about this morning: that man wanted to hurt you and you redirected his hate towards you to someone you created in his mind. It was beautiful.”

“So I can make people turn against each other?” Calypso wondered, still not fully aware of the overwhelming power she had in her hands as a brilliant thought ran through her mind, “Can I turn my parents against each other?”

“There are exceptions,” – was the woman’s response – “those who share True Love or are related by blood cannot be turned against each other by magic.”

“Why?”

“There are rules not even I can change.”

“Who are you?” Calypso asked again, hoping that this time the woman wouldn’t ignore her.

“A friend,” the woman replied, but her voice, much like her face in the water, started fading away.

“No, come back!” Calypso shouted, stepping into the water. She needed more answers.

“You will do glorious things, Calypso.”

And then, just like that, the smoke completely vanished from the water, the woman’s face nowhere to be seen anywhere as a tiny frog swam.

Calypso didn’t know how to process everything she had just heard. Who was that woman? Could she trust her? Nothing made sense anymore, but for some reason this encounter had comforted her in some way, soothed her even. And although she didn’t understand why, she chose to revel on the way the woman’s last words to her echoed in her ears.

Storybrooke – Present Day

“One charming hamburger!” Granny yelled to the kitchen as soon as she saw David sitting in one of the diner’s booth benches. He laughed in return, amused at how Granny would always do that whenever he stopped by for lunch.
“Hi, David!” Morgana greeted him, “Harsh morning?”

“You could say so.”

“Worried about Emma going to Boston with her pirate?”

“No, it’s nothing to do with that. I just wasn’t used to this much paperwork anymore,” he clarified before he suddenly frowned at her, taking in what she had said, “wait, you know they went to Boston?”

His question seemed to catch her off guard as she widened her eyes at him, “word gets around in Storybrooke, especially at Granny’s,” she said as she pretended to write something on her notepad, “can I get you anything to drink?”

“Water, please.”

A couple of minutes later Morgana was back with his water and hamburger.

“Bon appetite,” she said, leaving him to his water and his meal.

“Uh, I love hamburgers,” he hummed out in pleasure before taking a big, hungry bite.

---

**Boston – Present Day**

“Uh, I love hamburgers,” Emma said as she practically choked down the fatty hamburger in her hands as they sat in one of the tables at Tasty Burger.

“I’m certain I could use all this grease to lubricate the Jolly Roger’s wire ropes,” Killian retorted as he looked away from the fatty burger before taking a bite.

“It is greasy, but it’s also super yummy. I missed this” – it had been years since she had eaten real junk food and she wasn’t ashamed to admit she had missed it a lot.

As he tried to taste the different flavors in his mouth, Killian looked intently at Emma savoring her hamburger. As much as he disapproved of this type of food, getting to watch her in complete bliss while eating the meal she had missed so dearly, in the town where she once used to be all alone was enough to make him smile.

“Someone should totally open a fast food restaurant in Storybrooke. Just saying,” she pointed out, sticking an onion ring in her mouth.

“Want to ruin Granny’s business, Swan?”

“Good point.”

They kept eating in comfortable silence for some minutes, Killian still appreciating the joy on Emma’s face as she enjoyed the meal. While doing so, he couldn’t help but imagine a younger Emma, with her cute glasses on, sitting alone in one of these same tables, perhaps looking at the people outside and thinking about what she was going to be doing for the rest of the day.

“Tell me, love,” he finally broke their silence, curiosity getting the best of him, “what went through
Emma smiled at him, not exactly expecting his question, but she would gladly share her memories with him. Being back there, it was inevitable not to think about what her life used to be like before Henry got to her. No matter how some of those memories were still painful to talk or think about, she knew she could pour her heart out to him that he would always be there for her.

“I would think about the next person I was going to go after and the leads I got,” she said honestly as she put down her hamburger and wiped her hands clean on her napkin, before she continued talking, “I would think about the son I had given away and how he would probably enjoy being there with me.”

“You now know he would,” Killian said with a sincere smile on his face as she smiled in return.

“I would think about Neal… Where he would be and how much I wanted to kick him in the balls,” she continued, “I’d wonder about my parents, whether they were dead or alive,” she shrugged, taking a sip from her coke.

Killian was about to tell her how much he admired her strength, but Emma started chuckling before he had a chance to do it.

“It’s funny…” she started saying, but then stopped to grab her hamburger again.

“What is, Swan?”

She looked at him with shining eyes as she thought he may as well know about it, “I’ve always had kind of like a pipe dream, you know? I used to have this sort of wish of creating a place where lost kids could have a home. A place where someone actually cared about them.”

Killian kept listening to her, but he couldn’t help but watch her in awe as she proved yet again how big her heart truly was. She didn’t need to say that her wish to do something like that came from the own way she had felt for most of her life: desiring a home and someone who cared. Feelings he could relate to all too well.

---

**Boston - 2009**

_It wasn’t long past eight in the morning when Emma parked her yellow bug on the driveway of one of the fanciest neighborhoods in Boston. She picked up the letter Chris had sent her as she waited some minutes to see if there were any suspicious movements around. She had dug some information on this guy and had found the place where he lived. It was nothing he hadn’t done with her and maybe he would cut it off if she actually confronted him and set him straight. If he was thinking about keeping this up, she would have no problem letting him know that this was a game she was much better at and that he would eventually regret it._

_While she waited to make a move, she took in the beautiful houses all around her: gardens with perfectly mowed lawns, expensive cars, white picket fences… She didn’t even allow herself to entertain the idea of what it would be like to live there - it’s not liked she would never get to have the white picket fence life anyway._

_Deciding now was probably a good time to do what she had come here for, she got out of the car_
and walked towards house number 9754. When she knocked at the door, a young, brunette woman answered it, looking at her with suspicion.

“Hi, I’m looking for Chris Miller?”

“He’s already left for work.”

“Are you the housekeeper?” Emma asked, trying her luck, “Because I’d appreciate it if you would tell him I-“

“No, I’m his wife,” the woman cut her off as Emma froze in her place, not knowing what to say. Just then, to make things worse, a small boy, not more than four years of age came to the door.

“Mom, I want my giraffe,” he cried out as the woman picked him up and held him in her arms while keeping her inquisitive eyes on Emma.

“Who are you?”

Emma blinked at her a couple of times, trying to come up with whatever lie she could think of, “I work for… an internet service provider… and I just wanted to speak to your husband and let him know about our latest offers.”

“I’m sorry, but as I said he’s not home right now.”

“That’s okay. I’ll come back later,” Emma smiled at the woman, hoping that she wouldn’t ask her anymore questions, “thanks for your time,” - thankfully, the woman closed the door as soon as Emma started walking away.

The short walk to her car felt like an eternity as Emma took in everything that had happened. That damn bastard. He was married and he had never told her a thing: he had no wedding ring on, that much she was sure of because she always noticed that, not wanting to get involved with men who were already in committed relationships. Once had already been enough, thank you very much.

She slammed the bug’s door shut as she slumped on the driver’s seat, taking all her anger out on the steering wheel, hitting it with her hand balled into a fist. She couldn’t believe she had unknowingly slept with a married man. And of course he had no actual interest in her, except for getting in her pants, that is. She already knew he had been bullshitting her with all that load of hot air, but she never thought it was this bad. It shouldn’t surprise her, though, she should know no man would actually be interested in her because of, well, her.

A sudden pang of guilt invaded her as she thought about his wife and his kid. Should she tell her or was it better to just keep her mouth shut? It was ridiculous, she had been fooled too, she had nothing to feel guilty about - this was the idiot’s fault, not hers. Taking a deep breath, she decided that it wasn’t her place to say a thing, because doing so could mean she would be ruining a family.

“What a fucking asshole”, she groaned to herself as she buckled her belt, ready to get the hell away from there. One thing was for sure: she knew she would never find herself a husband and risk being in that woman’s position someday. Hell no.

---

Boston – Present Day
When they arrived at the private clinic, Killian was impressed at how professional and modern the entire place looked. It certainly had nothing to do with Storybrooke’s General Hospital.

“You can take a seat, the doctor will be seeing you in a short while,” the woman who was behind the desk told them, pointing at the waiting room chairs.

“You were right about the smell, Swan,” Killian pointed out, not detecting the foul smell that never failed to make him nauseated (and he had been around plenty of vomit in his two hundred year old life).

“I told you,” she smiled at him, taking a seat in one of the red chairs, “do you want me to go in with you?”

“I would love to,” – always the charmer, he then brought her hand to his mouth and dropped a gentle kiss on it. She was just about to ask him if he was nervous when a doctor came out of the office in front of them. He was looking at a file he was holding in his hands as he walked towards the receptionist they had been talking to. The moment Emma looked at his face, her entire body went numb. She would remember that douchey face anywhere.

“Oh my God,” she said in a loud whisper as she immediately turned her face to the side. What the fuck was Chris Miller doing there? The last time she had heard about him he worked in a clinic on the other side of town.

“Emma? What’s wrong?” Killian asked her with a preoccupied voice, but it was Emma’s sudden uneasiness that worried him the most.

“I know that guy,” she whispered, looking at Chris who now had his back to them, “I didn’t know he worked here.”

“The doctor?”

Emma nodded as she turned her face to the side once again when he picked up another file from the desk and went back into his office. She really, truly hoped that he wasn’t going to be the one seeing Killian, because that would be the-

“Dr. Miller will be seeing you in five minutes,” the receptionist informed them, interrupting Emma’s thoughts.

“This can’t be happening,” Emma sighed as she closed her eyes in terror. Of course he was going to be the doctor looking at Killian. Of course. Because not even out of Storybrooke she could take a break.

“Emma?” Killian’s calm voice brought her out of her anxious thoughts, his hand resting against hers on her lap. She didn’t even need to look at him to know he was confused and worried and she felt awful for even making him feel that way in the first place. He was her husband and she wanted to be honest with him.

“I know him because we… uh… I…” Emma started to stutter, not knowing exactly how to say that she had slept with the doctor who was about to see him. She didn’t feel the need to justify to him any of her past actions, but it was still something awkward to talk about. Even more so in this particular situation.

“You had a dalliance with him,” Killian asserted, concluding right away just what she had been trying to tell him. He didn’t look angry, but more as if he was trying to process everything.
“It was just one night, it meant nothing. But this is still awkward as hell,” she sighed, already knowing this was going to be the longest appointment she had ever been in.

Killian couldn’t exactly tell what he was feeling. He couldn’t deny that he felt a hint of jealousy taking over him, but he knew Emma had a past, just as he did. For some reason, however, it was easier to deal with it when no men from that past were around in the present. This was entirely new territory for him.

“I don’t want you to feel awkward with me, Swan,” he finally said with a sincere smile.

“I don’t mean because of us, I mean with him. It’ll be awkward,” she explained, “and I just really didn’t want to deal with any of his shit now. He was married with a kid and he didn’t tell me about it.”

“I wouldn’t judge you if you did know about it, love. He was the one carrying the responsibility to honor his vows and his wife’s trust, not you.”

“I’m sorry, if I had known about this, I wouldn’t have brought you here,” – she let her head drop to his shoulder, feeling that coming here was a mistake.

“You have nothing to apologize for, love. You did nothing wrong,” Killian comforted her as he squeezed her hand, “and I am undoubtedly more handsome than he is.”

The way his face had suddenly turned into a smirk had her chuckling, “way more devilishly handsome.”

“And infinitely superior in the attachment department, I take it,” he teased, perhaps more with a hint of truth than he had wanted to let on.

“Just refrain from that sort of comment while we’re in there,” Emma laughed, lightly smacking him in the shoulder.

“Mr. Jones?” a voice interrupted their moment as Chris came out of the office, his eyes locking on Emma with recognition. Killian wasted no time in getting up and holding Emma’s hand in his as they approached the doctor.

“Aye, the name’s Killian,” he said, extending his hand to him as Chris’ stare followed Killian’s prosthetic hand going around Emma’s shoulders, “and this is Emma… my wife,” – the emphasis Killian put on “my wife” didn’t escape Emma, but she shrugged it off, more concerned with the smug smile Chris sent her way.

“Dr. Chris Miller. Please come in,” he ordered, standing to the side so that Killian could go in the office, “Mrs. Jones, you can wait in the lobby.”

Emma was about to speak, but Killian anticipated her, “I would like for Miss Swan to accompany me. My wife and I have no secrets.”

“Very well. Then please come in, the both of you.”

Once they were inside the office, Emma and Killian sat on the two black chairs in front of the desk. Killian observed the man intently, feeling his jaw clenching just thinking about the fact that this bloody fool had a history with his wife.

“So what brings you here today, Mr. Jones?” Chris asked when he sat down on his much bigger chair. At the doctor’s question, Killian glanced at Emma, trying to remember everything she had told
Leaving behind his personal feud with the man, Killian explained what had happened and when he had first noticed the cut.

“Do you have a history of sexually transmitted diseases?”

“No,” Emma answered for him as soon as she felt Killian’s eyes on her again.

“When was your last checkup?”

“About a year ago,” Emma replied.

“Do you have an active sex life?”

“Yes!” Killian exclaimed, almost jumping from his seat as he didn’t let Emma answer that question in particular, “we love each other. Because we’re married,” he added with a grin, putting his arm around the back of her chair. Emma didn’t even know how to react to that, not able to do anything other than give him a puzzled look.

“I can see that,” Chris chuckled as he got up from his chair and put a pair of gloves on, “will you please come over here and drop your pants?”

“With pleasure,” Killian gushed as he stood up and walked towards the examination table before unbuttoning his leather pants, “I hope I will not make you insecure about yourself, doctor,” he taunted and Emma opened her mouth in shock as she glared at him, but of course Killian was too busy smirking at the doctor to even notice it.

Initially, she had been worried about Chris’ reaction, but it seemed like Killian was the one who was seriously starting to upset her with his infantile behavior.

“It takes a lot to make me insecure,” Chris chuckled at him before taking a look at Killian’s naked form, “nope, not insecure at all,” the doctor taunted back as Killian’s amused expression suddenly turned into a glare.

Emma felt like yelling. How old were they? She smacked her palm against her forehead, not believing the two of them. This couldn’t be going any worse.

“It’s a minor cut. There’s no infection, no rash, no swelling… This seems to be a typical case of penis tears,” Chris informed them.

“Look, mate, I assure you my penis is not torn apart, so maybe look better,” Killian snapped.

“Killian,” Emma called him out.

“Mr. Jones, your penis is perfectly fine. Penis tears are a very common occurrence. They’re usually associated with excessive amounts of sexual intercourse,” Chris explained to him, as a sudden grin appeared on Killian’s face.

“Well, that’s certainly plausible,” he beamed, finally looking at Emma, but she wasn’t looking so happy.

“You can put your pants on, that’s nothing to worry about,” – Chris then went back to his desk and started talking to Emma - “The most obvious cause for it is too much friction during penetration. The more friction between the vagina and the penis, the more likely penile injury is to occur.”
“Makes sense,” Emma nodded as Killian was quick to join them.

“That will go away with time, but you should refrain from penetrative sex until the cut is healed. Or, if you do, make sure things don’t get too rough,” Chris advised.

“And how long does it take to heal?” Killian asked him sharply.

“Not too long. A week. Two at most. I will order urine and blood tests, just to be completely sure we aren’t dealing with a sexually transmitted disease,” Chris added in his most professional voice, “I highly doubt it, but it’s part of my professional ethic.”

Emma nodded at him, grateful that everything was alright with Killian and that this mess was about to end. She wasted no time in getting up from the chair once she saw Chris walking towards the door.

“And that is all on my part, Mr. Jones. You should get your results in about a week,” he said, opening the door as he waited for Emma and Killian to walk out.

When they were on the corridor, Chris directed them to another room. He started talking to a male nurse and handed him Killian’s file before the man asked Killian to follow him so he could take the urine and blood tests.

The moment Killian started following the nurse, Emma quickly went back to the reception, not wanting to have to say a word to Dr. Douche. He walked past the reception with a sly smile on his face as he stood by his office’s door, hands on the pockets of his white coat as he watched Emma telling the receptionist she would prefer to pay right away (knowing the bill would likely never reach Storybrooke).

“Ms. Swan,” Chris called her out when she was finished with the receptionist, “can I please have a word with you?”

Emma flinched at the sound of his voice, her attempt to go back to the waiting room until Killian returned failing miserably. Slowly, she turned around and found him gesturing towards his office, inviting her in. What did he want now?

Groaning inwardly, she repeated to herself that as much as she couldn’t stand the guy, he was still Killian’s doctor at the moment and that was the only reason why she reluctantly walked into his office. If he wanted to talk about Killian and his health, great. If he started with any kind of crap, she could take care of herself and put him in his place.

“So… are you still the ‘I-don’t-do-relationships’ mysterious girl who ignores a guy who only wants to know her better?” he said with some bitterness in his voice as soon as he closed the door behind them. Emma rolled her eyes right away, she didn’t even know why she had expected him to act professionally.

“Are you still the entitled stalker who conveniently omits that he’s married so he can sleep with women who aren’t his wife?” she bit back and she could see that he was surprised at her knowing that piece of information.

“Ah, so that’s why you never called me back.”

She had actually found out about that long after deciding she wasn’t calling him back, but it’s not like it was even worth it to let him know that. He wasn’t worth it.

“Look, if this is what you called me here for, I won’t waste my time,” she snapped as she went to
grab the door knob to get the hell out of there.

“Life has treated you well. Good looks, a husband… Too bad his dick can’t take it.”

Emma had been just about to leave but the scornful way he was laughing had her seeing red. Who the fuck did he think he was?

“Excuse me?” she dropped the knob, narrowing her eyes at him.

“You know, since you won’t be able to have anyone taking care of your needs for a while, I am willing to help you with that,” he said, winking at her, “after all, you must miss two hands touching you, no?”

Emma had no idea what came over her, blood boiling within her as she lunged in his direction and punched him in the face before kicking him in the balls. Chris shrieked in pain, almost falling on his knees.

“Don’t ever talk about my husband again,” she bellowed with anger that probably echoed through the entire clinic.

“You can’t do this. I’ll sue you for this,” he threatened her as he stood up weakly, wiping off the blood from his lip.

“Do that and I will sue you for sexual harassment, ableism and unprofessional and inappropriate conduct,” she threatened back.

“You have nothing against me.”

“Are you sure about that? Did you forget that I’m a bail bondswoman and that I have all kinds of dirt on you? How do you think I found out you were married?” she asked with a fake smile on her face, knowing that she had pulled him into a corner when his cocky smile turned into a frightened glare.

“Dr. Miller, is everything okay?” the receptionist walked in.

“Yes,” Chris finally answered after a moment of silence, “Ms. Swan and I just had a little disagreement,” – so predictable. He was nothing but a coward. Not wanting to stay there one more second, Emma stormed out of the office just as Killian appeared in the lobby.

“Swan?” he asked upon seeing the pure rage on her face, “what happ-“

“I’m fine. We’re leaving,” she said, taking his hand in hers and pulling him with her out the door.

---

**Enchanted Forest – 236 years ago**

“I don’t know why you insist on reading that rubbish,” William grumbled, walking into Anne’s room and finding her reading the foolish pirate books she would never put down.

“I like reading them,” Anne said, not bothering to lift her head up to look at her father.

“Not anymore,” – he then took the book away from her – “I know what you have been doing. Escaping from grammar school and the house to meet that girl.”
Anne drifted her eyes to her father’s face, trying her best to hide her surprise over what he had said. How had he found out? She had always been careful to see if there was someone following her.

“Since, clearly, you refuse to respect me or my orders, from now on, you are forbidden to leave your room unless you are supervised by one of my guards,” he said menacingly, “you will not see that girl again.”

Anne scrunched up her face at him, not wanting to believe he would actually turn her into a prisoner in her own house and prevent her from being friends with Calypso. Her body trembled as images of running around in the woods with her friend started playing in her head, knowing that soon they could become nothing more than faded memories. She started shaking her head, anger swirling in her eyes as she glared at him, refusing to accept any of it.

“I hate you. I wish it had been you dying instead of momma.”

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

Ethel lied down on one of the inn’s old beds, stretching her arms over her head and feeling her ribcage widen. It had been a long, but successful day and she just hoped that everything would eventually fall into place.

“You look beautiful,” she heard Scott’s voice as he barged in the room. His hair was wet from the cold, rainy night and he quickly shrugged off his jacket.

“Please, you can stop pretending now,” she snarled, getting up from the bed the moment she saw him, “did you get the papers?”

Her eyes were expectant and Scott knew better than to tease her, so he just lifted the files in his hand, letting her know he had done exactly what she had asked him to do.

“What do I get in return?” he asked suggestively, but the serious, pointed look she sent him was enough to make him know there was no use in expecting a thing. She took the file from his hand and opened it quickly, her eyes scanning through the papers.

“I hope stealing those from the station was worth it.”

“It was,” she assured him, her eyes leaving the papers to focus on his instead, “you know how much I need this job. I need to be near him.”

---

**Enchanted Forest – 236 years ago**

It had been two weeks since Calypso had last seen Anne, images of her friend’s disappointed face when she had sent her away haunting Calypso during those long weeks. The guilt she felt over the incident that led to all of this had never left her, wishing she could turn back time and change the way she treated Anne. Unfortunately, there was little she could do now: she had expected to see Anne when she had gone to the grammar school, standing near the palisade as she used to do when they first met, but Anne hadn’t been there. She had thought about looking for her, but she realized that during the time they had spent together Anne had never told her where she lived. All she could do now was hope that the only friend she’d ever had would eventually forgive her and come find
Calypso knew she couldn’t lose Anne’s friendship, not when her relationship with her parents had been getting worse ever since she tried to enchant them. She had decided to give them another chance, but they didn’t seem to be appreciative of her forgiveness, now only talking to her when they ordered her to either go get milk or cheese. They had been acting in a rather strange way, always whispering in each other’s ear and looking at her sideways as they went out of their way to keep their distance from her.

She couldn’t get the old woman’s words out of her mind, wondering if enchanting her parents against each other would be a good thing for her, but she had always been too scared that her magic wouldn’t work on them again and that they would leave her for good. No, she couldn’t take that chance, which meant she had no other option but to do as she was told, hoping that the milk she was currently carrying was the one they wanted.

When she stepped into the hut, she dropped the buckets of milk on the floor with a thud, a loud gasp escaping her lips when she found the hut empty. There was nothing left: no tables, no benches, no casseroles, no cauldrons, no straw mattresses, nothing…

“Mother? Father?” Calypso called out her parents with a trembling voice, dropping to the ground and curling into a fetal position when no response ever came. Tears shimmered in her eyes at the confirmation of her biggest fear having come true: they had abandoned her. There was no other reason why they and all of their possessions were suddenly gone. That was why they had been acting so strangely: they were probably already plotting everything and asking her to go get milk was the excuse they needed to get her out of the hut.

A gentle knock on the door suddenly gave her hope that her parents had returned and that she had misunderstood everything, but when she turned around she found an older man in a nice suit and wearing a silk top hat.

Calypso hunched her shoulders and took a step back when he entered the hut, closing the door behind him. At his menacing look, she was quick to lift her hand to send him away with her magic, but nothing happened. She widened her eyes as she stared at her hand, trying to understand what was wrong.

“I’m afraid that won’t work on me,” the man laughed, holding a black necklace in front of her face, suspended by a single finger, “do you know a man named Zoso? He gave me this necklace,” the man said in a sneer as he started walking in circles around her, “it protects me from any kind of magic.”

Calypso’s heart started pounding in her chest, knowing that her powers wouldn’t help her and that she was completely at his mercy.

“You don’t know who I am, do you?” the man asked her as he leaned over her, his face mere inches away from hers, “I am Anne’s father.”

Anne had never talked much about her father, but Calypso sighed slightly in relief at his words. Surely Anne’s father wasn’t going to hurt her.

“My daughter was to be the one informing you of her decision, but, as it seems, courage isn’t one of her best qualities.”

“What happened to Anne?”
“Oh, but nothing happened to Anne. She’s at home, where she should be: sleeping in the most comfortable bed with the best linens and with every single commodity she needs,” - Calypso could feel that familiar stroke of jealousy sinking through her as she thought about Anne’s rich and comfortable life, enjoying the luxuries had always dreamed of having. “You see… My daughter is too good to be mingling with a useless rat like yourself. And she finally came to her senses,” William taunted her as Calypso glared at him, “she told me all about your magical abilities, came home crying one day about how much you scared her.”

Her lips started quivering as a hollow sense of betrayal invaded her chest and she suddenly found it hard to breathe. Anne had done the one thing she had promised not to do. She had told this man about her magic. She had always been afraid of her, just like everybody else. She had been lying to her all along. She could feel the throbbing veins in her neck as a triumphant smile formed on William’s features.

“No…” she mumbled, shaking her head in denial.

“Just the thought of stepping this very floor again was enough for her to burst into tears,” William glowered, “that’s why she asked me to tell you that she is not interested in seeing you again.”

Calypso started walking backwards as tears fell from her face, her entire body shaking with sobs when the sound of unexpected thunder sent chills down her spine.

“You leave my daughter alone,” William warned her with a growl, “if you don’t, I will make sure to inform the king about what you can really do and I assure you, you will not wish to be around when he starts his witch hunt.”

William watched as Calypso shook her head in fear, shrinking back into the wattle wall until a big, light blue cloud of magic engulfed her entire body. And then, just like that, she was gone.

When Calypso opened her eyes, she found herself in the lake, sitting on her rock. She didn’t know how she had gotten there. She only remembered how she had wished she was there. Maybe this was another one of her powers?

Calypso stood there, looking diminished and helpless as all those hateful and vengeful feelings she had felt weeks ago resurfaced once again and this time not even the water could prevent her heart from being consumed by a hatred she never knew could take root in her. In fact, it was the opposite, the more she let her eyes rest on the water, the more she remembered the woman’s words, a rush of power running through her body.

Everyone had betrayed her.

Anne.

Her parents.

They were the ones responsible for this and they would pay for it. If her gift was to turn people against each other, then that’s what she would do. And those who had hurt her were going to be the ones witnessing just what she could do and how wrong they had been for ever having doubted her. She took a deep breath in, almost as if she were pushing the lake’s restoring energies into her.

She could be all alone in the world, but glory was within reach, she could feel it in her skin. And she would go on to do glorious things, no one or nothing to stop her.
It was a good thing that it only took them a five minute walk to get to the hotel, because Emma hadn’t said a word to Killian the whole way there. He hadn’t asked her a thing either, knowing very well that her closed up expression meant that she wasn’t in the mood to talk.

When they got to their room, Emma went straight away to the closet, taking their bag out and scrambling through it. Killian started fumbling with the sheets as he stole some glances at her, the tension in the room palpable enough for him to sigh in frustration.

“I’m sorry if I upset you, Emma,” he finally said, breaking the silence. They had never fought too much, but on the occasions they did, they had always talked and sorted out their differences. He didn’t see why it should be any different now.

Throwing her night dress on the mattress, Emma stood up and put her hands on her hips, her eyes locked on Killian’s. She really thought they were past this by now.

“Why?” she demanded, the pitch in her voice a little higher than usual. She was absolutely pissed at what Chris had done, but right now she wanted to know why Killian had acted in such a childish way.

“Why am I sorry?” Killian frowned at her, not really sure what she had meant with that.

“Why did you feel the need to act that way?” she snapped, raising her voice more than she had intended.

Killian opened his mouth, but no words came out before he looked down, shoulders hanging low.

“I don’t know what got into me, Swan,” he mumbled, keeping his eyes on his feet.

Emma pressed her lips, holding in the exasperated sigh she felt building in her chest as she walked towards the end of the bed, standing in front of him.

“Hey,” she said, more softly this time as she grabbed his face in her hands, lifting it so he could look at her, “talk to me.”

Killian nodded at her, still ashamed at his juvenile behavior from earlier. He knew she deserved to know why he had done it, even if she would most likely dislike his reasons. They were both aware that if they were going to make this work, they would have to communicate – that was probably one of the most important lessons they had learnt not too long ago. Honesty and communication were key and neither of them would settle for less.

“I’m afraid I got jealous, love,” he admitted as he rested his hand and hook over her hands on his cheeks.

“I know you got jealous. What I want to know is why you were trying so hard to prove a point.”

“I simply wanted to show him…” Killian started saying, but stopped midway, ashamed to get the rest of the words out of his mouth while Emma kept gazing at him expectantly, “I wanted to show him that you’re with me now.”

“I think he realized that as soon as he saw us holding hands,” Emma asserted as she pulled him down so they could both sit on the bed, “there was absolutely no need for you to go all ‘oh, she’s my wife’, ‘oh, my dick is bigger than yours’, ‘oh, we have lots of sex!’ on him,” she said, mimicking the enthusiastic tone with which he had said those things.
“Aye, that was juvenile on my part, love. I apologize,” – Emma smiled at his apology, knowing that he meant it. He had always been the jealous type, the various clashes with Neal back in Neverland coming to her mind. Not to mention the whole wooden man child debacle. She didn't blame him, she knew what it felt like to be jealous, and Lord knew how much she had despised seeing him and Tinkerbell share breathing space. But still, there were limits.

“Being jealous is fine, I guess,” she shrugged, “as long as that jealousy doesn’t make you feel like you have to prove something to oth-“

“I know, Swan, but-“

“No, let me finish,” she asked him, repositioning herself on the bed so she could look better at him, “you have nothing to prove to him or to anyone who is a part of my past.”

“I just… I have never dealt with this before,” he finally let out, “When I was with Milah, jealousy was a feeling I never had to face. We spent most of our time on the Jolly Roger and no man in my crew ever dared to dally with her,” he paused as he stroked her fingers with his thumb, “that’s also why I reacted so poorly back in Neverland. I was never used to having other men fighting for the attention of the woman I love.”

Emma shook her head right away, a small frown creasing her brows, “See, that’s what I don’t get. That was back in Neverland, we’re way past that now!”

“I know, love.”

“After everything we’ve been through, do you really think you still have competition?” she asked him, not understanding how he could even think that, “I chose you. You’re my husband. My true love. You don’t have to compete with anyone because you don’t have to compare yourself to anyone. You’re already above all of that.”

Emma then brought his hook to her lips, dropping a gentle kiss to it, trying her best to be as affectionate as possible. She could also read him like a book and she knew that his insecurities played an important role in his jealousy, all too aware that she wasn’t the only one with abandonment issues.

“You don’t ever have to worry about other men,” she told him sincerely, “I’m never going to leave you.”

Killian smiled gently at her, the adoration in her eyes making his heart race, his face flushing just a little bit. He knew exactly what she meant because he felt the same way. No other woman would ever compare to Emma and their love. She would always be the only one who mattered.

“You are right, Swan. I never meant to make you feel guilty or ashamed of your past. I love and accept every part of you. My jealousy is my responsibility, not yours,” he said, owning up to his actions as he always did, “and I promise I will work on changing that.”

That was one of the many reasons why she loved him so much. He never shied away from doing whatever he could to better himself and to change his behavior. Few people could say the same.

She felt the cold metal of his hook brushing against her cheek and leaned into his touch, before deciding to lighten the mood, “I mean, it’s kinda hot how much you want me all to yourself, but there are limits.”

Killian laughed at her quip, moving so he could put his arms on either side of her body, pushing her down to the mattress until he was hovering over her.
“Despite my infantile behavior, I’ve quite enjoyed our day in this charming city,” he said as he nuzzled his nose against hers.

“Me too. And more important than that, you and your dick are fine,” she giggled, “we just need to stop fucking so much.”

“That will be an arduous task,” he murmured, purposely pressing his hook against the space in between her legs.

“You’re impossible.”

“Aye. And you love me for it.”
Of Loons and Rascals

Chapter Summary

Upon Emma and Hook’s return to Storybrooke, Regina makes a startling decision that surprises Emma while Hook finds himself in an unexpected struggle when he learns one of Henry’s secrets. In Enchanted Forest flashbacks, on her eighteenth birthday, Anne receives a gift from her father that will forever change her life.

Chapter Notes

This chapter includes many flashbacks related to new characters. With this being a Captain Swan story, these flashbacks featuring other characters will ALWAYS be relevant/connected to Emma, Killian and their storylines so I advise readers to keep track of all the information the flashbacks provide.

Enchanted Forest – 233 years ago

Not one whisper could be heard outside her bedroom as Anne fumbled with the lock of the heavy wooden door. Her fingers weren’t as steady as she wished, the fear of getting caught slowing her down, but never stopping her. She actually felt a thrill of enthusiasm running through her whenever she tried to open the door to her freedom.

Her father kept insisting on locking her in her own bedroom, only allowing her to leave when two of his dumb guards were watching her. He had lost his trust in her and he wouldn’t take any chances, not when that witch was still out there somewhere. What he didn’t know was that Anne’s bedroom was full of pirate books where one in particular had a thorough description of a rather rogue pirate with a very specific technique to open the thick doors of galleon ships. It had taken her about a year to actually be able to pick the lock using a hair pin she had stolen from Arietta, her maid, but she had eventually succeeded. Her effort came in handy in nights such as these – when everyone in the mansion was fast asleep, she would crack the door open and find a way to escape out of the house. Her father was smart, but she was smarter.

There had been plenty of nights where she had gone by Calypso’s hut, wanting to believe that she wouldn’t find the small shack empty and abandoned, but her hope eventually died down when nothing ever changed. Her excursions to the lake had been just as fruitless, Calypso never anywhere to be found. After a while, she had accepted she would probably never see Calypso again, assuming her and her parents had moved out during the three years that had passed.

There was no point in thinking about the last time she had seen Calypso and the deeply enraged state she’d been in - there was nothing she could do now. All Anne wanted was for her to be alright, wherever she was. At least that’s what she kept telling herself during her escapades to the village.

She loved how quiet and peaceful the poorer part of Kinsale was at night: people had no money nor fancy clothes, but they seemed genuinely happy, whether it was from drinking so much ale that they
passed out drunk near the taverns or from dancing around bonfires. There were men who always approached her, trying to get her into the chain dance, but she politely declined. She wasn’t supposed to be there in the first place and she couldn’t risk someone recognizing her – that would be a sure way for her father to lock her up for all eternity.

So far, her tactic of leaving the house during the night without anyone noticing was working and she wouldn’t do anything to ruin it. For her plan of setting herself free to work, she had to pretend to be a wonderful daughter, being in her best behavior during the day and doing everything her father asked her to do, while at night she let her true self come out. She could sense how happy William had been with her demonstration of obedience and she hoped that one of these days he would let her leave her bedroom without any kind of supervision. The day that happened was the day that everything would change. When that day arrived, no other soul would ever take freedom away from her again.

---

**Boston – Present Day**

As soon as the first rays of sunshine flowed through the hotel room window, Killian pushed the covers back and went straight to the bathroom, eager to savor the long, hot shower he hadn’t been able to take the night before. Their day had certainly taken a turn he hadn’t expected, but he and Emma had still fallen asleep in each other’s arms, content and at peace for quickly having sorted out their issues with a much needed talk.

Sometimes it still surprised him, waking up with Emma Swan’s long, blonde locks draped across his chest as her warm, peaceful breath puffed against his skin. The way their bodies molded together made it hard for him to leave the bed every morning, but once he woke up, he could never go back to sleep, his body buzzing with energy.

He carefully shut the bathroom door not to wake Emma up and then shimmied out of his clothes. He noticed the white tiles were warm beneath his bare feet and he made a note to himself to later ask Emma if it was possible to install a heated floor in their house – there were some commodities in this world that he was definitely getting used to.

The moment he turned the hot water on, the bathroom immediately began to steam up as he stepped into the rectangular glass shower cabin. This one wasn’t as large as theirs but it sure seemed to have a lot more useless features. After testing the water temperature, he moved under the shower nozzle, letting the water cascade over his body like a waterfall. This was always one of his favorite parts of the day – the moment when he could forget about the world and enjoy the way the hot water soothed his usually tight muscles. He liked to take his time, but lately he had been trying to take shorter showers – the befuddled expression on Emma’s face while staring at the first water bill since he had moved in still embedded in his mind. Today, however, he planned on taking a long time.

As Killian focused on the familiar drowsiness taking over him, he suddenly felt a pair of arms circling his waist from behind, holding him tightly as a smile instantly washed across his face. His Swan had always been a fan of joining him in the shower, but he wasn’t expecting her to wake up so early.

“Good morning, love.”

“Morning,” Emma mumbled, her voice still with a hint of sleepiness, but also something else. Killian felt her slightly cool naked body press against his warm, wet one as her fingers started playing with the damp hair around his belly button.
Killian felt himself relaxing into her soft touch as his breath became more labored. Her lips were now dropping kisses all over his back and her hands were slowly running up and down his chest before her right hand slowly dropped to the inside of his leg, ghostly fingers brushing against his thigh. A groan escaped Killian’s lips as he felt his cock start to grow in anticipation. He gulped when she gently bit his shoulder blade before running her tongue over the slightly red skin.

“Swan,” he hissed as one of her fingers started tracing circles around his balls.

“Yes, Killian?” her hot breath against his skin has him closing his eyes, taking a deep breath in a failed attempt to calm himself down. She was teasing him deliberately now, her hands and fingers everywhere but where he needed them the most. As her left hand played with his happy trail, her right one moved achingly close to his cock and just when relief was within reach, her hand drifted back to his chest. The little minx was serious about making this last, it seemed.

“Swan,” he groaned, moving his hand to knead one of her butt cheek as she giggled into him.

“Impatient, aren’t we?”

“Please, love,” he pleaded her, not wanting to waste any more time, “I-”

He stopped talking when Emma gripped his cock, her hot fingers teasing his length, but never reaching the head, a move that he assumed had to do with not wanting to hurt him because of his injury. She continued her light caresses over the base, her fingers stroking and teasing him as her left hand fondled his balls. She then went back to kissing his back, more urgently this time, matching the speed of her strokes. Killian’s moans of pleasure grew louder, astounded by how his wife knew just how to touch him in order to turn him into putty in her hands.

“I love doing this to you,” her words were low and her voice raspy with desire as he tightened his grip on her ass. He was embarrassingly close and he feared he wouldn’t last for too long, almost as if this was the first time she was jacking him off, but he couldn’t help it. Her touch would always have that effect in him.

“Is it hurting?” - the concern in her voice had him wanting to turn around and kiss the hell out of her before burying himself deep inside of her, but he knew that was off limits for now.

“No,” he grunted, involuntarily thrusting his hips forward, begging her not to stop. She did as he silently requested and increased her pace, switching between hands while Killian bit his lip to keep himself from screaming. Emma could tell by the familiar shudders of his body that he was dangerously close and kept squeezing, rubbing, teasing his cock deliciously as his eyes rolled back in his head. With one last long, rough stroke of her palm, his whole body seized up in an involuntary shudder, coming undone as he spilled himself against the shower wall, her name falling from his lips like a mantra.

Knowing how sensitive he got right after climax, Emma moved her hands back to his chest, a proud smile on her face as his breathless pants filled her ears, “good?”

“Bloody perfect,” - his voice was still shaking when he turned around, setting his lusty eyes on her and pushing her under the nozzle with him as he crashed his lips against hers. Now was his turn to show her what’s good.

---

Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago
“Happy birthday!” - the unexpected excited voices of everyone in the mansion startled Anne as soon as she entered the dining hall, accompanied by her father’s guards. It was her eighteenth birthday, but she hadn’t expected her father to allow every single one in the mansion to wait for her to surprise her.

“Happy birthday, my dear,” William said, emerging from the crowd as he grabbed Anne’s hand and directed her to the big birthday cake sitting on the table, uncut and candles unlit. “No gifts just yet, but what do you say today you accompany me to work? No guards either.”

Anne grinned right away at her father’s suggestion. A day at the harbor, surrounded by ships and with no guards around? She didn’t even care what would happen for the rest of the day, that was practically a dream come true! She knew that if she pretended to be an obedient daughter her father would eventually loosen his control on her – now her chance had finally arrived and she wasn’t going to waste it.

“Happy birthday, miss Anne. I can hardly believe you are already eighteen,” Arietta said, approaching the two of them and hugging Anne. The old woman would always have a special place in Anne’s heart: having been her mother’s maid and having stayed with them even after her death, Arietta was the closest thing to a mother figure that Anne had and she would always be grateful to have her by her side.

Storybrooke – Present Day

“Snow, calm down. They’ll probably get here any minute,” David advised his wife while he finished putting all the files he had been looking at back in the respective file cabinet.

“I know, I’m just nervous. You know how big this is!”

“We still don’t know if it’s true, we’ll just have to wait and –“

“Hey guys,” Emma greeted them when she and Killian entered the station. After having dropped their bags at home, they had no other choice but to get back to being the Sheriff and Deputy of Storybrooke.

“Hi!” Snow greeted them enthusiastically, a little too enthusiastically, “So?!” Snow’s gaze was expectant, her eyes widening with eagerness.

“So… what?” Emma asked confused.

“So… is it a boy or a girl?” Snow almost shouted while David shook his head. Emma and Killian stared back at her, mouths partly opened as they exchanged a perplexed glance.

“I’m not pregnant,” Emma stated matter-of-factly, still not believing her mother had thought that had been their reason to go to Boston, “I told you it was just a check-up.”

“Oh. I thought… maybe you knew you were pregnant and went to Boston so you could have more privacy,” Snow admitted as disappointment clouded her features.

She had certainly been right about the privacy part, but that was about it.

“How was the trip? Everything okay?” David asked to change the awkward subject, moving towards Emma and kissing her forehead.
“Yeah, everything’s fine,” Emma replied as she took off her jacket.

“It figures Boston is quite a delightful town, I was pleasantly surprised,” Killian added.

“What did we miss?” Emma asked David, looking over at the desks to see if something unusual had happened during their absence.

“Not much, don’t worry.”

Just then, they heard footsteps coming from the hallway outside and seconds later Regina and Ethel joined them, Ethel looking more radiant than usual.

“I’m glad to find you here,” Regina said as she gazed at Emma and Killian, “from now on, Ethel will be joining the Sheriff Department.”

“What?” Emma asked, shooting an incredulous glance at Regina as Ethel tried her best not to smirk.

“I decided to open a job vacancy for someone to help you two around here –“

“I don’t recall any of us requesting assistance,” Killian rebuked, glaring at Regina. Couldn’t this bloody woman leave them alone already?

“Yeah, we can handle it,” Emma agreed with her husband.

“That’s until some villain decides to show up again…” Regina countered, “we need to be able to protect Storybrooke as best as we can. I’m afraid two people aren’t enough for that.”

Two people. As if they were just two people.

“We’ve been doing just fine,” Emma bit back, trying her best not to be rude. There really was no need to have somebody else working with them, but she knew that Regina’s powers trumped hers, so if she wanted Ethel to be working with them, they would have no other choice but to take her in.

“It’s simply a precaution,” Regina assured, “Ethel is the most suitable person for the job. She used to be a watchwoman and she outperformed everybody else in the interview.”

“And you did all of this in the course of a day?” Emma questioned her with her hands on her hips.

“Many people are desperate for a job these days, in case you haven’t noticed.”

“I don’t mean to meddle, but I promise I will give my best to help keep Storybrooke safe,” Ethel said as her eyes fixed on Emma and Killian.

“Ethel will stay for a trial period. If she adapts and you find her efficient, she will stay permanently,” Regina clarified, but Emma and Killian were still reluctant. Without thinking twice, Emma asked Regina and Killian to meet her in the interrogation room so they could talk privately.

“We don’t even know her and you want her to work in the Sheriff Department?” Emma confronted Regina, once they were inside.

“I have looked everywhere and I didn’t find one single bad thing about her,” Regina replied, casually taking a seat in one of the chairs.

“So you don’t find her suspicious?” Emma asked dryly.
“I have no reasons to.”

“But we still don’t know who she is,” Killian grunted as he looked disbelievingly at Regina.

“That’s why she will stay for a trial period and you two will be paying attention to what she does. In fact, you can start today,” Regina said giving the two of them a look before she walked out the door.

“I always knew she wasn’t right in the head,” Killian murmured as he stared at the door.

Emma huffed out in frustration, letting her hands rest on the desk, her elbows stiffening as she leaned forward, trying to think what to do next. Maybe Ethel was okay and maybe, just maybe she’d be a great help.

“Can you take Ethel with you for your morning patrol?” Emma asked her husband, closing the distance between them, “Keep an eye on her, see how she does.”

“Aye, love. A pirate always has falcon eyes,” he said, kissing her on the cheek, “I was thinking of going to the library afterwards, to see how lady Belle is doing.”

“Yeah, that’s a good idea,” she smiled at him in return, “if I manage to finish earlier, I’ll meet you there.”

---

**Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago**

The harbor was still exactly as she remembered: colored houses with pointed roofs mingled with the occasional tavern, comprising the background to the impressively agitated crowd of villagers and merchants.

Anne closed her eyes for a moment, reveling in the feeling of the cool, salty breeze hitting her skin while the sounds of creaking boats on the waves filled her ears. She felt at peace, almost as if someone had transported her back to the time she used to spend most of her days there with her mother, watching the ships come and go as they tried to guess what each of them was transporting.

Her father pulled her by the arm, cutting through the crowd as everyone greeted him. As the port master of one of the busiest harbors in the Enchanted Forest he was a respected and influential man that any passerby would bow down to.

“I have a surprise for you, but I need you to wait here,” William told her once they reached the dockyard, stopping them right next to some barrels. Anne assented, happy to see how her father was most definitely trusting her more. After watching him leave, she took in the absolute chaos in that specific part of the harbor: there were peddlers trying to shove upon the villagers all kinds of products while the dock workers tried to avoid them altogether, hurrying to whatever task they needed to do next. It was funny how now she was right next to the ships tugged on their moorings to the pier and yet she couldn’t hear them creaking on the waves anymore, the loud din of the crowd muffling any other sounds.

She then focused on the ships in front of her, a look of awe in her face, as if she was in a trance. Someday, she would have one of those.

“Could you please move, milady?” – a voice echoed right behind her, but Anne was oblivious to it and didn’t move an inch. She was trying to guess what the carrack moored in front of her could be carrying when she felt two strong hands gripping her hips and moving her to the side. She quickly
turned around at the unwelcome touch and punched the young man in the face. Who did he think he was?

“Golly!” the man exclaimed as he brought his hand to his lip before widening his blue eyes at her. Anne found it hard not to take in his appearance: he was wearing an open quilted dark grey leather vest over a loosely fitted white shirt with a plunging neckline, revealing chest hair as dark as the hair on his head.

“Don’t ever touch me again,” Anne yelled at him once she was done with her perusal of the very handsome man. An absolute fool, but handsome.

“I was simply trying to get you out of my way,” he said, picking up from the floor the steel bucket full of white paint.

“You could have asked.”

“I did, but you didn’t listen,” he jabbed, a mix of a smirk and grimace on his face as his defined jawline flexed beneath a layer of dark stubble, “now if you’ll excuse me, some of us actually have work to do.”

The scornful look he sent her way had Anne glaring at him in response, wanting nothing more than to hit him again.

“You’re a rude twit!” she snapped at him, not really understanding why she was letting the idiot have such an effect on her.

“Says the pretentious loon,” he chortled, winking at her before walking away. Anne felt rage rise up within her as she watched him disappear in the crowd. She had never met such an insolent and vulgar man before. And she was not pretentious! Why had he even thought that about her? Had it been her clothes? Her hair? Because she was certain that pretentious was definitely something she was not. But then again, why did his opinion even matter? He was nothing but a rude, foolish man she was never going to see again.

“I apologize for my tardiness, my dear,” William’s voice brought Anne out of her daze as he reappeared on the dockyard, “this way.”

Forgetting about the vexing incident from before, Anne willingly followed her father to one of the floating docks where a beautiful brigantine ship was moored. The hull of the ship was painted in shades of dark green with two yellow stripes running the length of it and there were three tall masts with square-rigged sails. The bare feet of the working men thumped against the deck as Anne marveled at the sight in front of her.

“What do you think?” William asked her, not taking his eyes away from the newly restored ship.

“It’s beautiful,” Anne whispered, still impressed by the majesty of it all.

“Good,” William said before his lips curled upwards, “because it’s yours.”

Anne’s mouth gaped open as she stared at him with a fixed statue-like gaze, processing his words. Before she even had a chance to react, William pointed his index finger to the bow of the ship. One man was holding a big black sheet that covered the ship’s name. When he finally dropped it at William’s request, the white painted letters read: ANNE CORMAC.

“It can’t be” - an overwhelming feeling overcame her and she exploded with happiness at what was happening to her.
She had a ship.

She actually had a ship.

A real ship.

And her ship was named after her.

“Now, there are rules,” William informed her, turning to look at her, “you shall never get on the ship by yourself, you must be under supervision at all times. You know how dangerous –” William kept talking, but all Anne could do was nod in response, still so astonished she couldn’t find herself to say a thing. Her father could talk about any and all rules he wanted, she didn’t care. All she cared about was how her dream had finally come true and how her ship was a real marvel.

Storybrooke – Present Day

“I hope I didn’t cause any trouble between you, Emma and Regina,” Ethel said just as Killian parked the bug in front of Granny’s. Emma had told him to use the bug for his daily patrols until the sheriff’s car wasn’t adapted to him.

“As far as I can tell, it isn’t your fault,” Killian replied before getting out of the car. It took Ethel a while to realize he meant to go to the diner, her eyes fixed on his movements.

“Uh, I will stay here, if you don’t mind,” Ethel murmured from inside the car, “the smell of fried food makes me nauseous.”

Killian gave her a nonchalant nod and then made his way to Granny’s, happy that he was by himself again, even if it was only for some minutes.

He had taken two steps into the diner when a body smashed against him without warning. He rocked back on his heels, keeping his balance as he saw Morgana staring right into him with wide, green eyes before a sincere grin lit her face.

“You’re back,” she blurted out without thinking as Killian frowned at her.

“Aye… It would appear I am,” he said dismissively, becoming uncomfortable with the woman’s scrutiny. Once he realized Morgana wasn’t planning to take her hands off of him, he walked away from her, moving to the window next to the counter to check on Ethel.

“Can I help you with anything, deputy?” Morgana asked him as Killian peeked through the blinds. Ethel was still sitting inside the bug, looking in the opposite direction of Granny’s.

“I assume everything’s been quiet around here?” he questioned her, but his eyes scanned the whole diner. The place was rather calm for the middle of the afternoon.

“I haven’t seen or heard of anything unusual.”

Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago

“Arietta!” Anne ran to her maid as soon as she passed the mansion’s gate, “I have a ship!”
Arietta opened her arms to welcome Anne’s hug, the girl’s shrill excitement piercing through her. After years of comforting Anne and encouraging her to be strong, it was an absolute delight to see her so happy.

“To be fair, I already knew,” Arietta winked at her before glancing at William, who had just joined them.

“You have to see it! It’s so beautiful, so grand…”

“I expect you to be as excited at the ball next week,” William chimed in, taking this opportunity to prepare Anne for what was to come.

“What ball?” Anne asked, not liking where the conversation was going. She despised balls.

“The ball to find you a suitor, of course!” William exclaimed with a laugh, “my dear, you are eighteen, it’s time to find a prince who will sweep you off your feet.”

“No, I don’t even want to get married!” Anne shouted at him as she shuddered at the thought. She had hoped he had quit the nonsense of wanting her to marry a prince.

“I assume you want to keep your ship…” William’s tone was calm but threatening, the obvious blackmail behind it all too obvious to Anne, who just glared at him in response.

“Was that why you gave her to me?” she asked unbelievably, disgust written all over her face, “so you could use her as a bargaining chip?”

William didn’t reply, his cold eyes studying the grass at their feet with unnatural attention as Anne’s previous joy gave way to anger and disappointment. Shaking her head, she glared at him one last time before she ran to her room, fighting the tears that formed in her eyes.

“Miss Anne!” Arietta called out after her, following her inside.

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

“So the croc- Rumplestiltskin has been in good behavior, I gather?” Killian asked coyly in a not-so-subtle attempt to know if Belle really was okay. After finishing the patrol, he and Ethel had gone to the library and they had talked to Belle for some time, the two women quickly becoming comfortable with each other.

“He has. I appreciate the concern, but you and Emma don’t need to worry.”

“I still can’t believe the Dark One exists,” Ethel mused, “and that he’s actually married.”

“New books?” Killian changed the subject as he started going through some books spread on one of the tables.

“Sadly, no. I am reorganizing the shelves and still haven’t gone through those,” Belle answered as she moved towards Killian.

With Killian and Belle leaning over one of the tables, distracted with the books in front of them, Ethel started walking towards Belle’s desk, but the sound of the library’s door opening ruined her plans.
“Swan!” Killian rushed to his wife, pecking her on the lips as Belle and Ethel smiled at them.

“Hey!” Emma asked as she gave Belle a half hug before focusing her attention on Ethel, “so, how did it go?”

“I think it went well. We saw nothing strange or worthy of intervention, but I really love it,” Ethel gushed, “it’s not that different from being a watchwoman, really.”

They kept talking for a little while longer. Ethel was the first one to leave and Emma and Killian followed not long after, leaving Belle to finish her work.

“So… I may need to ask my husband a big favor,” Emma teased as they walked hand in hand on the sidewalk outside the library.

“Hmm, and what would that big favor be?”

“Could you please go pick Henry up at school and drop him at Regina’s?,” she pleaded, scrunching her nose in that adorable way that he loved, “we have to be at Ashley and Thomas’ at eight and I still have to make the chocolate mousse.”

“Of course, love. I wouldn’t dare to disturb your cooking session.”

“Thank you,” she said, kissing his cheek, “oh, before I forget. I talked to Archie. I’m meeting him tomorrow.”

“That’s wonderful,” Killian smiled at her, “I’m certain he will help you deal with your uneasiness.”

“I hope so. I mean, he definitely helped me the last time,” she agreed as they reached the yellow bug, “okay, I’ll see you at home,” she gave him a quick kiss on the lips as she opened the car’s door.

“Aye. I can’t wait to taste your dessert tonight, love,” Killian whispered, the smirk on his face followed by a wink earning him a playful swat on his butt.

“Behave,” she chuckled as she got in the car. Dessert awaited.

Just a little more to the left and… down or was it up? No, it was definitely down. Had that been an old door and she would have been inside ages ago. It was a rather strange lock and it was driving her mad. Morgana looked behind at the empty driveway, making sure that no one was around to watch her breaking into the savior and the pirate’s house. That would certainly be… unpleasant.

Just when she was starting to lose her patience, she heard the familiar sound of the lock opening as a victorious grin filled her face. Without wasting another second, she got inside. The interior design was subtler than she would’ve thought, but still very Emma and Killian-like: it was simple and cozy, but it was clear that they were newlyweds and that they still had to fill the house with plenty of things.

She let her eyes wander to the pictures hung on the wall to the stairwell, cheerful family moments captured for all eternity. If only she could have taken advantage of such commodities back when she was happy and had a life worthy of remembrance.

Morgana was about to trace her fingers over one of the pictures when she distinctively heard the sound of a car engine outside. Her eyes widened as her fingers started trembling. They weren’t
supposed to get back so soon, they never did. Her heart started beating faster as the sound of footsteps got closer and closer. She had to do something. Fast.

---

**Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago**

Being back felt weird, but also mildly empowering. After years wandering around and finding ways to stay alive, exploring new places and taking small jobs, Calypso finally felt she was ready to face her past and do what she should have done long before. She had promised herself she would not allow anyone to make her feel weak again and she intended to keep that promise, but for that she needed to at least ensure her survival in the most honest and magic-less way. She wanted to remain as anonymous as possible so that everything went exactly the way she had planned – she could never let anyone get suspicious of who she really was and what she could do, otherwise everything would be ruined.

She breathed in the cold night air as she sat in one of the haystacks outside a tavern, her stomach growling and sending waves of discomfort through her body.

“Uh…You surely aren’t the barrel of ale I was expecting to find,” a deep, male voice echoed in the distance as Calypso spotted a man walking towards her, “you alright, lassie?”

The moment her eyes fell on his, it was as if her entire world had stopped. He was tall with broad shoulders, his eyes a myriad of shades of blue, piercing through as he tried to understand what she was doing there. His slightly thick eyebrows furrowed at her and she couldn’t help but notice how handsome he looked in his dark grey leather jacket, a plunging neckline teasing a small amount of chest hair. The man was simply beautiful and Calypso felt an unfamiliar sensation all over her body.

“Are you hungry?” the man finally asked and it took her a while to nod in response, too lost in him to actually form any words. When he grabbed her arm, she couldn’t help but breathe in his scent – a combination of ale, sea and sweat that had her staring at him even more intensely than before – as he guided her into the tavern.

It was a small and warm place, full of drunkards and disgusting old men who were practically eating her with their eyes while chugging down their beer and ale-filled mugs. Trying to avoid the stares directed her way, Calypso set her eyes on the floor paved in stone, not offering any resistance as the man pulled her by the arm. When they finally reached the large wooden counter, he pulled a bench for her, encouraging her to sit as he jumped to the other side of the counter. Besides being handsome and charming, he was also athletic, she quickly concluded, watching his every move. His back was turned to her as his strong, lean hands moved over something on the table in front of him.

“Eat this,” he told her when he got back to her, setting a wooden bowl with bread and boiled fava beans in front of her.

“Thank you,” Calypso murmured, throwing some coins on the counter.

“Keep ‘em, darling.”

“No, please, accept it,” she insisted as she stared at his plump lips, “I don’t want you to get in trouble with the owner.”

“He’s a reasonable fellow, he won’t do a thing,” he said as he started cleaning some glasses.

“I appreciate it.”
“It’s my pleasure, lady…” his voice trailed off at the realization that he still didn’t know her name.

“Calypso,” she offered as she batted her eyelashes at him.

“It’s my pleasure, lady Calypso,” the man carried on, picking up her hand from the counter and dropping a kiss on it, “Davy Jones at your disposal.”

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

The first thing Emma did when she got in the house was to kick her boots off, not really caring where they landed. She had exactly three hours to make the chocolate mousse, take a shower and get ready for dinner. She practically ran to the kitchen and was opening one of the cabinets to take out the chocolate bars when she heard a thud coming from the upper floor.

Her body went rigid for a second, but she quickly grabbed a knife and made her way upstairs as quietly as she could. When she reached the top of the stairs, she realized the window on her and Killian’s bedroom was open. What the hell, she would swear they had closed it after they had dropped their bags earlier in the day. When she was about to close it, she spotted a squirrel on the window sill, eating an acorn. Ah, so there was the likely culprit.

“How did you get here, little guy?” she chuckled as she flicked her wrist, watching as she magically sent him back to one the nearest trees. ‘Now you’re safe and sound’, she thought to herself before closing the window and rushing back to the kitchen. She had no time to lose.

---

Killian impatiently tapped his foot on the floor while sitting in one of the school’s picnic tables. He didn’t know why Henry was taking so long. All of his friends had already come out and yet, the lad was nowhere in sight.

“Mr. Jones?” Killian stood up at the sound of the female voice coming from behind him, finding Mrs. Reynolds, Henry’s teacher, gazing at him with a somber face while Henry avoided looking at him altogether, “I’m sorry, but I’m afraid we need to talk.”

“Sure,” Killian said reluctantly, sensing that bad news were about to come his way.

“Henry has skipped this morning’s class. It’s the second time this has happened. Now I already talked to him, isn’t that right” she turned to Henry as she lightly pulled his ear, “but I believe you and his mother should have a serious conversation with him.”

“Of course, I can assure you it won’t happen again,” Killian guaranteed her as he put his arm around Henry’s shoulder.

“Good. I’ll see you tomorrow,” Mrs. Reynolds mumbled before going back in the building.

“So… can I know what was so important that had you skipping class?” Killian asked Henry as they started walking home.

It took a while for Henry to reply, but he eventually did, “Violet. I took her to the pumpkin farm. Please don’t tell mom.”
“I’m afraid I can’t do that, lad. Your mother has to know.”

“But she already has so many things to worry about. I know she’s been stressed out, I don’t want to worry her even more,” Henry explained as the two now stopped on the sidewalk, “and I’m not behind on any subject, I can easily catch up. Please.”

Killian found himself in a situation he had never been in before. He knew he had to tell Emma, but at the same time the boy had a valid point of not wanting to give her any extra concerns. Her meeting with Archie came to his mind, thinking about all the reasons that were driving her there in the first place and realizing she really didn’t need any more sources of disquiet.

As Killian considered, Henry kept his eyes on him the entire time, making it hard for him to go against the lad’s wishes. He could have simply made up some excuse to shut Killian up but he had chosen to tell him the truth, hoping that he wouldn’t tell Emma. He suddenly wished Henry hadn’t put him in such a difficult position – he didn’t want to keep from Emma such an important bit of information about her son, but he also didn’t want Henry to feel like he was a snitch.

“Alright, but under two conditions,” Killian finally decided, hoping that he wouldn’t regret it, “one, you tell your mother when you’re ready and two, you don’t miss any more classes.”

“Deal!” Henry said with a smile as he shook Killian’s hand.

After dropping Henry at Regina’s, Killian made his way home. The sweet smell of chocolate invaded his nostrils as he found Emma in the kitchen cleaning everything up.

“Oh, you’re back!” Emma gushed as she dried a bowl with a dish towel.

“It smells heavenly,” Killian said, stepping into the kitchen and offering to clean the dishes, “I can do that, love.”

“Thanks,” Emma smiled at him as he took the dish towel from her, “everything okay with Henry?”

“Indeed. He asked you to save him some mousse for tomorrow.”

“I figured,” she laughed as she started walking away, “there’s already a cup of it on the fridge. I’m going to take a quick shower, okay?”

“Aye,” he replied as he watched her leave, trying to focus on the dishes he still had to clean instead of the guilt eating him up inside. He hated keeping secrets from Emma, but this was a different situation and it was for a good cause. Or at least that’s what he told himself.

As soon as they arrived at Ashley and Thomas’, Alexandra ran straight into Killian’s arms, waiting for him to twirl her around in the air as he usually did. Ashley was quick to take the chocolate mousse from Emma’s hands, practically devouring the thing with her eyes, before they went to the kitchen while Killian followed Thomas to the outdoor grill where the steaks were cooking.

Emma watched as Alexandra kept her arms around Killian’s neck, not wanting to let go of him. He kept booping her nose and making faces to get her to laugh and judging by the girl’s chuckles, he
was excelling at it. As usual.

“She’s so adorable,” Emma confessed with her eyes glued to the little girl and her husband. A warm, fuzzy feeling started invading her as she tried to imagine what it would be like to have a baby with him. It wasn’t the first time these thoughts ran through her mind, but whenever they were with Alexandra, her mind always seemed to gain a life of its own and she couldn’t stop thinking about babies. Would they have his dark hair, his dimples? Or would they push after her and have her sandy blonde hair?

“Do you need a napkin?” Ashley asked her while moving around in the kitchen, looking for something.

“What?”

“You’re almost drooling,” Ashley mocked as she finally found her spatula.

“Shut up,” Emma feigned annoyance, “do you need any help?”

“No, I just have to take the pie out of the tin,” she said as she opened the oven, “So… how was it like in Boston? Lots of newlywed sex?”

“Not exactly.”

“Don’t lie to me. I’ve been there before.”

Emma smiled at Ashley. If only she knew.

In the patio, Killian kept gently rocking Alexandra in his arms while he watched Thomas turning the steaks with the tongs. They’d be read any minute now.

“I’m starting to get a little jealous,” Thomas said as he watched Alexandra’s small fingers trying to reach for Killian’s hook. For some reason, it seemed to fascinate her, “I guess that means your hook will be on the toy list when you and Emma have your own kids.”

Thomas’ comment caught Killian off guard, but a sincere smile still formed on his face, “it’s best not to get ahead of ourselves, mate.”

“You two don’t want to have kids?”

“I… don’t know,” Killian mumbled, “we have not fully discussed it.”

Sure, there had been some mentions of it, but never anything that resembled the big, serious baby talk.

“But do you want to be a father or not?” Thomas wondered as he took the steaks out of the grill and put them in a plate.

“Aye, I do,” Killian confessed with a shy grin as he felt Alexandra’s hand hitting his cheek.

“Hey, Alexandra! Don’t do that,” Thomas admonished her before turning his attention back on Killian, “then why don’t you tell Emma that?”

“I don’t want to pressure her. We’ve just gotten married.”

“I don’t think that would be pressuring her. She’s your wife, that’s something couples have to discuss,” Thomas was quick to say, “I think she should know what your wish is.”
Killian thought about Thomas’ words as he watched him start setting the table. He knew Thomas was right, but the moment to bring up the baby talk had never really seemed ideal. He wasn’t sure that Emma wanted to have another child, especially when Henry was reaching a complicated age. Which reminded him of a different concern altogether. Should he tell Thomas about the dilemma Henry had put him in? Killian had grown quite fond of the man’s friendship and he always had a helpful piece of advice for him. Perhaps he could help him with this matter as well.

“To be honest, I’m more concerned with another problem right now,” Killian started talking, carrying on when he saw he had Thomas’ attention, “Henry’s teacher told me today that he’s skipped two classes. When I confronted the lad, he told me he had been with Violet-“

“Of course,” Thomas laughed.

“Aye, but my dilemma is that he asked me not to tell Emma.”

“Oh,” Thomas winced, recognizing the difficult situation Killian was in.

“Precisely. I’d like to honor the boy’s wishes, especially when he trusted me with the truth, but I don’t want to keep things from Emma.”

“Yeah, even more so when they concern her son, right?” Thomas added as he ran his hands through his hair.

“I told the lad that I would only not tell Emma if he stops skipping classes and if he tells her about it, eventually.”

“Oh, that’s good.”

“I just hope I’m doing the right thing.”

“I don’t know, I wouldn’t like to be in your position. But I would’ve probably done the same,” Thomas shrugged while setting some extra chairs around the table, “I say pay attention to Henry and if he keeps skipping classes, you need to tell Emma right away.”

---

**Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago**

It had been a week and her father hadn’t mentioned the ball again, which certainly made it easier for her to follow him to the harbor so they could sail away on her ship for the first time. Knowing at the back of her mind that the ship had been nothing but another means to control her had dampened her excitement, but she had to think about the future instead of the present. If he thought she was giving the ship up, he was wrong. Maybe his plan would work for a while, but in the end she would be the victorious one.

“Wait here,” William told her as he saw one of his men waiting for him by the customs house. As soon as William left her, Anne didn’t bother to do as he said. She wouldn’t stay in the middle of the crowd when she had a brand new ship waiting for her.

Making her way to the dockyard, she spotted her now most prized possession, standing out in sharp contrast to the other lesser, uglier vessels. A rush of pride invaded her as she walked up the ramp, feeling as if every step she took was a step closer to her dream and, even more important, her freedom.
When she finally stepped into the ship, all the excitement was replaced by fear when she spotted a male figure kneeling on the deck. Anne only had time to grab the dagger she kept hidden in her boot before she pulled the man by the hair and held the knife at his throat.

“Who are you and what are you doing on my ship?” - her voice was rough on the man’s ear as he dropped some ropes on the deck.

“Thunderation, that’s a first,” he gasped and Anne increased the pressure of the blade against his throat, “I was merely curious. I have taken a liking to ships from a young age, but I was never fortunate to have one myself.”

The man sounded sincere enough and Anne let him go, hiding the dagger back in her boot, as the man turned around to face her.

“And your ship was just so…” he said as he looked her up and down, a suggestive smirk on his face, “…pretty.”

“You,” she said, recognizing him right away, “you’re the rude twit who insulted me the other day.”

“Ah. So the pretentious loon has a ship. How unpredictable,” he bit back, raising his eyebrows at her, pretending to be surprised.

“Almost as unpredictable as the pitiful insolent being bitter over the fact that I own a ship and he doesn’t.”

‘This woman always had to have the last word’, he thought to himself while crossing his arms and keeping his eyes on her, amused with it all, “why would I be bitter over this shoddy ship?”

“She’s a newly built ship,” Anne jabbed with a glare, trying not to notice the way his biceps flexed under his long sleeve shirt.

“Restored.”

“She’s still one of the safest ships in Kinsale.”

“She’ll go straight to the bottom in a matter of weeks.”

“You are going straight to the bottom if you don’t leave right now,” she hissed, tired of their exasperating exchange.

For a second she wasn’t sure if she had just threatened to throw him off board, because instead of leaving, he actually started walking towards her.

“Allow me to introduce myself: Davy Jones, charmed to meet you,” he then grabbed her hand in his, but she shoved him away before he had a chance to kiss it, “seeing as you won’t live for too long, you know - because you own a rotten ship and all - why shouldn’t we enjoy one of your last moments savoring the divine and unique taste of ale together? Let me treat you.”

The overdramatic emphasis he put on ‘treat you’ had her rolling her eyes at him and without thinking twice, she put her hands on his chest and pushed him off board. She had warned him and he’d been an idiot. What else could she have done?

Anne laughed as she watched him swimming back to land, his groans muffled by the creaking sounds of the ship. It only took him some minutes to make his way back to her, the sight of his wet clothes clinging to his body not bothering Anne too much.
“You could have simply rejected my offer,” he said, ruffling his wet hair.

“And you could have simply respected my wishes and left when I told you to,” she answered in the same cheeky tone.

At her comment, his expression dulled, realization falling upon him, “Fair enough. My apologies, darling. I shall disturb you no more,” he said sincerely and for the first time she saw an honest smile bursting onto his face before he turned around to leave, “I wish you fair winds and following seas,” he yelled as he walked down the ramp, moving as if he had no care in the world. Anne didn’t know why, but she found herself smiling at him as he disappeared into the crowd.

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

The captain’s quarters were a bit dusty, but still decent enough for them to spend the night. When they left Ashley and Thomas’, Killian suggested going to the Jolly Roger. The last time they had been there together had been during their honeymoon and Killian was starting to long for more nights where both of his loves were by his side.

“This reminds me of when we were dating and I used to sneak in here to have some peace and quiet,” Emma murmured as she started taking the dozens of blankets he had over the bed.

“And to do other things…” he added coyly, tapping his fingers on his lips before smiling mischievously at her.

“Yeah, that too,” she laughed throwing one of the blankets at him, “but this is nice. We should do it more often.”

She waited for him to join her in bed, watching him with eager eyes as he took his jacket and vest off. Maybe it wouldn’t be such a bad idea to bring some sleepwear to the ship, if they were planning to do this often.

“Remind me to properly wash my hook when we get home,” Killian said as he took off his brace and put it on the table before getting into bed, Emma’s legs immediately curling around his.

“Yeah, captain Hook can’t walk around with a hook that stinks of barbecue sauce,” Emma teased, thinking about how he had stuck his hook in the steak just to make Alexandra laugh.

“If that lass wasn’t such a sweetheart, I-“

“- you would do exactly the same thing,” she interrupted him, “c’mon, you love kids. I see how you are with Alexandra, with Neal…”

Emma rested her head on Killian’s chest, feeling the steady rhythm of his heart and draping her arm over his waist as they both settled into a comfortable position on the small bed. She felt a shiver going through her body, but she wasn’t sure if it was from the dropping temperature outside or from all this baby talk.

“Aye, that I do,” Killian mumbled as he thought of his earlier conversation with Thomas and, before he knew it, the words were coming out of his mouth, “have you thought about it?”

“Thought about what?”
“Having more children,” he was trying to sound so casual that his voice actually trembled a little. Emma lifted her head from his chest to meet his gaze, her lips parted as she blinked her eyes twice. She wasn’t expecting him to bring up “the” talk, but she wasn’t complaining. Not at all.

“Yeah,” she admitted as she grinned at him, “have you?”

“I have always wanted you to be the mother of my children, Swan,” his words made her heart skip as she waited in silence for him to continue, “there’s nothing I want more than to create life with you.”

Killian felt somewhat relieved to finally let the words come out of his chest and, judging by the tears Emma was currently trying to fight while her infectious smile almost lit up the room, the idea of having more children was one she wasn’t opposed to.

“I want to have your babies, too,” she smiled into his lips before kissing him, “but we have plenty of time and I think we can enjoy our child-free married life for a little longer, don’t you think?”

Killian nodded at her. As much as he wanted to be a father, it didn’t have to be right away, “aye, love. As long as we keep practicing,” he brushed his lips against her mouth, muffling her laughter. He pulled her on top of him as his hand kneaded her ass cheek, a rumble of appreciation escaping his lips. She had a magnificent bum.

“We can’t,” she whispered into his forehead as he assaulted her neck with nips and kisses.

“We can do it very,” he dropped a kiss on her chin, “very,” another one, “very slowly.”

Emma raised an eyebrow at his suggestion, “I hate slow sex.”

“That’s because you haven’t had slow sex with me yet.”

“Oh wait! I forgot Leroy’s birthday present for his party tomorrow,” Snow said as David was already about to close the loft’s door. It had taken them a while, but they were finally getting the last couple of boxes out of their old accommodation.

“I’m truly going to miss this place,” Snow said once she got back, closing the door behind her as a wave of nostalgia hit her. That loft was associated to many bad and lonely memories, but it was still the loft that she and her daughter had shared, the loft she and her husband had lived in after 28 years apart, the loft where Killian had proposed to Emma and where so many other important family moments had taken place. She was going to miss it all.

“I am, too,” David agreed as they climbed down the stairs one last time, “but we’ll create as many good memories in the farmhouse as we have in here.”

“I know, but you know how nostalgic I am.”

David opened the entrance door for her, the moonlight shining on the sidewalk, “I think we should have this big lunch to celebrate our definite move to the farm.”

“Yeah, we could invite everyone and put that gar--“

“Watch out!” before they even have a chance to see where the screams came from, they felt a body running into them, pushing them to the floor. Just then they heard the loud clink of metal hitting the
floor where they had been walking.

“That was close,” Ethel sighed in relief as she got up from the floor, offering a hand to Snow.

“What was that?” Snow asked disbelievingly while David moved to pick a mysterious sword up from the ground. Its guard was golden and there was a deep blue jewel on the round pommel, “a sword? Where did it come from?”

“I believe it was coming from the clock tower,” Ethel said, “it was as if it had a life of its own.”

David nodded at her and he started running towards the clock tower as Snow and Ethel followed him. He still had his sheriff master key and could easily get in. Once inside, they hurried to the steps that led to the clock but there was no one there.

“We should tell Emma and Hook,” Snow suggested.

“Tomorrow. Let them have some peace, they just got back,” David countered, “and it’s not like they can do much at this time of night.”

“And what do we do with the sword?” Ethel asked.

“I'll keep it,” David answered, keeping his eyes on the blade, “we need to find out where it comes from.”
Unvarnished Lies

Chapter Summary

The heroes join forces in their attempt to discover the origin of the mysterious sword while Emma is close to reaching a breaking point. In Enchanted Forest flashbacks, Davy Jones makes a proposition to Calypso that she is unable to decline.

Chapter Notes

This chapter includes many flashbacks related to new characters. With this being a Captain Swan story, these flashbacks featuring other characters will ALWAYS be relevant/connected to Emma, Killian and their storylines so I advise readers to keep track of all the information the flashbacks provide.

Storybrooke – Present Day

“Last night was so good,” Emma whispered as she peppered Killian’s face with kisses. She wasn’t entirely sure what had happened, but she had actually awoken before him at the first spec of daylight and she had taken the chance to show him just how thankful she was for having been magnificently worshipped the night before.

Their slow and tender lovemaking had made her feel things she didn’t even know were within her reach, her body reacting in ways she had never deemed possible. Sex with Killian had always been different than any kind of sex she’d ever had, but they had never really tried to do it slowly - things usually got too hot and heavy quite fast and they inevitably ended up rushing through it. Now, if there was an important lesson Emma had learnt from this was that slowing things down can be amazing.

Sure, the amount of orgasms she’d had (five, to be exact) had been enough to make her feel as if she was riding a rollercoaster of never-ending pleasure, but the sheer intimacy of the moment had been what made her toes curl. Sometimes they had sex – hot, rough and primal, a need to release all the pent up tension after a long day fighting witches, monsters or fairies – and most times they made love, and what they had shared the day before certainly fell under that category. She had never felt closer to Killian, the adoring smile on his face and his blue eyes glimmering with pleasure as he slowly moved in and out of her making her feel as if she had unlimited access to his heart, body and soul. It had been simply perfect. Hands down, the best sex of her life.

“Indeed it was,” Killian agreed, sweeping his hand along the naked skin of her back, “no soul had ever hauled my ashes like that, love. It was bloody perfection.”

Emma laughed against his mouth, a silly rush of pride invading her. Considering he was a two hundred year old pirate, it said a lot that she was the best he’d ever had. Not that it should surprise her, after all, what else could be expected when they were True Love?

“Let’s do it again,” Emma suggested in between giggles. It was still early in the morning and they
had time to at least get to orgasm number one of the day. Or they would have time for *that* if her phone hadn’t started ringing just when her hands had gone under the sheets.

“Don’t answer,” Killian grunted, gripping her shoulders to keep her in place, but it was too late. She was already reaching for the damn thing.

“I have to,” she dropped a kiss to his lips before bringing the phone to her ear, “dad, is everything okay?”

In a matter of seconds, Emma’s face contorted with concern before she threw the sheets back and got out of bed. Realizing right away that something had happened, Killian did the same and helped her pick her clothes up from the floor.

“Are you alright? You should have told us,” Emma blurted into the phone while Killian helped her putting her bra on, “okay, we’ll be right there.”

“What happened?” Killian asked her once she put the phone down.

“My parents were almost stabbed last night,” Emma huffed out in frustration as she tried to ignore the panicky voices in her head and focus on what she had to do. But what did she have to do, really? Right, putting her clothes back on.

“Bloody hell. Are they alright?”

“Yeah, they are. They asked us to meet them at the farmhouse.”

---

**Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago**

Calypso was well aware that the tavern’s usual chumps would have no qualms pointing out that her infatuation for Davy Jones was what had her visiting the place every single day, but she wasn’t bothered by any of it. She knew what, or rather who, she wanted and she wouldn’t stop trying until she was successful.

“Not that I don’t enjoy your company, lassy, but you spend an awful lot of time in here,” Davy muttered as he filled one of the large mugs with ale.

“I have nothing else to do,” Calypso shrugged, smiling at him. He was handsome, but a little obtuse if he hadn’t realized yet that her only interest in the tavern was its owner, “no family, no friends… no work.”

The loud thud of a mug being set on the counter surprised her for a moment before she looked up to see Davy grinning at her, a glint of compassion in his eyes.

“As it so happens, I am in dire need of assistance,” Davy said, as his voice trailed off, “I can’t promise decent earnings, but if you wish to help me, the position is yours.”

“Yes! Of course,” Calypso exclaimed without even thinking twice. How could she say no to the possibility of spending her days right next to Davy Jones? She had never thought it would be so easy to get near him.

“Then you are most welcome, Lady Calypso.”

Never keeping her eyes off him, Calypso smirked. For once, it seemed luck was on her side.
Storybrooke – Present Day

As soon as Emma parked the yellow bug outside the farmhouse, she rushed inside and went straight to her parents, hugging them before they even had the chance to say anything.

“It’s okay, honey,” Snow comforted her, wrapping her arms around her daughter, “we’re okay.”

Emma sighed loudly in relief, happy to see that nothing had happened to her parents. David had told her she needn’t to worry, but she was in such high alert that she was only going to believe him when she’d see them safe and sound.

“It was close, but fortunately no one was injured,” Ethel’s voice had Emma looking in her direction. She had been so focused on her parents she hadn’t even noticed Ethel was sitting in one of the kitchen chairs.

“Ethel. I didn’t know you’d be here.”

“If it wasn’t for Ethel, we wouldn’t be here,” David added, “she saved our lives.”

“Thank you,” Emma’s voice was sincere, the lines around her eyes crinkling as the edges of her smile curved up. Maybe she had been wrong about Ethel all along and she was just trying to help them and get used to life in Storybrooke.

“I did what I had to do. Now we just need to know where this sword came from,” Ethel smiled back at Emma before picking the sword from the kitchen table, holding it with remarkable agility.

“Can I?” Killian approached the table and Ethel handed him the blade. His hand clasped the sword as his eyes attentively studied it, particularly the blue jewel on the pommel.

“Do you recognize it?” Emma asked her husband, noticing the awed expression on his face.

“It’s a beautiful sword, but I’m afraid I have never seen it before, love.”

“Sorry I’m late,” Regina said as she barged into the house, leaving Snow and Charming confused. They were pretty sure they hadn’t told Regina a thing so why was she there?

“I called her,” Emma explained upon noticing her parents’ surprise, “I think we should put a protection spell on your house. I figured with both of our magic we can make it stronger.”

Emma watched as Snow, Charming and Regina nodded at her. Whoever had thrown that sword in her parents’ direction had wanted to hurt them and she was going to do everything in her power to keep them protected. She couldn’t lose them. Not after everything they’d been through, not after years of having finally found them. Just the thought of it had her weak in the knees.

“But what shall we do next?” Ethel’s question had everyone in the room making their own suggestions until the sounds of their voices meshed together in a discordant cacophony. Emma closed her eyes and brought her hands to her temples. The buzz of their voices was making her feel dizzy and suffocated until she stopped hearing them altogether, her vision becoming blurred as she started having trouble breathing and a terrible pain built in the center of her chest. In desperate need of fresh air, Emma stormed out of the house, leaving them to their confused swarm.

Once she got to the backyard, she let out her frustration in one of the small stones laying on the grass, kicking it with her boot before she started pacing back and forth, practically digging a hole in the ground. Not knowing what else to do, she decided to sit on the porch stairs. She knew she was all over the place and that she needed to calm herself down, but it was easier said than done.
“Swan?” Killian’s voice had her relaxing almost right away, but she was still feeling a knot in her stomach. And she really wanted to punch something. Or someone.

“I’m sick of this!” she blurted out when she felt him sitting next to her, his arm going around her shoulders to try to comfort her, “I’m tired of never getting a break, of my family always being in danger! When will it stop?”

Killian could spot the tears gathering behind her eyes, tension emanating from her body as she leaned her body against his, resting her head on his shoulder.

“Will it ever stop?” she said in a tired, breathless whisper and Killian ran his hand up and down her arm, trying to soothe her.

“Perhaps you should go to your appointment with Archie, as you intended.”

“No, I can’t meet Archie today. Not when someone tried to kill my parents last night. I need to find out who it was.”

“Your parents are Snow White and Prince Charming, they likely faced more perils than anyone in this realm and they always managed to succeed,” Killian asserted, “they’ll be alright. Even more so after the protection spell.”

“But I need to know who the sword belongs to and I-“

“Emma, you need to take care of yourself first,” he said, interrupting her, “I will examine the sword, you go meet Archie.”

Emma said nothing, lifting her head from his shoulder and looking at him pensively. Killian could tell she was thinking about his words and how, deep down, she knew he was right.

They stood there for some minutes, just contemplating the empty road ahead of them and the flocks of birds flying by until Emma nodded at him, realizing that she had to get her shit together if they were going to plunge into another crisis. Her parents needed her. The town needed her. She had to be in her best shape.

Killian followed her back into the house, watching that determination of hers he loved so dearly taking over once again.

“Okay, so here’s what we’ll do,” Emma started ordering them around in full Sheriff mode, “Ethel, after yesterday, the job is definitely yours, if you still want it.”

“Yes, of course!” Ethel exclaimed, getting up from her chair.

“Then maybe you can go to the clock tower and look more closely? See if you can find anything that may help us. Killian, try to get more information on the sword.”

“Aye, I’ll ask for Lady Belle’s assistance, perhaps she knows where to look.”

Emma nodded at him before turning to look at her parents, “mom, dad, please be careful.”

“We can help, too” David muttered, trying not to look bothered by the fact they had been sidelined.

“Yeah, but it’s not necessary for now,” Emma said reluctantly. She really didn’t want her parents out there, at least not today, “we still don’t have anything solid.”

“It’s okay, we’ll stay in today,” Snow mumbled, “we have to prepare everything for Grumpy’s
birthday party anyway. Right, David?”

David turned to look skeptically at his wife, “right.”

“Is Grumpy one of the dwarfs? I still mix them up from time to time,” Ethel wondered.

“You aren’t the only one,” Killian added, pursing his lips and arching his eyebrows.

“Yes, Grumpy is one of the dwarfs,” Snow answered, “and today is his birthday party at Granny’s. You and Scott are invited, of course.”

“Thank you, but I think we’ll pass. We aren’t too fond of this world’s parties.”

“Regina, help me?” Emma turned to the brunette, trying to get everyone’s focus back on the sword and her parents’ safety.

As soon as the two women stepped outside, Ethel moved towards the window, her eyes fixing on the white and red clouds of magic coming out of Emma and Regina’s hands. Truth be told, she had never seen anything like that.

“Do they always do this?” Ethel asked with slight apprehension.

“Only since we found out their magic combined is really powerful,” Snow replied, joining her by the window, “it’s so wonderful to see how far they’ve both come.”

“They didn’t always work together?”

Killian, Snow and David chuckled at Ethel’s naïve question, memories of Emma and Regina going at each other’s throats invading their minds.

“Definitely not,” Snow said, “those two used to hate each other, back when Regina was in her Evil Queen days and Henry was trying to convince Emma she was the savior. Who knew back then that a partnership between them could be so handy?”

---

**Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago**

Hiding behind one of the harbor’s wooden pillars, Davy Jones waited anxiously for a certain ship to return. He should be working, really, but at the mention that the ‘Anne Cormac’ would be porting in a matter of minutes, he hadn’t resisted the urge to go wait for one occupant in particular. Ever since their two encounters, he hadn’t been able to forget about the young woman who had talked back to him and pushed him off board (in what had been a brilliant show of astuteness). She had seemed so certain of herself, so brave, so strong-minded. Not to mention absolutely beautiful.

He couldn’t understand why, but something deep inside him craved another confrontation with her, another round of banter. He had made an effort to pay attention to her whenever she and what he assumed was her father went to the harbor. He could tell from her body gestures that she wasn’t too fond of the man, always trying to keep him at arm’s length. He found himself wondering why that would be, craving to know her better.

He didn’t have to wait too long until her vessel finally ported and, much to his luck, she was walking down the ramp to the dockyard alone. Good, this was going exactly how he’d hoped it would go. Picking one of the barrels up, he pretended he didn’t see her and crashed into her.

“Would you look at that, my favorite loon!” he exclaimed, putting the barrel down, “We really
should stop meeting like this, darling. Perhaps the universe is trying to tell us something?"

Anne, however, didn’t look too impressed, “are you following me?”

“I am a hard-working fellow who has no time to chase self-indulgent rich women who want nothing to do with me,” Davy replied in a teasing tone.

“At least you’re wise enough to get the last part of your sentence right.”

“So you do not want anything to do with my jaunty self?” he raised his eyebrows at her and gave her a cheeky smile as he invaded her personal space. Anne laughed at him almost instantaneously, refusing to say a word to him, “wonderful! Because I don’t want anything to do with you either,” he whispered in her ear as he smiled. And then, in what was starting to become a habit between them, he smiled at her and walked away. He knew he wasn’t indifferent to her, picking up the way her breath caught in her throat whenever he stood too close to her or how her eyes would wander to his lips when he sent a smirk her way. He knew he had an effect on her, but he was going to give her the time she needed until she reached that conclusion on her own.

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

“I’m here to listen, Emma,” Archie’s voice brought Emma out of her daze. She truly sucked at this. She was in his office, lying on the couch and staring at the ceiling, but her mind couldn’t stop thinking about the sword and whether or not Killian and Belle had already found anything relevant. She took a deep breath, trying to focus on herself for once. Archie was there to help her and she knew from experience that talking about her problems was useful.

“I just… wish I had a normal life,” she shrugged, “no monsters to fight, no villains to defeat. I just want to enjoy my life peacefully, even if it’s only for a week.”

“Is that really all that’s troubling you?”

“I’m over my identity crisis, if that’s what you’re talking about. I’m the savior, but I’m also a mother, a wife, a daughter, a friend…”

“And do you feel fulfilled in those roles?”

Emma shifted uncomfortably in the sofa, knowing very well what the answers to those questions were. She felt her walls coming right back up at the thought of letting herself be vulnerable enough to voice her deepest feelings and concerns. But wasn’t that why she had decided to come here in the first place? Hiding behind her walls would never be a sign of strength, being honest with herself and fighting her own fears was.

“I feel fulfilled in my marriage,” she quickly said, “I mean, it’s all pretty new, but things are going great. Killian has some really annoying habits, but I love him and I want to spend the rest of my life with him.”

“And do these annoying habits of his make you anxious?”

“I wouldn’t say anxious, they’re just… frustrating at times,” Emma replied, but she could tell Archie wanted her to elaborate, “he always wants to eat super healthy things and that’s just not how I work. And he’s this insanely organized person while I don’t care if I leave one boot in the kitchen and the other one in the living room. They’re just boots, who cares?”

“It seems to me those are normal clashes that happen in any marriage,” Archie said with a smile.
“Yeah, I know I’m lucky when the only annoying thing about my husband is how tidy and healthy he is,” Emma chuckled.

“What about Henry?”

At the mention of her son, a bittersweet smile formed on her face, “he’s growing up. He’s been spending a lot of time with Violet and that does concern me. I don’t want her to break his heart.”

“You can’t let things you have no control over upset you.”

“I know, but he’s been through so much for a kid of his age,” Emma sighed, “I’ve been keeping a close eye on him, but I don’t want to suffocate him either.”

“That’s a wise choice.”

“But I’m happy that he’s happy. I just can’t help but worry sometimes.”

Archie nodded at her, writing something down on his notepad, “what about your parents? Is there anything you would change about your relationship with them?”

Emma almost winced at his question, fully aware that he had just opened a can of worms. Talking about her parents had always been her weakness and Archie was well aware of that. It was complicated for her to even put it into words, but while she loved her parents to death, there were certain aggrieved feelings she had never been able to let go. Pretending they didn’t exist was easy enough, but they would always be in the back of her mind, stopping her from having the bond she wished she would have with them.

“I feel… disconnected, especially from my mom,” she finally gathered the courage to say out loud what had been consuming her for a long time now, “I’d like to feel closer to her. To feel I’m the one she talks to… and helps… and give hope speeches instead of Re-“ her words died down on her lips as soon as she realized what she was about to say.

“Regina,” Archie finished her interrupted sentence and Emma just felt like being swallowed by the couch.

“I know it’s ridiculous,” she mumbled, “but it upsets me to see mom always going out of her way to help Regina, and then with me she never seems to make the same effort.”

She knew her mother loved her, she had never questioned that, but sometimes she really wished that she would just go back to being Mary Margaret Blanchard, the kind and friendly woman who had become one of her best friends. She missed their friendship.

“Have you ever thought of talking to her about this?”

“I don’t know how.”

---

**Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago**

*When Davy went back to his tavern, he spotted Calypso cleaning the counter. She had been working there for less than a week, but she was already proving to be a fast learner.*

“Where were you?” Calypso asked in a demanding voice that had Davy blinking at her.

“Around,” he replied dryly as he started drying some mugs. He still didn’t know this woman very
well and he didn’t feel like telling the entire world that he had been trying to court a beautiful lass.

“You needn’t be mysterious,” there was a hint of bitterness in Calypso’s voice as she played with the loose sleeve of his shirt, “it’s a simple question: where were you?”

Ignoring the whistles coming from the men sitting at the counter, Davy pushed Calypso’s hands away from him, before snapping at her, “where I was is my own concern. I don’t recall owing you any justifications.”

Annoyance glowed in his eyes while the mug he was cleaning suddenly broke in his hands, the tiny shards of glass cutting into his skin.

“What kind of sorcery was that?” Davy wondered, his eyes falling on his bloody hands as the drunkards started shouting all kinds of expletives.

“Some witch wants you dead, mate” one of the men joked and the rest of them burst out laughing.

“Shut up, mate,” Davy said in a snarl, not one bit amused by what had just happened. Turning around, he was preparing to order Calypso to give him the cleaning cloth but she was nowhere in sight.

“Calypso?” he called out to her a couple of times, but no answer ever came. How had she just vanished like that?

Storybrooke – Present Day

When Emma left Archie’s office, she felt as if a weight had been lifted off her shoulders. She hadn’t expected to share that much with him, but the simple act of expressing her frustrations and concerns out loud had helped her feel more in control of her emotions. As Archie himself had said, the more she talked about things, the less they would haunt her. In the end everything was going to be okay and she was ready to kick the ass of whoever the sword belonged to.

She was on her way to Granny’s when her phone rang, Killian’s face flashing on the screen.

“Ahoy!” Emma said in the best pirate voice she could come up with, answering his call on the first ring.

“It seems you’re in a good mood, Swan. How did it go with Archie?”

“It was great, I feel better,” she replied as she waved at Marco, who was walking on the other side of the street, “we agreed on meeting every week. What about the sword, did you find anything?”

“So far, no progress, love. On the bright side, Belle and I still have plenty of books to go through. Perhaps we will come upon relevant information.”

“I’m going to see what I can find, too. We meet at the station at four?” Emma suggested, opening the diner’s door, surprised to see how crowded the place was.

Morgana had just finished preparing a sandwich when she spotted none other than Emma Swan entering the diner. She was talking on the phone and from the closed expression on her face, she must have been discussing a serious matter. When she put her phone back in her jeans pocket, Morgana dragged her eyes back to the sandwich, pretending her focus had been there the entire time as Emma took a seat in one of the counter stools.
“So… did you see any flying swords around?” Emma asked her casually as Morgana took a good look at her.

“Flying swords?” Morgana frowned at her and Emma shook her head dismissively.

“Nevermind, I need sugar. Any suggestions?”

“Uh, the chocolate chip cookie sundae would definitely do, but that’s way too sugary,” Morgana laughed but her smile quickly vanished when she realized Emma was actually considering ordering it.

“Great, I’ll have one.”

“Are you sure?” Morgana asked her warily, but regretted it when Emma narrowed her eyes at her. Right, what Emma ate was none of her business, “sorry. One chocolate chip cookie sundae on the way!”

Morgana smiled at her, hoping she hadn’t offended the savior - she most definitely needed to be on Emma’s good side.

“Mind if I join you?” August’s voice had both women turning their attention to him as he sat on the chair next to Emma.

“August, hi!” Emma greeted him, not expecting to see him there. Morgana walked away, but her eyes stayed glued to August. She had seen him before, but she was still suspicious of his intentions towards Emma. She could as well keep an eye on him.

“Bad day?” August asked Emma, putting his helmet on the counter.

“What makes you say that?”

“Ordering ice cream for lunch?”

“Oh, right. That,” she chuckled, “Yeah, it’s been a tough day.”

“Is there anything I can do to help?”

“Actually, maybe there is,” Emma replied, taking her phone out of her pocket. Maybe August had come across the sword at some point. After Morgana brought her the sundae, Emma spent several minutes telling August everything that had happened the night before, hoping that he would be able to give her some clue as to who they should be looking for.

“I have no idea, I’ve never seen it before,” he murmured, much to Emma’s disappointment and she suddenly felt like shoving her head against the counter. Why was this sword a freaking mystery to everyone?

---

**Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago**

Anne was standing by the door of her father’s office. Now that she had permission to at least walk around the mansion without being followed, she had decided to take her chances and tell her father about her intentions. The fear of rejection had prevented her from doing this earlier, but she wanted to be honest with him before taking any drastic measures. If he denied her wishes, that would be entirely on him and he would never be able to accuse her of having been untruthful.
“Come in,” she heard her father’s voice right after she knocked twice on the wooden door. When she walked in, she found him going through a pile of papers, “Yes, Anne?”

“I would like to talk to you, father,” Anne started talking, her voice trembling slightly, “about my future.”

“What is there to talk about?”

Anne fidgeted under his judging gaze, but refused to give into her fear, “I would like to sail away on my ship, to explore the world,” she stuttered, “you know that has always been my dream.”

William stared at her with wide eyes and raised eyebrows as his mouth gaped open, not quite believing her daughter’s absurd words. It was only seconds later that he started laughing out loud, baring all of his teeth.

“I mean it,” Anne snapped as William’s laughter died out, his nostrils flaring.

“Absolutely not!” he rebuked her, “You’re a foolish girl, just like your mother.”

Anne clenched her fists and tried to control herself. She knew by now that she would accomplish nothing by shouting back at him, “father, I-“

“End of discussion,” he interrupted her with a hiss, “we have talked about this. You will marry a prince, because that’s what better serves our family and I will not let you ruin it. Even if I have to confine you to your chamber again.”

“Is that what better serves our family or what better serves you?” Anne asked him calmly, even though her blood was boiling at her father’s ignorance and obsession with power and status. He really cared more about money than her own happiness. To him, she was nothing more than the tool that would allow him to be related to a royal family. And why? To prove that he wasn’t a failure? Why did he even care so much about his reputation when he was nothing but a despicable human being on the inside? Anne would never understand how anyone could be moved by an incessant need to have more money, more power, more recognition… None of that had ever mattered to her.

William was about to answer when another knock at the door was heard and one of the servants came in.

“Sir, here are the financial results of the plantation for this past trimester, as you asked,” she said, handing him some papers.

“Oh yes, thank you,” he eagerly grabbed the papers and started looking through them, a smile coming to his lips before he exclaimed, “this plantation is our main source of profit! Do you know what this means? That I am finally able to be looked at as a powerful and respected man.”

Anne fought the urge to roll her eyes at his futility, unimpressed by how quickly he had forgotten about her and their discussion.

“God bless the day I acquired this plantation!” he gushed, ogling the papers.

“The people who are forced to work there may disagree with you,” Anne jabbed.

“My dear daughter, you worry too much about matters that do not concern you,” William said as he dropped his glasses down on the desk, “you should go prepare for tonight’s ball. The prince of Thovor is honoring us with his presence and rumor has it that he’s looking forward to meet you.”
“I’m not going to this ball. You can’t make me,” Anne bit back before storming out of the office. There was no chance that she would attend this stupid ball. They would have to kill her first.

When she found Arietta in her room, she hugged her, silently seeking some comfort.

“It’ll be alright, miss Anne,” Arietta said soothingly as she rubbed her back.

“He wants me to go to a ball,” Anne sighed, “I don’t want to go.”

Arietta gently pushed her away, enclosing her hands around Anne’s wrists until they both sat on the bed.

“For as long as I knew your mother, she always went against what everyone expected her to do. That only changed when you were born,” Arietta said, her knuckles wiping a tear away from one of Anne’s eyes, “you know how unhappy your mother was in this house, but she endured everything because of you – because living in this torment was still the best chance she could give you.”

“I know that,” Anne assented, knowing that she would probably do the same for her own child.

“But there is one thing she never told you,” Arietta murmured as her tone sank and Anne looked at her expectantly, “she was planning on escaping, with you.”

Anne’s eyebrows shoot up into her hairline at that piece of information, “she was?”

Arietta nodded at her, “I was helping her, but fate got to her before she had a chance to go through with her plan.”

“So she was trying to free herself,” Anne mumbled, still processing what she had heard, “just like I am.”

“You sure are Mary Bonny’s daughter,” Arietta tittered, “you are so much like her, you will know what to do.”

Anne smiled at Arietta’s encouraging words while a surge of pride overshadowed her frustration. Without even knowing about her mother’s own struggle and plan to escape, she had followed her footsteps. That alone was enough to encourage Anne to keep following the plan she had concocted before: she would be in her best behavior and then she would go away when her father least expected it. And, unlike her mother, she would succeed.

“Thanks, Arietta,” Anne hugged the old woman one last time before she got up from the bed and walked towards the door.

“Where are you going, miss?”

“I have a ball to attend.”

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

The strong aroma of incense smoke drifted from Gold’s pawnshop as soon as Emma opened the door, making her cough.

“Miss Swan, I wasn’t expecting to find you here,” Rumplestiltskin drawled in a disdainful voice. Emma squinted her eyes at him as she walked towards him. She had gone there for one thing only and she wasn’t going to take any bullshit from him.
“Have you ever seen this sword?” she demanded, placing her phone on the counter, an image of the sword in Ethel’s hand on the screen.

“Do you expect me to scrutinize a sword through a cell phone?” he mocked her, not even bothering to look at the device.

“Have you ever seen this sword or not?” Emma insisted, picking the phone up and holding it in front of his face. The sword was with Killian, but even if she had it with her, she would know better than to let Rumplestiltskin see it or touch it. Who knows what he would do with it.

Rumple smiled sarcastically at her and then his eyes drifted to the screen, concealing a tinge of surprise when analyzing the picture.

“I’m afraid I haven’t,” he finally responded.

“You’d better be telling me the truth.”

“If you don’t trust my answer, why bother coming here in the first place, miss Swan?”

“I like to take my chances,” she retorted, while putting her phone back in her pocket, preparing to leave, “you’re useful when being on my side benefits you.”

When Emma arrived at the station, she went straight to the interrogation room. That’s where they kept all the files on the people they had arrested over the years. Maybe if she went through them again she would be able to find some sort of connection to the sword. She was pretty sure Gold had lied to her, but it’s not like she could’ve done anything about it. All her visit had told her was that Gold wasn’t going to get any benefit from helping them.

“Swan?” she stepped out of the room once she heard Killian’s voice, finding him, Belle and Ethel near her office, “We have nothing on the sword.”

“We have looked everywhere, but there seems to be no information whatsoever on it,” Belle said as she pointed to the sword, now on Killian’s hand.

“I didn’t find anything on the clock tower either,” Ethel added, “there aren’t even any traces of someone having been there.”

“Are we even sure the sword was thrown by someone?” Belle inquired the group.

“I just saw it flying like an arrow in David and Snow’s direction,” Ethel replied.

“Belle and I read about magical flying swords, but none of them looked like this one,” Killian said, his eyes falling on the blade once again.

“But even if no one threw it, someone had to enchant it to go around flying,” Emma huffed out in frustration, slumping into a chair. Their working day was almost over and there had been no progress, “alright, Killian and I will keep the sword and tomorrow we continue searching.”

“I can look in my storybook, maybe there’s something in there,” Henry babbled when the three of them got home. They had spent the entire ride home telling Henry about what happened and he had promptly offered to help them.

“Aye, as long as you don’t neglect your homework,” Killian advised in a paternal tone that surprised
himself, perhaps because he felt the need to make sure the boy wouldn’t disregard school anymore.

“Don’t worry,” Henry said as he and Killian shared a knowing look, until Henry decided to go upstairs.

“Very responsible,” Emma teased, her hand playfully pulling on one of his lapels, “I like it.”

And there were those damn butterflies in her stomach again. They never failed to appear whenever Killian showed off his fatherly side, whether it was with Henry, Alexandra or any other kid.

“I just want the boy to stay focused on school,” Killian replied, trying not to let his guilt eat him up. He really wished Henry would be honest with Emma so he could finally stop feeling this way.

“I know. I talked to Archie about that today, actually,” she said, taking off her boots and putting them in the entryway shoe storage, just as Killian wanted – she really wasn’t in the mood to have him lecturing her on footwear.

“I’m proud of you, Swan,” he murmured as he approached her, his hook pulling a strand of her blonde locks away from her face, “you put yourself first. That’s mighty progress, love.”

“I had a good persuader,” she laughed, putting her arms around his neck, “It’s a process, but I’m happy I went. I don’t want my fears to control me.”

“So, shall I assume you are planning to attend Grumpy’s birthday party?” he asked her, knowing very well how group celebrations at the diner were usually accompanied by some sort of crisis.

“Yeah. Talking with Archie again reminded me that I can’t stop living my life just because I’m afraid something bad will happen,” she replied, her breath caught in her throat at the way Killian was smiling at her, “and speaking of something bad, we have to hide that thing.”

Killian followed Emma’s gaze towards the sword she had dropped on the couch as soon as they had arrived.

“I’d say now is a good time to put our restored basement to use, love” Killian suggested, waiting for Emma’s approval.

Soon after they had returned from the Underworld, Emma had wanted to get rid of what had been her Dark One cave. She didn’t have any wish to live in a place with a cold, creepy cave underneath, so she had asked for Marco’s help and later the dwarfs had joined him as well, assisting him in the difficult task of turning the whole thing into a comfortable and functional basement. Clearly, that had been a great decision, because the bookcase with a secret door that Marco had made especially for her would most definitely be the perfect hiding place for the sword. With that and a protection spell on both doors, there was no way anyone but them would get to the blade.

### Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago

Standing at the top of the staircase, Anne could barely recognize her own house. Her father always went out of his way to host these silly balls and turn the mansion into a pretend castle. She saw some familiar faces, mainly acquaintances of her father who shared the same shallow preoccupations as he did. The beaming smiles on their faces as they either waltzed or engaged in conversation were a testament to how much they were delighted to be consumed by the superficiality of it all.

She started going down the stairs and tried to take a deep breath, but not even that was easy to do, not when she could hardly breathe with her corset fastened so tightly. When she spotted one of the
servants carrying a tray of toasted cheese squares, she fastened her pace, cutting through the crowd and their pompous ball gowns and tail suits. The food was always the best thing about these obnoxious parties anyway.

“I knew you would come to your senses,” her father grasped her arm, stopping her, “come, there is someone I want you to meet.”

Not letting her go, William dragged her across the room while Anne’s eyes followed the servant, who ended up disappearing in the opposite direction.

“You must be in your absolute best behavior,” William whispered as they kept making their way through the crowd, “he is the first prince attending one of our balls, do you have any idea what this means?”

“That our balls are tedious?”

“That this is a marvelous opportunity,” William corrected her, the grip on her arm tightening slightly, “and you shall not squander it.”

As they approached the center of the room, Anne noticed the figure of a young man leaning against one of the pillars, his dark brown eyes falling on her and accompanying her every move. His raven hair was caught in a ponytail, and the white shirt collar that hovered above his grey, gold and scarlet finery rose toward his beard-covered jaw line. When he realized they were walking in his direction, the man moved away from the pillar and started smiling at her.

“His Royal Highness, Prince of Thevor, please meet my beloved daughter, Anne,” William announced as he and Anne bowed down to the man. Anne was surprised that he was actually the prince her father wanted her to meet. There was no doubt that he was the most unsophisticated prince she had ever seen – he wasn’t repulsive, but he had slick hair and a slightly disturbing smile.

“Charmed to meet you, miss Cormac,” the man enthused, taking her hand in his and kissing it, “I am Brennan Lester. Prince of Thevor.”

Storybrooke – Present Day

After being certain that not one soul had followed him, Rumplestiltskin knocked on the door and waited patiently for her to answer. He would be lying if he said he wasn’t feeling a smidge of regret for coming here in the first place, but this was what was better for his family. Unlike what the heroes believed, sometimes it was inevitable to do the wrong thing for the right reasons. In the end, Belle and Gideon would thank him.

When the door finally opened, his mouth curved into a smile. He had been right once again and looking back at him was exactly the person he was expecting to see.

“Can I help you?” the female voice inquired and Rumple could tell she was putting on act and pretending she didn’t know who he was.

“You may stop playing the part of the nice new woman in town who doesn’t know who I am, dearie,” he sneered, “or should I say… Calypso?”

The woman’s eyes narrowed as if aiming a gun, tilting her head and pressing her lips together before her lips broke into a surrendering smile.

“Sagacious as always, I see” she sniggered, “what do you want?”
“To make a deal, of course.”

The party was going to start in thirty minutes and Morgana was nowhere in sight. She had already baked the cake during the afternoon but she was supposed to be adding the final touches to the frosting and there was still no sign of her.

Snow and Charming were the first to arrive with baby Neal in tow, offering to help Granny when they found her running around the diner like a headless chicken.

“She’s always been on time and just today she decides to disappear,” Granny ranted while putting some onion rings in a bowl.

“I’m sure she’ll be here any minute,” Snow tried to get her to calm down just as Morgana barged through the door.

“I’m so sorry,” she mumbled, trying to catch her breath, “the hot water wasn’t working and I had to bathe the old way.”

---

**Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago**

At the first chance Anne got, she escaped from the mansion, practically ripping her dress off and putting much more modest clothes on before she climbed out the window. After having to listen to prince Brennan ‘obnoxious’ Lester for about two hours, she really needed to pay the village a visit and remind herself that there were people out there whose preoccupations in life didn’t revolve about property, fancy attires and royal titles. It was no wonder her father had wanted her to meet the prince – their hollowness was strikingly similar.

She trekked the woods under the moonlight, trying to push that unpleasant night out of her head, eager to get to the village and cheer herself up. Along the way, she started hearing the distinctive sound of horses galloping, but before she could run away to hide, she felt a cold hand over her mouth, muffling her shrieks. She tried to free herself from the resilient grip, but whoever was pulling her behind one of the trees was much stronger than she was. Her body was now almost smashed against the damp tree trunk and she tried one last time to free herself, elbowing the body behind her. That had certainly been a successful tactic for she was finally able to turn around and look at the nitwit who had grabbed her: Davy Jones.

She opened her mouth to yell at him, but he covered it again with his hand, widening his eyes at her as he put a finger to his lips, urging her to keep quiet. The galloping sounds were getting closer and in a matter of seconds three horsemen passed by them, oblivious to their presence.

“What was that for?!” Anne shouted at him when the men and their horses were far gone.

“I was running away from them,” Davy replied nonchalantly.

“Why?”

“I may owe them some doubloons…” he answered, but Anne kept looking at him suspiciously, “several doubloons.”

“You never fooled me,” she chuckled, pushing him away so she could resume walking.

“I simply borrowed some money from them.”
“Stole,” she corrected him as he caught up to her and started walking alongside her.

“I never said I wasn’t a rascal,” he teased, smiling at her as the tip of his tongue wet his bottom lip, “are you alright, lass? You seem afflicted.”

The way he had been able to notice she wasn’t in the best of moods almost stopped her in her tracks. Was she really that transparent? Anne glance at him and found herself gulping when she met his tender and concerned gaze. She felt an inexplicable pull to him, urging her to tell him everything that was happening in her life, but she quickly pushed it away. Davy Jones could be handsome and charming, but she didn’t know if he could be trusted.

“I am dandy,” she replied dryly and he squinted his eyes at her, knowing that her answer had been nothing other than utter rubbish.

“Perhaps I could keep you company then?” he suggested, this time without a hint of smugness.

After taking a long look at him, Anne shrugged, a small grin plastered on her face to let him know that she wasn’t going to deny his offer. Why would she? He intrigued her and, more importantly, humored her. She would never say no to that.

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

The parties at Granny’s rarely had good music, but the food was always exquisite. After singing happy birthday to Grumpy, everyone had attacked the cake. Most people had actually eaten not one slice, but two, not resisting the creamy chocolate filling.

“Emma, are you okay?” David asked when he saw his daughter reaching for the counter on her left.

“Yeah, I’m just… feeling a little dizzy,” Emma replied.

“Aye, I’m feeling the same way, actually,” Killian said while shaking his head, momentarily feeling the need to sit in one of the benches next to Grumpy.

“I don’t feel dizzy, but I am a little nauseous,” Snow added, resting one hand on her stomach.

“You shouldn’t have eaten so much, sister,” Grumpy’s discourteous remark had everyone staring at him, but he simply shrugged his shoulders, not giving a damn.

“You know what, mate?” Killian turned to him, eyebrows shooting up at him as he pulled Grumpy’s beanie hat off his head, “I’ve always wanted to tell you how hideous this hat of yours is.”

“Oh, really?” Grumpy’s expression hardened as he stood in front of Killian, “the gift you and Emma gave me is hideous! I’ll just give it to somebody else on their birthday.”

“That’s so rude!” Emma exclaimed right away, feeling a sudden urge to call Grumpy an ungrateful asshole. Where was all of that even coming from, she wondered to herself, not knowing what the hell was going on with her.

“Emma, it’s not like Killian was exactly nice saying Grumpy’s hat was ugly…” Snow pointed out and that seemed to trigger something inside of Emma. She could feel everything she had talked about with Archie coming back at her with an intensity she wasn’t able to quell. All she wanted was to blurt it all out, losing each and every single capacity to keep all of her frustrations bottled up.

“Of course you turn against him, against me,” Emma said in a bitter tone, keeping her eyes on her
mother, “if it had been Regina I bet you would be hugging her and comforting her while saying everything’s alright because she didn’t mean to do it. She never does.”

The diner suddenly went silence as everyone stared at her, no one knowing what to say or do.

“Emma –“ Snow was about to say something, but Emma wasn’t finished.

“You know what, mom, I’m really tired of your ridiculous double-standards. It’s like she’s your daughter, not me!” Emma almost growled, pointing a finger at Regina.

It took her some seconds for her to realize what she had just said.

Out loud.

For everyone to hear.

She felt like her heart was going to stop and a grimace came across her features when she saw the tears forming in her mother’s eyes.

“Mom, I’m… I didn’t…” she stuttered, trying to say that she didn’t mean any of it, but for some reason the words weren’t coming out, “I actually meant every word I said,” she blurted out and she was certain that something really wrong was happening with her. What the hell was going on?

“Finally, it was about time someone said it,” Granny chimed in from the other side of the counter as Snow sent her an appalled look, “sorry, dear, but your daughter is right. You put Queenie here on a pedestal. And she doesn’t even deserve it.”

“Excuse me?” Regina gasped, glaring at Granny.

“Everyone, just calm down,” David finally said in a pacifying way, “something isn’t right.”

“Why? Because your daughter is jealous of me and your wife?” Regina asked sarcastically before turning to look at Emma, “It seems someone hasn’t put the past behind her and is bitter over people forgiving me.”

“Yes, Regina, I’m jealous,” Emma snapped back at her, “and no, I haven’t put the past behind me. You know why? Because you made me spend my entire life alone and you haven’t even apologized, not once.”

Except for some gasps and hushed whispers, the diner went silent again and Killian took Emma’s hand in his and pushed her body against his.

“Emma, are you alright?” he murmured in her ear. She could feel his concerned eyes boring into her. Better than anyone, he knew that something wasn’t right with her.

“I don’t know what’s happening,” she replied in a whisper, not wanting anybody else to listen to her, “it’s like the words just come out of my mouth and I don’t want them to.”

Killian knew exactly what Emma meant. For whatever reason, he had felt the same as soon as his eyes had landed on Grumpy’s hat. He had never intended to provoke the dwarf, but before he could tell, he was poking fun at him.

“Emma, is that what you really think?” Snow approached the two of them, interrupting their moment, “The reason why I do that with Regina but not with you is because she actually opens up to me, unlike you!”
“Maybe I would if you showed you care, but you don’t even try!”

“This is not the time or place to be talking about this,” David advised, standing between mother and daughter, “let me take you two home.”

“Yeah, I think we should all call it a night,” August added, putting his beer down on the table.

“Oh, not so fast, buddy,” Emma said as she walked towards August, “I’m still mad at you too. You were a real asshole all those years ago for taking my money and leaving me in jail.”

“You did what?!” David turned to August, anger and shock swirling in his eyes.

“We’re all very nervous,” Marco added nervously, “we should – “

“Your son stole from my daughter and put her in jail?” David interrupted, his judging gaze still lingering on August, who did nothing but look down in shame.

“He has annoyed me since he was a kid,” Grumpy muttered and all over the diner less than pleasant opinions about August started being heard:

“I never liked him.”

“He’s selfish!”

“His motorcycle is too loud!”

“I think he’s very attractive,” Blue’s voice had everyone diverting their attention to her as she looked away, her cheeks turning pink.

“The quiet ones are always the worst,” Zelena laughed before taking a sip of her wine.

Feeling as if she was losing her precious time, Regina rolled her eyes at the ludicrous exchange, “this is ridiculous. You wash your dirty linen in public all you want, but I won’t be wasting my time with any of this. Henry, let’s go home.”

Henry nodded at her, but the words he uttered said otherwise, “no, I’ll stay here with my favorite mom.”

Emma widened her eyes in surprise, her sudden joy at her son’s confession soon transforming into concern when she saw Henry wincing.

“Mom, wait!” he shouted, but before he could say anything else, a cloud of magic engulfed Regina as she poofed away in tears.

“I didn’t want to say that!” Henry gasped, turning to Emma, “mom, I need to talk to her.”

“I know, kid, but maybe tomorrow. I think it’s a good idea if we all just go home and…” Emma’s voice trailed off when she glanced at her mother’s somber look.

“Aye, that’s probably the wisest option right now, until we figure out what is going on,” Killian added, finishing Emma’s thoughts.

“Hook,” David called him out, placing his hand on his shoulder and looking at him as if he had struck gold, “repeat after me: ‘my name is David Nolan’.”

Killian furrowed his eyebrows at him, not really understanding what the prince’s goal was with any
of that, “mate, I don’t think now’s the time for charades.”

“It’s exactly the time for that. Just say it: ‘my name is David Nolan’.”

Even though he was still puzzled by his father-in-law’s request, Killian tried to do what David asked as everyone looked eagerly at him. When he opened his mouth to say the words, no sound ever came out, no matter how many times he tried. It was almost as if he had no voice at all. What bloody sorcery was this?

“I can’t,” Killian wheezed, his eyes widening with worry, “I try to, but no words come out.”

“Then we know exactly what’s happening,” David muttered, “we can’t lie.”
Tension arises when everyone is forced to deal with the effects of the truth spell as a new menace threatens Storybrooke. In Enchanted Forest flashbacks, Anne struggles to claim her independence and finds an unlikely confident in Davy Jones.

This chapter includes many flashbacks related to new characters. With this being a Captain Swan story, these flashbacks featuring other characters will ALWAYS be relevant/connected to Emma, Killian and their storylines so I advise readers to keep track of all the information the flashbacks provide.

“Wait, so we’re all Fletcher Reede now?” Emma asked incredulously while Killian tilted his head in confusion, “it’s from a movie.”

“Who could have done this?” Snow wondered, trying her best not to let Emma’s previous words affect her clarity.

“It had to be someone who knew we would all be here today,” David added, “the question is why would they do it?”

“Isn’t it obvious? To turn us all against each other,” Zelena’s voice had everyone turning their heads in her direction, “what? I’m giving you my former villain input.”

“Aye, that’s actually quite logical,” Kilian agreed.

“And it was working exactly the way they wanted,” David said, letting his eyes rest on his wife and daughter, who exchanged an embarrassing glance.

“Then we should all go home. Sleep on it,” Snow babbled as she reached for her purse in one of the benches, “I don’t see how blurting out the first thing that comes to our minds with no filters whatsoever will help us resolve our issues.”

“Great, more time for me to clean this mess!” Granny murmured, putting her apron back on.

After that, everyone started saying their goodbyes, trying to keep their mouths shut before they said anything they would end up regretting. When Emma saw Snow walking towards her, she found herself twisting her wedding ring - a new habit she’d picked up on now that she actually had a wedding ring to twist – not knowing exactly how she should even act around her mother. Thankfully, Snow didn’t give Emma a chance to say or do anything, surprising her with a kiss on the cheek.
“Goodnight, honey,” Snow said gently while her warm hands grabbed Emma’s face. There was no hint of anger or disappointment in her tone and Emma smiled shyly at her.

“Goodnight, mom,” she replied, before hugging her father and kissing baby Neal’s forehead. When she watched them go, she grabbed Killian’s hand in his and put her arm around Henry. They were her rocks, the ones who she went home to at the end of the day, and a sudden rush of relief invaded her - at least she had her boys and they would always be there for her, no matter what. There was no doubt that she would be having a serious conversation with her parents, but for now Emma just wanted to go home and forget about the last hour of her life.

“Emma!” August called out to her, trying to stop them from leaving the diner.

“August,” Emma sighed in frustration as she held the door open for Henry, “tomorrow, okay?”

“But –“

“She said tomorrow, mate,” Killian bit back, his eyes shooting daggers at August until the very moment they walked out of the diner.

“I can defend myself, Killian,” Emma said sharply once they were outside walking towards the bug. There was a tinge of annoyance to her voice that made Killian wince.

“I know you can, Swan. I was simply trying to help.”

“I’m sorry, I know. I’m just…” her voice trailed off as she stopped on the sidewalk and shook her head, still not believing any of it, “ugh, what else will happen today?”

“It’s going to be okay, mom,” Henry quickly offered his support, rubbing his hand on her back.

“Let’s get you home, love,” Killian wrapped one arm around her shoulders and guided her towards the bug, “you get in the backseat with your boy. I’ll drive.”

---

Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago

“A tavern? How original,” Anne mocked Davy once they walked into the pub. Along the way, he had offered to cheer her spirits and although it had taken him a while to convince her that she needed a distraction, she had ended up letting him lead the way.

“Not just any tavern, darling,” Davy gushed as he pointed to the wooden counter in front of them.

“Ale O’Jones,” Anne read the words carved on the wooden counter’s surface. Realization hit her at the familiar surname and she blinked twice before raising her eyebrows at him, “this is your tavern?”

“Indeed it is,” he confirmed with his usual smugness as he directed her to the counter. With it being well past midnight, the tavern was crowded with drunk sailors laughing and cursing all around, but there were two in particular who couldn’t stop ogling Anne, making her shift uncomfortably in her seat and trying to avoid eye contact with them at all costs. Davy must have noticed her uneasiness because he promptly dragged the two boozed up men to one of the doors in the back, locking them inside before making his way back to her, “I apologize for their behavior.”

“Did you just lock them in there?” Anne questioned him, baffled and amused at the same time at
what she had just seen him do.

“They’re accustomed to it.”

“What, do you always do this?”

“Only when they misbehave,” he shrugged and then placed a mug of ale in front of her, winking at her.

“But why? I take it taverns and well-behaved drunkards don’t go together. Shouldn’t you lock everyone then?” she inquired him, ignoring the mug and focusing on the way his fingers started tapping the counter. For whatever reason, this seemed to be a sensitive subject to him.

“Not everyone, just the seamen,” he replied blandly, “I do love ships, but I despise inebriated sailors,” he added, his entire demeanor changing in a matter of seconds. His previous boastfulness was nowhere in sight now and his jaw was tightly clenched, a detail that had Anne deciding to lighten the mood.

“Well, it seems there are sailors you like enough to the point of offering them drinks,” she noted with a hint of amusement as she brought the mug to her lips and took a sip. That was enough to get his attention again, observing her with that smirk of his that she had grown so fond of.

“You can say there is one sailor that I do not despise,” he murmured, leaning over the counter as his tongue darted out to wet his lower lip, “you know, besides confining topers in there, my ale locker can have plenty of more uses.”

Anne was still curious about what his history was with sailors to explain the resentment she had sensed in his voice just seconds ago, but she had understood that he wasn’t going to be elaborating. For now, this was what he was comfortable with: throwing facetious remarks and insinuating himself at her.

“I think being in charge of this tavern all by yourself is making you feel lonely, Davy Jones.”

“Oh, but I’m not alone,” he was quick to say, “I haven’t seen her in days, but there’s this lass who helps me.”

His voice hadn’t been suggestive in the least, but Anne still felt her stomach turning, pressing her lips flat as she shoved a strand of hair away from her face.

“Then maybe she can help you with other things, too,” she said, trying to strip any bitterness from her voice.

“I am not adept of mixing business with pleasure,” he assured her, “and, besides, I have no lascivious interest in her.”

Anne felt slightly relieved at his admission, even though she didn’t understand why. She had absolutely no interest in a man like Davy Jones and he could be with whomever he wanted. She wouldn’t give a damn. Really, she wouldn’t.

“The ale is good,” she ended up saying, trying to escape the potentially dangerous path their banter had taken.

“Wonderful. You are free to come here whenever you feel like it,” he said with a genuine smile on his lips, “or whenever you manage to escape your guards’ supervision again, that is.”
“What did you just say?” a shiver ran through her body and she almost froze in her place. How did he know any of that? She had never told him about having her father’s guards watching her every move (or trying to, at least).

“I have seen you in the harbor being watched by what I assume are your father’s guards,” he explained, “and it’s not common to see a wealthy lass like yourself out in the woods at night, which means you were likely running away.”

“You’re quite perceptive, aren’t you?” she asked him, suddenly feeling as if she could breathe again. For a moment, she had feared that he was somehow working for her father.

“I’m delighted you noticed,” he mocked her, “but regardless, my offer still stands. May you always consider this tavern your refuge.”

Storybrooke – Present Day

When they got home, Henry hurried upstairs under Emma’s worried gaze. He had kept quiet for most of the ride home while Emma had tried to cheer him up. She had told him that she would drop him off at Regina’s right after school, so he could talk to her and explain what had happened, but that didn’t seem to be much of a consolation to him. As much as she was happy to know that Henry loved her more than he loved Regina, Emma wished he had never said it out loud because watching him so sad was absolutely heartbreaking.

“I hope Regina doesn’t stay mad at him for too long,” Emma sighed, walking into the kitchen and filling the electric kettle with water. Sleep wouldn’t be coming for a while and all she wanted was to have some tea and make good use of the cushioned swing they had bought for the front porch.

“I believe that’s too much to ask of the woman who was resented for years because a child didn’t keep a secret,” Killian mused as he joined her in the kitchen. Emma winced at his words, not because of what he had said, but for the reminder they were that Regina and understanding weren’t exactly a match made in heaven.

“It’s bullshit if she does. She has no right to be mad,” Emma snapped, looking pissed while she paced around the kitchen, “she treated Henry like crap for years. She can try to forget it all she wants, but I remember. Everyone does.”

Killian listened to her ranting while he searched through the cabinets for the lemon ginger tea he knew Emma loved, “aye, it’s quite normal that after all of that the boy favors you.”

“I mean, I can understand it’s upsetting, but she has to understand Henry’s point of view, right?” Killian was about to answer, but Emma kept talking, “And if she doesn’t, I’ll talk to her.”

“I’m certain at some point she’ll come to her senses, Swan,” Killian offered his two cents as he put two mugs on the kitchen counter.

“I wish I was that certain,” Emma replied, kicking her boots off and watching them land on the hallway carpet. With all her worry over Henry and Regina she had forgotten to take them off.

“Bloody hell, woman, can’t you simply put your boots in the storage as any tidy person does?” Killian growled.

“Any tidy person?” she growled back at him and Killian knew right away that he had upset her with
his insinuation that she was not a tidy person. If he still wasn’t under whatever magic had made them tell the truth, he would have been more careful with his words, as he usually was.

“Swan, you have to admit you lack a great sense of orderliness.”

“Well, yeah, for the guy who organizes his socks by color anyone will lack orderliness,” she protested, but went to pick the boots off the floor.

“Leaving your footwear spread all over the house can be dangerous, someone may trip and fall,” Killian insisted in a scolding tone before sending a sarcastic smile her way once she put the boots in the shoe storage, “that wasn’t so difficult, was it?”

“You know what, I’m really not in the mood for this right now,” Emma rolled her eyes and stormed out the door, but not before turning the porch light on.

Killian could see her silhouette outside, sitting on the swing they had recently acquired. He sighed in frustration, knowing fully well that she was irritated and needed to be by herself for a little while. She had already been on edge over what she had said to Snow, Regina and August at the diner and over Henry’s own distress. If Killian had total control over what he said, he wouldn’t have even mentioned her misplaced boots, not wanting to upset her even further. Damn this bloody magic trick.

Only some minutes had passed when Emma heard the front door opening and she saw Killian carrying the two tea mugs, handing her one.

“May I join you?” he asked calmly as his sad eyes searched hers.

“It’s your house, too. You don’t need to ask, Killian,” she said, more softly this time, accepting the mug and folding her fingers around the warm ceramic.

“I’m sorry, love. I believe I am still under the effect of whatever fell upon us,” Killian apologized as he sat next to her, “I saw your boots in the middle of the floor and I spewed the first thing that came to my mind.”

“It’s okay,” she muttered, appearing to be calmer than before, “you’re right anyway. I should be more careful, even if it’s just to set a good example for Henry.”

Despite her voice being much smoother now, Killian knew that she was still letting her guilt get the best of her. He knew the feeling all too well for him not to notice it, especially when it came to his Swan.

“You’re vexed,” he whispered, putting his arm around her shoulders, “don’t blame yourself, Emma.”

“I still can’t believe that happened,” she scoffed, “but there has to be more to it, it can’t be as simple as not being able to lie. You said it yourself right now - it’s like we say everything we think.”

“Aye, it reminds me of the shattered sight curse.”

“Except this couldn’t have been a curse,” Emma pointed out, “we would have noticed.”

“Which means whoever is responsible for it is powerful enough to create such an effect without having to cast a curse.”

“Screw them,” Emma mumbled, taking another sip of her tea, “because of them, I probably ruined three relationships today.”
“No, you didn’t, Swan. Perhaps this was a blessing in disguise,” Killian said, stroking her shoulder with his hook, “you would have never been able to express yourself like that if it hadn’t been for this spell or whatever this is.”

“I probably wouldn’t. I never did because I thought I would handle it and just let it go. I guess I was wrong,” she confessed, “and the strangest part is that I do feel guilty but… it felt good to be able to say all of that out loud, you know?” Killian nodded at her in response, “Ugh, tomorrow is going to suck.”

“Perhaps it won’t. This is an excellent opportunity for you to make those relationships stronger than before,” he advised, tightening the grip of his fingers around his mug, “be honest, Emma, let them know you still hurt over it. If they care, they will do everything in their power to make up for their misdeeds against you.”

She smiled softly at him, his comforting words soothing her worries and easing her anxiety.

“You’re the best husband anyone could ever hope for, you know?” she whispered, wrapping her arm around his and he didn’t need them to be under a truth spell to know that she meant every single word, which only increased his own guilt for not having told her about Henry missing two classes the other day.

“I don’t think I am, Swan,” he blurted out without wanting to and he gulped, preparing himself for what was to come. No matter how much he tried, he couldn’t stop this bloody magical nonsense, “I’m afraid I haven’t been entirely truthful to you, love.”

Emma let go of his arm, her face falling at his gloomy words as she narrowed her eyes at him. He bowed his head, avoiding any eye contact with her and Emma trembled at what that meant. That’s what he always did before telling her something she wouldn’t like.

“What do you mean?” she asked, her voice barely a whisper.

“When I went to pick Henry up at school the other day, his teacher told me that he had missed the morning class,” he said as he gained the courage to look at her, “and I’m afraid he had already skipped another class before that.”

Emma’s mouth gaped open and she looked away, processing what he had said. She didn’t know what bothered her most: Killian not telling her about it, Henry skipping classes or her being oblivious to it all.

“I wanted to tell you, Swan, but the lad asked me not to and-“

“Are you telling me this now because you want to or because magic is making you do it?” her somber question interrupted him and he slumped his shoulders when her hardened eyes locked on his.

“Magic,” he mumbled, lips quivering slightly as he knit his eyebrows together, regret written all over his face. The sadness that clouded Emma’s features in that moment nearly killed him and he watched as she went inside, leaving him all alone in the porch. He knew pressuring her would only make things worse and, for the second time in a matter of minutes, he decided to respect her space and give her some time.
It had been a relatively busy day at the tavern so far, with Davy moving around the establishment with urgent steps, trying to take everyone’s orders. When Calypso walked in, she found him cleaning the counter with soap and water, paying special attention to the way his biceps bulged with each movement. He had been the only reason why she had returned and she had missed him. Just staring at him gave her the motivation she needed to keep pursuing her plan.

“My, look who it is!” Davy exclaimed when he took in her presence, “I thought you’d never return.”

“Sorry, I needed to run an errand,” she said dismissively, walking towards him behind the counter, beaming at him the entire time.

“What a mighty long errand that was,” he sniggered, turning to face her after he finished wiping the counter dry, “I must warn you that if you are to work with me, you can’t disappear for days in a row.”

“I understand. It won’t happen again,” Calypso said determinedly as she closed the distance between them, fluttering her eyes at him, “perhaps we can make up for lost time.”

“Wonderful idea,” Davy mumbled, putting the dishcloth in between their bodies, preventing her from getting any closer to him, “as you see, there is plenty of work to do.”

Calypso faked a smile as she grabbed the dishcloth and watched him walk past her towards the kitchen. She knew how to deal with rejection, she had done nothing else for her entire life, but she had learnt to be patient. She could handle Davy Jones and she would have him, no matter the cost.

---

Storybrooke – Present Day

Killian wasn’t sure if enough time had passed, but he had long finished his tea and the idea of going to sleep with Emma mad at him was dreadful enough to make him take a chance. He just wanted to talk to her and explain why he hadn’t told her. He wanted her to fall asleep in his arms as she usually did and to wake her up with sloppy kisses all over her neck. He wanted to prepare her breakfast and to have her body pressed tightly against his as she hugged him when she got to the kitchen. He just wanted them to go back to normal.

Determined to fix things, Killian gently pushed their bedroom door open and the yellow bedlamp light filled the room with a dim, a sure sign that Emma wasn’t asleep (she could never fall asleep with any lights on). His eyes fell on their bed and he spotted Emma’s body under the covers, her back to his side of the bed. He felt a silly tinge of relief when he noticed she had taken his pillow and pajamas out of the closet and left them on the bed – at least her disappointment hadn’t affected her small and loving little gestures. As he took his clothes off, he paid attention to her somewhat erratic breathing and his heart sank for her. It had been an emotionally exhausting day for her and he wished he hadn’t contributed to her distress.

“I’m sorry, Emma. I was going to tell you, but your boy asked me not to and I didn’t want him to think he couldn’t trust me,” Killian said, getting under the covers next to her, “we agreed that I wouldn’t tell you as long as he told you on his own and didn’t miss any more classes.”

He felt her body moving next to his as she turned to him, getting into a sitting position. She stayed silent for some moments, her eyes trained on the sheets before she lifted her head to look at him.
“I can understand that, but I’m his mother,” she told him firmly, “I need to know when he’s skipping classes, even if he doesn’t want me to know.”

“Aye,” Killian agreed with a nod of his head, averting his gaze from her.

“Killian, you’re his stepfather,” Emma reached out to him, taking a hold of his hand, “I’m expecting him to tell you things that he won’t tell me.”

“What things, Swan?” the frightened look on his face almost had Emma chuckling.

“Things that he may find awkward to talk about with his moms,” Emma shrugged, “you know, normal teenager stuff… girls, sex…”

“Aye, I’m quite practiced on that,” Killian bragged, more comfortable now that they were finally talking.

“When it comes to that sort of thing and Henry asks you not to tell me something, it’s fine if you don’t,” Emma said, her parental instinct telling her that would be the right thing to do, “but if it’s a significant problem that affects him in any way, I need to be involved. You have to tell me, even if he asks you not to.”

“Aye, love. I just…” Killian sighed before he started scratching his ear, “I never had to parent anyone before, Emma. I’m still not entirely sure how to do it properly.”

“Yes, you do. You’re a great stepfather,” Emma assured him, trying to wipe the concerned look off his face, “just don’t omit important things from me, okay?”

“I can assure you it won’t happen again,” Killian guaranteed, taking her hand in his and kissing it. The warmth of his mouth on her skin had her wanting to snuggle with him. She had been mad, but she also understood his position and how he had found it hard to keep a balance between being honest with her and wanting to respect Henry’s wishes. It hadn’t been like before where keeping a secret had everything to do with him and the fear of her not accepting his past. That alone helped her being more understanding of the situation.

“By the way, tomorrow we’re having a serious talk with that kid,” Emma said and then chortled sarcastically, “actually, tomorrow will be ‘serious talk day’. I can’t wait!”

“It’ll be alright, Swan,” he tried to comfort her as they both started moving until they found their cuddling position, “you weren’t the one wronging them.”

“But it’s still awkward.”

“Whatever happens, I’ll be by your side.”

“I know.”

Going by the way Henry was barely looking at them, Emma could tell that he was uncomfortable with their conversation. As soon as he had come down for breakfast, she and Killian had told him to sit down and they had started talking to him while they ate. It was a good thing that they seemed to no longer be under the effect of whatever had afflicted them the night before, because trying to have an important talk with a teenager while having no control over what was said could be… problematic. After much insistence, Henry had confessed that cutting classes had made him feel like a ‘cool kid’ and that had given him more confidence in his courting of Violet. In good parenting fashion, Emma and Killian were quick to tell him that there was nothing cool about missing school
and that the best way to impress Violet was to just be himself.

“I promise I won’t skip school again,” Henry ended up saying, taking one last bite on his bagel. He was certainly going through that weird puberty stage where one minute he’d act like an interested and affectionate boy, and then the next minute he’d be aloof and dismissive. Emma knew by now not to take it personally, but sometimes she missed the ten-year-old who had gone after her, the one who hugged her for no reason other than just simply wanting to hug her.

“Good. Now go get your things,” Emma ordered him before he ran upstairs, “and don’t forget to brush your teeth!”

“The lad seemed cooperative,” Killian commented, putting the milk back in the fridge while Emma carried the dirty dishes over to the sink. She prepared to say something in return, but the sound of the doorbell ringing stopped her. Watching his wife busy with the dishes, Killian rushed to the hallway and found Snow, David and baby Neal smiling at him once he opened the door.

Emma almost dropped a glass as soon as she heard her mother talking to Killian. She was expecting her to come over, but not this early in the morning. Not being entirely sure if she was ready to talk to Snow just yet, she opened the dishwasher and flicked on the faucet, rinsing away any sticky remnants of maple syrup before putting the plates in the machine.

“Good morning, grandma, grandpa,” Henry greeted them after he almost brought the house down with his heavy steps down the stairs, backpack in tow.

“Shall we go, my boy?” Killian turned to Henry, patting him on the shoulder as David sent them a not so subtle knowing look.

“I’ll join you two,” David said, “I miss taking my grandson to school.”

“Good morning,” Emma mumbled when she finally joined them in the hallway, nodding shyly at Snow before kissing Henry’s head, “have a nice day, kid.”

“I’ll see you at the station, love,” Killian pecked her lips and then gave her an encouraging nod, which she returned with a smile, welcoming any sort of reassurance for what was probably going to be one of the most difficult conversations of her life.

There was an awkward silence when Killian, Henry and David left, but Snow broke the ice and clasped her hands together as she started talking.

“Emma, I owe you an apology,” Snow started, but Emma shook her head, eyes still fixed on the floor.

“Mom, you d-“

“No, please. Let me finish, I thought about this the whole night,” Snow pleaded, taking Emma’s hands in hers, “I realized yesterday that I have failed as a mother if I ever made you feel like you weren’t my number one priority. Regina is my friend and I care about her, but I do not love her. She is not my daughter.”

Emma’s eyes bored into Snow and she could tell by her mother’s frustrated yet determined voice that she truly meant it.

“There is something I never told anyone,” Snow continued, pausing for some seconds to guide the two of them towards the couch in the living room, “I still don’t fully trust Regina. She spent almost my entire life trying to kill me and going out of her way to make me miserable. I am terrified that one
day she decides that going back to being the Evil Queen is what truly makes her happy.”

“Well, technically that stopped being an issue when she separated the Evil Queen from herself,” Emma pointed out.

“That’s not true. Look at Jekyll and Hyde: they were the same man and both were capable of being good and evil,” Snow countered, “Regina isn’t any different just because she got rid of her darkest side. There’s still light and darkness in her heart.”

“Is that why you’re always so concerned about her?” Emma asked, realization dawning on her face, “because you’re afraid she turns into the Evil Queen again?”

“I know I will do whatever it takes to keep her from going back to the way she used to be,” Snow answered, the corners of her mouth quirking up, “I will not let her hurt my family again, even if that means doing some unnecessary cheerleading at times.”

Emma could only stare at her mother, not wanting to believe what she had heard. All this time, she thought Snow had developed some sort of weird protective instinct over Regina, but after all, it seemed that had been nothing but fear that the person who terrorized her for years would have a relapse.

“So yes, I know I have spent some time with Regina and that it may seem like I’m being overprotective of her,” Snow stressed, “but it’s not because I care more about her than I care about you. It’s because I feel the responsibility to keep a close eye on her, to prevent any setbacks that could cost us our happiness again.”

It did make sense. Regina had always been an insecure person and her willingness to change had come not only from her desire to love Henry, but also from the second chance everyone had decided to give her. Being harsh and unsupportive of her could trigger the maniac inside and that was something Snow felt they couldn’t chance.

“But that still doesn’t excuse the fact I have been more focused on Regina than on you,” Snow continued, her eyes filling with tears, “and that’s why I owe you an apology.”

“No, you were right too, mom,” Emma cut her off as Killian’s voice advising her to be honest echoed in her mind, “I don’t exactly open up to you.”

“And I don’t make it easy,” Snow admitted as she swiped at her face, wiping a tear away, “I remember when you knocked at my door asking if my spare room was still available…” she raved, her voice filled with nostalgia, “I was so happy. You were the first person during those endless years that encouraged me to be strong and to stand up for myself.”

Emma’s smile faltered slightly at the memories her mother was evoking, feeling an unexpected burn in her chest. Mary Margaret had been the closest person she had been able to call a friend up until that point in her life and even if she had refused to admit it back then, her friendship and support had played an important part in her staying in Storybrooke.

All of that felt like a lifetime ago now, almost as if they were somebody else’s memories. She missed it. She missed Mary Margaret. She missed the nights where they would stay up late talking about Henry, the bitchy mayor, Mr. Gold and his super creepy ways, David and Kathryn… All of that had turned into a mirage the minute she had broken the curse. Her friend had suddenly become her mother and any details she had been able to confide to Mary Margaret turned into details she was nowhere near ready to share with Snow. The ugly truth was that she had gained a mother, but lost a friend. She wouldn’t change it even if she could, but damn, sometimes she wished she could have
Mary Margaret back, even if it was only for some minutes.

“I miss her,” Emma sputtered, trying to hold in her own tears, “I miss us and how comfortable I was to tell you things. And then I found out you were my mom and what once had been really easy to do suddenly turned into something really hard.”

“When I found out you were my daughter, I just couldn’t help but want to be a mother to you and I had no idea what I should do. I know I pushed you when I shouldn’t have, but I thought I was doing the right thing.”

“I know and I don’t blame you for it, but knowing who you really were changed things,” Emma pondered, “and we can’t just turn back time.”

“Emma, I’m still her. I am Mary Margaret,” Snow whimpered, wrapping her fingers around Emma’s hands, her sorrowful eyes searching her daughter’s, “we can’t turn back time, but we can get close to the way things were before. I am your mother and I love you. I refuse to give up on you.”

A tear ran down Emma’s cheek and she sank into her mother’s arms as a feeling of peace washed over her, “I love you too, mom.”

“I promise I’ll never stop fighting for you again,” Snow sobbed into Emma’s neck, dampening her skin with the tears that kept falling.

---

**Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago**

“Ah, you’re here. I’ve been looking for you everywhere,” William joined Anne in the mansion’s wide patio, interrupting her lonesome sword fight training, “I have wonderful news to share.”

Anne slumped her shoulders in exasperation. If the news were wonderful to him, then that meant they would be dreadful to her.

“I don’t have the whole day, father,” she grumbled when he kept staring at her with a radiant and proud smile plastered on his pale face. Twilight was falling and she didn’t have much more time left to practice.

“You, my daughter, are a very lucky woman,” he noted, walking slowly towards her, “or should I say princess?” Her head snapped in his direction almost instantly, something about his giddy voice putting her on high alert. “Prince Brennan just asked me for your hand in marriage!”

Anne dropped the sword on the floor, the shrieking sound of the metal hitting the floor the only thing she was able to register. She took two steps back and felt the urge to scream and cry out loud, but she took a deep breath and tried to remind herself that she had a plan to follow. The plan, yes. She had to follow the plan. She had to follow the plan. She had to follow the plan. That helped her keep her composure, even though she still felt really inclined to put her sword to good use. If only that was an option…

“I’m not going to marry someone I do not love,” she stated, picking her sword from the floor. She was expecting to see his face contort with wrath at her answer, but surprisingly he did nothing but send a soft, sarcastic smile her way.

“If you don’t, you can bid farewell to your ship,” the casualty in his voice had her blood boiling. He had just threatened her but, for him, they had been nothing but trivial words. She glared at him as
she watched him go inside, extremely pleased with himself. She started pacing back and forth in the patio, thinking about what would be her next step. But for that, she needed to calm herself down first and there was only one thing that could help her: the sea.

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

Before starting his patrol, Killian decided to go to the docks to check on the Jolly Roger. After walking Henry to the school bus, he had accompanied David to Ashley’s daycare, so he could drop off baby Neal before he went to help Anton with the bean plantation. They had mainly talked about how Emma and Snow had barely slept, too bothered and frustrated with what had happened. ‘Like mother, like daughter’, they had said in unison.

When he walked past the Storybrooke Cannery, he spotted someone sitting on one of the benches, facing the sea. It was still relatively early in the morning and he didn’t usually find anyone there at that time of day.

“Everything alright?” Killian asked as he approached the woman, finding Morgana smiling back at him when she looked up.

“Deputy, I wasn’t expecting to see you here.”

“Then that makes two of us,” he noted, hooking his thumb on his belt.

“I come here whenever I’m missing home,” she explained, “watching the sea waves move gently across the rocks soothes me like none other. Does that make sense?”

Killian frowned at her, ignoring her chuckle as he realized he could have been the one saying that.

“Aye,” he agreed, mimicking her and fixing his eyes on the water, “it makes all the sense in the world.”

---

**Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago**

The chilly night seemed to have kept people away from the docks, with Anne only coming across some peasants here and there, wandering around and minding their own business. It was a strange thing to see the harbor so quiet, but today she didn’t mind. All she wanted was to lie down on the deck of her ship and think about what she should do next. She despised the idea of marrying that greasy prince, but losing her ship wasn’t an option either.

Once she got on her vessel, the pile of clothes sitting on the deck had her reaching for the dagger in her boot. She looked around the ship, but spotted no soul until the sound of drops falling on the wooden deck had her turning around. Davy Jones grinned at her, standing there under the moonlight in nothing but a small white cloth covering his lower parts. Anne tried not to stare, but she was surprised how hard of a task that seemed to be. He was dripping wet and she quickly realized those were his clothes.

“You really picked the wrong day to invade my ship. Again,” she grunted, putting her dagger back in her boot.
“My apologies, dear. I thought no soul would be here this late at night,” he replied, combing his fingers through his hair. She had no idea how he wasn’t freezing, but he sure looked healthy.

“So there is only a problem to your intrusion if you get caught?”

“Precisely,” he jested, picking his clothes up from the deck, “perhaps you’d like to join me?” he asked suggestively, his eyebrows shooting up as he closed the distance between them, “it’s the most… natural thing in the world: two people giving in to their deepest desires,” he added breathlessly as he rested his forehead against hers.

His close presence had Anne trembling and her heart skipped a beat. She would be lying if she said she wasn’t attracted to him and that she didn’t appreciate how determined and playful he was, but she refused to give in to her desires. She didn’t need any more men in her life distracting her from her main goal. Gaining her composure back, Anne decided to change tactics. She was going to show him just who he was dealing with, but she would have a little fun first.

Just when he was expecting her to push him away, Davy felt her hands resting on the naked plains of his chest, sultry eyes gazing up into his.

“You’re right,” she whispered in his ear, her hot breath sending chills down his body, “I’ve been attracted to you since the first time I saw you,” she continued in her most seductive voice while her hands slowly ran up and down his chest, “we should just… embrace our feelings,” his mouth gaped open as his dark eyes fell on her lips, nodding at her like a fool. She grabbed his face in her hands and kissed him, hot and passionate and a messy tangle of teeth and tongues. When she finally pulled away, he looked as if he was about to faint. He was out of breath and unable to move, his fixed gaze still on her lips.

“Good gracious,” he yelped, still so stunned he didn’t even notice Anne taking his clothes and cloth from him. It was only when he felt an unfamiliar breeze in his lower parts that he noticed just what she had done: his clothes and the cloth he had been using to cover himself were now in her hands as she waved them at him with a smug smile on her face. He covered himself with his hands and he shrieked when he watched her throw his garments off board.

“My clothes…” he mumbled in disbelief. He glared at her, realizing she had only seduced him so she could humiliate him and leave him as bare as the day he was born.

“Go get them,” she boasted, “now get off of my ship.”

She started walking away, watching him as he quickly jumped in the water. She definitely didn’t take a peek at his cute bottom. And she definitely wasn’t feeling guilty for having been so mean to him. She didn’t care about him. No, not at all.

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

After their heart to heart, Emma and Snow had agreed to spend the day together. Snow had offered to help at the station and Emma had promptly accepted. The two were on their way there when they heard a familiar honk. They saw the sheriff’s car passing by them and Killian grinning from the driver’s seat as he signaled to park.

“He seems to have gotten the hang of it,” Snow gushed while the two of them watched him park the car almost flawlessly.
“I know,” Emma said with a proud smile on her face. Adapting the cars to him had certainly been a great decision, “it was bumpy in the start, but he’s really good now.”

“It makes me so happy to see you so in love,” Snow raved and Emma blushed a little, feeling like a teenager who had just confessed to being in love. It was a good thing Killian joined them, greeting both ladies and dropping a kiss on Emma’s lips. He gave her a small nod, silently wanting to make sure that she was okay, but her wide grin let him know that the conversation had been a success.

“Emma!” they had been just about to enter the station when they saw Regina running towards them, a gloomy look clouding her features as she approached them.

“What happened?” Snow asked as the three of them waited for Regina to talk.

“One of the dwarfs was found in the docks…with a tail instead of feet.”

“No,” Snow gasped as she looked at Regina in shock, “which dwarf?”

“Sleepy.”

“Wait, a tail like… mermaid tail?” Emma asked in disbelief.

“But I was just there and I saw nothing unusual,” Killian added, baffled at Regina’s news.

“We need to talk to Sleepy. Maybe he can tell us who did that to him,” Emma grunted as they all followed her to the car.

Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago

Sitting in one of the tavern tables, Davy couldn’t keep his eyes away from the door, hoping that Anne would pay him a visit. He had been over the moon at their kiss, taking it as a possible indication that she had feelings for him. Her kiss was so sweet and tender, and yet so hungry and rapturous that he craved for more.

“Waiting for someone?” Calypso’s voice brought him out of his Anne-filled thoughts. She was an odd lass, Calypso. On the day he saw her outside the tavern, she had looked so lost and lonely that he had felt sorry for her and he had tried to help her as best as he could, but her behavior was rather strange, to say the least. He had never been shy around women, but the longing glances Calypso would bestow on him were starting to make him uncomfortable.

“Indeed I am,” he replied, hoping that she would leave it at that.

“Whoever it is, it seems you are wasting your time,” she said as her voice dropped to a whisper, “I can keep you company if you’d like.”

Her voluptuous voice had him clenching his jaw before he gathered the courage to finally tell her he had no interest in pursuing any kind of relationship with her, “I’m afraid you have misunderstood my helping you. Pardon my forwardness, dear, but the only thing I am interested in is your assistance.”

“Are you in love with somebody else?” she asked him bluntly, bitterness rolling out of her mouth.

“That is not of your concern,” he barked as Calypso stared blankly at him, his words hitting her like
knives as anger built inside of her. She got up and hurriedly left the tavern, sitting in one of the haystacks, right next to a drunk old man. Despite knowing him as one of the men who spent his days in the tavern, Calypso ignored his presence, her thumbs skimming the throbbing veins in her neck as she tried to calm herself down. She had to find a plan — she had to find the woman Davy was in love with and use her magic to turn him against her. Yes, that would be brilliant. He would hate this woman and then Calypso herself would be there to cheer him up, to support him and he would finally realize that she was the one for him.

“I’ve seen ya’ eyeing Jones,” the old man slurred, gazing at her with his dopey eyes, raising a finger in her direction, “as hisss number one ale enjoyerrr I can assure ya’ you should take an interest in anotther man.”

Calypso scowled at the words that tumbled from his mouth, her fury emanating sparkles of blue magic from her hands as the man widened his eyes and looked at her in horror. Calypso flicked her wrist and the man’s legs suddenly turned into a green, scaly tail. Before he had a chance to scream, she poofed him into the water, his cries for help going unnoticed by the scarce villagers still out in the streets as Calypso watched his desperate attempts to keep himself afloat.

“No one tells me what to do.”

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

When they arrived at the docks, Dr. Whale and his team were surrounding Sleepy, who was shaking and rocking the upper part of his body back and forth, his eyes as expressionless as ice cubes. His legs had been replaced by a gooey, green tail, the scales shining under the sun’s rays like emerald diamonds.

“He’s in shock,” Whale informed them.

Emma kneeled in front of Sleepy, her hands landing on his shoulders, trying to stop his erratic movements, “Sleepy, can you tell us who did this to you?”

Sleepy shook his head vigorously, his frightened eyes never meeting hers.

“Who could have turned him into a… merman?” Snow wondered as they stepped back, giving room for the doctors to put Sleepy on a stretcher.

“Are you sure you didn’t see anything suspicious?” Emma asked Killian.

“I’m afraid not, love. Everything was quiet and…” when his voice trailed off and he raised one of his eyebrows, Emma knew that he had remembered something that could be relevant to them.

“What?”

“Morgana was here,” Killian answered, before gesturing towards the bench in front of them, “she was sitting there, staring at the water, but I didn’t think anything of it.”

“I don’t like this,” Emma said, fearing the worst. She hoped that Morgana had nothing to do with it, otherwise she would never forgive herself for being the one letting her out.

“Then let’s confront her,” Regina suggested.
“No, I think it’s best if she doesn’t know we are suspicious of her,” Emma cautioned, “whoever is doing this clearly has magic. If it’s Morgana, who knows what else she’ll do if she knows we’re onto her?”

“Aye, it’s preferable to keep discretion,” Kilian agreed.

“Well, I think it’s idiotic,” Regina said, but the sourness in her voice had Emma frowning at her. Regina was probably still bitter over Henry’s admission from the day before and was now taking it out on her, as usual.

“Then it’s a good thing you’re not the Sheriff,” Emma bit back, before she pulled Killian aside, “hey, do you mind keeping an eye on Morgana? My mom said she wanted to spend the day together and I didn’t really want to change plans now.”

“Of course, love,” Killian assured her with a smile.

“Thanks. Make sure she doesn’t realize you’re onto her,” she advised and then smirked at him, “you know… be a pirate.”

“That I most certainly am,” he boasted, kissing her on the cheek.

“Call me if you see anything suspicious,” she watched him walk away before she turned to the two women, “Regina, before you go to the city hall, do you think you can come with us? I need your help for something.”

After taking an unauthorized peek at the guest list of Granny’s Inn, opening the door of Morgana’s room hadn’t been a grueling task for his hook (once a pirate, always a pirate). The neatness of the room was what impressed Killian at first - there were no clothes or shoes lying around and everything fell into place flawlessly. In fact, it didn’t even look like someone was actually living there. He turned the room upside down, but he found anything. She had close to no possessions and the ones she did have were meaningless earrings, scarves and some clothing items.

Frustrated with his inconclusive search, Killian climbed down the stairs to the diner. He had never been an adept of small talk, but he knew how to be charming enough to get information out of people. Surely, it wouldn’t be any different with Morgana.

“Captain,” she greeted him when he sat in the booth closest to the diner’s door, “what brings you here so early in the morning?”

“It appears I am out of duty today,” he lied as he looked around the diner. Besides him, there was only one other lady eating a stack of pancakes, “can I have a chamomile tea, if you’d be so kind?” He didn’t understand why Morgana’s face went blank at his words, “you alright, love?”

“Yes,” she whispered, seeming to have awoken from her sudden hypnosis, “I’ll get your tea.”

He kept following her every movement out of the corner of his eye, darting his gaze away when she started making his way to him, teapot and cup in hand.

“Would you mind if I joined you?” she asked him hesitantly, a small, hopeful smile on her face as she poured the tea in his teacup, “I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have asked.”

“That’s quite alright. Take a seat,” he invited her to join him, realizing that this could actually be his chance to catch some sort of incongruency on her part that could let them know if she had anything to do with Sleepy turning into a merman.
“Since there are no people for me to serve and I love chamomile tea…” she said, watching Killian take a sip of tea, “how are things with Emma? I heard you two recently got married. I didn’t get a chance to say it before, but congratulations.”

“Thank you.”

“I’ve seen the passionate looks you two exchange… It’s a joy to witness,” she enthused.

“Aye. I’m married to the most brilliant and perceptive woman in the world, being happy doesn’t begin to describe it,” he said, emphasizing the word ‘perceptive’. He wanted her to know that if she was the one they were after, they would best her, but she had seemed oblivious to it.

“I am delighted to see you two so happy,” she gushed and then started clearing her throat, earning her a scowl from Killian, “I… It pleases me immensely when people are happy,” she shrugged, trying to look so casual that she ended up sounding disingenuous.

“What about yourself? No husband to tend to?”

Her expression dulled at the mention of a husband and that let him know that he had just mentioned a sensitive topic, making a mental note of that bit of information.

“There was someone. A long time ago,” she said melancholically, her fingers tracing the edges of the cork coaster under the teapot, before she shook her head and smiled again, “but now I’m focused on starting a new life here in Storybrooke.”

“You have managed to stay away from the bakery’s locks so far, that’s progress,” he taunted her and she closed her eyes in embarrassment.

“I am terribly ashamed of that.”

“We all have done things we regret,” he said, this time in a more serious manner, fixing his eyes on the teacup in front of him.

“And unless we find the courage to forgive ourselves we will always be consumed by it,” she noted and Killian lifted his gaze to hers, sensing she wasn’t just talking to him, but also about him. Upon his intriguing perusal, she grabbed her teacup and got up from the booth, “I should go back to work.”

She couldn’t have been talking about him, or could she? Perhaps it had simply been a coincidence. Or maybe she had heard about him being a reformed pirate and had decided to offer him her advice, even if he hadn’t asked for it. It was strange how, after that, she didn’t look in his direction even once, pretending to be too occupied with whatever small task she had in hand. A bizarre lass, indeed.

The door’s bell chimed and Killian side eyed August, who walked in and wasted no time in making his way to him.

“I was just looking for you,” he said, sitting in front of him, in the place where Morgana had been, “how’s Emma?”

“Going on thirty years without an apology on your part,” his sardonic tone had August looking away, a frustrated puff of air escaping from his lungs.

“Did she talk to you about it?”

“Look, mate, what Emma and I talk to each other is nobody’s business but our own,” he grumbled, “but if you still want to offer her your friendship, I suggest talking to her and gracing her with an
“I know I have to do it. I want to do it,” August confessed, “I just don’t know how.”

“Do you truly regret it? What you did to Emma all those years ago?”

“I do.”

“Then you need nothing else.”

Holding the sword in her hand, Snow took a step back while Emma and Regina put a protection spell on the door to the cave in Emma and Killian’s house. It was the first time she was holding it and she was surprised at how heavy it was.

“I see that being a Dark One has given you some brand new qualities,” Regina told Emma when they were finished with the spell and both Emma and Snow frowned at her, “creating a fake copy of the sword is something you probably wouldn’t have thought about before being a Dark One, that’s all I’m saying.”

“There’s a strong chance that whoever is doing this is among us. We need to step up our game,” Emma said, taking the fake sword from Snow’s hands and handing it to Regina, “you keep the fake and we tell everyone you’re the one with the sword.”

Snow smiled proudly at her daughter, “while the real one is actually down here. Clever. That way -”

“If anyone tries to steal the fake, we’ll know who we’re after,” Emma finished Snow’s thoughts, taking a better look at the copy Regina had helped her create. It looked exactly the same and there was no way anyone would be able to tell the difference. She just hoped that this would work and that the person they were looking for would take the bait.

---

_Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago_

_The wedding would be in two days. Her wedding. The rebel side of Anne couldn’t believe she had agreed to that nonsense, but logic had prevailed and convinced her that she had no other choice. Soon after the marriage she would get on her ship and leave Kinsale and everything behind, with Arietta being the only one knowing about her plan to flee. Regardless of her conviction to do anything for her freedom, the thought of marrying prince Brennan made her sick to her stomach and she felt a sudden urge to see Davy. She enjoyed being around him. Whenever they were together she didn’t have to pretend that she was the well-behaved daughter of William Cormac or prince Brennan’s fiancée or the future princess of Thvor. With Davy, she could just be herself. Of course that now knowing he was a great kisser helped, but that was the last thing that had made her go to his tavern._

_It had been four days since the last time they had seen each other and she smiled once she got in and spotted him behind the counter, in deep conversation with another man. He stopped talking as soon as he saw her by the door, a wide grin spreading across his face._

_“What an unexpected surprise,” he beamed once she sat in one of the benches near the counter, “if you’re here to get rid of my clothes again, can I suggest we go somewhere more private first?”_

_“I see you got them back,” she jabbered, gladly accepting the ale mug he had placed in front of her._
“Indeed. It was but a plain task, but congratulations, darling. You bested me.”

“Thank you,” she said sarcastically, tilting her head back and chugging the ale, “it was my pleasure.”

“Of course, I do hope you know this means that I will get my revenge,” he asserted, his lips getting dangerously close to her ear. She chuckled and pulled him away, asking him for a refill. Davy frowned at her. She had never been a heavy drinker, but today she seemed keen on downing as much alcohol as she could.

“Something’s troubling you,” he said, pulling the empty mug away from her and not complying to her request of bringing her another, “you know, as much as I am a fabulous kisser, I’m an even better listener.”

Her lips curled upwards at his sweet words. He really hadn’t been lying when he had told her to consider that tavern her refuge. She debated for a second whether she should talk to him about her afflictions, his warm and expectant eyes letting her know that she could trust him.

“It’s my father,” she mumbled, “he’s forcing me to do something I don’t want to do.”

“Then don’t do it.”

“I have to. Otherwise, I’ll lose my ship.”

“You really do love that boat, don’t you?” he laughed, but in a non-judgmental way.

“I need my ship,” she corrected him, “she’s the pass to my freedom. I have made it my mission to travel the world and do whatever I wish.”

“I have no doubt you will succeed,” he said with a praising smile.

“So you’re not going to mock me and call me mad?” Anne wondered, her voice cracking with surprise. Other than Arietta, he was the only person who hadn’t given her a dirty look for wanting to explore the world on her ship.

“Why would I? It’s a perfectly legit ambition to me,” he answered, “in fact, I would do the same if I could. Perhaps I’d become a pirate and wipe all the bloody conceited sailors from the face of the earth.”

“I love pirates,” Anne chuckled, “I used to want to be one.”

“You don’t want anymore?”

“I could be one, if I had to,” she shrugged. If she was going to be traveling the world on her ship, she guessed that at some point she would have to do some pirate things in order to survive.

“You’d make a good pirate,” he winked at her, leaning again over the counter, but still keeping some distance between them.

“So would you.”

“I’m already a pirate in many ways,” he teased, looping one finger through a strand of her hair before tucking it gently behind her ear.

“You’re never going to stop, are you?” she asked him lowly, failing to resist glancing at his lips until she felt his finger pulling her chin up as his eyes flicked over her features while she studied his
serious expression.

“Look me in the eye and tell me you want me to stop and I will not bother you again,” he stated, his eyes never leaving hers. She knew now would be the time for her to back away and put an end to it all, to whatever was happening between them. And yet, she couldn’t bring herself to say a thing, his closed expression giving way to a wide grin upon her lack of response.

“I’m going to take your silence as permission to keep courting you,” he warned, wiggling his eyebrows at her.

“Good.”

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

Getting tired of looking through books, Emma looked at the clock on the station. It was almost time for her to go pick Henry up at school and then she still had to drop him at Regina’s. Ethel and Scott had found nothing new, claiming there seemed to be no record of any monsters or creatures turning people into mermen or mermaids.

“Do you think this could be the same person who tried to attack your parents?” Ethel asked her, adding another book to the growing pile on the floor.

“I don’t know, but the timing is certainly suspicious.”

“Did Killian say anything about Morgana?” Snow turned to Emma, who checked her phone once again and shook her head in response.

“Morgana? The nice Granny’s waitress?” Scott wondered, with an odd grin appearing on his face. As if suddenly aware of his overt enthusiasm, he coughed and his face then turned serious.

“Yeah, we’re wondering if she’s involved in any of this,” Snow replied, but Emma was still eyeing Scott attentively.

“I never liked her. I get bad energies whenever I’m around her,” Ethel added, “nothing on the sword yet?”

“Belle is taking care of it. So far, nothing,” Emma answered.

“But the sword is safe from enemy’s hands, right? You kept it,” Ethel pointed at Emma.

“No, actually, Regina is the one keeping it now,” Emma observed as she and Snow shared a knowing look, “we figured the Sheriff was too obvious a choice to keep such an important object. It’s safer with Regina.”

It was little past seven and night had already settled in when Killian opened the white wooden gate and plodded up the concrete path and up the porch steps. It had been an unexpectedly long and tedious day following Morgana around without having seen or heard anything that could possibly turn her into a suspect. She had left Granny’s at around five and then she had gone to the pond, where she hadn’t done much but write whatever in a small notebook paper and stare at the water for a long time. When the sun had started to set, she had gone back to her room, much to Killian’s desperation.
“Swan!” he called out once he got in, taking off his leather jacket and rolling up the sleeves of his dark blue shirt. It was only when he looked up into the kitchen that he saw Emma, Captain Nemo and Liam smiling at him as the three of them sat on the nicely set dinner table.

“Hello, Captain,” Nemo greeted him, getting up from the table and walking in his direction, to give him a tight hug.

“I didn’t know you were back in Storybrooke,” Killian mumbled, smiling from ear to ear at the unexpected surprise. It had been some months since he had last seen them, but he would welcome his friend and brother with open arms anytime.

“We ported today,” Liam said, welcoming his brother’s hug.

“We stumbled across your lovely wife on the street and she was kind enough to invite us for dinner,” Nemo explained, as the three of them walked to the table.

“I’m glad she did,” Killian leaned down and kissed Emma soundly on the lips.

“I figured you would like the surprise,” Emma whispered, the grin on Killian’s face making her heart flutter. She remembered how disappointed she’d been when, months ago, Nemo and Liam had told them they were leaving. She couldn’t say she knew them all that well, but she knew they were important people for Killian and she’d been hoping that they would stay for a little while longer, for him. When she had seen them near the docks after leaving Henry at Regina’s, she had wasted no time in inviting them over, knowing that Killian would love the surprise. Thankfully, she’d been right.

Dinner had gone smoothly, the talk around the table lighthearted and fun as Nemo did most of the talking, sharing his most humorous adventures on the Nautilus over the years. Emma was pleasantly surprised that everyone had seemed to enjoy the roast pork with apple and cider gravy that she had managed to cook (it was certainly one of the best meals she’d cooked over the years). As she prepared to do the dishes, she thought about her day and a rush of pride ran through her. Just twenty-four hours ago she had been feeling like absolute crap, but now she felt so relieved, so much lighter that she and Snow had taken an important step in their relationship. Killian had been right, maybe this spell would end up helping her mend her most tumultuous bonds.

“Let me do that, Swan,” Killian tried to get her away from the sink, but she didn’t budge, “you already did the dishes this morning.”

“It’s okay, stay with Nemo and Liam,” she told him with a smile as she turned around to face him.

“Thank you, love,” he nuzzled his nose against her, “for everything.”

“You’re welcome,” she replied, kissing his cheek tenderly, “I’ve been thinking about something…” Killian tilted his head in response, waiting for her to keep talking, “Nemo said they would be staying in town for two weeks.”

“And what of it, Swan?”

“I think it would be nice if you invited your brother to stay here with us,” she suggested, lifting her right hand to caress the short hairs on the nape of his neck, “it would be a good opportunity for you two to get closer.”

His instant grin showed off his dimples and her green eyes twinkled at him. He sighed, his eyes burning into hers as he thought his heart was going to burst out of his chest with how much he loved her, “Aye, I would love it, Swan.”
“Then what are you waiting for? Go te-“ His lips on hers cut her off mid-sentence, a moan escaping her mouth as she surrendered to his kiss. His tongue stroked her bottom lip, demanding entrance, but it then dawned on her that Nemo and Liam were in the living room and could very much hear them making out. She pushed him away, chuckling at his sudden pout.

“Not here,” she cautioned him in a whisper, “keep them company. It’s rude to leave guests all alone.”

“We’ll continue this later;” he growled suggestively and she laughed at his usual innuendos.

When she finished doing the dishes, she started cleaning the kitchen counter and she got startled when August’s voice echoed from the hallway. Apparently, she’d been so lost in her own world that she hadn’t even heard the knock on the door. She could tell that August was talking to Nemo and Liam, presuming that Killian was introducing them to each other. That meant that soon enough he’d be walking into the kitchen and that had her stomach twisting a little. She didn’t know if she should be happy or sad that he had come by. On one hand, they could finally set things straight, but on the other hand, it had been such a tough day that she wasn’t sure if she had it in her to have an emotional talk right now.

“Hi, Emma,” August said as he entered the kitchen and Emma could see Killian standing behind him, giving her one of his encouraging nods that she loved, before leaving the two alone.

“Hey,” she greeted him back, throwing the dishcloth into the sink, waiting for him to say something, but he was clearly struggling to get the words out and she decided to break the uncomfortable silence, “do you want something to drink?”

“No, thanks. I won’t steal much of your time,” he said in a gravely voice as he tightened the grip of his fingers on his helmet, “I’m sorry. Both for what I did back then and for not having apologized sooner.”

“Thank you, it’s nice to hear that,” she said with a half-smile.

“I thought I was doing the right thing, but it was still selfish and I only realized that when I almost died,” his admission had Emma feeling sorry for him. He hadn’t had an easy life either, and she knew better than anyone how being alone in the world could be overwhelming and make you do things you’d end up regretting, “it puts things in perspective, you know?”

She did. Although she had never been that close to dying, her short time as the Dark One had been enough to make her reflect on her own life – the choices she had made and the chances she had missed – but not feeling comfortable enough to delve into that, she simply nodded at him.

“I just hope that one day you can forgive me,” he murmured, taking another step towards her.

“Of course I forgive you,” she smiled, feeling at peace. All she had ever wanted from all of them was a sincere apology, some sort of demonstration that they were at least aware that they had hurt her. That had always been what she needed to put the past behind her.

He enveloped her in a hug, sealing their somewhat of a reconciliation and then she took the chance to ask about how his and Marco’s business was going. They had recently opened a wooden furniture store, but it had been a while since the last time she’d been there.

“You sure you don’t want a drink?” she asked him a few minutes later while he walked to the front door.

“I appreciate it, but Papa’s waiting for me.”
“Okay, say hi to him for me,” she told him as Killian joined them, shaking August’s outstretched hand. He nodded at Killian, silently thanking him for his help, and then he was stepping outside and putting his helmet on as he waved them goodbye.

“See, Swan?” Killian told her as they watched August’s bike disappear in the dark of night, “A blessing in disguise, indeed.”
Pequod

Chapter Summary

On Mother’s Day, Killian decides to spend the day with his half-brother while Emma receives a mysterious gift that devastates her. In Enchanted Forest flashbacks, teenagers Killian and Liam try to escape the wrath of Captain Ahab and Anne teams up with Davy Jones on an adventurous quest.

Chapter Notes

This chapter includes many flashbacks related to new characters. With this being a Captain Swan story, these flashbacks featuring other characters will ALWAYS be relevant/connected to Emma, Killian and their storylines so I advise readers to keep track of all the information the flashbacks provide.

Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago

The wedding had been nothing but a grim affair. Anne had expected more pomp and grandeur, but the kingdom of Thevor was in reconstruction after the Golems War and the royal family had been forced to engage in sensible cost containment - why the Lesters had waited to reveal that only hours before the wedding was a mystery to Anne, one that had left her even more apprehensive. Her father, however, hadn’t thought much of it. He was so focused on having her daughter marry a prince that he had even agreed to bear the total cost of the wedding under the condition that he should become the rightful owner of a considerable amount of royal lands in Thevor.

The ceremony itself had been the single worst moment of her life, pain slashing her heart as tears pricked her eyes the entire time. None of it was what she had once imagined: from her hideous dress and all the irrelevant people in attendance to the pathetic groom she despised. She tried to think about the many different ways in which all of their faces would contort with shock and bewilderment the day they realized the princess of Thevor had abandoned her precious husband and ran away on her own, never to be seen again. That had helped her hold back her tears.

Thankfully, the day was almost over and as she stood in front of her bedroom mirror, she kept her eyes on prince Brennan’s reflection. He had rudely taken the liberty to sit on her bed and taken off his dark brown cape. With the castle in Thevor not being ready to welcome the newlyweds, William had offered the mansion for their wedding night. Anne had practically barfed - mad were the souls who thought she was going to let that greasy prince touch her. Working up the courage to let him know just that, she turned around and narrowed her eyes at him.

“Now that we’re in the privacy of our arrangement, I want to be clear,” Anne warned him, “I do not love you. And if you touch me with even one finger, I will slit your throat.”

Her menacing tone had him quiet for a few seconds, fear momentarily crossing his face before he gave her a half-smile.
“And what makes you think, my dear, that I do love you?” he inquired, getting up from the bed and grabbing his cape, “you needn’t worry, I will leave you alone. But tomorrow you will pretend you had a grand wedding night.”

His voice was calmer than ever and, with one last amused glance at her, he walked out of the room, leaving Anne relieved, but astonished.

What had just happened?

---

**Enchanted Forest – 212 years ago**

It hadn’t been too long ago, his seventeenth birthday. Killian still remembered how he had wished for his and Liam’s next employer to be a ship captain instead of the vile farm owners they had been sold to since their father abandoned them. It seemed to him that it would be better to do force labor near the sea than far from it. What Killian didn’t know was that there were ship captains who could be much worse than any farm owner they had encountered.

Working for Captain Ahab was an absolute nightmare and they hadn’t even set sail yet. They hadn’t met the old captain right away, being taken aboard by one of his crew members – a man named Ishmael, who promptly warned them to do everything as he said, otherwise they would have to face Ahab’s wrath and that was something they wouldn’t wish to see.

After days of swabbing the decks of the whaleship, Ahab had finally come out of his cabin. He stood before them while Killian and Liam looked up at the imposing figure scowling at them as if they were nothing more than filthy rats. Killian had expected him to be taller, but that made him no less intimidating with his peg-leg made of whalebone and a massive white scar running down the length of his face and, according to his crew, his whole body. Ishmael had once told them a white whale had bitten off his leg and that had sent Ahab on a mad, vengeful quest against the whale. Killian couldn’t believe how anyone could be that mad, but it didn’t take him or Liam long enough to get used to Ahab’s monomaniacal goal of getting revenge on the mammal.

On a good day, Ahab would ignore them and not say a word. On a bad day, he would go on endless cycles of name-calling and humiliation. Today, it seemed, he was on a particularly bad day. Unlike before, he hadn’t gone to his cabin, watching Killian and Liam swabbing the wooden deck instead.

“Harder, ya’ scum” Ahab ordered with a shout, poking Killian’s shoulder with his peg-leg. Killian’s nostrils flared up, trying not to let Ahab’s provocation get the best of him. He knew by now just how vicious Ahab could be, but the old man always managed to make his blood boil.

“My captain, I-“ Liam tried to speak up when he noticed how much Ahab’s words were affecting his brother, but the captain interrupted him before he had a chance to intervene.

“Go get more water,” Ahab cut Liam off, never taking his eyes off Killian, who kept doing his best to swab the deck just as Ahab wanted. Liam did as he was instructed and left the two of them alone, hoping there were still buckets of water in steerage. The sooner he’d be back, the better.

“You missed a spot,” Ahab said facetiously, but Killian ignored his request when he realized that the spot he meant was just as damp as all the others. He had to respond to Ahab’s orders, but he would never be anybody’s puppet, “you’re useless, aren’t you?”

Ahab kept tormenting him with insults and this time Killian took a deep breath, hoping to block his
voice out. He had almost done it. He had been so close to turn Ahab’s voice into nothing more than a distant, intangible echo, but then the old fiend had to be an arsehole and Killian was no longer able to control himself.

“Not even your own father thought you were worth it.”

Killian tightened his grip on the brush, the muscles in his jaw tensing as he stopped swabbing. Losing his composure and focusing on nothing more than the rage consuming him, he got up and prepared to punch Ahab, but the experienced captain anticipated Killian’s move and punched him first. The force of Ahab’s blow was enough to knock Killian off his feet and he grunted when his back hit the wooden ladder that led to the upper deck. He felt dizzy and he forgot where he was, but then Ahab stood in front of him and all Killian could feel was the cold tip of a sword pressing against his right cheek as the sickening grin that crept upon Ahab’s face had him fearing the worst. Before he could do anything, Killian slammed his eyes shut as the sharp blade sliced into his cheek. He clenched his teeth and found the strength to open his eyes to glare at Ahab. The bastard was enjoying every single second of it and he wouldn’t give him the pleasure of watching his face contort with pain, no matter how difficult or impossible a task it seemed.

“Killian!” Liam’s voice made Ahab pull the sword away from Killian’s cheek almost instantly.

“Next time I won’t be so merciful,” Ahab taunted, putting his sword back in its sheath as Liam leaned over Killian, who could feel his face heating up. His cheek was tingling and throbbing and he tried to press his fingers over the wound to staunch the bleeding, but Liam pulled his hand away. Careful not to hurt his brother, he passed a cool, damp cloth over Killian’s cheek. All he wanted was to make Ahab pay for what he had just done, but that would only make things worse for them.

“Don’t worry, little brother,” Liam’s soothing attempts were barely heard over Killian’s groans of pain now that Ahab was gone, “you’ll be alright.”

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

“Impressive skills,” Liam’s compliment brought Killian out of his thoughts as he looked over his shoulder and forced a smile at his half-brother.

“Practice makes perfect,” he pointed out while maintaining his firm grip on the brush he was using to swab the main deck. Usually, Smee was the one in charge of such task, but Killian had invited Liam to spend the day with him on the Jolly, just the two of them.

He was grateful that Emma had encouraged him to ask Liam to stay with them for some days, and he had been excited about spending the day with him, but something felt wrong. Killian couldn’t pinpoint what it was, but being with his half-brother on the ship where he had so many loving memories of his real brother had him experiencing an unexpected swarm of guilt - for being there with a brother that wasn’t his Liam and for the pain he had inflicted on the other Liam. And now he was thinking of them as “his Liam” and “the other Liam” – how bloody fantastic.

This had been a bad idea. He should never have invited Liam. It wasn’t fair. Not after having killed his father. *Their* father. The remnants of self-doubt that had been fluttering through his mind morphed into a cloud of hasty anger and he threw the brush forcefully against the foremast.

“Are you alright?” Liam wondered, scurrying towards Killian.
“Aye,” Killian stood up to pick the brush up from the floor, trying his best to avoid Liam’s gaze, “shall we swab the quarter deck?”

Liam could tell something was bothering Killian and even though he had an idea as to what could be upsetting him, he still wasn’t too sure if he should say something. Without thinking twice, Liam assented and followed him without saying a word. He tried his best to copy Killian’s every expert move with the brush, but no matter how much he tried, he couldn’t keep up with his brother’s steady and determined pace.

“It’s okay if you miss her,” Liam offered after a period of tense silence, and then he explained himself at Killian’s inquisitive look, “your mother. I miss mine too.”

“I do not miss my mother,” Killian snapped, jutting his chin forward. The bitterness in his voice was quite telling, but he ignored it with a shake of his head before he went back to focusing on what they were there for: to swab the decks. The last thing he needed on top of his own guilt was to be reminded that today was the day to celebrate mothers. As content as he had been for Emma and Henry, on a personal level he couldn’t say that it was a day that lifted his spirits. His mother didn’t matter, and she did not deserve any amount of time spent thinking about her. She most certainly had nothing to do with his foul humor today. Nothing.

“Sorry,” Liam mumbled, slumping his shoulders in defeat as he went back to swabbing. At his half-brother’s stiff posture, Killian realized that perhaps he had been harsher than he had intended. This was definitely not going the way he had planned at all.

“A Granny’s coupon for a grilled cheese and onion rings, an Apollo candy bar and…” Emma paused to look further into the Mother’s Day jar that Henry had made for her, “an inspector Gadget DVD!”

“I know our New York memories weren’t real, but I’m glad they made me want to watch inspector Gadget,” Henry slumped into the couch and let her pull him into a snuggle.

“Thanks, kid. I love it,” Emma dropped a kiss on his head and hugged him tightly. When they were made to believe that she had never given him up for adoption, watching inspector Gadget had been one of their rituals, one of their many mother/son bonding moments. They had been fake memories, but Emma’s heart thawed a little at knowing that her son was suggesting they make it real.

“Killian helped me,” Henry confessed as he looked around the room, “where is he, by the way?”

“He’s with Liam. You know it’s not an easy day for him. Maybe being with his half-brother may actually help.”

“I hope so. He looked weird this morning,” Henry noted and the tinge of concern in his voice had Emma smiling. Not that she needed anymore proof that Henry loved Killian, but it was always nice to see that he cared to the point he could notice Killian’s mood swings.

“Yeah, he did. That’s why I’m thinking of checking on him, just to see how he’s doing,” Emma got up from the couch and adjusted the navy blue tunic dress she wore over leggings. “Want to come?”

Henry looked at his watch, “I have to go to mom’s.”

“Okay, let’s go then. I’ll drive you there.”
Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago

Anne knew she had hit rock bottom when she found herself wishing to be a swan. All madness aside, they were remarkable creatures: they could walk on land, swim in the water and fly in the sky. Who wouldn’t want to be a swan? To be free and careless and just go wherever you wish. It wasn’t all that usual to spot swans on the harbor, but the moment she had got on her ship, she hadn’t been able to take her eyes off the elegant swan that paddled gracefully through the water.

Time passed as she felt the ship swaying beneath her. This was the only place where she was truly safe, where no one could hurt her or force her to be someone she was not.

“The things I do for you…” she mumbled, her hand caressing one of the rigging ropes. If she were honest with herself, there was another place where she felt safe. Or rather someone. The same person who had made her come to the harbor so early in the morning.

He should be about to open the tavern by now, and Anne knew she could easily spot him from her ship. All she had to do was turn around and see if he was anywhere in sight. She wanted to surprise him, but she dreaded the thought of rejection. Would he look at her differently now that she was married?

Partially hiding behind the foremast, she took a furtive glance at the tavern in the distance and her eyes found Davy dragging some heavy barrels. A thin wisp of a smile etched on her lips and she didn’t hesitate in making her way out of the ship. Her heart started pounding in her chest as she walked towards him, careful so he wouldn’t notice her. Being married had changed nothing, her union with prince Brennan was all but a formality and the ring she now wore on her finger hadn’t silenced her heart.

When she got to the tavern door, she found him with his back to her, dust spreading in the air as he kept dragging barrels. She tiptoed towards him and got close enough to whisper, “fancy some help?”

His hands let go of the barrel at the unexpected wail in his ear and he fell flat on his rear.

“Thunderation!” he looked up and instantly grinned at her, not angry in the least.

“So all I need to do is ask if you need some help for you to fall at my feet,” she smirked as she offered him one hand to help him get up.

“There are other requests you can make that will undoubtedly make me fall at your feet,” he teased, and a steady blush crept on her face.

“Are you going to offer me a drink or should I go home?” Anne crossed her arms over her chest, hoping her playful challenge would encourage him to keep flirting with her, but all she witnessed was the sadness that crossed his features as he stared at the ring on her finger. Her first instinct was to hide her hand behind her back and a vein popped out in his neck at the silent confirmation that her ring meant exactly what he thought it meant. Why would she try to hide it, otherwise?

“If you’ll excuse me, I have work to do,” he said in a voice as cold as stone, walking past her and entering the tavern, not bothering to leave the door open for her. Anne buried her face in her hands while she tried to think of what to do next. She had to be brave and as honest with him as she could be. Running away wouldn’t be an option – he’d end up hating her and thinking she had been fooling him all along. She knew this was coming, she just had to remain calm and hope that Davy would
understand her decision. Her mother’s voice echoed in her mind: “the moment you stop trying is the moment you start failing”. Lifting her head and pushing her chest out, she opened the tavern’s door and walked inside.

Davy was furiously cleaning the counter with a sponge, trying to ignore the rants of the lonely old man sitting in one of the benches.

“I’d like some water,” Anne stood on the other side of the counter and put her hand over his, stopping his frantic movements. He looked up at her and she felt her guilt resurface at the hurt that pooled in his eyes.

“Were you married all along or were you simply trying to make a fool of me?”

“I got married two days ago,” she replied with no hesitation and somehow her answer seemed to leave him even more baffled.

“Then why were you snogging me the other day?”

“Because my marriage is nothing but a contract,” relief overtook him as he looked up, trying to hold in the sigh of contentment that threatened to escape his lips at any moment, “my father always wanted me to get married to a prince.”

“To royalty, of course,” he scoffed, placing an aluminum cup in front of her and filling it with water.

“He finally got what he wanted. And I did it because –“

“- your ship,” he mumbled as realization hit him like a ton of bricks. This was what she had been talking about the other day, “your father threatened to take her from you if you didn’t get married to this prince.”

Anne nodded at him, happy to see that he had finally put the pieces together.

“I couldn’t lose her. When my father least expects it, I’ll be sailing away on my ship and he will never be able to control me again.”

He frowned at her, “and what of your husband?”

“That fool can rot in hell, for all I care,” she took an irritated sip of water and the corners of his mouth turned up at her remark. The anger and disappointment from before now nowhere to be seen.

“And who’s the lucky fool?”

“Prince Brennan Lester of Thevor,” she replied with a mocking accent.

“Thevor? I’ve never heard of such a kingdom.”

“He says it’s to the north of Arendelle. It seems the kingdom is in reconstruction after the Golems war,” Anne explained as Davy leaned over the counter, “and that was about the only thing that came out of his mouth that I was able to listen.”

“So you don’t fancy him in the least?” she sensed a hint of jealousy in his voice and a startling thrill spiraled inside her. She would have never thought he was the jealous type, but it seems she had been wrong.

“No,” she clarified, “I told him right away that I did not love him and that he shouldn’t expect me to act as his wife.”
“And what did he say?”

“His reaction was quite bizarre, actually,” she tilted her head and furrowed her brows, “he said he didn’t love me either. I suspect he may have also been pressured to marry me.”

“So it’s a total charade,” Davy remarked, “on both sides.”

“I believe it’s entirely possible that our parents were the only people pleased with such union, yes,”

“Then my offer still stands,” he took her hand and caressed her palm with his fingers, “feel free to come here whenever you need to vent about your fool of a husband.”

When he brought her hand to his lips, Anne struggled not to get lost in the heat of his lips against her skin. They were so soft and smooth and images of their kiss flashed in her mind.

“She’s pretty, Jones!” the old man howled at the two of them, interrupting their moment.

“Shut up, Tristan,” Davy barked, letting go of Anne’s hand. Tristan always had the best of timings.

“You delight yourself in her honeypot, it must be delici-,” Davy punched him in the face before Tristan had a chance to finish his sentence. The old man fell off the bench and Davy wasted no time in pulling him by the collars and dragging him in the ale locker.

“Disgusting old dirt,” Davy grumbled as he locked the door behind him, “I apologize for that.”

One side of her mouth lifted in an amused smile as she wondered once again why he had this fascination of locking part of his clientele in the ale locker, “why do you really do that?”

She looked up at him through lowered lashes and he darted his eyes away quickly, an obvious sign that whatever his reasons were, this was a topic that was not easy for him to talk about. She didn’t want to pressure him and started thinking about ways to change the subject when he started talking.

“This tavern used to belong to my grandfather. My father never cared about it because he was a drunk sailor who didn’t give a damn about anything but the booze,” the resentment was audible in his voice and Anne squeezed his hand in hers, “that’s why I take great pleasure in locking bastards like him.”

“And you kept the tavern to honor your family?”

“My grandfather Liam was the kindest man I knew. I didn’t want his hard work to go to waste,” he confessed, letting his thumb caress her hand, “the truth is this tavern is the only thing I have left from my family.”

The gentle melancholy in his eyes had her sending him a warm, compassionate smile his way as she opted to stay silent. There was nothing she could say to make him feel better – she didn’t know what it was like to be all alone in the world, but she did know what loss felt like: a wound that will always be there and will never fully heal.

The comfortable silence that had settled over them was interrupted by Anne’s attempt at lighting up the mood and a loud chuckle escaped her smiling lips as her eyes fixed on the ale locker’s door, “how come they keep coming back? You lock them in that bloody thing almost every day.”

Davy gave a smug shrug, his eyes twinkling with amusement, “they never remember what I did to them the night before.”
Storybrooke – Present Day

The sea was fairly calm, but the breeze was strong enough to dishevel Killian’s hair as he leaned over the edge of the ship and contemplated the dark blue water. Unfortunately for him, not even the sea seemed to soothe him today. He recalled all the times Liam would stand next to him, leaning over the railing of some ship as he tried to comfort him and give him hope that they would be able to escape indentured service. He now knew that Liam was far from being perfect, but despite everything he had done, his brother had always been there for him.

“I’ve grown to learn that when a captain stares into the sea, he’s hardly lost in pleasant thoughts,” Nemo’s voice had Killian turning around and nodding in greeting at him, “I heard you invited Liam to spend the day with you.”

“Aye. He’s below deck,” Killian said as Nemo approached him, “he volunteered to work on the steerage mechanisms and I didn’t stop him.”

“I hope you haven’t left the poor boy to do all the work by himself,” Nemo’s tone was teasing, but Killian could hear the underlying question in his voice.

“I believe he’s better off without me,” Killian said with a sad smile plastered on his face and Nemo’s understanding expression encouraged him to elaborate, “I thought I could do this, I thought I could be a good brother to him and make up for all the pain that I’ve put him through, but I can’t look him in the eye and not think about our father.”

“Liam forgave you for what you did. I thought you had already come to terms with that, Killian.”

“I have, I’m just not certain if I can forgive myself,” he admitted, the muscles along his jaw twitching as his eyes darted to the floor.

Nemo put his hand on Killian’s shoulder and waited until Killian’s gaze met his, “is that really all there is to it?”

“I’m afraid I don’t get what you mean,” Killian feigned confusion on his face and voice.

“Being abandoned almost always leads to guilt, insecurity and self-loathing” Nemo explained, “I know you, Killian. These are all traits that you have displayed for most of your life.”

“Very perceptive,” Killian regretted the mocking words as soon as they left his lips, but Nemo didn’t appear to be offended.

“You have made great progress on overcoming your demons. You have learned how to forgive yourself.”

“I still fail to understand what your point is.”

“My point is that today being a day to celebrate motherhood is yet another stark reminder that your mother left,” Nemo stated matter-of-factly, “which, of course, might bring old feelings to the surface and cause a stepback in your progress.”

The bluntness of Nemo’s words felt like a slap against his suddenly hot skin. Killian blinked rapidly, startled by how much hearing Nemo say that had his stomach in a knot. His first reaction was to tell him he should join Archie, but he managed to hold that sarcastic remark in. Killian had far too much respect for Nemo and knowing that he was right didn’t help either.
This was the second Mother’s Day he witnessed, but he knew he would never be able to enjoy it. Maybe for everybody else it was just another happy, cheerful day, but to him it was one of the most dreaded days of the year. A day to reopen old wounds. A day that made it impossible for him to ignore the fact that he did not have a mother. A day when all he could think about was how his mother chose to leave. Leave him. Leave Liam. Perhaps that was the reason why he had also been having such feelings of longing for Liam – he was the only other person in the world who could understand how he felt. No matter how close he got to his half-brother, they didn’t share a mother and Liam Jr. would never be able to understand what it was like to have a mother who had given up on him.

“You’ve become a great man on your own, Killian. Don’t let the anger caused by your mother’s decision make you doubt yourself,” Nemo asserted in his calm voice, “it’s not fair to you.”

Killian turned his head to the side, but he ended up nodding. Once again, Nemo was right. He had the best wife he could ever hope for, a stepson who loved him in his own way, family and friends who welcomed him and accepted him for who he was. He hadn’t needed his mother or his father for any of that – he had accomplished all of it on his own and due to his own willingness to change.

Perhaps he should try to turn that anger towards his mother and father into gratefulness for those who were still a part of his life, including his half-brother. The disappointment he had seen in Liam’s face moments before had him cringing and a new wave of determination overwhelmed him. He had invited him so they could get to know each other better and he owed it to him to be the best older half-brother that he could be. He still didn’t know how, but he knew one thing: he would try his best, as always.

---

**Enchanted Forest – 212 years ago**

_The cold, black winter night had settled in when Captain Ahab went back to his cabin. They had set sail that afternoon and were on their way to the suicide mission to seek revenge on a whale. The minute Ahab was gone from sight, Killian stopped swabbing the decks and got up, ignoring the pain in his knees. He let his body lean over the railing and stared into the ocean as his mind wandered. That was still the one thing that no one could take away from him – he could be an indentured slave, but he would never stop thinking about all the different ways he and Liam could set themselves free. The only downside was that such thoughts usually led him to feeling even more furious and bitter over their situation. If he ever had the chance to cross paths with his father again, he would make sure the bastard would pay for what he had done._

_He started pounding his fists on the wood railing in what had become a habit of his. That had been the most effective way he had found to let go of the pent-up tension that had been welling within him for the past several days. At the sound of splashing water, his eyes trailed from his fists to an unusual area of agitated waters that he spotted in the distance. He narrowed his eyes, drawing his chin up as he spotted a bright blue, shimmery tail desperately swaying back and forth right above the water. Bloody mermaids._

_“What do you want?” he asked in a snarl as the tail splashed against the water once more, “leave me alone.”_

_“Killian, who are you talking to?” Liam joined him and peered into the water._

_“The bloody mermaids,” he then pointed at the tail that insisted on taunting him, “isn’t it ironic how even those demons have better lives than we do?”_
Liam put his arms around Killian and pulled him away from the railing, “c’mon, brother. Let’s get some rest.”

Storybrooke – Present Day

After Nemo left, Killian started making his way to meet Liam in steerage, but before he got to the stairs, his half-brother appeared on the main deck.

“I think it’s all set now,” Liam said, dropping a heavy, wooden box on the floor, “you have plenty of brand new ropes in here. Do you still want to change those?”

Killian didn’t even bother to look at the old ropes fallen on the deck that Liam was pointing to, keeping his eyes trained on his half-brother, “Aye, but before that, I’d like to apologize for my foul humor earlier.”

Liam noticed the way Killian started shifting weight from side to side, a sign of mild embarrassment, “it’s okay. I can’t say today is my favorite day either.”

“This world has its perks, but an absurd amount of celebratory dates,” Killian pointed out as he took some of the ropes out of the box.

“Yes, I’m still processing the fact that there’s an actual Bubble Bath Day.”

“It still doesn’t trump Tin Can Day.”

They both erupted in laughter at the absurdity of their talk. Not that any of them minded it, at least it helped ease the awkwardness from before.

“I guess Mother’s Day doesn’t sound so bad when you put it like that,” Liam added, following Killian into the quarter deck and watching him drop the ropes on the side of the deck.

“Aye. I actually think it’s a fair celebration.”

“But that doesn’t mean you have to like it,” Liam accurately concluded, “I know how you feel. I really miss my mom.” Killian sent him an inquisitive look, but Liam was oblivious to it as he kept sharing thoughts about his mother, “Sometimes it feels like I can still listen to her singing to me.”

It wasn’t that Killian was jealous, he was happy that Liam had the chance to have such fond memories of the woman who had given birth to him, but he couldn’t deny that he wished he could feel the same about his own mother, “you should cherish those memories. They’re a treasure in their own way.”

“How was your mother like?” Liam’s curiosity got the best of him. He remembered all the times he had asked Brennan plenty of questions about the mysterious woman who had been his father’s first wife, but for some reason he had always avoided talking about her.

“I’m afraid I can’t help you,” Killian’s voice was tense, but he tried not to take his frustration out on Liam again, “I have no memories of my mother. I was two years old when she left me, my brother and… our father.”

Killian pushed his flask out of his jacket’s pocket and tipped it up for a little swig. Liam looked away at the mention of his father and a stilted silence fell over them as Killian offered him his flask. If they
were going to be doing this, perhaps rum would help.

“I am sorry for what I did to our father,” Killian said with sadness and regret filling his voice. He had wanted to say those words for a long time and now he wasn’t going to wait any longer, “I realize I never apologized to you. There’s not a day I don’t regret what I did.”

Liam remained silent, nodding his head at him and Killian could see him fighting the hint of tears in his eyes.

“Can I ask how he was like with you?” Liam inquired, a grimace forming on his face after he accepted Killian’s flask and tasted the rum. He most definitely didn’t take after his half-brother.

“I can’t say he was a loving or caring father,” Killian confessed, getting his focus back on the rope as he bent to curl it around one of the wooden bitts, “he was always quite cold and distant, barely paid any attention to us.” He could feel Liam’s eyes on him and he looked at him over the shoulder, “I take it you can’t relate to that.”

“I’d be lying if I said he was anything but an extremely attentive and loving father to me,” Liam’s shy admission didn’t surprise Killian. He knew that his father had loved Liam more than he had loved his other two sons. He would never accept it, but Liam wasn’t the one to blame, “I don’t know what father did to you, and I don’t wish to know, but I am sorry if he hurt you.”

“You have nothing to apologize for, brother. Nothing he could have done would justify what I did.”

“It helps… knowing you regret it,” Liam knelt next to him and started curling another rope around the other wooden bitt, “I know my mother changed him, helped him become a better man.”

A spontaneous smile slipped across Killian’s lips at his remark, “aye, love can have that effect.”

“Like you and Emma…” Liam gave Killian a teasing shove, “how did you meet her anyway?”

“It may surprise you, but it all started with me lying under a body of corpses.”

“Very romantic.”

Killian nodded at him, his brother’s genuine curiosity and amusement helping him feel more at ease. Liam seemed to be enjoying himself and now that they had finally had a serious conversation over the ghosts haunting their relationship, he found himself looking forward to the rest of the day. Perhaps he could be a good older brother, after all.

Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago

Anne’s mansion was quite more luxurious than Davy had imagined. He had never cared about grandeur and even he had been impressed with the fortified, idyllic house. Jumping over the iron entry gate hadn’t been a difficult task, but as he hid in one of the garden’s bushes, he tried to think of a way to get rid of the guard that kept walking back and forth under two wide balconies. One of them had to belong to Anne’s room, he thought.

At the sound of strange noises coming from the bushes, the guard ceased to walk, turning around to where he thought the sounds were coming from. He quickly reached for his sword as he took careful steps in that direction, hoping that it was only another stray cat trying to hide its kittens.
Davy could hear the guard’s steps getting closer, but still not close enough. Only a couple of more steps and...yes, now was the time to do it. When the guard leaned over, Davy jumped from out of the bushes with a fake surprised look on his face.

“Lovely night, isn’t it?” before the guard could react, Davy’s right fist landed on his chin and the guard’s knocked-out body fell on the floor with a thud as pride gleamed in Davy’s eyes, “perfect to see stars”.

Anne was reading a book when a loud knock at her window almost had her falling off her bed. Her hands started trembling as she watched a shadow moving on the balcony and she picked up her dagger from one of the drawers, ready to fight the intruder. She was dumbfounded when there was another knock at the window and the figure stood still on the other side. It was only when she pulled the curtains aside that she saw Davy smiling at her.

“Wha- how did you get in here?” she whispered, opening the window and pushing him inside before someone saw him.

“I’m quite agile,” he boasted, perusing her room.

“You shouldn’t-“

“I heard something today, at the tavern. I think it may be of your interest,” he interrupted her, the serious tone in his voice letting her know that something wasn’t right.

“What is it?”

“It appears that not too long ago there was a princess who almost married a charlatan who claimed to be a prince,” he raised an eyebrow at her, “of a kingdom north to Arendelle.”

“You believe it’s Brennan?” Anne frowned at him. No, it couldn’t be. Would he even be smart enough to pull that off?

“I think it’s rather odd that the king and queen of Thevor forced their son to marry someone who isn’t royalty, but still very wealthy,” Davy pointed out, sitting on the edge of her bed and leaning back on his hands.

Anne shook her head in disbelief. The Lesters had always been slightly bizarre, but could they really be charlatans? “I have always assumed that no royal suitors were willing to be associated with them while the kingdom was in reconstruction.”

“Perhaps... or perhaps they couldn’t fool any royal suitors and had to start targeting non-royal wealthy families.”

Now that Anne thought about it, the Lesters being charlatans would explain a lot: Brennan suggesting that he did not love her, the castle in Thevor not being ready for them to move there, their un-royal wedding ceremony, not one of them being opposed to her father paying for the wedding... It all made sense now and she suddenly felt like slitting Brennan’s throat for real.

“That fop!”

At her loud gasp, Davy got up and held her hands in his, “there’s a way we know for certain that this man’s a fraud.”

“How?” Anne asked, shooting him an exasperated glance. She would do anything to expose that bastard.
Storybrooke – Present Day

While Liam went to the crew’s quarters to search for lubricant for the wire ropes, Killian leaned down to open a new can of varnish. Not long ago, during one of their conversations about ship preservation, Marco had advised him to apply a solid coating of varnish to protect and enhance the beauty of the ship’s wood. Trusting Marco’s word, Killian had ended up buying the most expensive can of varnish, made especially for ships. He just wasn’t expecting the bloody thing to be so smelly. He coughed at the intense odor that assaulted his nostrils once he removed the lid.

“Hell of a view,” Emma’s voice echoed from behind him. She was shamelessly checking out his butt all up in the air and she didn’t resist to pinch it softly. Killian turned around almost instantly, suddenly not giving a damn about the varnish. Not when his wife was paying him a visit and wearing clothes that hugged her in all the right places. There was no doubt that he had been blessed by the Gods.

“You’re lucky my brother is down there,” he whispered in her ear as his hand traveled down the length of her body until it rested on her ass.

“Or else?” her sultry voice had him groaning and it was his turn to pinch her butt in retaliation. They both laughed into each other’s mouths before their lips smashed together, only breaking apart when they heard Liam coughing.

“Hey, Emma. Sorry to interrupt,” he mumbled in embarrassment, pretending he hadn’t seen Killian dropping his hand from Emma’s butt, “I can’t find the wire rope lubricant. Are you sure it’s in there?”

“Perhaps it’s in the captain’s quarters,” Killian replied after some seconds of thinking, “don’t bother, I will look for it later,” Liam nodded at them and then disappeared below deck again, probably not feeling like being a third wheel.

“I can help you look for it. I told my parents I’d only be there by noon,” Emma offered her assistance. That way she wouldn’t stall Killian and she would still be with him.

“Taking you to my quarters will never not be a pleasure,” his smirk sent shivers down her spine and she chuckled at the overdramatic way he took her hand in his and dropped a loud, sloppy kiss on it. “So… any surprises from the boy yet?” Killian asked as they both climbed down the ladder to his quarters.

“The Mother’s Day jar was so sweet, I loved it,” Emma gushed, accepting his helping hand on her last step, “thank you for helping him.”

“You have nothing to thank for, love,” she closed her eyes to savor the peck on her lips, “I’m actually quite curious to see what’s so special about this Inspector Gadget the lad kept talking about.”

“Inspector Gadget is the best,” Emma vouched as she started going through some of the chests he had in his closet while he checked the drawers underneath his bed, “we can all watch it someday, if you want.”

It took a while for him to respond and when he finally did, his simple and uninterested “aye” caught her attention.
“Killian?” he had his back to her, but she could tell he was standing as still as a statue, his head down as he held something in his hand. When he still didn’t reply, she walked up to him. There was an alertness in his eyes as he stared at the two tarnished silver nameplate bracelets on his hand and her heart sank a little when she read “Killian Jones” and “Liam Jones” on each baby bracelet.

“Liam once told me we always used to wear these bracelets when we were children,” Killian sighed and Emma rubbed his back. This day was already emotional enough for him. Finding those bracelets had only rubbed salt in the wound, “my father was the one doing the engraving.”

“They’re beautiful,” Emma studied the bracelets more carefully, the rough edges of the letters and the black spots obvious indicators of their old age. Her fingers traced the tiny bracelet chain, clearly made to fit a baby’s wrist, and warmth started radiating through her. There was something about seeing Killian’s baby bracelet that made her feel all fuzzy inside. It was bittersweet. She loved getting glimpses into his past, but she knew the emotional toll that always took on Killian.

“We should get back to our search for that bloody lubricant,” the muscles in his back tensed under her hand and he threw the bracelets into the drawer, closing it more forcefully than necessary. He tried to move, but Emma gripped his arm, stopping him in his tracks.

“Hey,” her voice was gentle and her knowing eyes searched his, “it’s okay to be sad.”

“I’m alright, Swan,” he reassured her, not wanting her to be concerned about him, “Nemo reminded me that my past will always haunt me, but I have too much to live for. I won’t let my resentment get the best of me.”

Emma fluttered her eyelashes at him and a proud smile graced her lips. His strength and resilience would never cease to amaze her. She leaned forward and cupped his cheek in her hand, her thumb caressing his scar before she brought his lips down to meet hers in a slow sensuous kiss.

“That’s my pirate,” she whispered into his mouth. He still had plenty of unresolved issues with his past, but she wasn’t going to pressure him in any way. Seeing him have the determination to not let any of it bring him down was enough to let her know that he was going to be alright. She knew from experience it would take time to get there. And she would be with him every step of the way.

Enchanted Forest – 212 years ago

Killian and Liam tried their best to hold onto the ringing. Captain Ahab and his crew were astonished as to what had caused the sudden storm they had sailed into. Minutes ago, the night had been moonless and quiet, the ocean water as calm as a millpond, but then darkness had engulfed them, the clouds thickening and the still ocean morphing into a black swirl of angry waves, desperate to swallow them.

“Mermaids!” captain Ahab kept shouting, but the hisses of the furious wind and the roar of thunder prevented them from hearing a thing.

“Hold on, Killian!” Liam desperately reached for Killian’s collars, trying to pull him to him. With each threatening roll of the ship from side to side, Killian got dangerously close to the railing. The wind slammed the rain into their faces as Liam kept trying to get to his brother. Killian held onto Liam’s arms, but before Liam could pull him, Killian slipped on the rain soaked deck and his back hit the railing. Liam prepared to get to Killian once again, but the angry and relentless waves rocked the ship almost to tilting point and tossed a helpless Killian off board.
“Killian!” Liam fought to keep his balance as he held onto the railing. His brother was nowhere to be seen amidst the ocean’s wrath, but not even that would stop him to go after him. If he had to sacrifice his life for it, so be it.

They woke up with the sun rays hitting their cold bodies, the feeling of damp sand sticking to their skin urging them to lift their faces.

“How did we get here?” Killian brought his hand to his head, looking around to see if they were anywhere familiar.

“I don’t know, we must’ve washed ashore.”

“Do you know what this means, brother?” Killian grinned at Liam with glowing victory, “We’re free from Ahab.”

---

**Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago**

“That was some impressive work,” Davy gushed as he took the princess’s unconscious body out of the carriage. Davy’s plan to find whether Brennan was a charlatan or not was to infiltrate the royal ball that was going to be hosted by the princess who had almost been deceived. There was only one issue: no entrance was allowed without an official invitation. That’s when they resorted to their wit and decided to stop the carriage carrying the prince and princess of Prydain, two expected guests at the ball. Davy had pretended to be an old, injured beggar standing in the middle of the road. While the prince had gotten out of the carriage to help the man, Anne had used the pommel of her sword to knock the princess out. Davy had used the same tactic, but with a stone in the prince’s head instead.

Anne had to admit she was surprised by the rush of adrenaline that ran through her body. She wouldn’t mind having this kind of life – after all, it’s not like they were killing anyone. They were simply trying to right a wrong. Besides, the prince and the princess would be fine. In some hours they would wake up and they would go on with their rich, precious lives.

“Now we should hurry, darling. Before they wake up,” Davy urged her, reminding her that the next step was to steal their clothes. Anne removed the princess’s dress as fast as she could and then walked behind one of the trees, away from Davy’s prying eyes. She secretly couldn’t wait to see him in prince gear, her mind wondering if he would pass as a real prince or if his scoundrel ways would denounce him as the insanely beautiful rascal he was.

“Did he have the invitations?” Anne asked after she stepped out from behind the tree, hoping that Davy had found in the prince’s clothes the one thing that would allow them to crash the ball.

She was trying to get used to her new hideous and unbearably itchy dress when Davy appeared in her line of sight. He looked even more handsome in the brown pants and long, dark red coat. He could definitely pass as a sophisticated, charming prince. He raised one eyebrow at her and she knew that he had caught her staring, but instead of making a suggestive remark, he simply waved the invitations at her.

“For the following days, we are officially the prince and princess of Prydain on our way to the royal ball of her Royal Highness, the queen of Misthaven.”
It took them almost a day to get to the castle of Misthaven, but they had finally arrived. It was quite a harmonious kingdom with plenty of dwarfs who were ever so kind and helpful.

“Welcome, prince Taran and princess Eilonwy of Prydain,” one of the castle’s guard smiled at them, extending his hand to invite them in. They had been afraid someone would notice they weren’t actually Taran and Eilonwy, but as expected nobody really knew who was who. Royals usually only cared about pompous titles instead of the people behind them.

“Poor girl. As if being a princess wasn’t enough torture, she also has a ludicrous name,” Davy couldn’t help but laugh at Anne’s impatient comment, his blue eyes set in a piercing stare. She could hate to pretend to be a princess all she wanted, but she certainly looked the part.

When they entered the large dining hall where the ball was being held, Davy’s jaw dropped slightly. He had never seen so many people gathered together in one single room. They were all wearing exquisite attires and some were lost in chatter while others gracefully waltzed to the sound of the orchestra.

“Oh, you must be the prince and princess of Orlitz, am I right?” a very loud, obnoxious damsel accompanied by an older man stroke conversation with them.

“No. I’m princess Eilonwy of Prydain,” – was that even how the name was pronounced? – Anne wondered as she corrected the woman, “and this is prince Taran.”

“Brilliant! I was looking forward to get acquainted with you!” Davy looked at the woman as if she had three heads and Anne had to subtly poke his ribs with her elbow, “I am princess Mathilda and this is my father, king Alfred of Thusland. How are you enjoying the ball? Isn’t it wonderful?”

“It is. It’s always delightful to be surrounded by such lovely people,” Davy was the only one catching the sarcasm in Anne’s reply and his chuckle earned him another poke in the ribs.

“I am especially excited to meet the monk of Alnazar just so I can see his Cintamani stone necklace up close.”

“Excuse me, did you say Cintamani stone?” Davy blinked his eyes as if to make sure he’d heard right, “The magical stone that grants-“

“-any wish in moments of danger? Yes, that very one,” Mathilda confirmed, “it’s not every day that you can take a good look at one of the most powerful stones in the world.”

It took everything in Anne not to roll her eyes at the futile woman. She hadn’t come here to talk about magical gravel, “would you be so kind as to introduce us to the princess of Misthaven? I have heard wonders of her and I would love to meet her.”

“But of course, dear! Follow me.”

Mathilda took them to two women who Anne had to admit presented themselves quite elegantly. It didn’t surprise her in the least when they introduced themselves as the princess and queen of Misthaven.

“It’s an honor to be here. Thank you for the invitation,” Anne greeted her with a bow.

“You’re very welcome. We believe it’s important to gather the monarchs of every kingdom,” Queen Penelope asserted, “Discussing the future of the Enchanted Forest is of utmost importance.”

“I couldn’t agree more. It’s just a shame that these events also attract a fair share of impostors,”
Davy lamented, doing as he and Anne had agreed.

“You’ll have to forgive my husband, he’s rather distrustful,” Anne said with a fake smile, “ever since I told him that a charlatan posing as a prince once tried to deceive one of my closest friends he has been obsessed with catching impersonators.”

“It seems to be a common affliction these days. My daughter almost fell prey to a similar fraud.”

“Do you happen to remember his name? Surely, we must be talking about the same person,” Anne suggested in her most indignant voice, hoping that the Queen Penelope would take the bait.

“I wouldn’t be able to forget that name even if I tried. He was a man who claimed to be prince Brennan of Lester.”

"I can’t believe he’s actually a fraud,” Anne raced down the castle’s stairs fantasizing about all the ways she could kill Brennan. She knew she should have never married the bastard. This was all her father’s fault. If he hadn’t been so greedy and power hungry they would never been put in this position. Not that she cared much – she had never been fond of Brennan. If he were a prince or a random commoner was all the same to her.

“Look at the bright side,” Davy stopped her once they walked by the castle’s gate door, “once your father knows he too has been fooled, he will no longer support your marriage to this cretin.”

Anne appreciated his caring words, but she still scoffed at the thought, “I wish I was that certain.”

“Why would he possibly want you to stay with an impostor?”

“I don’t know, maybe he won’t want everyone to know that he was humiliated in such a way.”

Davy frowned at her, not really understanding the logic behind her comment, “You and your family are the victims. You mustn’t feel humiliated.”

“You clearly don’t know my father,” Anne’s tone was harsher than she had intended and Davy looked down in defeat. He was doing the best he could to cheer her up, but none of it was working so far.

“You’re right, I don’t know your father,” he told her, refusing to give up, “but I do know that it is useless to dwell on it now.”

“I’m not dwelling on it. I just want the bastard to get caught.”

“And now we caught him so...” he said in a low voice, “what do you say we forget about him and enjoy our trip back home?” and there he was invading her personal space again. She smirked at him, letting him know that she wasn’t going to push him back this time.

“It’s a long journey... I’m expecting you to entertain me,” she was baffled at how forward she was being, but spending the day with “prince Taran” had helped her seeing how much she liked Davy, the real Davy. He had always been honest about himself and, above all, he had been her main support system during the last weeks. She didn’t care that he was a tavern owner. She didn’t care that he barely had any money to eat. What she did care about was the way her heart pounded wildly in her chest whenever she saw him. Or how her face reddened when he teased her with his suggestive remarks. Or how he was the only one believing in herself and treating her with respect. It
was time for her to embrace her feelings and to accept that she was in love with Davy Jones. She had been so concerned with what that admission could mean that she hadn’t even noticed what she had been doing to herself: as if having been repressed her whole life hadn’t been enough, she had started repressing herself. Repressing her own feelings. She could see it clearly now and she was ready to change that. This was who she was. And standing in front of her was the man she loved.

“I was hoping you would say that,” he gushed, pulling a necklace from one of his pockets and dangling it in front of her face. Wait, was that…?

“No…” Anne was certain her gasp could have been heard from miles away, her eyes widening in disbelief, “You stole the Cintamani stone?”

“That monk won’t live for too long. It would be a waste to let such a useful stone be buried with him,” he added with a mischievous grin, “did you notice his limp?”

Anne couldn’t hold her laughter in any longer. Life with this man was certainly anything but boring or predictable, “you’re mad!”

“I’ve learnt that life has no purpose without a smidgen of madness,” her heartbeat raced out of control when she felt his rough knuckles caressing her cheek, his love-struck eyes gazing and admiring her face first and then her lips. He slowly leaned in, waiting for her to meet him halfway, but a loud roar coming from behind them interrupted their moment.

“There they are!” they heard one of the armed guards yelling in the distance, pointing at them, “thieves!”

Davy grabbed Anne’s hand in his and they started running until a white horse appeared in front of them. Not giving a damn about where the horse came from, Davy helped Anne get on it before he mounted it himself and made a clicking sound that urged the horse to start running. It seemed the monk had finally noticed that his necklace was missing.

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

After brushing her teeth, Emma put on her pajamas and got into bed. It had been a good day. She’d had lunch with her parents, her mother had loved the couple of blue parakeets she had gotten her for Mother’s Day and then she had spent most of the afternoon with Henry after picking him up at Regina’s. There was still no progress on the merman issue and the sword, but she had promised herself that she wouldn’t think about any of it on Mother’s Day. Tomorrow there would be plenty of time to deal with it.

She was starting to text Ashley when she heard the front door opening and shutting downstairs, Killian and Liam’s voices echoing through the house. She could hear Killian wishing Liam a good night followed by his footsteps climbing the stairs. He stopped by Henry’s room and it was only minutes later that he walked into their bedroom, a big, happy grin on his face.

“Hello, my love,” he greeted her with enthusiasm, kneeling on the mattress and kissing her tenderly on the lips.

“Someone’s happy,” she hummed in pleasure.

“My day was off to a bad start, but it ended on a rather high note. Liam and I agreed to spend more time together.”
“That’s great!” Emma put her phone down, wanting to focus on her husband and how much the development of his relationship with Liam meant to him. This is what she’d had in mind when she’d given him the idea to invite Liam to spend some days with them.

“Aye, and I wouldn’t have done it without you,” she kissed her once again, before getting up from the bed and moving towards the closet, “how was your day? Did your mother approve of the birds?”

“Yeah, she loved them,” Emma chuckled, remembering the absolute awe in Snow’s face when she opened her eyes and found the parakeets staring back at her from inside the cage, “you should’ve seen her face. I think I even spotted a tear escaping her eye.”

“Swan, what is my old jacket doing here?” he grabbed the hanger that held his old pirate jacket and sent his wife a curious look.

She licked her lips and stretched her legs on the bed, a hint of a smirk on her lips, “I miss seeing you in it.”

Raising one eyebrow at her, he shrugged out of his modern jacket in a hasty hurry and let it fall to the ground – something his neat freak self never did – before he used his hook to take the old jacket off the hanger and putting it on. He walked back to the bed with his usual swagger, blatantly teasing her as her giggling filled the room.

“You mean…” he pulled her legs apart with his knee, hovering over her as he grabbed the headboard for balance, “this jacket?”

“Yes,” her murmur was followed by a whimper when his hand fondled her breast, his fingers traveling up to slip the strap of her nightgown down.

“Mom?” Henry’s voice pulled them out of their daze and Killian got up like a spring at the knock on the door.

Emma pulled her strap back up and fixed her hair, thanking the Gods above that Henry hadn’t just barged in the room, “come on in.”

“Sorry, I forgot to ask you to sign this. I need it for tomorrow,” he told her, handing her a pen and some papers about an upcoming school trip before frowning at Killian, “why are you wearing your old jacket?”

“I… uh… I’m planning on wearing it tomorrow and I was making sure I still look devilishly handsome in it.”

“Here you go, kid,” Emma handed him back the papers and that seemed to put a stop to Henry’s suspicious gaze, “hey, don’t stay up late.”

“No worries,” he mumbled, and then he was out the door with a lazy ‘night’ as Emma’s amused eyes fell on Killian.

“You do know that now you’ll have to wear that thing, right?”

“I don’t mind, love,” he whispered, getting back on top of her, careful not to hurt her, “I much prefer it to this realm’s modern jackets. And it seems you think the same,” he didn’t let her answer, his mouth covering hers and sucking her tongue into his mouth.

“Whoa,” she pulled away with a laugh, “you definitely ate garlic at dinner,” she watched his face fall as it dawned on him that he still hadn’t brushed his teeth.
“Aye. My apologies, love. I’ll be right back,” he got up once again and graced her with his sexy smirk, “do not move an inch.”

Once he disappeared into the bathroom, Emma adjusted the pillows and straightened the sheets, smiling to herself as the butterflies in her stomach traced further down south. Oh yeah. She was totally going to get laid tonight.

---

**Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago**

They had been riding for hours under the starry sky, not a trace of any guards following them, when they decided to stop by a lake shore with enough trees and vegetation to make their presence unnoticed. Kinsale was still half a day away and they had to get some sleep.

They started a bonfire, hoping the heat would protect them from the chilly night as they sat in silence for a while, their backs leaning against the same tree trunk.

“The stone really works,” Davy mentioned, his fingers wrapping around the necklace, “when I saw those guards, I thought we could really use a horse.”

“And then the horse came out of nowhere,” Anne concluded and Davy nodded at her before staring at the sky.

“It’s late. We should probably get some sleep,” Anne was disappointed at his suggestion. She had hoped that he would try to kiss her again, but he had barely looked at her ever since their moment earlier. Not one to let others decide her fate for her, she stopped him from getting up.

“I don’t feel like sleeping,” her voice was bold and for the first time in hours, his eyes landed on hers, “any other suggestions?” her breathing hitched in her throat and her lashes swept down over her eyes in unconcealed invitation. She almost laughed at the way he gulped and how he opened and closed his mouth without any words ever coming out.

“Wh- what do you have in mind?” his stuttering gave her a rush of confidence and she let her hand rest on his thigh.

“I remember fancying what were about to do before being rudely interrupted”, her voice was barely a whisper before she kissed him, slow and languid until tension filled her and the kiss grew more urgent.

“I’m not sure if…” he panted into her mouth, not able to finish his thoughts.

“It is the right thing to do,” Anne assured him, straddling him against the tree and kissing him again, “I’ve learnt that life has no purpose without a smidgen of madness.”

---

Calypso paced back and forth by the tavern’s entrance. It was now the second day in a row that the tavern was closed and Davy was nowhere to be seen. She felt anger bubbling up inside and tried to take a deep breath, telling herself that he would never leave Kinsale without warning. Or would he? The coldness with which he had been treating her lately had her on the edge and she wasn’t certain about anything anymore. Didn’t he realize that she needed him?
Storybrooke – Present Day

In the morning, upon arriving at the kitchen, Emma was pleasantly surprised to find a stack of pancakes in the oven with a thank you note from Liam. Who knew her brother-in-law could actually cook? She placed the pancakes on the table and filled two mugs with coffee. Regina had already picked Henry up to take him to school and it would only be her and Killian for breakfast. Maybe that was a good thing because she was pretty sure anyone would be able to tell by her face that she had been thoroughly fucked the night before.

“Swan?” Killian’s distressed voice echoed from upstairs and she took two steps at a time to the top floor.

“What’s wrong?” she walked into their not fully ready office, watching Killian standing in front of the cherry wood desk they had recently bought.

“I came here to get my telescope and I found this,” Killian pointed at the small tinderbox on top of the desk, “is this yours?”

“No,” she quickly said, picking up the white envelope next to it and tearing it open.

“How well do you know your friends, Emma?” she read the message out loud, her voice trembling enough for Killian’s apprehensive eyes to peer over the room. Whoever had put this here had been in their house and that alone was enough to send both into a frenzy. Emma put the envelope down on the desk and removed the tinderbox’s lid.

“What the blazes is that?” Killian blinked at the grey, fluffy substance glowing inside that resembled some kind of gooey foam.

“I don’t know, but I know exactly where to get answers,” Emma said, flicking her wrist as she magicked them into Gold’s shop, saving them precious time. Their sudden presence startled Rumple and Belle, who had been looking at a wrist watch behind the counter.

“Emma, Killian, is everything alright?” Belle asked them, assuming something had happened. It wasn’t common for them to show up this early and unannounced.

“Someone left this in our house,” Emma put the tinderbox on the counter and searched for any signs of recognition on Rumple’s face, but his poker face gave nothing away, “do you know what it is?”

“This is a magical tinderbox,” he replied as if he had been asked the most absurd question in the world.

“We can see that,” Killian’s lips drew back over his teeth in a snarl, “what the bloody hell is inside?”

“If you would be so kind as to let me finish,” Rumple sent him a sarcastic smile and Killian glared at him in response, “this tinderbox is a memory reader. Once you open it and touch the memories inside, you are taken to the exact time and place of the events they hold.”

“So these are somebody’s memories?” Belle scrunched up her nose at the gooey substance.

“Precisely. And once you return from memory land, they go back to its owner,” Rumple explained,
his index finger pointing at the tinderbox.

“Who could have done this?” Emma wondered, trying to think of all the people who had been in their house recently, but not one of them was untrustworthy.

“Regardless of who it was, miss Swan, I can only assume they wanted you to see what secrets these memories hold.”

Emma and Killian’s eyes locked in a shared understanding and they both nodded in unison. They were going to do this.

“What do we have to do?” Emma glanced at Rumple, her fingers gripping Killian’s hook.

“Simply touch the memories.”

They did as Rumple instructed, putting their hands inside the box at the same time. The moment their fingers touched the memories, they got sucked into a purple vortex of light and, before they knew it, they were stepping on grass. It was night and there was a dark mist all around them.

“Where are we?” Killian looked around as tombstones started becoming more noticeable amidst the fog, “the graveyard?”

“That’s Regina’s crypt,” Emma pointed out as they watched Regina’s figure walking towards her crypt, one hand massaging what seemed to be a fresh cut in her lip while the other held a bouquet of flowers.

“Aye, I believe we found the person who these memories belong to.”

“Regina?” Emma called out to her, but she got no response. Regina just kept walking as if she were all alone in the graveyard, not acknowledging their presence at all.

“I don’t think she can hear or see us, love.”

“Yeah, it makes sense,” Emma looked away pensively, “Gold said we would be taken to the exact time and place of the events the memories hold. Neither of us was here when this happened.” They were simply an audience: they could hear and see everything, but do nothing about it.

“This isn’t over, miss Swan,” Regina’s angry voice had Emma experiencing a weird sense of _déjà vu_ as Regina opened the door to her crypt and went inside. She closed the crypt’s door before they could follow her, but since these were Regina’s memories they got dragged inside with her.

Emma could tell that Regina was livid, the tension emanating from her palpable in the hair. They stood still as they watched her put the bouquet of flowers over her father’s tomb, but then she pulled the top part of the tomb away and the stairs to her vault came into view.

They followed her down the stairs, where she pulled some black curtains out of the way to reveal her mysterious collection of vaults.

“I have never seen that before,” Killian narrowed his eyes at the gold, squared things.

“I have, but Regina never really told me what she keeps in there.”

They took two steps forward, standing right next to her as she took a small wooden box from inside one of the vaults. The somber look on Regina’s face sent shivers down their spines. They hadn’t seen that look in a long time. They waited impatiently to see what was inside the box and the only
thing they could do was stand there, staring with wide eyes at the glowing and throbbing heart Regina now held in her hands.

“Has she been keeping people’s hearts in here all this time?” Killian asked, but he wasn’t actually expecting an answer from Emma, knowing she was probably as confused as he was.

“I don’t know,” Emma’s voice faltered, not having a good feeling about any of this. This was Regina, in Storybrooke, not the Evil Queen in her castle. What the hell was she doing?

Then everything became clear. While Regina held the heart in her right hand, a rush of sounds started coming directly out of it and they could clearly distinguish two people’s voices.

“You okay?”

“I remember.”

Emma froze in her place. That was her own voice and… Graham’s?

“No,” she gasped, realizing that Regina holding Graham’s heart. Killian could only recognize Emma’s voice and a wave of doubt hit him. He had no idea what was going on, but Emma was extremely afflicted all of a sudden. He was about to ask her if she was alright, but what he heard next stopped him from saying a thing.

“Graham?”

“I remember.”

“You remember what?”

“Thank you.”

Emma didn’t know what to think, what to do. All she could feel were the tears that started forming in her eyes as Regina started squeezing the heart and Graham’s grunts and her own screams filled the room.

“Graham!”

“Graham!”

“Graham?!”

She closed her eyes, hoping that reliving that moment would hurt less. She felt Killian pulling her into a hug and she dropped her head on his chest, welcoming his comforting arms.

Killian rested his head against Emma’s, knowing fully well that she was re-experiencing one of the most upsetting events in her life. He knew enough about the original sheriff to understand how distressing his death had been to Emma. A sudden urge to hurt Regina for causing Emma this much pain took hold of him as Graham’s heart turned to dust before their eyes.

“Graham! Come on!”

The indistinct sound of her own crying took Emma right back to that moment. It was as if she was sitting on the station floor again, Graham’s lifeless body in her hands, that familiar feeling of impotence invading her once again.

And then, just like that, they were back in Gold’s shop. Emma stood still in her place, her red eyes
fixed on the floor as everything became clear to her.

“Swan…” Killian gripped her arm, not sure which words were the right ones to say, “I’m sorry you had to go through that again, love.”

“What happened?” Belle asked them with concern in her voice, “Emma, are you alright?”

Emma lifted her eyes from the floor to look at Belle and she took a deep breath, “I am. Just… some things that are hard to process.” It all made sense now. Of course Regina had killed Graham as soon as she’d found out that he was remembering who he really was.

“I take it those weren’t happy memories,” the sick smile on Rumple’s face was enough for Killian to understand that he had enjoyed every single second of this torture.

“You knew about this,” Killian practically barked at him, shooting him daggers with his eyes.

“I fail to understand your accusations, captain. I simply answered your questions.”

All Killian wanted was to wipe that smug smile off the crocodile’s face, but Emma storming out of the shop made him redirect his attention to her. Killian quickly grabbed the tinderbox and slammed the door behind him. If there was one thing he was certain of was that he wouldn’t let Emma make the same mistake he had once made. He wouldn’t let her heart be filled with resentment.
Emma confronts Regina about Graham’s death as Hook and Belle make an important breakthrough. In Enchanted Forest flashbacks, Anne and Davy Jones face an unexpected hindrance that will change the course of their destinies.

For the first time since she had arrived in Storybrooke, Emma ignored the good morning greetings sent her way as she strode across the street, disregarding anyone who stood in her path. She may not have been sure of what she should do, but she knew that she didn’t have time for any of that.

“Swan!” not even Killian’s shout made her slow down her pace, her heels clicking furiously against the pavement, “Swan, wait!”

“I’m fine!” she turned around, her unexpected halt causing Killian’s body to crash against hers. Emma’s flushed face and heavy pants were a sure sign that his wife was struggling to deal with what she had just heard and seen, “I’m over Graham, okay? This isn’t about that.”

“I may not have your superpower, Swan, but I can tell when you are being untruthful,” Emma took a step back and, for a minute, Killian wondered if she had done so because of the harshness in his voice.

“I’m not lying to you,” Emma snapped, “I am over him, I have been for a long time.”

Killian’s gaze wandered to the floor and he nodded in frustration. That wasn’t the part she was lying about. She had completely missed his point.

“You are not fine, Emma,” he told her more gently this time, hoping that she would calm herself down enough to realize it, “I know you have moved on from what happened to the Sheriff, but that still doesn’t mean that learning that someone close to you is responsible for his death doesn’t rightfully upset you.”

As usual, Killian was able to see through her bullshit and Emma knew there was no point in putting up a front with him. That was a lesson she had learnt long ago, but that didn’t mean she didn’t have some relapses once in a while. It didn’t help that she was scared Killian thought she was reacting this way because of the feelings she used to have for Graham. It really didn’t. Traumatic as it was, she had made peace with his death. Experiencing it all over again and learning that Regina was the one killing him was what truly set her off.

Closing her eyes, Emma let out a long, frustrated sigh as she let her body fall against Killian’s. The warm touch of his fingers pushing her head against his chest was the reminder she needed that she didn’t have to handle this all by herself. He was her husband, her friend, her rock. He was going to be there for her whenever she needed him. And right now all she wanted was for him to hold her in his arms.

“I… I don’t even know what I’m feeling right now. All I know is I really want to give her another bloody lip,” she admitted, pressing her cheek even harder against his chest. “She never told me about it. That really pisses me off.”
“I don’t mean to be the devil’s advocate, love, but perhaps Regina didn’t know how to tell you.”

“I don’t care, she still should have told me.”

Killian’s hook started massaging her back, trying his best to soothe her, “aye, that she should.”

“I just…” Emma disentangled herself from him but still reached for his hand and hook, “it felt like I lived it all again. I could do nothing but watch him die…”

Her words faltered, the stinging pain of recalling that moment getting the best of her, and she felt him squeeze her hand in his.

“I know, love. It’s as though you are experiencing again all the painful feelings pertaining to that moment,” Killian added with a voice full of melancholy. Despite her daze, Emma noticed the twitch of his jaw as he wiped a tear from her cheek. His entire demeanor had changed, concern and apprehension turning into sadness. Of course. As usual, he knew how she was feeling. He had gone through the exact same thing.

“Milah…” was the only thing Emma was able to say and Killian gave her a gentle, yet hurting smile.

“Aye. And I’ve learnt that succumbing to madness nearly destroyed me. Don’t let the seeds of resentment grow in your heart, Swan.”

His eyes bore into hers with brusque concern and she felt the urge to reassure him that she wasn’t going to let any of this change the person she was. She would never let that happen.

“I won’t. I promise,” she held his face in her hands and leaned on her tiptoes to place a soft kiss on his cheek.

“What are you going to do?”

“I’m going to talk to Regina,” she replied, wrapping her arms around his waist and letting her head fall on his chest once again, “and then I’m going to punch her in the face.”

---

**Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago**

*The minute Anne opened her eyes, images of the previous night flashed before her eyes and she beamed with delight at their pleasurable activities. Her decision to finally open her heart to Davy had been a rash one, but she didn’t regret a thing.*

“Good morning, my goddess,” Davy’s warm breath tickled her ear and she pulled him by the Cintamani stone necklace he had looted, shutting him up with a kiss.

“Good morning, ” her tone was suggestive, and his wide grin almost had her heart stopping. She was simply… happy. The happiest she had ever been her entire life. And it was all because of him, “thank you.”

“For our night together or for helping you find out the truth about Brennan?”

“Both,” she laughed at his irresistible smirk, never one to miss a chance to tease her. “I’m going to tell my father that Brennan is a charlatan who only wants to take advantage of his wealth.”

“You certainly have nothing to lose,” Davy put his hand over hers, encouraging her to keep running
her fingers over his chest hair.

“Perhaps he will surprise me and find a way to annul the wedding,” she wondered, already excited at the prospects of never having to look at Brennan’s daft face again.

“You will be spouseless again, much to my content,” he pointed out, leaning over to kiss her, “and you will keep your beloved ship.”

“I will,” she laughed into his lips, “who knew this arsehole being an impostor would turn out to be the solution to all of my problems? I just hope my father doesn’t ruin everything.”

“Has he always been this controlling over you?” Davy hoped he wasn’t crossing a line. He knew how much Anne had suffered at the expense of her father’s tyrannical ways, but he was curious to know just for how long that had been happening.

“Always,” Anne replied, feeling completely at ease to share part of her story with him, “but somehow it got even worse when I was twelve years-old and I became friends with a girl.”

“He didn’t like her?”

“She was the daughter of a poor couple. Of course my father didn’t approve of that,” Anne scoffed, still disgusted by her father’s snobbish behavior. “He locked me in my own house to prevent me from seeing her again.”

“What a bastard… I’m sorry he did that to you,” Davy’s jaw clenched and his fingers flexed against her hip, but he then forced himself to keep any anger away from his voice, not wanting to upset her any further. “And what of the girl?”

“I have no clue. I have gone many times to what used to be her house, but it seems to be abandoned,” Anne answered, recalling all the nights she had gone by Calypso’s hut and the lake without ever finding any trace of her friend. “Wherever she is, I hope she is alright.”

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

Killian had asked Emma if she wanted him to accompany her to the Town Hall, but she had assured him that it wasn’t necessary. Without him and his support, she wouldn’t have been able to pull herself together so quickly, but this was between her and Regina - she had to do this alone. She wasn’t going to do anything stupid, but she sure as hell was going to hold Regina accountable for what she had done.

The free passes ended now.

Even the slight guilt she felt for telling the truth to Regina’s face just a few days ago was now completely gone. As a matter of fact, Regina’s lack of an apology even after the truth spell nonsense contributed even more to her current rage towards the Mayor. At least her mother and August had cared enough to try to make things right by her, but not Madame Mayor. She’s special. She’s a freaking saint, why should she apologize anyway? And it’s not like she tried to kill her mother countless of times. It’s not like she makes fun of Killian’s hook whenever she can. Seriously, the damn lady should feel lucky that the only thing she wished to do was punch her in the face.

Emma barged into the office and scowled at her when her eyes landed on Regina’s figure, sitting at her desk.
“Emma... I wasn’t expecting you. Is everything okay?” even her voice sounded fake now and Emma
sent her a lackluster smile. Maintaining her self-composure was going to be way harder than she had
thought. Heck, all it took was one look at Regina’s face for her blood to start boiling all over again.

“How do you do it?” bitterness rolled out of Emma’s tongue and the venomous tone in her voice
didn’t go unnoticed by Regina. “You’ve been sitting on that chair for years, pretending you are not
responsible for the death of many people in this town.”

Regina didn’t even bother to hide her massive eye roll, “I thought we were pas-”

“You killed Graham,” Emma grumbled and watched Regina freeze in her place, staring at her with
wide eyes and clearly taken aback by her words. “You crushed his heart and you didn’t even think
of telling me about it. Not once in these past two years.”

Regina looked down in shame, and for the first time since Emma knew her, it looked like she
actually regretted something she had done. That alone didn’t make Emma any less angry, but it was
enough for her to wait for Regina to say something.

“I killed Graham,” Regina said gravely, the muscles in her face tightening as she got up from her
chair and stuffed her hands in the pockets of her black pant suit, “but I’m not that person anymore.”

“Aren’t you?” Regina’s noticeable wince at Emma’s words let her know that she had struck a nerve.
Good, because she was nowhere near finished. “You’re going to take us to your crypt and you’re
going to show me exactly what you keep inside that vault.”

“What, so now you think I-”

“No, you don’t get to talk!” Emma lashed out at her, not letting her finish, “you keep quiet and you
take us there. And that’s a sheriff’s order.”

Regina’s face bore a deadpan expression, but Emma could swear she saw a glint of fear in her eyes
before she magically poofed them both to her crypt. Once there, Emma stormed towards the vault,
pulling away the black curtains that she still vividly remembered from Regina’s memories.

“Open them. I want to see what’s inside,” Emma ordered, not taking her eyes away from the
collection of vaults in front of her, suddenly feeling even more sick to the stomach. This was where
Regina had kept Graham’s heart. This was where she had killed him.

“If you’re thinking there are hearts in there, you’re wrong,” Regina clamped her hands on her hips,
“I returned them to their owners soon after we got back from Neverland.”

“Open them,” Emma insisted, much to Regina’s frustration.

“You still don’t trust me.”

“You’re done making me feel guilty for not trusting or believing you.”

Regina could send her all the annoyed looks she wanted, but Emma wasn’t leaving this place
without knowing for sure that Regina didn’t have any more hearts in her possession. Slumping down
her shoulders in defeat, Regina used her magic to pull all the vaults out, knowing that it was pointless
to try to convince Emma that she wasn’t lying.

When all the vaults were revealed to be empty, Emma couldn’t even tell if she was surprised or not
as relief washed over her – the idea that the Mayor could have been keeping the hearts of the people
she, as a Sheriff, should be protecting had been boggling her mind. Thankfully, Regina had been
wise enough to return all those hearts to their owners.

While that was one less thing for her to worry about, none of it changed the fact that Regina still killed Graham and omitted that from everybody for two whole years. That was something she wasn’t anywhere near ready to let go. She still very much wanted nothing more but to punch Regina in the face, for everything. For hurting Henry during the first ten years of his life, for separating her from her parents, for treating her husband like crap, for killing Graham, for never having apologized to her for any of it. Despite all of that, Emma now knew that punching her wouldn’t fix anything. Punching her would be the easy way out and Regina sure as hell wasn’t worth it.

“Henry is the only reason why I won’t give you another bloody lip,” Emma warned as she walked towards Regina, her steps matching her unapologetic voice, “from now on, you talk to me whenever parental decisions need to be made or mayoral duties require the sheriff’s assistance.”

Before Regina could even utter a word, Emma stormed out of there. She had a job to get back to.

---

**Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago**

Another night had gone by and Davy was still nowhere to be seen. Calypso had decided to wait for him and had spent most of her time in a hidden spot she had found in the back of the tavern. Much to her luck, the tiny, secluded area allowed her to control who entered and left the tavern without anyone seeing her. That way she wouldn’t miss Davy for sure. He would be back. He would never abandon his tavern. She was certain of it.

She had heard about the existence of a magic mirror that showed the whereabouts of any person one wished to see. If Davy didn’t arrive back in Kinsale soon, she was going to do anything to get her hands on that mirror and find out exactly where he was.

It was still early in the morning and she decided to practice some more of her magic to pass time. If it wasn’t for Davy, she would’ve left Kinsale and its tediousness long ago. This town brought her nothing but horrendous memories and she couldn’t wait for the day she would persuade Davy to leave with her.

When she least expected it, the sound of a horse galloping in the distance interrupted Calypso’s efforts of turning two leaves into droplets of water. The vast smile that grew on her lips when she spotted Davy stopping the horse just metres away from her soon turned into a quizzical frown when she realized he wasn’t alone. There was a woman with her arms wrapped around his waist. How dare she? Davy’s watery blue eyes were fixed on the woman with such love, such tenderness… How dare he?

Calypso took a step back when Davy dismounted the horse and helped the woman down. It was only when the short, feminine figure turned around that Calypso realized who the woman was. She would recognize that face anywhere. The face of the person who had ruined her life.

Anne.

Tears started forming in her eyes, the happy couple very obviously in love with each other as Davy leaned in for a kiss that lasted for much longer than necessary.

Everything made sense now. This was why Davy was gone. It was why he had resisted her advances – because of Anne. Davy wasn’t with her because of Anne.
Anne was the one on her way.

Anne.

It was always Anne.

Each kiss and caress she witnessed hit her hard in the chest - a knife twisting into her heart. Anger bubbled inside her, feeling as though Anne had just taken the last piece of her life from her.

It was always Anne.

The beautiful, wealthy girl who had everything one could ever hope for. The perfect daughter that her parents would have chosen in her place. The perfect girl Davy chose in her place.

The sound of unexpected thunder echoed in her ears as she felt her magic roar in a frenzy, begging to be released. Despite her turmoil, she didn’t lose her temper. She was no longer that inexperienced girl who didn’t know how to handle her power. If there was one thing she had learnt was that the key to success started with always maintaining control of your emotions.

Anne had taken everything from her: her parents, her home, her life. And now she was taking the man she loved, too. Calypso took a deep breath. If she really wanted to make Anne miserable, she couldn’t simply go to her and crush her filthy, selfish heart. No, she would be wiser than that. And this time she wasn’t going to fail.

“Are you certain you don’t want me to take you to your mansion, my goddess?” Calypso cringed at Davy’s term of endearment. Goddess? There was only one goddess in Kinsale and it sure wasn’t Anne Cormac.

“No, we can’t risk anyone seeing us together,” Anne cupped his cheek. “I’m still married. I can’t imagine my father’s wrath if he were to find out that I’m not honoring my family’s good name by being unfaithful to my husband.”

“You’re right. It’s best we do nothing that could hurt your plan,” Davy concurred, bringing her hand to his lips. “When will I see you again?”

“Tomorrow, by dawn. In here,” Anne’s irritating chortle had Calypso looking away, nose wrinkled in distaste. “I’ll talk to my father and then I will be able to kiss you whenever I want.”

A devilish grin flashed on Calypso’s face at that elucidative piece of information. So Anne had a husband and Davy was nothing but her forbidden lover? This was too good to be true. She needed to hear nothing more, a brilliant idea invading her mind. Oh yes, Anne Cormac was finally going to pay for everything she had done.

---

Storybrooke – Present Day

Stopping at the library’s door, Killian stared at the screen of his phone, checking for the umpteenth time if he had any news from Emma. Nothing. He was worried about her, but he wasn’t going to put any pressure on her. He would wait and let her come to him, as always.

He kept his eyes trained on the background image that Henry had set on his phone: a docked Jolly Roger in all its glory under the sunlight. Emma’s back could be seen in the distance, leaning against the ship’s railing as her long, blonde hair blew in the wind. Henry had taken that picture before the
three of them prepared to go on one of their sailing trips. That had been a bloody good day, Killian
thought, making a mental note to himself that they would have to do it again once the current crisis
was over.

“I know I’m late, I’m sorry,” Belle’s voice brought him out of his happy thoughts, but he still smiled
at his friend, who was currently struggling to hold a fidgety baby Gideon in her arms while looking
for the keys in her purse. “Ugh, can you please hold him for a second?”

Before Killian could answer, Belle was shoving the baby into his arms and a tinge of panic swept
over him. While he had held Emma’s brother and Alexandra plenty of times, they had never been
this small and… fragile. He had absolutely no idea what to do. Should he say something? But what
for if the baby couldn’t even understand him? And even if he did, what could he say? “Hello, little
human who once tried to kill my wife and whose father I’ve spent centuries trying to murder. How
are you today?”

It still felt slightly awkward to be around Gideon, but he always tried his best to ignore the
convoluted past associated to the infant and think of him as his friend’s son.

“He’s drooling,” Killian crinkled his nose as he watched a thin trail of saliva running down the
baby’s chin. “Is that normal?”

“Yes, but not as normal as blowing saliva bubbles.”

Finally retrieving the keys from her purse, Belle laughed at Killian’s suddenly repulsed expression
and wasted no time in opening the library’s door. They had agreed the day before to keep doing their
research on the sword. This time they would be going through the books in the legal deposit - their
last hope at finding something relevant or useful.

“How’s Emma? She seemed very upset earlier,” Belle turned to Killian, taking Gideon from his
arms.

Killian wasn’t exactly sure how to answer her question. He didn’t want to lie to Belle and say
everything was perfect, but he wasn’t going to tell her why Emma had looked so distressed either. If
Emma felt comfortable to share more details with Belle, or anybody else for that matter, she would
do it herself.

“She was quite distraught, but she’ll be alright,” was the answer that allowed him to be truthful
without giving anything away. Hopefully, Belle would understand he wasn’t going to be saying
anything else on that matter.

“You know I’m here if you two need anything,” Belle offered, placing Gideon in the baby chair that
had now become part of the furniture. Literally. “Who could even be cruel enough to do this?”

“Perhaps that pile of books will provide us with an answer.”

Being in the station was proving to be an especially hard task today. Emma’s emotions were still
running high and she couldn’t get the images of Graham’s lifeless body sprawled on that same floor,
next to the same desk she was currently sitting on. She had already sent Killian a text message,
letting him know that she had talked to Regina and that everything was okay. He needed to be
entirely focused on his and Belle’s research, she didn’t want him to be worried about her.

“Regina killed Graham?” Emma was pretty sure she had never heard her mother shriek so loudly
before, a mixture of anger and consternation evident in her voice. Her parents had decided to pay her
an early visit and she had ended up telling them what happened after they’d noticed her edgy humor.
“I’m so sorry, Emma,” David pulled her in for a hug, gently cradling her head before Snow joined them, trying to comfort her daughter.

“I still can’t believe it,” Snow shook her head in disbelief. “How are you feeling about this, honey?” Emma raised her shoulders in a shrug. “I’m mad that she never told me. And she wasn’t going to if I hadn’t found out.”

“She probably didn’t know how to bring it up after all this time,” David suggested, hoping that would make Emma feel better.

“That’s what Killian said. The thing is… I know she isn’t the Evil Queen anymore. I would’ve been pissed, but I would have appreciated her coming clean about it. Now I can’t trust her.” Snow and David exchanged a knowing glance, not really knowing what to say. “But whatever, I really don’t want to think about this anymore. I have work to do. I need to know who the hell broke into my house.”

“Yes, that’s what we should be concerned about right now,” David agreed, watching Emma determinedly step away from the desk.

“Can we help?”

“Not really, mom. Ethel is in there trying to find people or… things… that could have turned Sleepy into a merman, and Killian is meeting with Belle for more research on the sword. Which means…” Emma paused for a second, picking up her light brown leather jacket from the chair, “I’m patrolling today.”

Snow and David followed her into the room where Ethel was in. There were books everywhere and the woman seemed to be exhausted.

“I’m heading out now,” Emma turned to Ethel, “call me if you find anything.”

Emma nodded casually at her parents and turned to leave, but her father’s voice stopped her, “we can stay here helping Ethel.”

“That’s a wonderful idea!” Snow agreed. It’s not like they had anything to do at the farm house and they would only have to pick up Neal at five. They could as well help with research.

Ethel, however, didn’t seem so pleased. She suddenly crossed her arms around her chest and looked at Snow and David with her forehead puckered with worry. “It’s not necessary, really. I can do it myself.”

“Nonsense. We’ll help you,” Snow insisted, pulling out a chair and sitting right next to Ethel, who plastered a fake smile on her face that didn’t go unnoticed by Emma’s observant eyes.

After Emma left, Ethel waited some minutes until she excused herself to the bathroom, leaving a clueless Snow and Charming alone, practically drowning in books. Once she got to the bathroom, she closed the door of the stall behind her, frowning thoughtfully as she frantically pressed the buttons of her phone.

“Abort plan. Stay where you are,” she said in a commanding whisper to someone on the other end of the line, “I said stay where you are. Make yourself useful in the meantime and go talk to her.”
On her way home, Anne kept thinking about her mother. She always used to say to her that being in love was the world’s most precious blessing. She had never understood it, never even thinking that one day she would find a man she loved and who loved her back. But now… now she knew how true her mother’s words had been. Falling for Davy Jones had been unexpected, but she thanked all the Gods above for putting him on her path. Just thoughts of him had her mind turning to mush, even though she had spent the last forty-eight hours right next to him. She was in such an exhilarated state that she wasn’t too concerned with her father’s reaction to her unannounced absence. All that mattered was that she was going to get rid of Brennan’s imposturous arse and be able to show the world that her heart belonged to another.

“Sir!” the scream of one of the mansion’s guards brought her out of her daze as she walked past the iron gate, watching that same guard rush towards her father and Brennan, who were standing near the garden’s fountain. “She’s here, sir!”

Anne slowed her pace and forced herself to keep moving under the apprehensive observation of the rest of the guards as she walked towards her father. She could tell by his flushed face and wide stance that he was livid, but she remained as calm as she could. Once she explained to him why she had been gone, he was going to be even more furious, but hopefully she would no longer be the object of his rage. Maybe he would even be thankful.

“How dare you disappear without a trace? Without telling me where you were!” William’s bellow made her jump in surprise and she unconsciously took a step back at his aggressive demeanor. Sometime amidst all the screams, he raised his hand and slapped her harshly in the face. The pain and swelling of her cheek didn’t completely register as total surprise lingered within her glowering eyes. Words failed her as her hand pressed on the stinging. In all his years of tyranny he had never once laid a hand on her.

Until now.

In front of her supposed husband.

In front of all the guards.

It didn’t matter that she was able to see a hint of guilt flashing in his dark eyes the moment her cold gaze met his. It was too late. He had crossed a line that would never be forgiven.

A tense silence filled the air and Anne could feel her pulse throbbing in her ears as she fought not to succumb to the sheer humiliation she had just been exposed to. All she wanted was to turn around and run to the tavern as fast as she could, but she knew that wasn’t an option. Her father would have one of his men following her and that could simply have catastrophic consequences. Sending her father one last look full of scorn and disdain, she stomped towards the house as she tried to control her suddenly erratic breathing. Her father could rot in hell for all she cared. She didn’t need him. She didn’t need his money nor his power. She didn’t need any of it.

In the short time it took her to get to her room, she decided what to do next. Why would she even tell her father about Brennan? Nothing would prevent her from being with Davy, marriage or no marriage. If Brennan and his fake family wanted to milk her father dry, so be it. That wouldn’t affect her in the least – if the Gods were on her side, she would be out of Kinsale soon and she would never have to look at any of their faces ever again. Her father would deserve it. Having someone make a fool of him and taking everything from him was exactly what his arrogant self had been
asking for during all these years. Perhaps she should feel guilty for allowing an impostor to steal from her father, but that slap had wiped away any remnants of feelings she could still have for him. Enough was enough and that was the moment she knew in her heart that she was done playing nice.

Outside, William lifted his remorseful eyes to the window of Anne’s room. He didn’t know what had come over him earlier, but he couldn’t show any signs of regret. Not in front of the prince or his guards. He could only hold onto the hope that Anne would forget about the incident.

“Sir,” one of the guards called out, handing him a wax-sealed scroll. “Someone left this for you.”

“Who did?” William’s voice was demanding as he took the scroll from the guard’s hand.

“A young boy said he was asked to give it to you, Sir.”

Taking a step back, William quickly opened the scroll and scanned the paper looking for a name, but he never found one. The message was short, but the words hit him like and he stared at the paper in disbelief.

No.

It couldn’t be.

“No. Sir Cormac, are you alright?” Brennan’s voice was followed by the sound of paper being crumpled viciously. William’s hands rolled into fists and shook uncontrollably as he snapped his eyes shut, crushing the paper in his hands as hard as he could. When he finally opened his eyes, it was to look at Anne’s window again. This time, however, not a glimpse of remorse could be found in his cold, menacing glare.

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

“Everything okay around here?” Emma asked as soon as she saw a cheery Ashley sitting on the floor of the daycare center, trying to keep the babies entertained. Ashley widened her eyes at Emma’s unexpected presence, but then managed to smile enthusiastically at her friend. It was good to actually hear a normal, adult voice amongst all the baby squealing.

“You scared me,” Ashley put one hand over her chest and looked up at her before waving her hand around. “Sorry, I would get up, but…”

“Don’t worry,” Emma chuckled at the two toddlers playing with Ashley’s ears. “How’s my little bro?”

Emma glanced at the crib in the back of the room, the one where her baby brother used to sleep in whenever he was there. Her mouth curved into a smile when he raised his little arms up in the air the moment he saw her leaning over him.

“He’s okay,” Ashley replied, taking a good look at Emma and noticing an unusual sadness in her eyes that not even holding her baby brother in her arms could disguise. “You, on the other hand, don’t look so good.”

“Ugh, I know.” Emma groaned at Ashley’s comment. She was hoping she wouldn’t notice, but of course she did. They hadn’t been close friends for too long, but still long enough for Ashley to be able to tell when something wasn’t right with her, it seemed.
“What’s going on?”

Emma rocked her brother in her arms, her hips swaying back and forth as she tried to quieten him. She could feel Ashley’s eyes following her movements, waiting for an answer. Maybe venting to her would be helpful. Maybe, deep down, that had been one of the reasons why she had decided to stop by. Talking to Ashley was always nice - she never failed to be honest while still being incredibly supportive.

Holding baby Neal’s head against her chest, Emma started telling her everything, not leaving any detail out. There was still a lump in her throat as she spoke, the surrealism of it all getting to her once again.

“And I have to be careful,” Emma added, after minutes of talking uninterruptedly. “Killian was there, he saw everything. He was really sweet about it, but I don’t want him to think I’m still not over Graham’s death. I don’t want him to feel threatened.”

“I think he understands Graham was someone special in your life,” Ashley offered her reassurance, pulling one of the baby’s hands away from her ear. “He shouldn’t compare himself to him, it’s not a competition.”

“Yeah, I know that,” Emma tilted her head in agreement. It wasn’t a competition because there was no possible comparison to begin with. “But after everything that happened with Chris… you know, that guy from Boston—”

“Yeah, I remember.”

“After how much that affected him, I worry that he goes there again.”

Ashley’s smile was accompanied by a shrug of her shoulders as she got up from the floor. “There’s only one way to know: ask him how he feels.”

Ashley was right. Communication was key. Well, technically they had already talked about it after she had stormed out of Gold’s shop, but their entire exchange had been about how she felt.

“Yeah, I will,” Emma’s thankful smile transformed into a cringe when baby Neal pulled a strand of her hair. One day she would understand her brother’s fascination with her hair.

She was about to thank Ashley for the advice when her phone started buzzing. Killian. Speaking of the devil…

“Hey, what’s up?” she asked, waiting for his response from the other end of the line. “Are you sure?” Ashley watched as Emma’s eyes widened in surprise. “Okay, I’ll be right there.”

Ashley could tell by Emma’s sudden twitchiness that whatever Killian had just told her was important. “Is everything okay?”

“Sorry, I have to go. Killian and Belle found something,” Emma shoved her phone back in her pocket and then dropped a kiss on Neal’s forehead. “We’ll talk later tonight?”

“Sure,” Emma was so quick to leave that Ashley wasn’t sure if she had heard her, but that still didn’t stop her from shouting, “stay safe!”

“A tinderbox that also reads memories?” Regina frowned at Snow as the two women kept walking down the street. “I’ve never heard of such a thing.”
“Apparently that’s what Gold told Emma and Killian,” Snow added, pushing her hands into her coat pockets. She had left David helping Ethel after Regina showed up unannounced at the station, asking to talk to her. “Regina, give Emma some time. You have to admit she’s right in being upset.”

“She is, I can admit that. I just wish she wouldn’t ignore all of my progress.”

“She is not doing that,” Snow said in a grave voice. “She’s hurt that you didn’t come clean to her.”

“But how could I have told her? ‘Hi, Emma, thanks for the beer. Oh, by the way, I killed Graham. Could you please pass me the fries?’”

Regina’s sarcasm stopped Snow in her tracks as she huffed out in frustration. “Try to talk to her, explain why you never told her about Graham. You are the wrong one here, you can’t… you can’t just expect people to instantly forgive you for everything you have done just because you’ve changed.”

“You have.”

“I’ve spent years hating you for what you’ve done to me and my family. Until one day I just realized I was tired of feeling that way and I decided to forgive you. And I haven’t regretted it,” Snow offered her a smile before her entire expression closed up in a slightly hostile way. “But I will if you don’t try to fix things with my daughter.”

Emma saw her father’s truck parking in front of the library as she arrived. She had called both of her parents to let them know Killian and Belle had made progress on the sword, but she asked them specifically to not tell Ethel a thing. She still didn’t fully trust the lady and she definitely didn’t need to have any more information than she already did.

Emma hadn’t expected to find Regina in there and promptly avoided any eye contact with her. She had no time for any of that now. Or ever, really.

“So, what did you find?” Emma turned to Killian, her hand gently caressing his elbow as he opened one of the books.

“We’ve identified the sword, love,” he then tapped the page with his index finger as the group stared at an illustration of the familiar blade - golden guard and round pommel with a deep blue jewel in all its glory. It looked just the same as the one hidden in their basement.

“It’s a magical sword called The Fragarach, but it’s also known as ‘The Answerer’”, Belle added in a rather enthusiastic voice, “No one can move or tell a lie with the sword at their throat. According to legend, it belongs to Calypso.”

“Aye, it seems Calypso was also known for having the ability to turn humans into mermen and mermaids,” Killian completed Belle’s thoughts, astounding everyone in the room.

“Wait, Calypso like… Calypso?” Emma asked, her brows knitted in a frown as she regretted not having paid more attention to her high school classes on Greek Mythology.

“How would she even be here?” David wondered, trying to make sense of things.

“Age certainly wouldn’t be a problem,” Regina’s snarky remark had everyone looking at her expectantly, “she’s a goddess, which means she’s immortal.”

“Not exactly. According to the books, there is one way to kill her,” Belle informed, redirecting
everyone’s attention back to the book. “By stabbing her with her own sword.”

Emma cast a skeptical eye at the book. Something wasn’t right. “Okay, but are we sure she was the one targeting my parents with it? Why would she risk losing the one thing that can kill her? It makes no sense.”

“Perhaps she wasn’t expecting to miss, love.”

Maybe Killian was right. If Calypso had been successful, she could’ve easily retrieved the sword. A shiver ran down her spine just thinking about it.

“We have Calypso’s sword trying to kill us and Sleepy’s legs turning into a fishtail.” Snow pointed out matter-of-factly. “It’s hard to believe it isn’t Calypso.”

“It was her,” realization hit Regina. “The truth spell. The tinder box with my memories… She wanted to turn us against each other. To turn Emma against me.”

Emma glanced downwards, avoiding Regina’s gaze once again. Thankfully, though, her mother spoke up soon after.

“But how would any of this benefit her?”

“Whatever it is, she can’t know we know about her,” Emma closed the book, frustration crinkling her eyes. They really couldn’t get a fucking break, could they? “Everything we just said stays in this room.”

After that, it didn’t take too long for them to decide on who would be doing what. The one good thing about Storybrooke being a crisis magnet was that they kept practicing their team skills.

“Emma,” Regina ran after Emma, who was just about to leave with Killian. “I—”

“In case you didn’t notice, I have work to do,” Emma interrupted her with an edgy voice, before tugging on Killian’s hand and pulling him out the door with her, not even giving Regina another chance to talk.

---

**Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago**

A bitterly cold night had settled upon the town and Davy found himself rubbing his hands together, in a hopeless attempt to warm them. There was no living soul on the streets - it was two in the morning, after all - and, exceptionally, he had closed the tavern long ago. He hoped Anne wouldn’t take much longer to arrive, fearing that his hands would fall from the cold. Oh, the things he did for love…

He had started flirting with the idea of fetching firewood when a silhouette emerged from the darkness that surrounded the back of the tavern. An instant smile appeared on his face when his widened eyes met Anne’s. He rushed to her, hugging her as hard as he could, his face buried in the crook of her neck.

“I missed you,” she giggled at his warm, ticklish breath on her skin and a new wave of sadness washed over her. He was the only one that could make her giggle during times of absolute hopelessness. And what she was about to tell him was probably going to break his heart. “What’s wrong, my love?”
It had only taken one look at her face for him to know that her spirits were down and, for the first time whenever she was around him, she didn’t know what to do next. She started shaking her head, not wanting to tell him about what her father had done to her. Not wanting to tell him that she hadn’t told her father the truth about Brennan. Not wanting to disappoint him and let him know that she would continue being a married woman. She found herself wishing that she could go back to Misthaven, to that peaceful and beautiful lake. Just Davy and her again, nobody else in the world but them.

Her fingers tugged on his hair and her nails dug into his scalp, feeling a sudden urge to kiss him, wishing for him to make her forget about everything else. She stood on her toes as her lips crashed into his, but he pulled away from her embrace.

“Something’s troubling you,” he told her, not wanting to take advantage of her when she was obviously so distressed.

“I…” her voice was barely a whisper, her eyes suddenly trained on the ground. “My father, he—”

“So it is true,” William’s stern voice interrupted her, his eyes narrowing at them as if aiming a gun. “My own daughter is dishonoring me.”

Anne felt her heart thumping wildly, beads of perspiration forming droplets on her brow. She had never been one to be afraid of her father, but the strenuous malevolence blazing from him had her taking a step back, her body unconsciously shielding Davy’s.

Her father wasn’t alone. His guards had followed him, like the pathetic, little foremen they were. The light emanating from the torches each one of them was carrying allowed her to see the hatred burning in her father’s eyes as he closely inspected Davy’s figure.

“You know what you have to do,” at William’s command, the guards ran over to Anne and grabbed her by the arms, not really caring whether they hurt or not. Davy tried his best to push them away, but a fist collided with his cheek and sent him reeling to the side. Just then three guards hovered over him and a short scream escaped Anne’s mouth as they started punching Davy with no mercy.

“No!” Anne shouted, tossing around and trying to break away from the guards’ strong grip, but they were just too many. “Davy!”

She heard her father’s footsteps walking in her direction, but she kept her eyes glued to Davy. The three men were tackling him all at once and he was unable to push them away, his body getting weaker at each blow to his face.

“And just when I was starting to feel guilty for having sold your ship in your absence,” her father’s words didn’t even register with Anne, her hammering heart twisting hard at the sight of Davy’s barely conscious body lying on the muddy floor. Nothing mattered anymore. Not her. Not her ship. Just Davy.

“Leave him alone!” she begged in tears. “He has nothing to do with this!”

"Enough,” William ordered the guards to stop and they left Davy alone almost instantly. Amongst her daze, relief washed over Anne. Maybe her father wasn’t a monster. Maybe he had actually listened to her and had abided her request.

Her blind hope in her father proved to be momentaneous when she could do nothing but stare at what he did next. A wicked smirk spread on his face as he walked eagerly towards Davy, who was covered in blood. Her face turned ashen pale when she watched her father’s foot tap Davy’s leg.
with sheer repugnance, almost as if he was pushing an insect out of the way.

“Do you know what I enjoy the most about taverns?” he taunted Davy as he swung his arm in a signaling gesture to his guards. Four men raised their torches to the wooden walls of the tavern and small patches of smoke started to rise from the dark, old wood. “The amount of alcohol they have inside.”

“No!” Anne whimpered, watching the red and yellow sparks turn into hungry flames when they reached the straw roof. She tried to break free once again, the adrenaline in her veins allowing her to forget about any pain she could feel.

She had to get away from them.

She had to stop the fire.

She had to save Davy.

She twisted and turned with as much resilience as her weakened body allowed her, managing to free her right arm from the guards’ grip. She prepared to hit one of them square in the jaw, but before she could, she found herself back in her room at the mansion, her feet hitting the cold, tiled floor that she had always hated.

How did she get back here? Her hands started shaking uncontrollably, images of a powerless Davy surrounded by his father’s guards while his tavern burned down making her breath hitch in her throat. This was all her fault. If Davy had never met her, none of this would have ever happened.

Doubt started consuming her as the panic of losing Davy settled in. She couldn’t just stand there and do nothing. She had to do something, anything.

“The moment you stop trying is the moment you start failing,” her mother’s voice echoed in her mind, giving her the smidgen of courage she needed.

She wasn’t going to let her father take everything away from her. She wasn’t going to let him win, she thought to herself, storming out of her room without looking back.

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

Taking one last look at their front door, Emma closed her eyes in deep concentration, hoping the magic that started emanating from her hands was enough to prevent any break-ins. This was something she should have done long ago, but after the Final Battle everyone in Storybrooke (including herself) had genuinely believed nothing would disrupt their Happy Beginnings.

Yeah. So much for that. Now freaking Calypso was the one going for a ride in the Storybrooke Villain of the Month Rollercoaster.

“You’re bloody brilliant, Swan,” Killian couldn’t help but compliment his wife’s magical skills, watching her with an unrelenting stare as she cast a protection spell on the house. There was a smile still lingering on her lips by the time she pulled away, opening her eyes at the familiar feeling of her magic fading.

“Let’s hope that does it,” she said, shaking her hands. Even after all this time, she could still feel a rush of heat flowing through her hands whenever she used magic.
“Surely Calypso wouldn’t be foolish enough to barge into our home again,” Killian pointed out, bending down to take off his shoes.

“Yeah, but still… I’m not taking any chances,” Emma insisted. “What the hell does a sea goddess want to do with us anyway? I don’t get it.”

She removed her jacket and hung it on the coat hanger by the door, trying not to let her brain explode. It seemed the cumulative effects of her stressful day were finally starting to take a toll on her. Her muscles were rigid and tense and her head hurt like a bitch, but she was way too agitated to take a nap before dinner. Maybe tomorrow she should go talk to Archie and see if she could let some of the anxiety out of her system.

“Don’t think about that now, love,” he stepped in front of her, taking her hand in his. His voice was always so smooth and sweet whenever he tried to relax her. “How did it go? With Regina, I mean.”

Her lips turned into a hard line the minute he mentioned Regina.

“Not well. She said she was sorry, but it’s not that easy. I can’t look at her without thinking that I’m looking at Graham’s murderer,” she said, not looking up from where their hands were joined.

“Understandable,” Killian’s sad nod had Emma thinking about her earlier conversation with Ashley. This was the right time for them to finally talk about Killian felt.

“Hey,” Emma reached up to caress the stubble on his chin with the palm of her hand. “I know we’ve talked about him many times before, but does this make you uncomfortable? Because I really don’t want you to—“

“It does not make me uncomfortable, Emma,” he cut her off with a small, gentle smile on his face. “We both have a past with other people and I have nothing but utter respect for it.”

She said nothing, not finding the right words to say, only smiling back at him in response.

“I know you must be thinking about the Boston ordeal, but that was different,” he added, making her wonder if he was actually a mind-reader. “I was jealous because I knew that man had meant nothing to you. And being an arsehole certainly didn’t help.”

Killian’s hand slipped around her waist and squeezed, clinging to her as hard as she clung to him.

“I respect the other women you had in your life, too,” Emma’s eyes locked on his like magnets. “You wouldn’t be the man I love if it hadn’t been for them.”

He raised an eyebrow at her use of the plural, earning her a teasing reply. “I’ll have you know Milah was the only one.”

“Oh, c’mon,” she burst into giggles, giving him a playful swat on the arm. “Not even a crush on some wench or some other lady?”

“Aye,” he conceded, joining her in her amusement before his expression grew more serious. “But none were ever strong enough for me to consider them an important part of my life.”

The way he was staring brazenly into her eyes had Emma’s stomach doing flip-flops. She didn’t know if she should just kiss him or slap him for being such a ridiculous charmer. She decided to go for option and stood on her tiptoes to kiss him softly on the lips.

“How come you always make me feel better even in the shittiest of days?” Emma buried her head in
the crook of his neck, her body shivering as he ran his hand up and down her back.

“I believe that’s my job, love.” He rested his cheek against her head, the delicate scent of her shampoo wafting up to tease his nostrils – strawberry and mint. So Emma. “Which reminds me…"

He raised his eyebrows at her, dropping a kiss to her hand before parting, much to her disappointment. Her eyes followed him as he walked towards the hallway closet, opening its door and poking his head inside.

“What are you looking for?”

“Patience, Swan,” was the only reply she got as he struggled to get out of the way all the junk they had in there. She had no idea how he still hadn’t decided to clean organize it. Wait, what if that was what he was going to do now? He better not- “Ha, here they are.”

He was holding two swords in his hand and she recognized one of them as his old sword, his one companion of centuries.

“How could I forget?” she said, not fully grasping why he was stretching his arm to her, encouraging her to hold the sword that wasn’t his. “Am I missing something?”

“You taught me how to drive. It’s only fair I return the favor and teach you how to swordfight,” he said, flipping the sword in his hand and holding it loosely by his side. Show-off.

“Are you saying I don’t know how to use a sword?” Emma was well-aware of the double-meaning of her words and the smirk she sent him wasn’t entirely innocent. He took the bait (he always did) and cut the distance between them, a smile dangling on the corner of his lips.

“You excel at taking great care of a sword,” his voice was low as he stared at her lips, gladly letting her know that she had absolutely no reason to feel insecure about her natural talent for handling swords. All kinds of swords. “But you’ve had a long, taxing day. Perhaps a swordfight lesson will help you release all that tension.”

She chuckled at him, her heart thawing a little at his gesture. She wouldn’t mind releasing the tension in other ways, but despite all the teasing and innuendo, she wasn’t really in the mood for sex. A swordfight lesson with her favorite pirate, however, seemed pretty damn great. Maybe along the way she could pretend she was actually cutting Regina in half. Or Calypso. Or both.

“Alright, Captain. I hope your sword can take it.”

---

**Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago**

Anne ran through the forest, pushing branches out of the way as her breath curled like smoke in the cold night air. Her hands and face were freezing, but she wouldn’t let that stop her. She had to get to Davy, no matter what.

“Going somewhere?” his father appeared from out of the shadows and her body smashed against his. Two of his guards came up from behind him and her pale brows creased in a worried frown as she started running in the opposite direction. She let out a frustrated wail when her body jerked violently, two pairs of hands circling her waist and stopping her in her place. For what seemed like the millionth time that night, she tried to escape their embrace, but she no longer had enough energy to resist. Her knees started buckling under her and tears started forming in her eyes.
“What do you want from me?” she hissed, almost out of breath. Her legs hurt so much that she had no choice but to lean against the guards for support.

“Look at you,” her father stood before her, disdain written all over his face as he grabbed her by the arm and pulled her to her feet. “A pathetic little girl crying over a worthless tramp. You’re nothing but a disappointment.”

Anne didn’t know what was harsher: her father’s belittling words or the grip of his fingers on her arm when he started dragging her through the woods. She had no idea where he would be taking her, but wherever it was, there was no chance at all that she would get to Davy.

Davy.

Images of his beaten-up body out of her mind gave her a knot in her stomach and she thought she was going to vomit. Her heart started racing uncontrollably and her chest tightened, feeling as if all the air was being pushed out of her lungs. Her knees buckled once more and she could swear the trees around her were moving and about to fall on her. She vaguely registered the guards holding her unbalanced body, his father’s voice nothing but an imperceptible echo in the distance despite him being no more than one feet away from her. What was happening? Why couldn’t she move? She…she couldn’t. She…Davy. She had to…She had to get to...

And then everything went black.

Davy could hear the faint sound of the flames consuming the one thing he had worked for his entire life. He should be doing something – anything – but his body didn’t respond. All he could do was focus on how much everything hurt. Why did it hurt so much?

Right, he thought to himself.

Right.

He had almost been bludgeoned to death. By pompous arsehole. Hideous outfit. Anne’s father.

Anne. A sharp pain had him growling when he moved his head in hopes of finding her. He never did. Of course he never did. His hands slowly reached for the necklace on his chest and the corners of his mouth turned up. She was safe. Safe, yes. That’s all that mattered.

“Davy!” was someone calling for him? He fought to open his eyes when he felt two hands on his chest. A woman. Not the woman he wanted. Calypso. “Look at you!”

He closed his eyes and didn’t even notice how the fire magically came to a halt, leaving nothing but a burnt down tavern behind.

Storybrooke – Present Day

Emma clutched the sword at her side, trying to guess what Killian’s next move would be. He was winning, but she was still holding her own, even though the boastful simper that never left his face was making it hard for her to focus.

Killian took a step forward towards her and she quickly responded by holding the sword in front of her, but he leaped backwards as if to pretend he wasn’t going to lunge at her. Oh. She knew that
move. He wanted her to believe that this was a failed tackle. He would expect her to lower her defenses and then he would leap forward again and try to disarm her.

Two could play this game.

“Hold on,” she said, rocking back on her heels and lowering her sword. “Five-minute rest?”

Killian put his sword down and approached her, his blue eyes twinkling with concern. “You alright, love?”

The victorious grin on her face let him know that he had been fooled and before he knew it, she was turning him around. Her hand was gently gripping his hair and she raised the blade to his throat, safely away from his skin but still close enough for him to know that she had bested him.

“I’m great, thanks,” her bragging voice was hot in his ear. “What happened to ‘never lower your guard’?”

He growled playfully, clearly enjoying the sudden turn of events. “Very well, Swan. I believe there is nothing I can do but surrender.”

Without letting him go, Emma watched him drop his sword to the ground, the lawn of their backyard muffling the sound of the fall. Really, was he going to give up that easily? She jumped when she felt his fingers pinching her butt, a yell escaping from her lips. Of course he wasn’t going to give up that easily. Pirate.

He took advantage of the way her jerked at his touch to take the sword from her hand and use her own move against her.

“And that’s lesson number two, love,” he boasted, pointing the tip of the blade in the direction of her throat. “Always keep your eyes on the blade.”

“Right.” Emma pulled the sword down with her hand, bending down to pick Killian’s sword up from the floor. “I should probably remember that. Calypso has her own sword, I’m assuming she knows her way around sword fighting.”

With the way Storybrooke worked and with yet another villain on the loose, the chances that she would end up fighting against Calypso were, well… very high.

“You are stronger than her, Swan.”

“You don’t even know who she is,” she wiped the sweat off her forehead with the back of her hand and pointed the sword at him again, challenging him for another round.

“I don’t have to. You are stronger than anyone.” She would’ve smile at him if he hadn’t already started tackling her again, metal clanking against metal as she defended herself.

“I still…” she stopped talking for a second to catch her breath as she blocked each and every one of his advances, “…don’t trust her.”

“Morgana?” he wondered, never taking his eyes off his sword. “I didn’t find anything that could possibly incriminate her, Swan.”

“No, not Morgana. Ethel.” Killian stopped his movements, faint puzzlement crinkling between his eyes. “She looked really nervous today and insisted on not having my parents help her with the research on the sword.”
“But she was the one who saved your parents.” Killian picked up the bottle of water they had brought outside and handed it to Emma, who gladly accepted it. “Why would she do that if she were Calypso?”

“To try to trick us? I don’t know.” Emma shrugged before tipping her head back and guzzling the water down.

Killian tried not to get lost in the alluring sight of her glistening neck and blushed cheeks. She always looked particularly irresistible while exercising, but he mentally shook himself out of any lusty thoughts. “Whoever she is, love, we’re going to get her.”

---

**Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago**

When Anne woke up, the first rays of sun caressed her face. Her head pulsed in time to her heartbeat and, as she scrambled unsteadily to her feet, she realized she was locked in the cellar of the plantation her father owned. She hadn’t been there too often, but she would recognize that rotten smell and small compartment anywhere.

She struggled to remember how she had ended up there, but all she could recall was being on the woods, trying to make her way to David, when her father and his guards appeared out of nowhere. Then reality hit her and images of her father’s atrocities ran through her mind all at once.

A slap on her face. Guards battering Davy and burning down his tavern. Her ship being sold. Locking her in the cellar.

A fresh wave of anger hit her square in the chest and she suddenly found it hard to breathe. She was done having to be exposed to her father’s ways. She was done letting him do whatever he wanted. This was her life, she was the only one who got to decide how to live it. She didn’t care if she ended up begging on the streets. Anything was better than staying in this town. In that house. In that prison. Being locked somewhere had never stopped her before. Why would now be any different?

Today would be the day she would flee Kinsale for good. Today would be the day that she would finally be free.

But not without doing something first. Her lips curled up in a vicious smile as the sweet taste of vengeance consumed the crevices of her heart.

She would leave, but first her father would have a taste of his own medicine.

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

Pretending to be absolutely captivated by Granny’s menu card, Scott let his body sink into one of the comfortable booth cushions, stealing some glances in Morgana’s direction. He had to admit she was stunning: long, light brown hair and green eyes that he was certain he could get lost in if it weren’t for his unconditional commitment to Ethel. Or Ethel’s cause, that is.

He almost dropped the menu once he saw Morgana making her way to him, ready to write down his order.
“Hey,” she said in a rather sweet voice that surprised him. He had never heard her voice before. “So… what will it be?”

He stuttered at first and ended up reading the first thing that caught his eye.

“A fiery chicken burrito… please.”

“Alright. I’ll be right back.”

As soon as she left he started shaking his head. This wasn’t going the way he had planned. He wasn’t supposed to be acting like a teenager with a crush on the school’s mean girl. He had to focus. This wasn’t the first time he was around a beautiful woman. Ethel would kill him if she saw him behaving like this and that wouldn’t be pretty.

Five minutes had passed when Morgana returned with his burrito in hand, placing it in front of him. This was it. He had to do it.

“Can I ask you a question?” there was no stuttering this time. “How long have you been in Storybrooke? I’ve only seen you around here recently.”

Morgana’s smile faded, but she kept her eyes on his. “Not for long.”

“Do you intend to stay?” he tried to sound casual as he cut his burrito in half. “I’m asking because I heard you were a baker… back in the Enchanted Forest.”

He held in a triumphant smile when he saw her scratching her ear and her eyes darting to the floor. His cryptic voice was making her uncomfortable. Good. Ethel would be proud.

“I was a baker and yes, I intend to stay,” she replied in a firm and confident tone. It really seemed that Ethel had made an accurate description of her.

“I used to be a guard. In a kingdom called Kinsale.” he saw the way her eyes widened at his words and he felt just a smidge of guilt that he quickly blocked out. After all, he was doing this for a good reason, he thought. “My specialty was to catch impostors. You know, people who pretended to be something they weren’t.”

In that moment, Morgana’s eyes locked on his again and he swore he could see the faintest glint of menace in them. “Good for you. Enjoy your burrito.”

And then she left, trying to get away from him as fast as she could. He couldn’t help but let his hungry eyes linger over her smooth legs, a longing smile spreading over his face. Little did he know that Ethel’s livid glare was burning into him from outside the diner.

It had been a long time since Emma and Killian had had a quiet dinner, just the two of them. Lately, when Henry wasn’t staying with them, it would be Liam keeping them company. With Henry at Regina’s and Liam having dinner with Captain Nemo, they hadn’t bothered to cook, having decided to go with the leftovers there were still on the fridge.

“So that’s why you were smelling like baby powder earlier today,” Emma’s chuckles filled the kitchen as Killian told her about his unfortunate encounter with Gideon at the library. It was his turn to do the dishes and the dishwasher was full and he had to wash the dishes by hand (something he was surprisingly good at).

“I’m telling you, Swan. As adorable as babies may be, they do come with some rather unpleasant
rituals.”

“Of course they do,” Emma grabbed one of the plates he had just finished washing and started drying it with a towel. “They’re babies. It’s hard work.”

“Aye. Making them is certainly more pleasurable.”

That earned him a playful poke in the ribs, but Killian cried out at Emma’s touch and the glass he was holding fell on the sick.

“Did I hurt you?” Emma put the towel away as her worried eyes darted down to where she had poked him. “Let me see.”

“No!” he moved away, not letting her push his shirt up. What the hell? “I’m just sore from our practice, love.”

Emma sensed something different in his voice, but he kept washing the dishes as if nothing had happened. Maybe she had poked him harder than she had meant to.

They had just finished cleaning the kitchen when Henry arrived, Regina closely following behind.

“Hey mom, hey Killian,” Henry greeted them when they walked into the entrance hall. Emma avoided looking at Regina. Couldn’t she just have dropped Henry in the driveway and then gone home? “Killian, can I talk to you for a second?”

Killian glanced at Emma and then at Regina, feeling the awkwardness in the air. Henry was most definitely trying to leave the two alone to see if they would talk.

“Sure,” he put his arm around Henry’s shoulder, after Emma nodded at him, letting him know that she would be fine. “Why don’t we go upstairs?”

Watching the two of them climb up the stairs, Emma tried to remember Killian’s words during dinner:

“I don’t mean to upset you, love, but Regina has a point. Calypso wanted you to see Regina’s memories so she could turn you against her.”

She knew he was right. By staying mad at Regina, she was doing what Calypso wanted. That was a sure sign that wasn’t what she should be doing. But how the hell could she not be mad at Regina? She wasn’t some robot, she couldn’t just turn off her feelings and pretend nothing happened.

“Emma, I’m sorry. I know I should’ve told you about Graham,” Regina said once Henry and Killian were no longer in sight. “I didn’t because I was afraid.”

“Afraid of what?”

“That you and everyone in this town would think I hadn’t changed at all.”

“Telling me about it would have been the best way to prove that you had changed,” Emma bit back, taking a step forward to close the front door. The nights were getting chillier and they didn’t need to have a cold house, on top of everything.

“I was scared! You would all think I was still the Evil Queen.”

“You are the Evil Queen, Regina,” Emma snapped, reaching her breaking point. “Why do you keep talking as if you were two different people?”
“I am not her,” Regina insisted. “You know it, I used the serum and I-“

“The real you is not that version of yourself,” Emma corrected her, folding her arms around her chest. “But it’s still a version of you. Serum or no serum.”

Regina kept quiet, putting her hands in her pockets. “I don’t know what else to say.”

“I believe you regret being the Evil Queen. I believe you wouldn’t do it again,” Emma saw a subtle smile emerge on Regina’s face. “But what do you want me to say, Regina? I won’t tell you that I forgive you, because I would be lying.”

“I understand that.”

“I am mad. I am pissed, actually. And I don’t see that changing anytime soon,” Emma carried on, letting out all of the anger she felt. And damn, did it feel good. It was like lifting a weight off her shoulders to be telling all of these things straight to Regina’s face.

Regina simply nodded at her and Emma figured it was a silent goodnight night when she watched her walk to the front door.

“But I also know,” Regina turned around when Emma kept talking, “that there’s a powerful goddess in town trying to turn us against each other and I won’t fall for it. I won’t do what she wants me to do.”

“That’s a wise decision.” Emma almost rolled her eyes. Could she cut the crap already?

“I won’t let my personal feelings get in the way of everyone’s well-being,” Emma extended her hand for a truce handshake. “I think history has proved us that Storybrooke needs us as allies, not enemies.”

Regina gave her a half-smile, shaking Emma’s hand. “I think you’re right.”

There was some sort of relief washing over Emma. She was still mad at Regina, but at least now they should be able to breathe the same air again. The things she did for the people of Storybrooke.

“I see what you did, lad,” Killian patted Henry’s shoulder as he followed the boy into his room. “Perhaps they’ll sort things out.”

“Eh, actually… I want to talk to you about something.” Henry’s voice had Killian dropping one of the bizarre stress balls that Henry had on his desk. He tried to contain his enthusiasm over the lad wanting to talk to him. After the fiasco with his missing classes situation, Killian wasn’t sure if Henry would trust him again to open up to him.

“Of course. What do you want to talk about?” Killian sat on the bed next to Henry, helping him take off his backpack.

“I was thinking of taking Violet on a romantic date,” Killian’s eyebrows shot up in delight, but he straightened his face and controlled his amusement when he noticed how embarrassed Henry was. “But I have no idea what to do.”

“Don’t worry, my boy,” Killian got up from the bed and encouraged Henry to do the same, directing them to Henry’s desk. They had work to do. “We will make sure you will provide lady Violet with a date she shall never forget.
In the darkness of the street below, the eyes of two carefully hidden figures observed the shadows of stepfather and stepson, moving behind the curtains.

“Aww, the pirate is such a good father. It runs in the family,” Calypso tried to provoke her late-night companion.

“What do you want?” There was a mix of bitterness and menace in Rumplestiltskin’s voice.

“Someone is impatient.”

“You may be a goddess, but I am the Dark One. Do not waste my time,” his face was mere inches away and his breath blew in her face. “I gave you the tinderbox with Regina’s memories. My end of the deal is done.”

“Oh, I know. But why not extend our partnership when we share a common interest?” Calypso took a step back, careful to avoid the fading light of the street lamp. “We both want to make the pirate miserable. I know you still hate him. You always have.”

“You and I both know that the pirate isn’t your main target.”

“But a target, nonetheless,” she ran her index finger over his lapels. “I need one last favor.”

“One would think you would know by now that I don’t do favors. And certainly not to you.”

“What if I told you that there is one tiny, little piece of information I have that you will most definitely want to know about?”

That got Rumple’s attention and he roughly grabbed her by the arm. “How do I know you’re not lying?”

“You don’t. You’ll just have to trust me,” Calypso shoved his arm away, turning to look at Henry and Killian as she waited for Rumple’s answer.

“Very well, but I shall remind you,” he almost whispered in her ear, “you are in no position to play games with me. Not unless you want miss Swan and company to know that the person they’ve been looking for has been under their nose the whole time.”

Calypso smirked, staring off into the distance. That wouldn’t be a problem. She wasn’t playing any games.
Birthmark

Chapter Summary

The heroes come across an important clue that brings them closer to Calypso. In Boston and Enchanted Forest flashbacks, a young Emma struggles to accept herself while Anne and Davy Jones reunite and make plans for the future.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Storybrooke – Present Day

Killian was vaguely aware of the mattress shifting beneath him, but it was only when he felt Emma’s lips brushing against his jaw that he forced his eyes open. Their bedroom was still dark, the dawning sun barely seeping through the blinds. Any sleepiness he could still be feeling left him the minute Emma slid her silky body on top of his. A growl escaped his lips at the warm, moist feeling of Emma’s tongue on his neck.

Bloody hell.

He loved when his Swan woke up hungry for him. There was no better way to start the day.

“Wanna do it?” she chuckled into his mouth in between sloppy kisses. He didn’t say a word, wrapping his left arm around her instead and letting his stump caress her back in slow, small circles. When would he ever not want to do it?

She skimmed her hands up the planes of his chest, curling her fingers around his white t-shirt, but stopped once his hand slipped under her tank top and cupped her breast. His hand was colder than usual, but the way his fingers started teasing her nipple had her body heating up.

Damn.

She loved how much her pirate loved her breasts.

Giving up on trying to get him off his t-shirt, Emma let her hands wander down and began toying with the waistband of his sleeping pants. He captured her lips in a sultry kiss when she pulled his pants down and took him in her hand. No teasing. No games. Just a desperate need to have him.

Killian groped her breast even harder as she pumped him in a fast, deliberate motion. It was a good thing that he kept sucking on her bottom lip, otherwise his moans of pleasure would have awoken Henry and Liam for sure. She pulled her mouth away from his lips and groaned in frustration when she realized she wasn’t going to be able to take off her underwear with only one hand available and while kissing. So much for not looking awkward during sex. The best part about being intimate with your True Love, however, was that none of that mattered – and sure enough the two of them started giggling at their slightly awkward moment.

“Sorry,” she whispered, putting one leg on each side of his waist after she got rid of her underwear. “Take two.”
The bedroom was dark, but Killian could still register the smile on her face as her fingers wrapped around him once again, stroking him from base to tip. His hand cupped her cheek as he lowered her head to his, turning it to the side to gently suck on her neck. He heard her gasp when she slipped him inside her, mercilessly rocking on him.

“Emma,” at the feel of his hot breath on her neck, Emma picked up her pace, undulating her hips, desperately seeking release. They would do it slowly some other time. But not now. Now she just wanted to ride him into oblivion. Hard. Fast. Shameless. “Swan.”

She silenced him with a kiss, her hands gripping his hair as her tongue stroked his bottom lip in time to the rhythm of her hips. Killian dug his fingers into her waist, trying his best to control himself as her welcoming warmth took him inside as if he belonged there.

It wasn’t long until he felt her body trembling against his, her walls clenching around him in a spasm of release that triggered his own orgasm. He joined her on a low, husky whimper until her body collapsed on top of his, the sweaty fabric of their clothes sticking to their skin.

“I love you,” Emma’s words came in breathless pants as she arched closer to him, dropping a kiss to his neck and breathing in the familiar scent of his skin.

Killian carefully pushed a strand of hair behind her ear, helping her roll off him so they could snuggle together while they waited for the alarm clock to ring. “I love you, too.”

---

**Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago**

It was only when cold water was splashed on his face that Davy woke up with a jolt. He wiped his hands across his eyes and a blurry face standing next to him was the first thing he saw. No. It hadn’t been a nightmare. He was still there. His face still throbbing with pain. His tavern – or what was left of it – nothing but a burnt pile of rubble.

*His tavern.*

*The family business he had fought so hard to keep.*

*His livelihood.*

“You’re hurt, let me help,” Davy winced at Calypso’s cold fingers tracing the bruises on his cheek. She was right, he was hurt. But the cuts on his face were the last thing on his mind.

“Not now, Calypso,” he said, pushing her away and getting up from the floor. “I need… I need to find someone.”

His tavern was gone, there was nothing he could do to bring it back. Standing there feeling sorry for himself was of no use. Not when Anne was still out there. Not when he didn’t know what had happened to her. He had sent her to safety, but after knowing just what her father was capable of, she would never be completely safe while she was still around that man.

“Who?” jealousy made Calypso’s voice as bitter as bile as she stood in front of Davy, trying to prevent him from leaving.

“No,” Calypso almost felt bad for having sent that letter to Anne’s father, letting him know where Davy and Anne would be. Almost. “Lass, I am beyond grateful for your help, but as you see, I’m afraid I won’t be needing your assistance anymore. I wish you the best of luck.”
She was barely aware of his distant pat on her shoulder as he walked past her in a rushed step. Had he just said goodbye to her as if this was the last time he would be seeing her? Did he seriously think that this was it? That he could just go back to Anne and leave her?

“Davy, wait” when he turned around to look at her, all he saw was Calypso’s hand lifted in front of her face as a dark blue dusty substance emanated from her hand. Was that… magic? A smirk spread on Calypso’s lips as she silently wished for Davy to start hating the one woman who had ruined her life. She couldn’t make Davy love her, but she could make him not love Anne. All she needed was to see the eerie shade of her blue magic engulfing Davy’s eyes, the definitive proof that her spell had worked. It had to work.

Her smirk gave way to a grimace when Davy’s eyes never changed, staring at her in confusion with their usual watery blue shade. No, it couldn’t be. It hadn’t worked. Why hadn’t it worked? Calypso tried to block the voice in her head that shouted the answer at her. Loud, cruel, persistent.

“Those who share True Love or are related by blood cannot be turned against each other by magic”, her mentor’s voice from years ago echoed in her mind and everything became clear.

They are True Love.

Anne Cormac is Davy Jones’ True Love.

Her spell would never work on them. She would never be able to make them hate each other.

“You have magic…” Davy whispered, his voice filled with disbelief as he focused on Calypso’s shaking hand. “Are you a witch?”

“I am not a witch!” Calypso’s growl of anger could be heard from a mile away, images of being pushed to one of the walls of her hut coming back to haunt her. The first time someone had called her a witch. The day she had discovered Anne’s betrayal. Her parents’ betrayal.

“Then what were you doing just now?”

“I was trying to help you!” Calypso shouted back at him, coming up with the first lie she could think of.

An uncomfortable silence fell between them until Davy nodded stiffly, his glare subsiding. “I don’t need your help.”

And then, just like that, he turned around and left. Calypso stood there, motionless, watching his figure disappear in the peaceful, cold dawn.

She had been rejected once again. Because of her magic.

The cruel realization that Davy was just like everyone else hit her like a vicious bolt of lightning – he would never love her, would never accept her for who she was. He had betrayed her. He had made her think that he was different.

How could he have done this to her? Now any love that she had left for him was gone and it was all his fault. If he didn’t want her, then he would get what he deserved. This wasn’t over yet. Her primary plan may have failed, but she knew just what to do next.

Storybrooke – Present Day
When Emma got to the kitchen, she found Liam opening a carton of orange juice. The table was already set for breakfast, linen napkins folded across the plates and a delicious smell emerging from a tray of eggs and bacon (clearly, Liam didn’t take after his half-brother in that regard).

“Oh wow,” Emma laughed, her hungry eyes never leaving the tasty bacon strips. “Good morning.”

“Good morning. I took the liberty to make something other than pancakes,” Liam poured the juice into the four cups set on the table. “I hope that’s fine.”

Hey, she didn’t mind one bit. If Liam wanted to cook eggs and bacon every day for breakfast, she wouldn’t say no. “It’s more than fine. We were serious when we told you to make yourself at home.”

Liam smiled at her and watched her open the fridge, pulling out one of the yoghurts that he already knew would go straight into Henry’s lunchbox.

“Good morning, brother,” Killian walked into the kitchen with an overly cheerful mood. “Good morning, wife.”

Killian kissed her on the cheek, the trace of his cologne catching her nostrils as she coated two slices of bread with peanut butter and banana – Henry’s favorite.

“Good morning,” Emma and Liam greeted him in unison before they exchanged an amused, knowing look when they saw Killian shooting a dirty glance at the tray of eggs and bacon.

“Did you sleep well?” Killian turned to look at his brother, ignoring what he assumed had been Liam’s unhealthy choice of breakfast.

A light blush crept over Liam’s face and he awkwardly pulled one of the chairs out from the table and sat down, avoiding Emma and Killian’s gaze. “Not really… I woke up in the middle of the night and I couldn’t go back to sleep.”

Wait, had he…? No, he couldn’t have heard them. Could he?

A smirk formed on Killian’s face, but Emma was too busy pretending to be entirely focused on the peanut butter. It had a stunning color and it was so soft, so smooth. Liam who?

“I hope at least your dinner with Nemo went well,” Killian tried to change the subject as he walked over to the counter to get the coffee pot.

“It did. He sends his regards.”

“Ugh, I forgot to buy scones for Henry,” Emma’s frustrated voice had Killian and Liam turning in her direction, watching her as she opened the pantry cabinet. With all the chaos happening lately she had completely forgotten about the scones. Damn it. And damn Storybrooke’s constant crisis.

“Don’t fret, Swan. I’m sure the lad won’t mind,” Killian tried to ease her mind just before Henry joined them in the kitchen. “Ah, you speak of the devil.”

Henry ignored Killian’s amused smile and, with his head down, mumbled a low-keyed “morning”.

“What’s wrong, kid?” Emma noticed the heavy bags under his eyes. “Bad night?”

It took Henry a while to answer her as he sank into one of the chairs and promptly filled his plate with eggs and bacon. “I had this awful nightmare. I was cursed and living in Seattle, away from all of you. And I… kind of had a daughter.”
“What?” a shiver ran down Emma’s spine just thinking of something like that actually happening. Henry, a father? And alone and cursed in the other side of the country?

No. She wasn’t going to do this, she thought as she closed Henry’s lunchbox. Her boy was thirteen and it would still be a while until he left home. She wouldn’t let a stupid nightmare make her think about the future and making her even more anxious.

“It was only an unpleasant dream,” Killian took a sip of his orange juice. “You’re safe and sound, lad.”

As always, those were very dangerous words to say in Storybrooke – just when Emma sat down and planned to get lost in the delicious tasty bacon, her phone rang. So much for a quiet breakfast.

“Hey, dad,” all the eyes were on Emma as she picked up the phone and started talking, her serene expression turning to apprehension in a matter of seconds. “Okay, we’ll be right there.”

“What is it, Swan?” Killian asked once Emma hung up, preparing himself for the worst when he saw her getting up in a swift move and pulling her jacket from the back of the chair.

“We have to go.”

---

**Boston, Group Home – 15 years ago**

As much as Emma would prefer to spend the weekend away from the old, moldy walls of the Group Home, it was freezing cold outside. Much to her disappointment (and boredom) she had no choice but to sit on the living room’s saggy couch and wait until Mrs. Murphy, their caregiver, called for lunch.

Paying careful attention not to sit on one of the protruding springs, Emma let her body fall on the hard cushions, cheap teen magazine in hand to keep her entertained. She wasn’t a big fan of those, but there was nothing else to read in the living room. The flashy words and images blurred as she flipped through the pages, but an article on a newly released doll with washable body art called her attention. She had always loved dolls – or the idea of having them, that is – and the washable tattoos in this one looked so pretty.

Before she could even finish reading the article, the loud thud of steps and shrill screams drew Emma’s attention to the stairs. Unsurprisingly, Priscilla was running after Emma’s roommate, Samantha. The shy eight-year-old little girl had joined the Group Home at around the same time as Emma and she had quickly become an easy prey for older girls like Priscilla.

“Leave her alone,” Emma got up from the couch and tried to stop Priscilla from taking Samantha’s one and only teddy bear.

The older girl, however, was having none of it. “Oh, really? Or what?” Priscilla shoved Emma away, making her stumble back and almost lose her balance.

“What is going on here?” Mrs. Murphy emerged from the kitchen before Emma could do anything. She had always disliked Priscilla. Punching or slapping her was long overdue, if she was being honest with herself. The girl seemed to get a kick out of taunting all the other kids in the house, just for the sake of it.

“She tried to steal my teddy bear,” Samantha stepped forward, pointing her index finger at Priscilla, who was now under Mrs. Murphy’s threatening glare.
“Priscilla, I told you to leave Samantha alone,” Mrs. Murphy admonished. “Now you all go to your bedrooms.”

“But – “ Emma tried to protest. Why all of them? She had done absolutely nothing.

“Now.” Mrs. Murphy’s authoritative voice was enough to let Emma know that there would be no point in arguing with her. “I’ll call you when lunch is ready.”

Emma sighed in frustration as she followed the two other girls up the stairs. Great. As if it wasn’t enough to spend the day at home, now she couldn’t leave her room either.

“Rat,” Priscilla’s murmur was followed by an intense scowl at Samantha before she vanished into her bedroom.

Jerk.

---

**Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago**

The thickness in the sound of her coughs was the only thing Anne was able to hear as she cut her way through the dense forest. She had to find a different way than the one she usually took, lest her father and his guards find her again.

At each step she took, she told herself that what she had done was justified. She shouldn’t be feeling bad about it – and she didn’t, really. Her father had it coming for a long time now. She just had to make sure she was out of Kinsale before he realized what she had done. She wished she had been able to say her goodbyes to Arietta, but going back to the mansion was too dangerous. She couldn’t take any chances.

Once she spotted the docks in the distance, Anne adjusted the scarf on her head and pulled back a few loose strands of hair. Hopefully, no one would recognize her like this, but it was a risk she was willing to take, for Davy. The streets were oddly quiet and Anne wondered if it was Sunday. The last hours had been so agitated that she had lost track of time. A peddler with a two-wheeled cart tried to stop her, persuading her to buy some fresh cherries, but she ignored him, knowing that Davy’s tavern was right around the corner.

She had been expecting to find a devastating scenario, but nothing had prepared her for the pile of rubble that she found where the tavern once stood. She didn’t know why, but no tears ever came to her. Perhaps it was because she still felt numb and hadn’t processed everything that had happened in the last hours. Or perhaps it was because a sense of pride invaded her, knowing that she had avenged Davy. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

“Anne?” she would recognize that voice anywhere. When she turned around, she found Davy staring at her, a broken smile forming above his bruised chin before he ran to her. “It is you!”

“Davy!” she met him halfway, throwing her body against his and pulling him closer. She never wanted to let go. She never wanted to stop feeling him pressed against her. Ever.

“I looked everywhere for you, I tried-“ her lips were on his before he could finish. He was alive. Nothing else mattered.

“I’m so sorry,“ her voice trembled as she gently touched the wounds on his face.

“What matters is we’re both alright,” he said, resting his head against hers. “I can’t even imagine what your father would do if I were to ask him for your hand in marriage.”
She chuckled at his morbid sense of humor. How could he possibly joke after everything that had happened? This man was something else.

“I was so scared that you…” her voice trailed off as she lowered her head. She couldn’t finish her thoughts, but Davy knew exactly what she was thinking.

“It’s alright, my love. I’m alright,” Davy felt her hands caressing his chest, a sudden look of realization hitting her when her fingers traced the chain of his necklace.

“It was you,” she raised her eyes to him, her mouth gaping open. “You sent me home.”

“I wanted you to be safe.”

She smiled at his sweet words, her heart thawing a little at how he had put her first even when he was being attacked. “He’s not going to hurt us anymore. He paid for what he did to you. To us.”

“What do you mean?” Davy noticed how her face had suddenly hardened into viciousness. “Anne, what did you do?”

“I set fire to my father’s plantation,” there was excitement and bitterness in her voice and a glint of malice in her eyes that he wasn’t familiar with. “It was his main source of profit.”

Davy didn’t know what to say at first. Part of him was concerned about Anne and how she had let her desire for revenge get the best of her, but he would be lying if he said that he wasn’t happy that that bastard had finally paid for everything he had done to his daughter. Wasn’t it something that he deserved? Perhaps there were situations in which revenge was justified.

“If that brought you peace, I stand by your side. All I want is for you to be happy,” he said, caressing her cheeks with his thumb. “Speaking of which… I have a surprise for you.”

“A surprise?”

“It should take us a while to get there, but it’ll be worth it,” he groaned when he attempted to wink his swollen eye at her. “I promise.”

They walked for what seemed hours but was probably only several minutes. The empty and dirty streets were an obvious indication they were no longer in Kinsale, but in a rather small village nearby with a surprisingly large shipyard. Anne recognized it from one of her sailing trips with her father.

Sailing trips that would happen no more.

With all her concern about Davy she hadn’t even had time to process the loss of her ship. It was that heaviness in her heart that had her pouting when Davy grabbed her hand and pulled her with him towards the dockyard.

“Stop, I know what you’re trying to do,” she pulled her hand away from his and took a few steps back. As sweet as it was of him to try to cheer her up, being in a dock surrounded by ships after she had lost hers wouldn’t help her. “I can’t do this.”

“Do you trust me?” he then stretched his hand to hers, a soft smile on his face as he nodded at her. Of course she trusted him. She took a step forward and put her hand over his, letting him take her wherever he wished.

As they walked through the wooden planks of the dockyard, they came across all kinds of ships:
from cogs and carracks to crayers and picards. None of them could ever be as beautiful as herbrigantine. Or what used to be her brigantine.

She was about to protest when Davy suddenly stopped and turned around to face her, smacking his lips as if in eager anticipation. It was only when he took a step to the side that she understood the smile dangling on the corner of his lips. Not more than one hundred feet from where they were standing, a beautiful brigantine ship came into sight. The hull was painted in familiar shades of dark green... And there were two yellow stripes running the length of it... and was that... three tall masts with square-rigged sails.

Her heart pounded wildly in her chest when it all became clear to her. “It’s my ship.”

The words had barely left her mouth when she started running towards the vessel. She had to make sure her eyes weren’t deceiving her. When Davy joined her near the ship’s ramp, he saw her eyes open wide in surprise and recognition, tears threatening to fall as a wide grin lighted her face.

“It’s her!” Anne’s delight was an absolute wonder to witness. She had the most beautiful smile. The ship’s name – her name – had been painted over, but that didn’t stop her from recognizing the ship that was rightfully hers. “How did you know she’d be here?”

“I’ve spent enough time around docks and ships to know that recently sold vessels never go in the open water right away,” Davy explained as he put one arm around her shoulders. “They’re moved to maintenance shipyards to undergo through some changes before sailing away with their new owners.”

“You’re bloody brilliant!” Anne threw her arms over his neck and hugged him. His laughter echoed in her ears and she vaguely heard him talk about having been there the night before and having found her ship, but her brain was going a mile a minute and his words became distant mumbles. “Run away with me.”

Her abrupt interruption caught Davy off guard, who simply stared at her. “What?”

“Run away with me,” Anne insisted, sounding even more determined this time. “I can’t stay here any longer, but I don’t want to leave you.”

"But how will we-"

“We have my ship now. We can travel the world, do whatever we want without having to respond to anyone. Look around you: there’s nothing but corrupt and immoral men who only seek wealth and glory.”

Davy’s brows were knitted in a frown as he carefully considered her words. She had a point. He and his family had always been treated like dirt because they had committed the crime of being poor. All the mocking and name-calling had been what had led his father to drown his sorrows in alcohol in the first place. The king, the nobility and their thirst for power and wealth had always prevented people like him and his grandfather to lead the life they truly sought and deserved. A life where they were respected for their hard work instead of being mocked and spit on. Perhaps Anne was right – a life on the sea would allow them to depend only on themselves.

“On the sea we would finally be free,” Anne insisted, her eyes twinkling with hope when a smirk appeared on Davy’s lips.

“We could dock on any port and steal from the wealthy.”

“And perhaps from drunken sailors...” she suggested with mischievous glee, knowing how much
Davy despised drunkard fellows. “It would be our way of getting revenge on those who have made our lives miserable.”

“You, my goddess, are an absolute genius,” he wrapped his arms around her waist. “Of course now we just need to find a way to steal your ship.”

“You can’t steal something that’s yours.”

“Get your ship back,” his prompt correction was accompanied by a teasing smile. “Yesterday, when I was here, there was a guard wandering around. We should wait until it’s dark and then we need to find a way to get past him.”

“It’s nothing we haven’t done before.”

Calypso paid unrelenting attention the nauseating couple from afar. Now that Davy had made his decision, she wasn’t going to let them out of her sight. She finally had everything she needed to go through with her backup plan. She could have easily turned Anne into a mermaid, but that wouldn’t be painful enough.

Davy and Anne could run away together all they wanted, but they had no idea what awaited them.

Storybrooke – Present Day

On the way to the town hall, Emma told Killian that Glenda, the bakery owner, had been attacked by someone and Regina had taken her to her office. When they arrived, they found her, David and Ethel trying to soothe a very frightened Glenda, who was sitting on Regina’s couch. The glass of water she was holding in her hand was shaking uncontrollably and her body was rocking back and forth. Much like Sleepy a couple of days ago, she seemed to be in shock.

“Hi, Glenda,” Emma smiled at the woman, kneeling to get on eye level with her. “It’s alright, you’re safe here. Can you tell us what happened?”

The glass clinked against Glenda’s teeth and some water ran down her chin when she tried to take a sip. “There was… this woman. She… she blasted me with her magic. She said…” her lips trembled and more tears rolled down her cheeks. “She said she was going to turn me into a fish.”

Emma’s eyes sought Killian’s. First Sleepy, now Glenda. This could have only been Calypso’s doing.

“Clearly she didn’t go through with it,” Regina said, looking at Glenda from top to bottom.

“I don’t know why she stopped,” Glenda added in between sobs. “She was gone all of a sudden.”

“Have you ever seen this woman before?” Emma’s question had Glenda nodding vigorously. “Where?”

“What if she goes after me again?” Glenda’s eyes widened with fear, the panic obvious in her voice. “I don’t want her to hurt me.”

“We won’t let that happen,” Emma gripped Glenda’s hand in firm reassurance. “Who is she?”

“She’s the new waitress at Granny’s.”

Emma raised her eyes to the group and they all shared a worried look. Morgana.
Emma shifted in her top bunk-bed, trying to find a comfortable position, but that was pretty much impossible when the mattress was as thin as a wooden board. She tried to focus on the book in her hands. Every month Mrs. Murphy would give them a new book to read. If they finished it on time, she would give them fifteen bucks and a box of Milk Duds. Reading had always been boring to her, but the money and the Milk Duds made it worthwhile.

It was in times like these when she was alone in her room (Samantha had gone to the grocery store with Mrs. Murphy) that she was able to really get ahead in reading – the sooner she finished it, the sooner she could get her reward.

She was about to start reading the third chapter when she heard the bedroom door opening. She saw Priscilla peeking in before entering the room, completely oblivious to Emma’s presence. Emma stayed as quiet as possible, trying to see what Priscilla was up to. It was only when the girl opened one of Samantha’s drawers and took out her teddy bear that Emma decided to make her presence known.

“What are you doing?” Emma’s voice startled Priscilla, who looked like a deer caught in the headlights before storming out of the room. “Hey!”

Emma threw the book over the bed and tried to get down from the bed as quickly as possible. When she got to the end of the hallway, she pushed Priscilla by the arm and tried to get the teddy bear out of her hand.

“Eww, is that a wart on your wrist?” Priscilla let the teddy bear fall to the ground as she grabbed Emma’s left wrist and turned it up, her nose scrunched up in disgust.

“It’s not a wart, it’s a birthmark,” Emma’s words were as rough as the strength with which she pulled her arm away from Priscilla’s grasp.

“It’s disgusting, no wonder you were sent back,” Emma glared at Priscilla’s mocking laughter, but that didn’t seem to stop her from being cruel. “Don’t you know? No one is going to take home a kid with ugly warts.”

At the sound of the front door opening downstairs, Priscilla went to her bedroom but Emma just stood there, feeling as though someone had punched her. She cast a hesitant glance at the round, black spot on her left wrist. She had never liked it, but she had never thought there was anything wrong with it. It was just a birthmark, it’s not like it was her fault that she was born with it.

Could Priscilla be right? Could her birthmark be part of the reason why no one wanted to adopt her? Samantha’s footsteps brought her out of her thoughts and she picked the teddy bear up from the floor before making her way back to the bedroom and putting it back in the drawer.

Enchanted Forest – 232 years ago

Knocking the guard unconscious and tying him to one of the pier’s pillars hadn’t been an arduous task – they were becoming quite practiced at it, actually. After spending a couple of hours inspecting the ship and doing all the necessary changes, they were finally ready to go.

The sea was as calm as a pond, reflecting the bright moonlight almost like a mirror. Anne clutched her fingers around the steering wheel’s handles, a bright smile stained upon her lips. She couldn’t believe this was happening. She had her ship back and she was leaving, never to return. She was
going to explore the world. Just her, her ship and the man she loved. After years of dreaming about this moment, it was finally here. After all those years of confinement and torment, she was free at last.

“Are you alright, darling?” Davy joined her at the steering wheel, his hand rubbing circles on her back upon noticing the tears that ran down her cheeks.

“I’m happy,” she laughed and sniffed, before wiping the tears away from her eyes. “My dream is coming true. And you’re here with me.”

“I will always be with you.” Davy put his hand over hers on the handle and kissed her forehead in response. “Ready to set sail, Captain Cormac?”

“That name is no longer meaningful to me,” this was something she should have done a long time ago. Cormac was her father’s last name and that man was dead to her. From now on, she would honor her mother by carrying her last name instead. “It’s Captain Bonny from now on. Anne Bonny.”

From the dock, Calypso watched the ship getting smaller in the distance, the white, freshly painted letters forming the name “Revenge” on the place where “Anne Cormac” once was. She opened the small jar in her hands and let the magic blue dust fall on the palm of her hand. She hesitated for a second, but ended up blowing the dust, knowing it would find its way to the ship. She looked up at the starry sky and full moon, relief and peace washing over her. She had won.

Now it was only a matter of time.

Storybrooke – Present Day

Granny was flipping some burgers on the grill when Emma, Killian and David stormed into the diner, guns and sword in hand.

Emma’s eyes scanned the entire place in search of a blonde head, but found nothing. “Where’s Morgana?”

“She’s not working today,” before Granny even had a chance to ask why, the three of them disappeared into the hallway that led to the inn. “And here I thought all that urgency was because I made lasagna today.”

On their way up, they were careful not to shove into two ladies going down the stairs. Once they reached the third floor, Emma kicked the door open and charged into Morgana’s room. Not surprisingly, she wasn’t there. Emma gestured with her head for Killian and David to check the bathroom while she looked in the closet.

Nothing.

“It seems our goddess is on the run,” Killian put his sword back in its sheath after he and David returned from the bathroom. Of course that now that they knew that Morgana was Calypso she was nowhere to be found. Of course.

A sudden burst of anger took over Emma and she slammed the closet door shut. This was all her fault.

“Don’t worry, honey. We’ll find her,” David tried to comfort her, but Emma just started pacing back and forth.
“We wouldn’t need to find her if I hadn’t let her out in the first place.”

“You gave her a second chance, it’s not your fault she threw it away.”

“Your father is right, Swan,” Killian squeezed her hand in his, trying to soothe her guilt away. “Your heart was in the right place.”

Emma loved them both for trying to make her feel better – and they did – but right now she needed to find Morgana to feel at peace with herself.

“We should talk to Granny. Maybe she’ll be able to tell us where Morgana could be,” Emma suggested and David and Killian nodded in agreement.

When they got back to the diner, they found Granny arguing with a tall man who was yelling at her. Emma studied the man as she took some slow steps in his direction. Wait… Was he? No, she had to be seeing things.

“I’m telling you, one of your employees attacked me yesterday and threatened to kill me. Are you going to do nothing about it?” the man’s coarse voice was unsettlingly familiar and when Emma stood before him, her mouth gaped open in astonishment.


“Chris,” it was only when he turned to look at her, no smirk or smug leer, that Emma realized she had said his name out loud.

“My name’s not Chris,“ he was now looking at her as though she had three heads. "You must be mistaking me for someone else.”

“Cut the crap already,” Emma snapped at him, noticing Killian and David were now standing by her side. “How did you get here?”

"You better answer her, mate,” Killian took another step towards him, invading his personal space in a threatening manner and Chris hunched his shoulders and took a step back, clearly afraid of the sudden confrontation.

“Look, sheriff, I have no idea what you’re talking about,” he turned his attention back to Emma, "I’ve lived in Storybrooke all my life.”

What the hell was going on? Back then, there was no mention whatsoever of Chris having a twin brother or a look-alike. This was Chris Miller, it had to be. And yet he seemed to believe every word he was saying.

"Who are you then?” David asked, casting the man a skeptical glance.

“I’m Jacob Baines. I work at the medical equipment store,” they all frowned at his answer. There was no medical equipment store in Storybrooke. "Yesterday, one of the waitresses from this place broke into my store and threatened to kill me. She blew everything up and then she was gone. She’s a witch, I’m telling you.”

"Look, soony, I am not responsible for any theft or damage my employees may engage in during their free time,” Granny kept cleaning the dishes as if it was none of her business, which clearly seemed to tick Chris off. Taking advantage of such distraction, Emma pulled Killian and David to the side.
“I don’t think he’s lying,” she whispered, feeling her brain was just about ready to explode.

“Then how the bloody hell is he here saying he’s somebody else?” Killian glared at Chris, just as confused by the whole things as Emma was.

“How do you two know him?”

Emma and Killian exchanged a somewhat awkward look at David’s question, but Emma eventually answered. “I met him in Boston, some years ago. He’s a doctor and has a family.”

“Wait, he’s from Boston? Then how did he pass the town line?”

“I don’t know, nothing makes sense,” Emma shrugged while her eyes narrowed to crinkled slits. She had turned her attention to Chris once again, trying to think of what to do next when her phone’s ringtone brought her out of her thoughts for the second time today.

“What is it?” David asked after Emma ended the call, a somber expression haunting her features.

“That was mom. We have a bigger problem,” Emma put her phone back in her pocket as she nodded in Chris’ direction. “Dad, will you please take Chris… or whoever he is now… to the station? Killian and I will be there as soon as possible.”

(Of course.” David assented, turning around to face Chris and holding his left arm. "You’ll come with me.”

“You’re going to arrest me?” there was a hint of irritation and impatience palpable in Chris’ voice and he tried to break free from David’s grasp, but he had no such luck.

“No one’s going to arrest you. Now go on, let’s go.”

“But I’m the victim here! That woman must be caught!”

Emma and Killian watched David drag Chris out of the diner and then they walked to the bug in hurried steps. It was going to be a long day.

______________________________

**Boston – 15 years ago**

*The rage of the wind pushed through Emma's hair and into her ears until she was shivering with cold. She should be waiting for the school bus to take her back to the Group Home, but Priscilla’s words kept replaying in her head.*

“No one is going to take home a kid with ugly warts.”

*Maybe she was right. Maybe hiding her birthmark would increase her chances of being adopted. A tattoo was the first thing coming to her mind, knowing that drawing something around the birthmark would be the easiest way to disguise it. Months ago, there had been some kids in her class that had mentioned getting a group tattoo, but she had been left out of it. It hadn’t surprised her, she was better on her own anyway, but the idea of getting a tattoo had stayed with her. Money had been the main reason why she hadn’t gotten one before, but she’d been able to save enough with the few dollars Mrs. Murphy gave them each month. Now she just had to decide on what tattoo she would get. A dog? She liked dogs. Or bunnies, maybe a small bunny would look nice. A swan would be ideal, but she didn’t see how anyone could tattoo a swan on her wrist in a way that hid her birthmark. Maybe she should just let the tattoo artist decide for herself.*
Emma crossed the street in long-legged strides towards the tattoo parlor, the wind blowing her hair in every direction and forcing her to squint her eyes. When she reached the sidewalk, a flyer hit her in the face as another blast of wind made her stagger a little. She removed the paper from her face and crinkled her nose before she read the green flyer: “The Cinquefoil Theatre Academy presents: Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Join us for the premiere at the Strand Theatre.”

The small yellow flower in one of the corners was what called Emma’s attention – it was easily one of the most beautiful flowers she’d ever seen. It had five single petals and a dark yellow center. She didn’t know why, but there was something drawing her to that flower.

Holding the flyer in her right hand, she turned her left wrist up and studied her birthmark. It was only seconds later that her mouth curved into a smile that not even the sharp wind could blow away. The round, black spot could easily pass as the center of a flower. All she needed to do was get the petals tattooed around it. She folded the flyer in two and shoved it into her pocket before she kept walking among the crowd. Her tattoo awaited her.

Storybrooke – Present Day

“What the hell?” the first thing that Emma and Killian noticed once they got to the town line was the vast amount of people they had never seen before passing the town line looking like they were an army of robots. They were marching almost in sync, the expressionless on their features matching the emptiness in their eyes. Snow and Ethel were already there and they seemed just as surprised as they were.

“Where are they coming from?” Killian reached for his sword, in case all those people decided to turn on them.

“We don’t know,“ Snow shrugged her shoulders. ”I was on my way to check on Anton’s plantation and I saw all these people walking as if they were under some spell.”

“I think they are,” Ethel barged in. “They act like we don’t exist. They don’t talk to us or even acknowledge us.”

“Is it possible Calypso did this?”

“It has to be her,” Emma answered her mother’s question. “The sword, the truth spell, the tinder box. And now we have two people saying they were attacked by Morgana.”

“And now she’s nowhere to be found. Why escape if she weren’t guilty?” Killian finished Emma’s thoughts.

“So you think Morgana is Calypso?” Ethel’s sudden proximity startled Emma and she instinctively took a step back.

“It’s possible that she is,” Emma’s reply was dismissive, her attention now on another group of people crossing the town line. In all her years in Storybrooke she had never seen anything like this. ”We have to follow them. I want to know where they’re going.”

Enchanted Forest – 231 years ago

Sometimes Anne still couldn’t believe that it had been a year since they had left Kinsale to spend their lives on the sea. It wasn’t always easy, with having to depend on thievery and robbery to survive, but Anne wouldn’t have it any other way. There was nothing like waking up in the morning
and feeling like she could do anything and everything she wished. Her favorite days were the ones they spent on the open sea after having docked the ship for replenishing. They would have everything they needed: food, water and each other.

She smiled to herself as she prepared the chamomile tea Davy loved. The truth was that they had ended up becoming pirates in their own way and she, for one, couldn’t be happier. The only downside to it was in days such as this – Davy now had to do stealing alone and she would have to wait on the ship until he arrived. It was still hard for her to let him venture into a new land all by himself, but at this point she had no other option but to trust his survival instincts.

When her ears captured the indistinct sounds of men screaming outside, she sighed in relief. That was always a good sign – it meant Davy had been successful.

“Thief!”

“You hornswoggler!”

“Ratbag!”

Within seconds, there was a loud thud coming from the main deck before Davy burst through the door of their quarters, trying to catch his breath.

“Thank God you’re alright,” she hugged and kissed him, as she always did when he came back to her.

“I’m far brisker than they are, my goddess,“ he said with a breathless voice as he dropped a big burlap bag on the floor. "I brought plenty of fruit, just as you asked.”

“Thank you. I’ve been dreaming about eating apples all day.”

“And now you have apples for a week,“ he chuckled and started taking all kinds of fruit from the bag. "I took these from a snotty tax collector. He had his men after me right away, but it turns out I’m a professional scoundrel.”

The brash smirk glowing on his face didn’t stop her from feeling her chest tighten in concern. He was strong and unbelievably witty, but he wasn’t invincible.

“Davy, please be careful,” she held his face in her hands, the scruff tickling her palms. “Especially now that I can’t help you.”

“Don’t worry, my love. Nothing will happen to me,” he gave her a smile and then brought one of her hands to his lips. “And as much as I miss having you as my partner in crime, we can’t risk having you engage in straining activities. Not in your condition.”

“I’m with child, I’m not sick,” she protested, hands going immediately around her protruding belly. She absolutely hated not being able to join Davy in their weekly missions whenever they found new lands to plunder. She had refused to stay behind even after they had concluded she was pregnant, but not too long ago she had been feeling an uncomfortable, sharp pain in her belly whenever she started doing more demanding physical tasks. Not knowing exactly if something was wrong with her, she had agreed to let Davy do the stealing on his own. Everything for their baby’s well-being, even if that involved being bored to death.

“Still… Let us not take any chances,” he knelt in front of her and dropped a kiss on her belly, a warm and adoring smile on his face. “We want little Liam to grow up to be a robust lad.”
She gripped his hair and made him look up at her. “It could be a lass.”

“It’ll be a boy, mark my words. You know how-”

“- all the Jones men only have boys. Yes, you’ve told me that tale plenty of times already,” she interrupted him with an amused raised eyebrow. Apparently, he still believed that the men in his family could only procreate boys.

“It’s a bloody shame, if you ask me,” he left a trail of kisses all over her body as he got back on his feet. “I would love to be a father to a little girl who looked just like you.”

She closed her eyes when his lips met hers, savoring his familiar taste. “Maybe one day you will.”

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

By the time the four of them reached downtown, the group of intruders seemed to snap out of the trance they were in, each person splitting from the group and going their own way. Some went to Granny’s, others to the grocery store and a couple of them to… the medical equipment store? Okay, that definitely wasn’t there before.

They agreed to split and see if they could talk with as many people as they could. Ethel and Snow would be inspecting the left side of the street and Emma and Killian the right side. Everytime they approached anyone, the answer would always be the same: “I’ve lived in Storybrooke all my life.”

Except they hadn’t. None of them had.

“Are you alright, love?” Killian asked her as they stood on the sidewalk in front of Granny’s. An absentminded nod was all he got from Emma, her face screwed up in concentration as she tried to understand what was happening. The weirdest thing was that it really didn’t look like any of these people were lying. Something – or rather someone – had made them believe that Storybrooke was their home and that they had been there since ever. Just like Chris.

“I think I know where all these people come from,” Emma blurted out, her eyes narrowing as realization hit her. “The world. The land without magic.”

Killian blinked at her in response, but let her finish before he said anything.

“We know for a fact that at least one person used to have a very non-magical life in Boston. And now he’s here claiming to be an entirely different person who has spent his whole life in Storybrooke?”

Killian’s eyebrow shot up, impressed by his Swan’s usual wit. “You think these people are doing the same.”

“Which tells me they can all come from the same place, too.”

“Calypso must be controlling them.” Killian’s eyes drifted to Granny’s windows, watching the new residents talking to one another as if they had known each other all their lives.

“The question is what for.”

---

The first thing Emma did when she and Killian got to the station was to go straight to the file cabinet that contained the folders with all the records of Storybrooke since its creation. She was pretty certain
none of these people had ever been in Storybrooke, but this was the only way to know for sure.

“Did he share any useful information?” Killian walked towards David, his eyes never leaving Chris, who kept walking around in circles inside the cell.

“Not really. He just kept ranting about Morgana,” David threw a file on one of the desks. “Luckily, he’s calmer now.”

“Just as I suspected,” Emma’s voice had both men turning around to look at her. “There are no records whatsoever of a Jacob Baines having ever been here. And nothing on anybody else either.”

“So they’re definitely not from he-“

"Emma!" Liam’s breathless voice startled them all as he barged into the station. His face was red and there were drops of sweat over his forehead.

“Liam, what’s wrong?” Killian rushed to his brother, concern evident in his voice.

“When I got home, I…” Liam was slow at first, but then his trembling voice came faster and faster as he spoke. “I found Morgana sitting on the couch.”

“She broke the protection spell?” Emma stared at him with wide eyes and raised eyebrows. How could that have happened? Panic hit her at the possibility of Calypso having gotten the sword back.

“Believe me, she’s powerful,” Liam said as he held onto Killian for balance. "She threw me against the wall and started choking me from afar.”

“Did she hurt you?” Killian inspected his brother’s neck, looking for any bruises.

“No, I’m fine now, but…” Liam hesitated, but his eyes eventually landed on Emma’s, “she made me promise that I would tell you she wants to meet with you tonight. 9:15 at Granny’s.”

“So she finally decided to stop running,” Emma crossed her arms around her waist. “That’s a start.” If Calypso wanted to fight, then so be it. Bring it on.

“Did she say anything else? Why would she want to meet with Emma?” Killian’s words came out in a snarl, the muscles in his jaw twitching in anger.

“No. She vanished after she said that.”

“Regardless of what she wants, we’re coming with you,” David put a hand over Emma’s shoulder. “We’re doing this together.”

Emma smiled at her father. She wasn’t expecting any less. That’s how she knew they were going to win. And then she’d finally feel at peace.

---

**Boston – Group Home, 15 years ago**

Watching Samantha get in the car with her new family made Emma feel as if she had gone back to the countless times she had said goodbye to the girls she had shared a bedroom with until they had finally found a home.


She still remembered their names. Their happy faces forever attached to her hopelessness as
thoughts of rejection consumed her. She was always the one who watched the others leave, winning a new chance at life, while she always stayed in the same place. Left behind. Left with thin mattresses, broken couches and indifferent glances from Mrs. Murphy.

She traced her fingers over the flower tattoo on her wrist, fighting the tears that started forming in her eyes as the car drove away. She was stupid for ever thinking that a tattoo could make a difference. It didn't matter whether she had a birthmark or not – she wasn't ever going to find a family who wanted her because that was something that would never be in the cards for her. No one would ever want her. Maybe it was time she accepted it and learnt how to rely only on herself.

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

Killian closely inspected every room in the house, making sure Calypso hadn’t taken anything or, even worse, left there any magical objects or weapons. Emma had gone straight to the basement to see if the Fragarach was still in the secret compartment behind the bookcase. Having been the place where Calypso had left the tinderbox with Regina’s memories, he examined the office with unwavering attention. Who knew what else that bloody demon could do?

When he was done, he went back to the living room and found Emma’s eyes glued to the sword in her hand.

“Everything’s clear, Swan,” she jumped at the sound of his voice. She had been so lost in her own thoughts she hadn’t even heard his footsteps. “Ah, I see the witch didn’t find the sword.”

“Yeah, she didn’t know it was here, otherwise she would’ve easily walked past the protection spell on the basement, too” Emma said, pulling one of the lapels of his jacket with her free hand, a playful gleam of deviltry in her eyes as she reached for the flask of rum in his inside pocket.

“What could she possibly want from you?” Killian didn’t mean to sound so harsh, Emma wasn’t the one at fault for any of this. He was just bloody tired that every bloody villain in this town always wanted to bloody harm his wife.

Emma took a swig, but the way Killian was clenching his jaw prevented her from savoring the exquisite liquid. She knew what he was doing. Worrying about her. It was inevitable, he always did that when she was about to go through a potentially dangerous situation. Emma would never blame him for it, not after she had lost him more than once, not after he had watched Milah die in his arms.

She tried to remember Archie’s words, how being able to remain calm and level-headed during stressful events was key to a successful resolution. Killian was always there for her. He was her anchor, her pillar to lean on when life seemed to get the best of her, but she was his safe haven as much as he was hers. Now that he was the one who needed comfort, she was going to be there for him as he always was for her.

“Hey, nothing’s gonna happen to me,” a small smile cut the tension on his face at her reassuring words and he closed his eyes for an instant when she leaned her head on his chest.

“I know, Swan. You’re stronger than her,” her eyes locked with his when she looked up. His never-ending belief in her never ceased to amaze her and she threw the flask to the couch so she could wrap her arm around him.

“I was thinking tonight would be a good night to watch Inspector Gadget,” she whispered against his chest, trying to give both something to look forward to. When all of this was over, they would be back to the peace of their home and cuddle together on the couch until the flames in the fireplace
burnt out.

“Of course, love,” Killian dropped a kiss on her head, knowing very well what she was trying to do and loving her even more for it. “As you wish.”

---

**Enchanted Forest – 230 years ago**

No matter how hard Anne gripped the steering wheel, nothing seemed to make the ship respond to her commands. She could not understand what was happening – never had she ever experienced something like this, not in any of her sailing trips with her father and not for the last year and a half on the sea. There was no storm and the sea was as calm as glass. There was no logical reason for her to be losing all control of the ship.

“What is happening?” Davy was right beside her, holding a baby Liam in his arms.

“I don’t know. It’s like the ship has a life of its own,” just then the ship tilted to the side with a deep groan and Davy fought for balance. “Go to our quarters right now!”

“I won’t leave you he-”

“You have to protect Liam!” Anne had never yelled at him before, but she didn’t regret it. Their child was their priority now. “I will be alright. Now leave!”

Knowing that she was right, Davy held Liam against his chest and climbed down the ladder to their quarters just before the ship tilted violently again, this time to the other side. A loud, scary creak came out of the ship’s guts and Davy got on their bed, his body carefully covering Liam’s as his heart pounded in his chest. No matter what happened, he wouldn’t let anything happen to their boy.

“Don’t worry, little one,” Liam had started crying at the eerie sounds and Davy tried to soothe him. “Your momma is the best sailor I know. She’ll figure it out.”

The ship kept rocking back and forth until it finally came to a stop with a heavy thud. Davy waited some seconds until it was safe for him to move and then he took Liam in his arms and rushed to the main deck, sighing in relief when he saw Anne by the steering wheel. She was leaning her hands on her knees, breathing heavily.

“Thank God you’re alright,” she said after straightening up and dropping a kiss on Liam’s smooth forehead. “I don’t know what that was, but I’m afraid we’re aground.”

Davy scrunched his face and stared at the horizon, shielding his eyes with the flat of his hand to block the sun. “Well, at least the view is delightful.”

Anne turned around to look at the horizon while she rocked Liam in her arms. With all her concern she hadn’t even taken in her surroundings. Just mere feet away from them, there was an island with a beautiful beach filled with golden sand that begged to be explored. It was simply breathtaking, but after what had happened, Anne wasn’t easily charmed by what seemed to be a desert island.

“This couldn’t have happened at a worse time,” she kicked one of the buckets to let out her frustration. “We’re running out of food… and money.”

“We’ll replenish on our next stop.”

“That’s if we get out of here on time.”
“There’s no need to worry, my goddess. We will,” Davy smiled gently at her and caressed her cheek with his hand. That always helped whenever she was starting to get irritable. “Perhaps in the meantime we can explore this island and find some fruit.”

As usual, Davy was right. They had spent most of the day walking around the island and had managed to find some bananas and coconuts. That should be enough for at least a couple of more weeks. What had initially been a very taxing and inconvenient event had ended up being a rather different and joyful day.

After their tiring excursion, they decided to lay on the sand and enjoy the feeling of the glorious sun against their skins. They laughed when Liam cried out at his failed attempts of grabbing the small grains of sand with his small fingers. Davy prepared to help his son, but when the ground started shaking for no apparent reason, he picked him up from the ground instead.

Before they could run away, a bright light erupted from the sand underneath them, the intensity of the glow making them look away. When their bare feet were no longer shaking, they gazed downwards and found a small wooden chest.

“Thunderation,” with both arms holding Liam to him, Davy knelt to better inspect the object that had come out of nowhere. There was a bright flash of light coming from out of it and, embedded in a small, circular hole in the middle of its lid, there was a stunning silver ring with a black stone.

“It’s beautiful,” Anne didn’t resist and pulled the ring from the lid. The chest started shaking again as the lid opened itself. When nothing else happened, they carefully peeked inside and they couldn’t believe what they saw shining and glowing right into their eyes.

Gold.

Thousands and thousands of gold coins. They had stunned, ecstatic grins on their faces. Was this really happening? Could they have been this lucky?

They had found an actual treasure.

It was theirs now.

“Wait!” Davy stopped Anne from touching the gold, a sudden wave of apprehension taking over him. “What if it’s cursed?”

“I already took the ring and I’m perfectly fine,” she laughed at him, but her eyes never left the shiny coins. She had never cared for money, but back then she didn’t have a child to feed and food was always a constant. They simply couldn’t waste this opportunity.

Davy ignored all the voices in his head telling him that perhaps this wasn’t a good idea. The truth was that they were short on supplies and having a chest full of gold was something they were in no position to ignore. This could possibly set them for life. Besides, his goddess had always been right – why would this be any different?

He smiled at her, kissing her forehead enthusiastically before letting his hand jump into the sea of gold coins. It was only then that he noticed some symbols carved on the inside of the lid.

Όποιος φέρει το εκ γενετής σημάδι θα σε ελευθερώσει

“What does it say?” he let his fingers trace the carving, calling Anne’s attention to it.
“It’s Greek,” she narrowed her eyes at the words, studying them for some seconds. It seemed all that time spent in grammar school and learning Greek paid off. “The one with the birthmark shall set you free”.

A cold shiver ran down Davy’s spine upon hearing those words. “Set you free? Why would we need that?”

Anne ran her hands through her hair and he noticed a nervousness in her gestures that seemed at odds with her confident perusal of the gold coins.

“It’s probably a tactic to scare pirates away,” as if to prove a point, she took a coin out and held it in the palm of her hand as absolutely nothing happened. “See? It’s fine.”

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

It was a moonless night and the only light illuminating their way was the one that glowed dimly from the street lamps. Emma’s entire family (and Regina) was right behind her, following her lead as they walked to Granny’s, ready to face yet another battle.

“How do we know this isn’t some trap?” Regina tried to catch up to Emma.

“We don’t;” Emma didn’t even bother to look at her. She had no idea what Calypso wanted, but not showing up to meet her wasn’t an option. "But we don’t have any other choice.”

“What matters is we’re all together,” Snow added as she took Emma’s hand in hers. “She’s not going to hurt us.”

When Emma opened the diner’s door, they were all surprised to find it empty. The lights were off, but the light outside could still let them see that the clock marked 9:15. Emma’s clammy hands gripped the hilt of the sword, her body in high alert. Calypso should be here any minute now.

“I don’t like this,” Regina was the first one breaking the silence, her own impatience making her fidget.

“Let us hope her fighting skills are as good as her punctuality,” Killian glanced at the clock for the twentieth time since they arrived. When he put his arm around Emma’s shoulders, she felt him tremble, but then she quickly noticed that Killian wasn’t the one shaking. The ground was.

Shattering sounds echoed from the kitchen as the shaking grew in intensity. They all held onto each other and fought to stay on their feet as glasses and dishes started falling out of the cupboards. Another violent shake hit the diner and the floor began to crack.

"Curse!” Grumpy’s shout from outside was heard by everyone just as a giant purple cloud ripped off the diner’s roof. Emma and Killian’s eyes locked in a shared moment of fear and Emma only had time to grab his hook and Henry’s hand before the cloud of magic engulfed them all.

---

It was the sound of seagulls screeching that woke Killian up. He tried to ignore the throbbing in his head while slowly adjusting his eyes to the bright light seeping through the windows. He felt the familiar balancing of his ship and a smile had just started to appear on his face when his eyes snapped open. He wasn’t supposed to be feeling any balancing at all. The bed he shared with Emma certainly didn’t balance first thing in the morning.

He took in his surroundings and sprang from the bed when he realized he was on the Jolly Roger.
How had he got here? The last thing he remembered was Emma holding his hook before they’d been hit by the curse. Again. Calypso had tricked them all and used her meeting with Emma to cast a curse on them.

Emma.

He needed to know where she was.

Not wasting another second, he grabbed his pirate coat from one of the chairs and stormed towards the ladder. “Emma!”

His shout died down on his lips when he got to the main deck and recognized the all too familiar harbor.

No, it couldn’t be.

He was back in the Enchanted Forest.

Chapter End Notes

Author’s Notes 1: just a fun fact. I tried to add a twist to the mythic figure of Anne Bonny (just like OUAT used to do) but one of the things that is believed to have happened (although not confirmed) was that Anne set fire to her father’s plantation in retaliation for him having disowned her.

Author’s Notes 2: I know, another curse. I have to be honest and say all the curses never really bothered me on OUAT. I actually liked them and always thought they provided interesting ways to explore AU situations - the way the show didn’t use them to their full potential was what usually annoyed me. Hopefully, you’ll end up liking the AU where this curse will take us.

Author’s Notes 3: Special thanks to user captainswan4e on Tumblr for providing me with a translation to Greek that I used in this chapter. Thank you!
After Calypso’s curse sends everyone back to the Enchanted Forest, Hook comes upon the realization that he is the only one who still has his memories. While reminiscing about pivotal moments in his relationship with Emma, he quickly arranges a plan to find her and convince her their True Love is the only way to break the curse.

Enchanted Forest – Present Day

The familiar fishy odor of the pier invaded Killian's nostrils as his eyes settled on the small, brick houses he hadn't seen in a long time. He still couldn't believe that bloody witch had tricked them all and cast a curse on them, but staring at old houses sure wouldn't solve a thing.

"Emma!" he knew looking around the Jolly would be fruitless, but he still couldn't help but let his eyes wander the deck. He heaved an annoyed sigh when all he saw was an ashamed Smee sitting on one of the trapdoors, trying to hide a piece of bread and cheese behind his back.

“Captain, I swear I was just stopping for a breath,” he used his free hand to clean some breadcrumbs off his bearded chin before sending Killian a curious look. “Who is Emma?”

The muscles of Killian’s jaw clenched at the realization that this version of Smee didn't know who Emma was. That couldn't be a good sign.

“Captain?” Killian heard Smee's voice in the distance, his mind too busy trying to figure out what to do next. As much as he loved his ship, it would be of no use now. Without even bothering to take one last look at his first mate, Killian started walking along the ramp in hurried steps, uttering a loud, but sarcastic “Enjoy your meal, Smee.”

When he got off the ship, everything seemed to be as he remembered: there were dockers all around taking goods on and off other smaller ships while the concrete walls of the houses nearby echoed the loud expletives and laughter of the crew men preparing for their next journey.

As he strode along the cobblestone street, he could sense the suspicious glances sent his way at every step he took. Some of the passers-by would slow their pace to try to avoid getting too close to him, while others not so subtly turned around and started walking in the opposite direction, not wishing to cross paths with him at all. As he ignored the cold gazes of all around, he couldn't help but let his mind wander to the last time he was subjected to such scrutiny.

Enchanted Forest – Two years ago

“I tried the hero thing,” Killian said once he settled on the horse under David’s surprised gaze. “It didn’t take.”

“So that’s it? Emma’s gone and you’re gonna go back to being a pirate,” Snow joined the two of
them, her tone somewhat judging and condescending, but one that didn’t bother Killian in the slightest.

“Back, milady?” his face quirked with an ironic half-smile as he pulled on the reins of the horse. “I’ve always been a pirate.”

The stunned expression on the prince’s face was the last thing he saw before he galloped away.

He was Captain Hook, the most treacherous pirate of the seven seas.

He didn’t need them.

He didn’t need Emma.

"Good."

His breath caught in his throat every time he remembered he would never be seeing her again, but he didn’t need her. No. All he needed was to have the Jolly Roger back. His ship. His love. He just needed to find it.

"Good."

"Please, you couldn’t handle it."

He yanked the horse’s reins, hoping the wind cutting his face would take away the words that insisted on haunting him.

"This is not a contest, Hook."

Another yank. Harder this time.

As much as he fought against them, the memories of her hazel green eyes swallowed him whole and, before he knew it, he was instinctively ordering the horse to stop when he got to the pier. There was quite nothing like that tarry, woody smell that would always make him smile.

Yes.

Now he was one step closer to home.

He let himself study the crowd before him as he got off the horse. His attentive eyes failed to stay indifferent to the fearful glances sent in his direction. Or in his hook’s direction, to be more exact. At any other time, he would have taken it as a compliment, an indistinct proof of his fearsome reputation. But now, no matter how much he tried to feel some sense of pride in it, all he could bring himself to do was walk through the crowd with slumped shoulders, trying to ignore all the terrified eyes following him. His hand rolled into a fist at the powerlessness that started taking over him. He was a pirate. Why the bloody hell was he feeling ashamed of it?

"Does that surprise you?"

"You're a pirate."

"Aye, that I am. But I also believe in good form."

A sigh escaped his lips as he stood by the tavern's door. He was going to get in there, find his crew and get the Jolly Roger back. And then... everything would be right in the world and he wouldn't think of Emma Swan ever again.
**Enchanted Forest – Present Day**

Of all the things Killian missed about the Enchanted Forest, the overly crowded fairs certainly weren't one of them. While they made for wonderful occasions to steal from the least alert folks, he had never been fond of the bothersome wails from those trying to sell whatever they could.

If there was a way to get to the Charmings' castle without having to walk through this nightmare, he would have gladly taken it, but alas here he was. A hurried pirate mumbling an array of "excuse me's" and "sorrys" to cut through the crowd. Emma was somewhere out there, he had no time to waste on old men who appeared to have an unhealthy fascination for horned helmets.

He kept walking as fast as he could – he had definitely forgotten how easily his boots would sink into the forest's muddy floor – but amidst the roar of the fair, the faint sound of a familiar voice stopped him in his tracks.

“Antique books. Four shillings each!”

Killian's head turned in the opposite direction, trying to determine where the voice was coming from.

"Four shillings!"

He pushed a man out of the way as he sallied forth, his fixed expression on one of the wooden stalls just a few feet away from him. Could his hearing be playing tricks on him? The corners of his mouth turned up once he got to the stall, the hazel eyes staring back at him leaving no room for doubt that he was most definitely *not* hearing things.

Henry.

“Would you like to buy a book, sir?” Henry stretched his arm, holding a book in his hand. Kilian's smile faded when he saw no sign of recognition on Henry's face. "It's only four shillings.”

“Is your mother with you, lad?” Killian's eyes instantly inspected the rest of the stall. If Henry was here, Emma had to be nearby. Or so he hoped.

“Buy a book. Three and a half shillings for you, sir," Killian raised an eyebrow at Henry's not so subtle refusal to answer his question. Not that Killian could blame the lad - after all, he was nothing but a stranger to him now. Trying to hide the unexpected disappointment that washed over him, Killian searched for some doubloons in his satchel. He knew that no curse could take Henry's perceptiveness away and the last thing he wanted was for the boy to get suspicious of him.

“Here, have five doubloons,” Killian dropped the coins on the table before taking Henry's book from his hand and taking a look at it for the first time. “The Mutton Scripture: everything you need to know about mutton meat” Ah. Fascinating. Perhaps he should have bothered to look at the title before giving him the money.

“Thank you, sir.”

Killian scratched his head with his hook, trying to appear as casual as possible during the awkward silence that ensued. “So… is there any chance I can speak to your mother?”

Henry's stuttering suddenly came to a halt when Belle joined him on the other side of the stall.

Killian tilted his head in confusion as he tried to understand what Belle was doing there with the lad.
“Mama, this man was looking for you.”

_Mama?_

Henry thought Belle was his mother?

The disturbing thought had Killian flinching and crinkling his nose in a way that in any other circumstance would certainly offend his friend.

“Oh,” Belle seemed taken aback with what Henry had just told her. "Do I know you?”

“No, I’m afraid not,” Killian said elusively, looking away from her inquisitive eyes. "I was looking for somebody else. My apologies.”

Realizing that staying in there would only make him look more distrustful, Killian nodded at the two of them and walked away. He had to find a way to keep his eyes on Henry. Not only was the boy his best chance to find Emma, he also couldn't help but fear for his safety in this cursed world.

Spotting a tree near Belle and Henry's stall, Killian skillfully walked his way through the crowd and hid behind it.

He watched intently as Belle smiled at Henry and her hand gestures seemed to be giving him permission to go. After Henry put some books in a satchel of his own, he waved at Belle and joined the sea of people. With a hint of a smirk appearing on his face, Killian started following him. It wasn't long until they got to the end of the fair and Henry started trekking through the dense forest.

Killian hurried his step, trying to catch up to Henry. Now that they were alone, this was his chance to get Henry to help him, but before Killian could even say a thing, Henry turned around, fists held up in front of his face.

"If you hurt me, my father will find you," Henry's menacing tone had Killian pulling his head back in surprise.

"I'm not going to hurt you, lad," he slowly raised his arms in surrender before frowning at the boy. "Your father… Who's your father?"

Baelfire couldn't be alive in this world. Or could he?

"Rumplestiltskin. He's a blacksmith and he has all sorts of weapons."

The utter look of disgust on his face probably had Henry thinking that Killian was bothered by the second part of the answer, but Killian couldn't help the way his entire face crinkled with revulsion. He needed to find Emma and get them all out of this sick, twisted world as fast as he possibly could.

“I… I simply need your assistance. Sadly, the book I bought from you isn’t of any help,” he tapped his hook against the book inside his satchel and waited for a response from Henry, who simply pressed his lips together and darted his eyes away from Killian. That was enough for Killian to know that Henry was admitting just how useless that book on mutton meat was – and feeling guilty about it.

“Alright. What do you need my assistance for?"

“I'm looking for someone,” Killian wasted no time in answering. "Her name is Emma Swan."

Killian was hoping that just hearing his mother's name would trigger some sort of memories in
Henry, but all he witnessed was incredulity stamped on the lad's face before he erupted in laughter.

"You have heard of her," Killian concluded, both annoyed and hopeful.

"Of course I have," Henry replied in between chuckles. "She’s the Queen of the Misthaven."

"The Queen?" Killian’s words came out in a gasp as he felt a sudden surge of pride. It seemed not everything in this bloody world was abominable. If there was one thing he knew was that Emma would make an incredible queen. The only downside to it was that getting to her and trying to break the curse had just turned into an even more challenging mission, but nothing he couldn't handle.

"Yes, she's the Queen. In what world have you been living in?"

"You wouldn’t believe it," Killian raised an eyebrow at Henry's words before casting an inspecting glance around. If Emma was the Queen, all he had to do was find a way to get to her castle.

"Why are you looking for her?"

"Maritime matters," Killian didn't make eye contact with Henry this time around, in fear the boy would rightfully conclude he wasn't being truthful. "Urgent matters, actually."

"I happen to know the Queen is visiting a nearby village today. It's this week’s big event."

That got Killian's attention. "Show me where."

"Buy me more books and I will."

The unashamed grin on Henry's face prompted Killian to flash him a smirk of his own. Always a spitfire.

"Lad, I will buy you all the books in the world. Just take me to your mothe– Queen."

"This way."

As Killian followed Henry down the forest road, he tried to think of ways in which he could get Emma's attention once he saw her. She would likely be surrounded by guards and perhaps even her own parents. That had him wondering if David and Snow were even her parents in this world. In a place where Henry was the crocodile's and Belle's child, anything was possible.

He could feel the pulse in his temple at each step he took. If he were honest with himself, he feared that a cursed Emma would not believe him right away – after all, his adventure in New York hadn't been exactly easy – but he had no doubt that their True Love would prevail and she would eventually believe him. He just hoped none of that would take too long. They had to get back as fast as they could and stop Calypso from whatever she was planning to do.

While they walked, Killian tried to know more about Henry's life in this world. His answers never failed to make him mentally cringe, but he tried not to give away any sign of disgust. Apparently, Henry loved his baby brother Gideon and Rumple was "the best Papa ever". How the crocodile's name and "best Papa" could ever be put together in the same sentence, Killian didn't know. All he knew was that whatever curse this was, it sure was powerful if it managed to put the Dark One in Henry's good graces.

"So… This Queen Emma…” Killian changed the subject when he realized Henry had nothing more to share about himself. "Tell me more about her."
“She's really nice. Misthaven’s poverty rate has never been so low.”

“Not surprising,” Killian smiled and grabbed Henry's arm to prevent him from stepping on a mud puddle.

“She really cares about the people and their problems,” Henry said as he adjusted the satchel's strap on his shoulder. “I think that’s what makes her unique.”

“So I take it the people of Misthaven approve of her?”

“Most do. Mama is always saying she’s the best queen Misthaven has ever had, but Papa disagrees. He doesn’t like her very much, but I never really understood why.”

Of course not even a cursed version of the bloody crocodile would approve of Emma. He shouldn't be surprised.

“Allow me,” Killian used his hook to get the strap from Henry's shoulder and expertly put it around his shoulder, offering to carry it.

After some more minutes of silence, Henry stopped and pointed at one large stone with the name “Dawsbury” inscribed on it.

"We're here."

As far as Killian's eyes could see, the road below was filled with people from one side to the other, impatiently waiting for Queen Emma's arrival. The loud sound of a horse trotting had Killian moving himself and Henry behind some bushes, not wanting Emma nor anybody else to see them – at least not yet. He would need time to think about what he would say to her, to think about an effective plan to get her to believe him.

As much as Killian had conjured stunning images of Queen Emma in his mind, nothing had prepared him for his wife's unearthly gloriousness when she finally came into view, waving at the people while still on the horse. Her green eyes sparkled in the light and her long, blonde locks held the white jeweled tiara that matched her floral white gown. Always with a pleased smile etched on her face, she got off the horse and greeted everyone personally, either shaking hands one by one or giving small hugs.

The purity of her beauty staggered him, triggering a sudden firework in his belly. He had always known that under all those walls there was a woman with overwhelming kindness and a heart bigger than most. Those traits would always be associated with Emma Swan and there was no curse that could ever erase them from her.

“She’s beautiful,” Killian whispered, his mouth gaping open in awe as she hugged an old lady.

“You won’t fall in love with the Queen, will you?”

“I’m afraid it’s far too late for that,” Killian ignored Henry's playful tone, but then realization hit him and he quickly turned his head to the boy. “Wait, why can’t I fall in love with her? Is she married?”

Killian's heart almost stopped in the few seconds that took Henry to reply. He hadn't even thought of the possibility of Emma being with somebody else in this cursed world. Seeing her with Walsh back then had already crushed him, he wasn't certain if he would be able to handle the agony of seeing her with another man now that she was his wife and they were confirmed True Love.

“No, there’s no king,” Henry laughed at the deep sigh of relief that escaped Killian's lips. "But
village rumors say she has plenty of suitors who have been pursuing her for a long time.”

“Aye, of course they have,” there was bitterness seeping from Killian as he took a step to the side to keep following each of Emma's movements. He could only hope that none of those bloody fools' tactics had been successful.

And that none of them were flying monkeys or some sort of bizarre creatures.

“You don’t want to discuss any maritime matters with her,” Henry followed Killian, also taking a step to the side. “You want to get close to her. That's why you're jealous.”

Killian arched an eyebrow at him, not so surprised at having been caught. “Always a smart lad.”

Killian's eyes settled on Emma once again. She was talking to two young women, but what really caught his attention was the big, burlap bag that Emma didn't seem to let go of. What was his Swan carrying in there? He had been enough time in the Enchanted Forest to know that it was unusual for monarchs to walk around with any kind of containers for their possessions, lest they be robbed.

“So how do you plan on winning her heart?”

“I have my tactics,” Killian's confidence took over his voice. It was an art difficult to master, but he excelled at wooing Emma Swan. He had no reason to think he wouldn't be able to win her heart one more time. "And they’re good enough for you to ask me for courting advice.”

“What do you mean?”

“Eventually,” Killian gave a dismissive wave of his hand. What mattered for now was that he may have thought of the one thing that could give him access to Emma's castle. All he needed was to get back to the Jolly Roger and hope that what he was looking for was there. Or the rest of it, that is. "We should go.”

"I can't go with you. I have to go home.”

Of course. Killian had forgotten again that this wasn't his Henry. Belle and… the crocodile were his family now.

"Aye," with a nod of his head, Killian grabbed Henry's hand and dropped all the doubloons he had in his possession. "For all these books. A deal is a deal.”

"Thank you." Henry's gaze fell on his satchel full of books that Killian was still carrying. With nothing more than an honest smile, Henry closed his hand around the coins and held them tightly.

“I'll see you soon, lad. And we will all be home then.” Before Henry even had a chance to question him, Killian pulled him in for a hug. He feared for what the crocodile could do to Henry in this world, but he trusted Belle to protect him from any danger. He wished he could convince Henry to go with him and help him get to Emma, but each passing minute was another minute Calypso had at her disposal. All he could do now was to make sure he got to Emma as fast as he could so this nightmare would finally be over.

Meeting the people of Misthaven and talking to them was both the best and the worst part of being the Queen. Emma truly loved her people and to know what was the best way to help them, but it was also an exhausting task. There were occasions in which she wished everyone would just look at her
as Emma Swan and not as "the Queen". Her parents had always taught her to be kind and graceful whenever people acknowledged her royal status, but no noble ranks would ever stop making her feel like a normal person who wanted nothing more than to have moments where she could serve herself instead of serving others. Was that selfish?

There were days where she felt like a spoiled, ungrateful brat for not feeling the happiness that she was supposed to feel. The happiness everyone kept telling her to cherish. There was this weird, hollow feeling of something missing. She didn't know what, but her life... it just didn't feel right. And yet, as she walked past the castle's large, wooden gates, there was noting missing. She had two loving parents who had always been there for her, friends who loved and supported her and a home with everything she needed at her disposal. Why wasn't that enough for her?

"You're back!" her mother's voice interrupted her thoughts, her voice echoing in the stone walls of the living room. "How did it go with the people of Dawsbury?"

"It was good, but apparently there has been an increase of thefts in the village." Emma took her tiara off and put it on one of the tables. That thing was itchy as hell. Luckily, this time she had also remembered to hide her bag in one of the bushes near the castle's drawbridge before any guards had seen her. If she were caught, there was no question her parents would not approve of her secret, extracurricular activities.

"I was talking to August this morning and that seems to be a common affliction in nearby villages," her father handed her a paper with the number of guards and August's watchmen spread across all the villages of Misthaven.

"Thanks, dad. If you don't mind, I'm going to study this in my chamber."

"Of course not," her mother dropped a kiss on her forehead. "Just don't forget that tonight is your dinner with the Duke of Ostrana."

Her mother's almost sing-songed reminder had Emma fighting the urge to roll her eyes as she made her way to the stairwell. Her mother's nauseating insistence in finding her a husband was driving her insane. No matter how many times she told her that she was not interested in finding a man to share her life with, her mother refused to listen. Every week Snow would arrange these dinners with these random men Emma wanted nothing to do with and every week she had to come up with new excuses to end the dinner earlier than it was supposed to.

"I'm so proud of her," Snow whispered to her husband as they watched Emma climb up the stairs. "There has never been a day I have regretted abdicating the throne to Emma. She's a brilliant Queen."

"She is, but I don't know..." David slumped his shoulders, his eyes focusing on an empty space in the air between them. "Doesn't she look unhappy to you?"

"You have noticed it, too," Snow admitted as her face fell.

"Of course I have. Do you remember when she used to come from these meetings all excited and ready to fight the world? Now she goes to her room and stays there for hours."

"You know I've been trying to keep her distracted with these dinners, but-"

"I think it's only making her feel worse," David's words cut her off and the way Snow promptly crossed her arms let him know she had taken offense at his words.

"David, I'm just trying to help her."
"I know you are, but maybe right now she doesn't want to meet anyone," David took a hold of her hand and tugged gently, trying to comfort her. "Let her be. Give her some space."

Snow assented, after a moment's hesitation. "Alright, no more arranged dinners."

Once Emma got to her room, she closed the heavy door and leaned her back against it. It was almost time for her to leave, but first she would have to think of a plan to increase the security of Misthaven. Only then could she think about leaving. At least that certainly wouldn't pose a problem - escaping through the window would be easy enough, she was far too accustomed to it by now.

“Oh, I’m sorry, your majesty,” her maid said when she finally noticed Emma's presence. "I hadn’t realized you’d be back so soon.”

“You don’t have to call me ‘your majesty’ in private, Regina,” Emma chuckled, making her way to the iron desk and pulling the chair out. The castle had plenty of extremely ornamented offices, but she had always found all the paintings and busts of ancient family members distracting. It was simply impossible to get any work done there with all those faces staring at her.

“If you have work to do, I’ll come back later,” Regina picked up the broom she had been using to sweep the floor.

“It's fine, you can stay,” Emma sat on the chair and pulled out a quill from one of the desk drawers. "I need to read this carefully and see how many guards out of service I can enlist to keep watch on the nearby villages.”

“What for, if you allow me.”

For the next minutes Emma explained everything to Regina, who appeared to be genuinely interested in knowing more about Misthaven's latest theft rates. When Emma was done writing the letter she would send to August requesting more of his watchmen, she put all the paperwork away and jumped from the chair like a spring. She could already feel the adrenaline running through her veins as waves of anticipation hit her. After a tiring morning, she would finally be able to do what truly made her happy.

“I’m leaving now,” the excitement evident in her voice as she opened the window to her balcony. Even though Regina had no idea why Emma always ran away at certain hours of the day, Emma had made her promise she wouldn't tell a thing to anyone. "I don’t know when I’ll be back so don’t worry about serving dinner at eight. I’ll grab something from the kitchen when I get back.”

“But tonight is your dinner with the Duke of Ostrana,” Regina followed Emma to the balcony, trying to understand if the Queen was purposely ignoring the event or if she had forgotten about it.

“Don’t tell mother, but I already informed the Duke’s assistant that I will not be available today.”

“Oh.”

Remembering she had forgotten about one very important thing, Emma went back to her room and opened one of the doors to the closet. “My mother scheduled that dinner without consulting me and I have no interest in seeing that man again.”

“I don’t mean to intrude, your– miss Emma. But I believe your mother's intentions are good,” Regina watched as Emma pulled a sword from out of the closet, her eyes twinkling with delight as she admired the blade. "You shouldn’t always put your kingdom’s well-being above your own. You deserve to have by your side a man who loves you wholeheartedly.”
Regina was right, or at least partially right. She did need time for herself, but why everyone seemed to think her well-being was attached to a man pissed her off. There were plenty of other ways for her to do things she loved without any man being associated to it.

“I don't need a man by my side. And I would appreciate it if everyone stopped thinking they know what's best for me.”

Regina smiled embarrassedly at Emma and could do nothing but watch her jump off the balcony.

---

**New York – One year ago**

Killian had never thought he would complain about an abundance of blonde women, but bloody hell, was this bizarre place filled with women with mainly one hair color. He had to admit he had always been partial to blondes, but not when such plethora of golden-haired women made it even more difficult to find one blonde in particular. The only one in whom he was interested in laying his eyes on.

He had spent the last two days going through the many bail bonds offices in town, hoping that this cursed version of Emma would still be doing her previous job, chasing criminals and being the cunning, brilliant lass she was. Long gone were the days he thought he didn't need her. He had tried to get back to his pirate life, but it was only when he got the Jolly Roger back that he realized not even his ship would be able to fill the hole in his heart. Emma Swan had inspired him to become the man he had always wished to be and she had changed him forever. There was no turning back. Part of his agony had vanished the minute he admitted it to himself: he loved Emma Swan and he would do anything to get back to her. Not for himself, but for her. He knew that this life wasn't real, she belonged with her family and those who loved her. He would help her find her way back to them, no matter the cost.

If, along the way, she came to the conclusion that he was worthy of her love, all the better. Her last words to him by the town line had given him hope. He was fairly certain that had been her own way to let him know that she felt something for him. That perhaps his feelings for her were reciprocated to the point a True Love’s kiss could jog her memories.

On the third day, he finally found her. There could be plenty of blonde haired women in this town, but none of them compared to her, golden locks shining in the sunlight and framing the beautiful face that had haunted him for over a year. The lips he had dreamt of kissing again.

He had been so mesmerized by her that he almost let her get on that yellow contraption of hers without following her. By then, he already knew that there were other (uglier) yellow vehicles that would take him anywhere he wanted. Without thinking twice, he had gotten in one and asked the man inside to follow her. That was how he had found out where she lived.

After waiting some minutes to let her in, Killian realized she lived in a building in which only residents could enter. Luckily for him, though, he was a two hundred year old pirate. He had easily opened the gate with his hook – the hardest part had been preventing anyone from seeing him – but frustration had taken over him when he realized the building had forty five floors. How was this nonsense even possible? How would he even know which of those cubicles belonged to Emma?

He had had no other choice but to go through them all and knock on all doors until he found her. On that day, he got to the first twenty eight floors until an unpleasant gentleman threatened to call the police if he didn't leave the building. Realizing that being arrested would only keep him from
finding Emma, he decided to inspect the remaining floors on the following day, first thing in the morning.

He couldn't believe it when, behind one of the doors on the thirty first floor, her face was the one staring back at him.

"Swan."

---

**Enchanted Forest – Present Day**

As he walked down the trail that would lead him to the castle (and hopefully to Emma), Killian tried to pull his white pants up. It had been a couple of centuries since the last time he had worn them and he was under the impression they weren't this tight back then.

He hadn’t opened his navy chest in a long time, not really wanting to relive the memories of his and Liam’s time as lieutenants, but he was thankful he hadn’t gotten rid of their uniforms. His navy-blue jacket was at the bottom of the sea by now, victim of his vindictive rage after his brother's death, but Liam's jacket suited him well enough. It was a good thing this curse had kept the Jolly Roger and its possessions intact, because this uniform was crucial for his plan to work. Surely, they would allow a Navy Lieutenant in the castle and, once inside, he would find a way to get to Emma.

When he heard seagulls screaming, he stopped to take in his surroundings. There was a lakefront right ahead and he could see the Charming’s castle in the horizon in all its magnificence. It should only take him a couple of hours to get there. He kept walking in long-legged strides, mentally practicing what he would be telling the castle's guards once he arrived, when the sound of a horse galloping had him hiding behind a tree for the second time that day.

He only had to wait some seconds until the white horse and its rider stopped by the lakefront ahead of him. His heart skipped a beat when his eyes fell on the golden tresses cascading over a long, white gown.

Emma.

A grin appeared on his face and he unconsciously licked his lips at the sight of her getting off the horse. Once her feet hit the floor, she started opening that mysterious bag, but not before casting a glance all around to make sure she was all alone. Killian knew she couldn't see him, but never one to be careless, he still took a safe step to side, hiding more of his body behind the tree. The sound of her heavy gown hitting the thick sand of the lakefront floor had his mouth dropping open slightly, his pulse racing a mile a minute. She was peeling another layer of clothes when Killian forced himself to look away. Even though she was his wife and he had seen her naked plenty of times, it still didn't feel right for him to intrude a moment he had no permission to watch.

It took everything in him not to look. All he needed was a quick peek, a sudden glance to feed his hungry heart, but he couldn’t – he wouldn't. He would never not be desperate to see her, to touch her, because even though he knew every ridge, dip and crevice of her body, everytime he saw her in her naked glory it always felt like the first time.

---

*Storybrooke – Ten months ago*
When Killian had chosen the Storybrooke Seafood House as the restaurant he would take Emma on their third date, he wasn't expecting the food to be so incredibly bland and tasteless. Clearly, this world had no clue how to honor the many wonders seafood had to offer. Luckily, the perfect company and flirty banter had made up for the disgraceful meal.

"C'mon, it wasn't that bad," Emma laughed at Killian's overdramatic look of displeasure once they walked out of the restaurant. "The coconut prawns were good."

"Exactly my point, Swan. I'm afraid it's telling when the appetizer is the only thing worth praising. Everything else was an insulting disservice to seafood."

Emma had to control herself not to start giggling in the middle of the street at how affronted Killian was. It amused her how picky he could be over unimportant things and she secretly hoped he never stopped being that way.

"I still loved our dinner," she locked her arm with his, flashing him a tender smile that silently told him that the quality of the food was the last thing she was interested in.

"Aye, love. Me too," his soft words matched his own smile. Emma had never locked her arm with his before, but he intended on reveling in the feeling of having her body so close to his for as long as he could. When he felt her shiver next to him, he didn't hesitate in breaking away from her grasp to put his old pirate coat around her shoulders. It was an unusually cold and wet night and he had opted for what was still his warmest coat.

Emma noticed how Killian's eyes lingered on her cleavage for longer than usual and a hint of a smirk appeared on her face. Her choice to put on a braless dress for today's date had not been innocent. They still hadn't slept together and she was hoping that showing a bit more of skin would steer things in the right direction. Now that they were enjoying the rare, peaceful days in Storybrooke, she was anxiously counting the days until it happened. There had been plenty of thirsty, stolen glances exchanged between them in the last few days, but the circumstances had never seemed right. Their second date, only five days ago, had come to an end as soon as her parents had gotten back to the loft before she even had a chance to properly kiss Killian (rude). And now there they were.

"Thanks," her hands curled around the sleeves of the coat, closing it around her as his eyes reluctantly travelled up. "I had no idea this thing was so heavy."

"I barely notice it anymore," Killian grabbed her hand and started walking them down the street, completely indifferent to the cool, crispy wind sweeping through them. "But I do have to agree the leather jackets from your world are quite more practical."

"Well, I'm glad you went for this one today. It's freaking paradise in here."

The way Killian suddenly stopped walking caught her off guard, but then she saw that sexy smirk of his flickering at the corner of his face as he stood in front of her. "I'll always be happy to take my clothes off for you, Swan. You just have to ask."

There it was. She knew he wouldn't disappoint her. He never did.

A coy smile formed on her face as Emma's eyes perused his body. This combo of modern shirt and old vest had her wondering if she could rub her thighs without him noticing it. Would it look bad if she just had her way with him in the middle of Main Street? Yeah, it probably would. And later she would die of embarrassment, so she should just try and control herself for the meantime. But that didn't mean they couldn't have some fun.
"Guess I'll have to remember that," her voice was low as she closed the distance between them, sultry gaze fixed on his lips until he yanked her to him and covered her mouth with his. Emma had done a whole lot of kissing in her life, but nothing could compare to being kissed by Killian. There was something about his very talented mouth that always had her toes curling. Maybe it was the way he always found to slip his hook under her jacket, or how his thumb would caress her cheek. Whatever it was, she knew she never wanted him to stop kissing her.

A quiet moan escaped her when his tongue brushed her bottom lip, sending a sharp pulse of heat to her core as she eagerly opened for him. God, they really needed to get out of here and –

Then he pulled away. What the hell.

His eyes were still closed and his words came in breathless puffs. "Will you allow me to show you something?"

In her lust-filled haze, she hoped he meant his dick, but the tender smile he gave her as he opened his eyes let her know he was talking about something else. She didn't answer him, placing instead another gentle kiss on his lips before locking her arm with his again and waiting for him to take the lead.

It was a short walk to the woods, with only the moonlight guiding them as they cut through the dense vegetation. The ground was covered in slippery, wet leaves and muddy clumps of dirt and they held onto each other even more tightly. She had been here before in many of her Sheriff patrols and she had no idea what Killian could possibly want to show her, but she trusted him and his romantic ways.

"We're almost there," he brushed a twig away from her so she could safely pass without it scraping her face. "It will be worth it, Swan. I promise."

"I think I'll be happy with anything that doesn't involve you killing me and burying my body somewhere in here."

He gave her a look at her teasing tone before pulling her by the hand toward one of the cliffs.

"Careful, love," his hand and hook rested against her elbows as he gently walked her ahead of him, but still safely away from the edge. The cold wind that blew in her face was something she could do without. She would probably be freezing if Killian hadn't given her his coat.

When they stopped, she took in the view, trying her best to ignore how much she enjoyed feeling his body pressed against her back. It was a pretty view – the glow of the town's soft city lights being engulfed by the dark-moon sky. She had never considered landscape watching as the ultimate romantic program, but his intentions warmed her heart regardless.

"It's beautiful," she said, smiling at the way his arms sneaked around her waist and his nose nuzzled against her ear.

"I didn't bring you here for you to appreciate a landscape you have seen hundreds of times before, Swan." Before she could even ask him what he was talking about, his breath was hot in her ear. "Look up, love."

It was only when she tilted her head up and saw the starry sky in its full glory that she understood why he had brought her here. There was something about that exact spot that made it seem like the stars were within her reach. It was simply breathtaking.

"That is the Cygnus constellation. It's the Latin word for 'swan'," Emma could hear the joy in his
"voice as she kept her eyes focused on the stars above her. "Usually the Northern Cross is far more noticeable than the entire constellation. Can you see it?"

She honestly had no idea what he was talking about, but everything became clear once he lifted his arm and traced the pattern of the cross with his hook. Oh. She could see it, too.

"Yeah, I can."

"When I was first exploring Storybrooke, I found this spot and was marveled at how easy it was to identify this constellation in particular," her breath caught in her throat when he started swaying them back and forth to the rhythm of nothing but the sounds of wildlife within the woods. "Perhaps it was a sign all along that I was meant to stay here."

"Maybe it was…" she smiled at him out of the corner of her eye until they fell into the quiet rhythm of their swaying. As Emma stared at the sky, Killian closed his eyes at the feel of her back pressed tightly against his chest. If he could stay like that forever, with Emma in his arms, he would. When the sweet scent of her shampoo invaded his nostrils, he almost lost it. She always smelled so delicious. So warm, so lovely. So Emma. Images of himself undressing her and taking her right there under the stars, started flashing in his mind as a bolt of desire shot through him. He drew in a long breath at the realization that he was quickly losing all his self-control, feeling himself begin to harden.

Emma's breath stuttered when his erection poked her butt, electricity coursing through her and making her forget all about the stars she had been so interested in just seconds ago. It seemed she definitely wasn't the only one craving something other than stargazing. She had felt him like this before and she had always been flattered to have such an effect on him. Not wanting to miss yet another chance, Emma rubbed herself against him and the deep groan she elicited from him had her grinning from ear to ear.

Just when she was about to turn around in his arms so she could kiss him, rain started falling over them in a torrent of large drops.

Seriously?

She swore someone up there didn't want them to fuck. That was the only logical explanation at this point.

"We should probably find shelter," Killian yelled through the heavy rain as he pulled Emma under a large tree that they figured was useless in protecting them from the violent raindrops.

"Follow me," making sure that Killian was right behind her, Emma started running, the cold drops hitting them as they picked their pace. As grateful as she was for Killian's coat, it didn't exactly make it easy for her to move and they took longer to reach the cabin she knew was nearby.

Emma kicked the wooden door open, knowing already that there would be no one inside. There were around three or four abandoned cabins in the woods and still to this day nobody knew who they belonged to.

"Ah, much better," Killian ran a hand through his rainsoaked hair once they got inside. "Well done, Swan."

"There's no power," Emma said after nothing happened when she flicked the switches. The dim moonlight penetrating through the windows was the only light they could count on until the rain stopped.
Whoever this cabin belonged to, going by the objects they could make out in the dark, it seemed to only have a small kitchen, a living room and a bathroom. There was a sofa, a storage closet and a fireplace in the living room area and a small, square table near the kitchen counter. Being clad in wood, the cabin wasn't too cold, but with her wet clothes clinging to her skin, Emma started quivering and quickly decided to look for some blankets they could use to warm themselves up. As she walked straight to the closet, she could hear the sound of the water draining from her clothes hit the floor. Please let there be blankets, please let there be blankets, Emma chanted to herself. She almost squealed when two big brown blankets came into view once she opened the closet. While putting them on the couch, she sensed Killian moving behind her and she followed his movements, surprised to see that he had managed to find some firewood under the kitchen table. Thank God.

"We may as well make the best of the resources we have," he smiled at her as he dragged the box filled with logs to where she was standing, in between the closet and the fireplace.

"Great. Let me see if I can find some matches," having only one window, the kitchen wasn't as well lit as the living room, but she could still find an old box of matches inside one of the cabinets.

It only took them a minute or so to light the fire and they exchanged a comfortable smile as they stood in front of the fireplace, enjoying the heat. It was still pouring outside and it didn't look like it was going to stop anytime soon. She had always hated the rain, but when she thought of what they had been just about to do when it had started downpouring on them, she felt even more like kicking the Gods above.

Her eyes sought Killian, who appeared to be intently focused on the flames. A hint of a smile formed on Emma's lips when she admired the way the fire light lit his face. He was beautiful. His hair was all wet and disheveled from the rain and she could see some drops of water running down his face. His jaw was twitching, an undeniable sign that he was nervous, and Emma hoped that it was a good kind of nervousness. The "I want to fuck her but what should I do" kind of nervousness. Without even realizing it, her eyes were now on his groin and it was quite clear that the cold rain water had helped him cool down. Sadly.

Another shiver ran down her spine and she didn't know what caused it: the cold she was still feeling or her sudden lewd thoughts. Killian's coat had gotten even heavier now that it was soaked in water and when she shrugged it off her shoulders, she felt Killian's eyes on her.

"It's heavier," her voice came out shaky, surprising even herself. After all, he wasn't the only one who was nervous. "And colder now that it's drenched with water."

"Of course," was the only response she got as he watched her drop the coat on the floor. Embarrassment hit him when he realized how his "of course" hadn't made a whole lot of sense, but he was having a hard time concentrating on anything but the way the soft fabric of Emma's dress was sticking to her skin, revealing more of her delicious curves to his hungry eyes. His gaze inevitably fell on her breasts. He swallowed hard when he saw the outline of her erect nipples through the wet fabric and his heart skipped a beat. In that moment, it became even clearer to him that he wanted nothing more than to please this woman in every possible way. Forever.

Emma's amused sigh brought him out of his daze and for the first time in a long time, he didn't know what to say or do. It was as if getting a glimpse of Emma's naked body had made him forget about basic human behavior.

"Sorry, love," he mumbled, scratching one of his sideburns with his hook. "I didn't mean to…"

Emma stood there staring at him with a glazed look in her eyes as she waited for him to finish his sentence, but he never did. Had she ever seen Captain Hook embarrassed for having been caught
taking a peek? Their eyes locked in a mutual embrace and a rush of adrenaline traveled down her body when she saw the restless desire in his gaze.

"It's okay, you can look," she was nervous as hell, but this time her voice didn't tremble and exuded a confidence that left Killian breathless. Watching his reaction was what Emma needed to take his hand and hook in her own hands and guide them to her breasts. "You can touch, too."

The way Killian looked like a deer caught in the headlights had Emma fearing he was going to pass out. This was not what she was expecting after making it so painfully obvious that she wanted him. She prepared to say something, but without warning, Killian lunged at her and took her in a kiss that was the perfect mix of rough and gentle. She groaned when his hand kneaded her left breast and wasted no time in pulling the material away. Oh yes, the pirate was back.

"I've been dreaming about this ever since we met, Swan," he whispered against her lips when they broke apart, but he never let her answer, claiming her lips in another scorching kiss. Her legs buckled a little when the cold metal of his hook grazed her nipple and Killian gently laid them down on the floor, neither of them caring that they had landed on his wet coat.

He tasted her first, his expert tongue touching and licking her in the place she wanted him the most. He licked up and down her swollen flesh until he sent her over the edge with a flick of his tongue, his name falling from her lips in a loud moan of pleasure. Never satiated, he turned her around, her breasts and stomach pressed against the pirate coat spread on the floor as his hand traced patterns all over her bare back and arse. Emma Swan was the most beautiful woman he had ever laid his eyes on and he intended to show her just that.

Leaning over, he pressed languid kisses to her smooth skin, letting his lips travel all over her. When he got to her bottom, his tongue laved the small mole on her right buttock as he felt her hand searching for his erection.

They took their time exploring each other's bodies, savoring each touch, each kiss until it all became too much. Her body convulsed first, her fingers curling into his skin as the cabin's lights flickered to life. Knowing he was the one having the honor to bring Emma to the brink of pleasure was enough to make Killian groan, his own release lighting every nerve on fire until his thrusts became lazy and he slumped against her, boneless.

Their heavy pants were the only sound echoing in the cabin for a long while until they drifted to sleep in the place they had been looking for their whole lives: each other's arms.

---

**Enchanted Forest – Present Day**

By the time Killian peeked through the tree branches, Emma's white cape was on the floor and she had on some high knee black boots, a metal vest and she was holding a sword in her hand. He was marveled at the sight, it was almost as if she had transformed into another person. That change of clothes had to be what she was hiding in the bag. One minute she was the Queen in her long, white gown and the next she looked like a warrior.

He kept quiet, waiting to see what she would do next. His mouth curved into a smile when she started practicing some movements with the sword. At each graceful and confident move of hers, Killian soon realized that this version of her appeared to be even better at sword fighting than the real Emma, a detail that could work in his favor. Without thinking twice, he walked from behind the tree as silently as possible and made his way to the lakefront, stepping on the sand just as she was
performing a rather agile move.

“Good form,” at the sound of his voice, Emma instantly turned back, her body standing in a
defensive position as she held the sword in front of her. Surprise hit him when he realized the sword
she was holding was the Fragarach.

Of course.

Emma was holding it when the curse hit them, it made sense she was still carrying the sword in this
world.

“Who are you?” she asked with a sharp glint of suspicion in her gaze.

“Lieutenant Killian Jones,” he greeted her with a curtsy as she looked at him with a curious look on
her face.

“Emma S-“

“Swan,” her eyes widened when she heard him say her last name. Why did his voice sound so
familiar? She didn't understand. She had never seen this man before. "Your reputation precedes
you."

That seemed to be enough for her to put her sword down. “Have you been spying on me for too
long?”

“Not quite. I was on my daily stroll to the harbor when I noticed an athletic lass sword fighting thick
air," he waved his hand absentmindedly and started walking towards her. "What can I say? I got
curious."

“I'm happy I amused you,” there it was. That sarcastic smile that was a fitting replacement for “fuck
you”. There was a tinge of annoyance in her eyes before she got back to her training session,
ignoring his presence. That was fine. If there was one thing courting Emma Swan had taught him
was how to be patient.

“You know, as entertaining as sword fighting an imaginary friend is, having a real person to practice
with is even better,” he said, hoping she would react the way he had planned.

“Are you challenging me?”

He raised an eyebrow at her as his hand rested on his black belt. “Perhaps I am.”

He spotted a hint of a smile on her lips as she crossed her arms over her chest. “I’m not one to turn
my back on a challenge.”

“Don’t I know it,” she sent him a look, clearly not understanding what he had meant by that, but he
quickly changed the subject. “May I suggest that whoever wins owes the other a favor?”

He pulled out his own sword then, but now was her turn to raise one eyebrow at him. He could tell
that she was confident she would win. Perhaps that is why it didn't take her more than some seconds
to nod and agree to it.

Emma held the Fragarach a few inches from Killian's chest, an exciting smile on her face as she
waited for him to move. Without any warning, Killian leaped to the side, trying to trick her into
leaving one side of her body exposed so he could pretend to stab her, but Emma didn't fall for it and
remained in her place.
“I wasn’t aware that Navy Lieutenants were such smart sword fighters,” she took a step back, sword in guard, and Killian smirked at her as he dashed at her.

“So you admit I'm good.”

“You are,” she grunted, stopping his tackle. "There’s no denying it.”

She was good, too. Very good, actually. However, she still couldn't compare to his two hundred years of piracy. With Killian keen on giving his best, it wasn't long until Emma was on her back, the tip of his sword safely away from her chest while Killian's lips stretched across his teeth in a victorious grin.

"Fine," she sent him a murderous look as she got up, pulling the blade away from her. "You win."

“I will let you know that I also excel in other departments,” Killian raised a teasing eyebrow, not able to help himself. He could be old and grey and he would still be trying to charm her. "I'm a very gifted man."

Emma tried to look annoyed, but a smile eventually formed on her lips as she put her sword back in its sheath. “Alright, Romeo. It seems I owe you a favor.”

“Aye, indeed you do,” he shortened the distance between them until she was merely inches away. His eyes darted between her eyes and her lips and he suddenly forgot about what he had to say. She was so goddamn beautiful that all he wanted to do was grab her and kiss her. For a moment he saw a speck of recognition in her eyes. She may be cursed and not remember who she was, but there was still something pulling her to him.

Emma didn't know what was happening to her, but her heart pounded wildly in her chest when this stranger invaded her personal space. There was something about him, something about the way he was looking at her with such a warm, adoring expression on his face. It was as if he had some sort of power over her that made her feel and think things that she had deemed impossible. She didn't agree to fight strangers and she certainly didn't agree to do them any favors. Why was it different with him? Why did she feel like she knew him? Like she could trust him?

"Are you going to tell me what it is or…?" her voice was the reminder Killian needed to control himself. There was no use in fantasizing about kissing her when he knew that it would take more than a kiss to make her remember her real life.

“This may sound bizarre, but I need your assistance… to climb a beanstalk.”

Emma suddenly looked at him as if he had three heads. “A beanstalk? What for?”

“To take me to the woman I love. My wife.”

Emma tried to keep the disappointment away from her face. Of course he was married. Should she even be surprised? He was just another arsehole who tried to charm while being in a relationship with another woman.

“So you have a wife you have to get back to and yet here you are trying to dally with me.”

Emma's slick words caught him off guard and his smile quickly turned into a frown. Perhaps he shouldn't flirt with her when telling her she is his wife isn't an option.

“I can assure you that my wife is the only woman I have eyes for,” the honesty and sincerity in his voice were enough to let Emma know that he wasn't lying. Her superpower never failed. She found
herself looking at his lips again, only this time she succeeded in fighting her silly infatuation for this man and walked away from him.

“Where is this beanstalk?” she asked, picking her white gown up from the floor.

“About half a day away from here.”

“Then we should go,” she didn't bother to look at him. "The sooner we get there, the sooner you will get back to your wife.”

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

Storybrooke was such a wonderful town when none of the annoying, patronizing heroes were around. Calypso had a feeling that she would definitely grow to love this place. With the pirate and his gang far gone, it was only a matter of time until everything fell into place. No one could stop her now – she just hoped that Rumplestiltskin would be successful in his task in the Enchanted Forest.

After making sure she was not being watched, she approached the lakeside and opened the small, blue bottle in her hands, spilling some drops of the liquid in the water. Seconds later, a cloud of smoke started forming in the water and the same smudged figure from all those years ago appeared on the surface.

"It's almost ready, mother," Calypso said with a broad smile on her face.

"Well done, Calypso. Your father and I are very proud of you."

"I will not let you down. I promise."

---

**Enchanted Forest – Present Day**

There was a silence filled with tension between them as they walked side by side. Killian pretended to be focused on the long path in front of them, but he was well aware of how Emma's eyes searched for him every once in a while. His plan was to climb the beanstalk and find their True Love sapling and hope that would make Emma get her memories back. He wasn't sure if the beanstalk had grown after his and David's adventure, but he had no other options, he had to take his chances.

“How did you and your wife meet?” Emma broke the silence and tried to sound casual. “If you’re making me climb a beanstalk you may as well entertain me with a good romantic tale.”

“I’m afraid the first time we met wasn’t too romantic,” his whole face lit up as images of their first meeting flashed in his mind. "She held a knife to my throat."

“Wow, you must’ve made quite a first impression on her.”

“I wasn’t being entirely truthful and her cunning self saw right through it.”

Emma nodded, caressing her horse's neck. “Good for – what’s her name again?”

“Uh…” the question surprised Killian and he failed to come up with a name fast enough.
“What, you forgot your wife’s name?” In that moment, Emma’s entire demeanor changed and she frowned at him.

“Leia. Her name’s Leia,” he said, breaking eye contact with her and looking at his feet instead.

“Good for Leia. Knowing how to tell when someone is lying is the best ability one can have,” Killian turned to look at her, not sure if what Emma said was directed at him in some way. He certainly recognized that tone of voice as the one she used whenever she wanted to send subtle hints at someone.

“Aye. Perhaps we should stop for some water?” he blurted out the first thing that came to his mind and that wouldn't sound suspicious to her ears.

“Sure. This way,” she smiled at him, pulling her horse by the reins so he would follow her. "I know just the right place."

The small waterfall Emma guided them to was in a secluded, hidden spot with old and fallen tree trunks. There were long weeds all around them and they had to be extra careful to get to the water. Emma’s horse had been uneasy at first, but she had been able to calm him down with some caresses and a hand full of grass.

“So… I’ve told you about my wife,” Killian held out his hand for her, helping her jump over one of the tall weeds on the way. "What about your heart, your Majesty?"

“It’s beating, thank you,” she accepted his helping hand and tried to ignore the electricity that surged through her body when their fingers touched.

“I hear you have plenty of suitors.”

“And yet not one of them interests me,” the half smile she gave him was indicative of how she wasn’t willing to talk about any of that. Never wishing to go against her will, Killian nodded in understanding and gestured for her to give him her canteen. "When was the last time you saw your wife?"

Killian stuttered again at her curiosity – the real Emma was not this inquisitive – and it took him some seconds to conjure an answer. "We were in… a tavern when we got separated."

His voice trailed off as he reached for the water and filled the canteen, feeling her gaze on him the entire time.

"Alright, that should do," he handed her back the canteen, his face slightly flushed from his effort to reach for the water without falling. "We should probably get going."

Emma forced a smile at him, but her feet stayed glued to the moss-covered ground, waiting for him to go ahead. Always mistrustful, his Swan.

He gave her an amused look and did as she wished, making his way to the main road. The next thing he knew, he was feeling a sharp pain in his legs pushing him down on his knees as a hand pulled on his hair.

“We’re not going anywhere until you tell me who you really are,” Emma's menacing voice was as threatening as the tip of the Fragarach she held at his throat. If the bloody blade hadn't been itching
his skin, he would have laughed at the familiarity of it all.

"I am exactly who I say I am."

"For a man who claims to love his wife, you sure stutter a lot when someone asks you what her name is. Are you even married?"

"Yes, I am."

"What's your wife's name then?"

Killian tried to say "Leia" again, but he simply could not get the words out.

The Fragarach. It was preventing him from lying.

"No one can move or tell a lie with the sword at their throat", he recalled Belle's words.

No matter how much he tried, the sword's power was greater than any resistance he could offer and he had no choice but to blurt out the truth.

"Her name's Emma," he wished he could see her reaction, but the sword had him completely paralyzed. "You're my wife."

Emma pulled the sword away from his neck and took a few disbelieving steps forward. There was a heavy feeling in her stomach that hardened her expression when she couldn't detect any lies in his words. Her incredulity soon transformed into laughter. No, it wasn't possible. He was probably some wizard and was making all of this insanity actually look plausible. She wouldn't fall for it.

“I’ve met plenty of lunatics, but you're something else,” she put the sword away as she kept laughing. Free from the powers of the Fragarach, Killian was quick to get up on his feet.

“Do you think I’m lying?” he stood in front of her, not bothering to keep a whole lot of distance between their faces.

Emma gulped at the feel of his hot breath so close to her as she glanced at his lips. They looked so full and… and… what was she doing? She was supposed to be inquiring him, not thinking about kissing him.

“You could be a good liar."

“We have done this before, Swan," he shook his head with a smile, remembering his days in New York searching for her. "I have no reason to believe the outcome will be any different this time.”

Emma looked at him with a skeptical frown, her hand resting over the grip of her sword. "What happened before?"

“You trusted me, even though you didn’t know who I was. That's what True Love does,” her breath caught in her throat at the love and sincerity that radiated from his blue eyes. She would be lying if she said that he didn't have an effect on her, but she couldn't ignore the fact that he was absolutely insane. The things he was saying… it made no sense. His pretty eyes wouldn't change that.

"You're crazy," she lifted her gaze up to his one last time before walking past him. "And on your own from now on."

Killian watched as Emma pulled her horse with her and started walking away from him. He couldn't let her go, he had to do something. Say something.
"You have a mole on your right buttock," his firm words hit her like a slingshot to her back and she stopped walking. "You don't like it at all, but I find it quite charming."

Emma turned around, a sudden coldness hitting her at the core as she walked back toward him.

"How do you know that?" there was an intensity in his voice and a glare in her eyes that he hadn't seen in years and he knew then that she was afraid. Afraid that he was right and that the answer he would give her would make her believe him.

"Because I'm your husband, Emma," he whispered, his eyes never leaving hers. "I know every part of you."

Her expression softened as she instinctively edged near him. She was starting to believe him, he could feel it. Perhaps she just needed another push, another proof that he wasn't lying.

He smiled at her and dropped his satchel to the ground before he started taking off his navy blue jacket.

"What are you doing?" her voice was low as she watched him intently.

"I want to show you something," he turned the left side of his body to her and pulled his white shirt up. Emma couldn't seem to drag her gaze from the black ink that outlined a large swan over his ribs, her scripted name on the inside. "I still haven't shown it to you. I wanted you to find it by yourself."

Still staring at his tattoo, Emma blushed, figuring what Killian had implied. He was waiting for her to see it while she undressed him. Could it be? Could she actually be talking to her husband?

Maybe that's why there had always been something so familiar about him. Maybe, just maybe… he was telling the truth.

"Please, love," he took her hand in his and pierced her soul with his passionate gaze. "Come with me."

On their way to the beanstalk, Killian told her everything about them. He could tell from her reactions that part of her was still skeptical about everything, especially when he told her she had magic and was the Savior, but at least she hadn't called him crazy and hadn't run away from him.

"There's just something I don't understand," Emma said as the beanstalk came into view in the horizon. "If we really are… you know, True Love… why didn't you just kiss me to break the curse?"

"Aye, it's a little more complicated than that. True Love's kiss will only work if you have your memories. That's why we need to find our True Love sapling," Killian held up his hand in the beanstalk's direction. "I am hoping that will give you your memories back."

Emma bobbed her head, a confident grin cutting her face. "I guess we have a beanstalk to climb then."

"I'm afraid I can't let you do that," Emma and Killian jerked their heads in the direction of the voice that echoed behind them. Killian gritted his teeth when he found the crocodile staring back at them. His appearance was the same as in Storybrooke, no Dark One scales, sparkly skin or high-pitched voice. He was simply Mr. Gold.
Before Emma and Killian had a chance to do anything, Rumple flew them forcefully against the trees, a beam of magic blasting from his hand. Killian heard Emma groan and that was the only thing he needed to hear to keep his eyes open and ignore the pain in his back. He tried to move, but the Dark One was standing in front of him now, his hand still in the air and immobilizing him with his magic.

"I am going to enjoy this," Rumple's sickening grin matched the amusement in his eyes as he once again used his powers on Killian. An invisible force grasped at Killian's throat, leaving him without air. His head started spinning as he tried to gasp for air, but the more he tried, the more he felt his life slipping away.

"No!" the magical grip on Killian's neck was broken in time with Emma's angry yell and he found the strength inside of him to open his eyes and see a white cloud of Emma's light magic blasting Rumplestiltskin away from him. Emma stood there, not quite believing what was happening, but she didn't stop.

"You should know by now your magic is no match to mine," Rumple refused to surrender and sent another wave of dark magic in her direction. A burst of light blinded Killian for some seconds as light and dark magic clashed against one another. Emma grunted as she took a step back for balance while Killian's mind ran a mile a minute, his widened eyes glued to Emma. He knew that as powerful as Emma was, she couldn't defeat the Dark One. He had to find a way to help her. He had to-

Another burst of light erupted in front of him and with one final groan from Emma, her light stream of magic completely snuffed out Rumplestiltskin's.

Killian parted his lips and a frown took over his face as he processed what he had just witnessed. Emma's magic had overpowered the crocodile. She had been stronger than the Dark One.

"If I were you, I'd get the hell out of here," her words came out in between ragged breaths, her hands on her knees as she tried to recover from the demanding fight. Rumple stared at his trembling hand, taking some reluctant steps back before he lifted his head to look at Emma. The emptiness and defeat that Killian saw swirling in his eyes made for a look of utter desperation that he had never seen on the crocodile. It was almost as if he had come to a fatal realization. With nothing more than an incredulous nod of his face, he flicked his wrist and a cloud of purple magic engulfed him to take him somewhere else.

"Are you alright?" Killian rushed to Emma now that the were finally alone. He wrapped his arm around her shoulders and could feel her entire body shaking under his grasp.

"I have magic," Emma said disbelievingly, a hint of pride in her voice.

"Aye, love. You do." Killian smiled at her, pushing a strand of hair away from her face. "You saved me."

"I don't know what happened," she inched forward, letting her hands rest against his chest without even thinking about it. "There was something inside of me that made me do that."

"That is who you are, Swan," their eyes locked on like magnets and Killian fought the urge to kiss her. She was still Emma, but not the real Emma. It would feel wrong – and they still had a beanstalk to climb. "Perhaps we should rest for a while. Regain our energies to climb that –"

Before Killian could even finish the sentence, they suddenly appeared at the top of the beanstalk.
"Bloody hell," there were stone ruins and skeletons all around, just as he remembered. "How did we get here?"

"I think I did it," Emma blurted out as she took in her surroundings. As creepy and bizarre as that place was, she felt as though she had already been there. "I don't know why, but I pictured this in my mind and the next thing I knew, we were here."

Killian sighed in relief at Emma's admission. For a moment, he was worried that Rumplestiltskin had returned to play more of his tricks on them. Thankfully, this had been Emma's doing. Her fight with the Dark One must have sparked the magic inside her.

"Well, love, you just saved us from a lengthy climb," he was about to add how brilliant she was, but what he saw out of the corner of his eye prevented the words from escaping his lips. Just mere inches away from them, poking out of the stone floor, was the unmistakable sprout of the first spark of their True Love.

Killian kneeled on the floor to take a closer look at the small sapling, overwhelmed at how such a thing could have been created by their love.

"Is that it, the sapling?" Emma kneeled beside him, inspecting the sprout from up close.

"Aye," Emma felt her temperature rise under his appreciative gaze that practically drilled a hole in her head. "Are you ready, love?"

Without even thinking twice, Emma took Killian's stretched hand, her body always drawn to his as if he were a magnet. When their joined hands touched the sapling, a series of memories flashed before them.

Good for you.

Maybe I was… once.

Hey beautiful.

You and I, we understand each other.

Excellent show of patience, love.

Perhaps gratitude is in order now.

There's not a day that will go by that I won't think of you.

I came back to save you.

If it can be broken, it means it still works.

You traded your ship for me?

I can't lose you too.

I've been dreaming about this ever since we met, Swan.

It's you.

I love you.
That's not enough for me.

Let me die a hero.

I don't know how to say goodbye.

Swan?

Move in with me.

I will always, always be by your side.

It is with great pleasure that I now pronounce you husband and wife.

Everything was gone in a matter of seconds and by the time Killian opened his eyes, he felt a little dizzy. It was the strong grip of Emma's hand on his that had him turn his face in her direction. When his eyes locked with hers, he finally saw that hint of recognition in her eyes that he had been searching for all day.

"Killian…" Emma lunged at him with a hug that nearly knocked him onto the floor.

It had worked. His Emma was back. She remembered.

They stood there for some minutes, reveling in each other's embrace until Killian felt Emma's warm fingertips pulling his shirt up. Tears pricked her eyes when she admired his tattoo once again, letting out an emotional chuckle. So that was why he had winced when she had poked him in the ribs the other day after their swordfight lesson. And why he had refused to take off his shirt while they were making love. He had been hiding the tattoo from her. "I love it… I love you."

Emma held his face in her hands, caressing his cheeks with her thumbs as she bared her teeth in a wide grin. Not wanting to waste even another second, she kissed him, and a sudden and intense burst of magic enveloped them in a rainbow as their True Love's kiss broke Calypso's curse, sending them and everybody else back to Storybrooke.

At Granny's, everything went back to how it was: Emma was holding the Fragarach in her hand and the roof was intact again. For some reason, however, she and Killian were the only ones who were awake. Her parents, Henry, Regina and everybody else were lying on the diner's floor in peaceful slumber.

"They're alright, love. We don't all wake up from our cursed state at the same time," Killian tried to ease her, recalling the way he had awoken first than everybody else when they had gotten back from the hideous reality the author had created. "I should know."

A shadow on the other side of the window caught their attention. Peeking through the window, they saw none other than Morgana, who froze when she saw them inside the diner. The unexpectedness of their encounter had both parties staring at one another for some seconds and it was only when Morgana took off running that Emma and Killian bolted out of the diner.

The streets were empty and it was easy to recognize the running body far ahead of them as the one belonging to Morgana. There was only one place that road could lead her to – the docks. Sharing a knowing glance, Emma and Killian agreed to part ways in order to corner Morgana without her expecting it. Emma would take the main road and Killian would turn left.
In the short run to the docks, all kind of scenarios went through Emma's mind. What if Morgana, or rather Calypso, wasn't working alone? What if the Fragarach couldn't kill her? Maybe it was better to search in the cannery first as there were plenty of places where she could be hiding by now.

Of all the things she had imagined when arriving at the docks, Emma hadn't expected to find Morgana sitting peacefully in one of the benches, quietly contemplating the water. What was she up to?

With the Fragarach in hand, Emma took careful steps forward until she was face to face with Morgana. There was a suspicious calmness to her that had Emma in high alert, a feeling that was only heightened by the sword resting on Morgana's lap. How could she just sit there and pretend she hadn't cast a curse on them? Or that she had tried to send them all away from Storybrooke? Not to mention how she had made a fool out of them all and had taken advantage of the second chance Emma had given her.

A sudden burst of anger washed over Emma and she held the sword in a defensive stance. "What do you want from us?" she was done playing games with Morgana, who appeared to have a different plan. She didn't even bother to look at Emma, keeping her eyes trained on the water.

"Isn't it beautiful?" she said after a minute of silence, lifting her gaze up to meet Emma's. "The sea has always brought me peace."

Emma stepped back when Morgana stood up from the bench, sword also in hand. Emma's body slumped, losing its stiff posture once she spotted Killian far in the distance, silently making his way to them from behind Morgana.

Feeling a new surge of confidence, Emma took a step forward with menacing intensity. "What do you want?"

"I'm not going to fight you, Emma," Morgana threw her sword away, the shrieking sound of metal against concrete stabbing Emma's ears. She didn't know what confused her more: Morgana's move or the unnerving smile that was wiped across the lady's face.

"Who are you?" Emma insisted, about to lose her impatience. Killian was now just a few steps behind Morgana and he seemed as surprised by Morgana's passivity as she was. He let Emma carry on with her interrogation, but he was ready to pull out his sword at any given moment.

"I'm Morg-"

"You and I both know that's not your real name," Emma didn't let her finish, pointing the tip of the Fragarach at her throat and asking her one last time, "Who are you?"

There would be no lies now. She would only be able to tell the truth and reveal herself as Calypso once and for all.

Gulping amidst her sudden paralysis, Morgana's words came out in a whisper. “My name is Anne Bonny. I am Killian’s mother.”
The Fifth Nereid

Chapter Summary

After confronting his mother, Hook is ready to do whatever it takes to find the truth about his family in what could lead to a striking clash with his biggest foe, Rumplestiltskin. In Enchanted Forest flashbacks, Nereus and Doris make an important decision regarding Calypso's fate.

Chapter Notes

There is not a whole lot of CS in this one, but this is a very important chapter with some major clues to what happened/will happen. There is also a bit of Greek mythology :)

Storybrooke - Present Day

I am Killian's mother.

The words haunted Killian as he took a step back from Morgana. He struggled to remember where he was as a cold shiver ran down his body. His staring eyes were fixed on Morgana's back and he could hear nothing but the distant, muffled buzz in his ears.

I am Killian's mother.

Images of Emma pointing the Fragarach at his throat in the Enchanted Forest flooded his mind. He knew how the sword's magical power had not allowed him to lie. He had been forced to tell Emma the truth. Just like Morgana now.

She couldn't be lying. She was his mother.

The daunting realization had his stomach in knots, churning and tumbling as if he were sailing through bumpy waters once more.

No, it couldn't be. She couldn't –

How.

He was vaguely aware of Morgana's body turning around to face him, surprise swirling in her eyes as her mouth gaped open. He wasn't aware of how much time passed until her lips started moving, no words ever reaching his ears. He only remembered Emma was there when he felt the touch of her hand on him, rubbing soothing circles on his back.

"Killian," Morgana's shaky whisper was the first thing he registered once the reminder that Emma was by his side snapped him out of his puzzlement. He didn't have to do this alone, Emma was right there.

"Killian," Morgana – or Anne – repeated, a wide smile on her face as a single tear ran down her
cheek. "I'm sorry, I wanted to tell you who I was, but I was afraid."

She tried to reach for his face, wishing nothing more than to caress his cheek the way she had wanted to ever since she had arrived in Storybrooke, but Killian pushed her hand away, taking another defensive step back. The hardness in his eyes hit Anne like a punch in the gut.

"How is this possible?" his angry, bitter voice raked the air, while Emma kept rubbing his back, trying to calm him down. "How are you here?"

"It's a long story."

"We have time," he said, gritting his teeth. "Perhaps you can start by the part where you showed the coward you are and abandoned us without as much as an explanation."

"I never abandoned you," Anne bit out the words, trying to contain her own anger as she crossed the distance Killian had put between them. "I know I am in no position to ask you this, but you have to believe me."

"Aww, what a sweet reunion," an unexpected, sarcastic voice had the three of them jerking their heads to the side. Standing only a couple of feet away from them was Ethel. Her casual pantsuits were gone and she was now wearing a long, silk blue dress with a ridiculously big collar made of dark emerald scales. "I almost feel bad for interrupting."

"It was you all along," Emma blurted out, a glare plastered on her face. There had always been something wrong about 'Ethel', but now everything was clear.

"Congratulations, Sheriff. You are very perceptive," Calypso's eyes widened mockingly while she started walking in their direction. Killian felt Anne's hand on his chest, pushing him and Emma behind her as she shielded them with her body.

"I will not let you hurt my family, Calypso."

The familiar way in which the words left Anne's mouth was enough to let Killian and Emma know that the two women knew each other and that this was not their first confrontation. What the hell was going on?

Calypso came to a halt then, narrowing her eyes at them, a vertical wrinkle forming between her eyebrows before an ironic smile emerged on her lips. "Who says it's your family I want?"

A light, blue cloud of magic swirled in front of them, vanishing just as quickly as it had appeared and taking Anne and Calypso with it. It was only when Emma took a glimpse at her hand that she realized the Fragarach was gone, too. Damn it. Of course Calypso had taken with her the only thing that could kill her. They would have to find another way to get to her, but as urgent as that was, Emma redirected her attention to Killian. He was her priority right now.

Killian was staring into nothing, his feet still rooted to the ground and ankles glued to one another as he clenched his fist. Emma's heart broke a little inside at seeing her husband's unresponsive state. She knew him well enough to know that he was trying to process everything that had happened. To process that the mother whose abandonment he had never overcome had just come back into his life unannounced. Only to be gone again.

Killian tried to move, but it was as though his legs were not responding. All he could do was try to remember every single encounter he'd had with his mother. The way she had looked at him when he and Emma caught her in the bakery… He had dismissed the awed gaze and her smile as nervousness, but now everything gained a whole new meaning when put into perspective. Had that
been the first time she had seen him? Or had she been watching him before? He remembered how
he’d found her sitting in that exact bench during one of his patrols. He could still hear the echoes of
that exchange:

"Watching the sea waves move gently across the rocks soothes me like none other. Does that make
sense?"

"It makes all the sense in the world."

Like mother… like son.

Then there were wide, green eyes staring at him, a grin on her face as she’d crashed right into him at
Granny’s, after he and Emma had returned from Boston.

"You're back."

Had that been genuine happiness written all over her face for knowing that he was back in
Storybrooke? Back to being near her?

The next thing he could remember was their rather odd conversation in the diner, after he had gone
through her bedroom at the inn. Anne had insisted to have tea with him and she had unashamedly
tried to know more about his relationship with Emma.

I am delighted to see you two so happy.

Even now he could still hear the sincerity in her voice. Had she always been rooting for them?

His body became even more tense when he recalled their final exchange on that same occasion, a
vein popping in his neck at how everything was starting to fall into place – from her odd, proud
stares to her enigmatic words.

"We all have done things we regret."

"And unless we find the courage to forgive ourselves we will always be consumed by it."

Even then he had suspected she was talking about him, but what before had looked like a bizarre
comment, now seemed to be a piece of motherly advice. There was only one thing he could not
make sense of: if she had said that, she had to know about his struggle with self-hatred. How was
that possible? Just how much did she know about him?

"How are you feeling?" Killian flinched when Emma's hand rubbed his bicep, her touch startling
him before his blank stare began to focus on her. "Do you want to sit? You've had a lot to-"

"I don't have time to sit, Swan," he resisted when she tried to motion him to sit on the bench, her
hand resting against his chest as she felt his heart beating unusually fast underneath her palm. "I need
to know what happened."

The roughness in his voice matched his swift movements to pick Anne's sword from the floor,
pivoting on his heel and storming off.

"Where are you going?" Emma followed him, trying to catch up to him.

"The crocodile wasn't cursed and he tried to stop us from returning. He's working with that bloody
demon and I intend to make him talk."

Emma supposed Killian had a point. It had been highly suspicious that Rumple hadn't been cursed.
Maybe he had made some deal with Calypso and she had saved him from all the fake memories and sucky life? What mattered right now, though, was to stay with Killian. His emotions were running high and she knew confronting Rumple would only make it worse. She skipped along beside him to keep up with his long-legged strides, but fell a little behind when her phone started ringing.

"Dad, can I call you back later? I'm-

"Emma, we think Ethel is Calypso," David didn't let her finish. "We found Scott dead in an alley, without his heart. We're thinking Ethel crushed it to cast the curse."

Oh. Now that made sense. With everything happening she hadn't even stopped to think about how Calypso had managed to cast the curse. Poor guy.

"Yeah, she's Calypso. We kind of had a run-in with her. She took the sword with her… and An-Morgana."

"What? Are you and Hook alright?"

David kept talking, but his voice was nothing but a distant whisper in Emma's ears as her attention fell on Killian crossing the street to Gold's shop.

"Emma? Emma, are you there?"

"Dad, I have to go now. I'll call you later, okay? Be careful."

---

**Aegean Sea, Enchanted Forest – 250 years ago**

Swimming calmly through the crystal-clear blue water, Doris entered her daughters' bedroom, her delighted gaze fixed on the five cribs. Everything could be crumbling around them, but she would never not smile at the sight of her baby nereids. Amphitrite, Thetis, Galatea and Dynamene were sleeping, their soft baby snores creating small bubbles in the water, but Calypso was still wide awake. She giggled when her mother leaned over her, wagging her tiny tail in an attempt to leave the crib – always special, that one.

"Where do you think you're going, little one?" Doris watched as her husband joined them, his stronger, bigger hand gently pushing Calypso back down. She could see the lines of tension on Nereus' face and suddenly the light in her eyes dimmed at the realization that the conversation with Zeus hadn't gone well. "You're our only hope now, Calypso."

"No, it's not fair." Doris's voice broke at the confirmation that Nereus would no longer be the ruler of the Aegean Sea. This was all Zeus' fault. He had been the one overthrowing Cronus and choosing Poseidon to supplant her husband as the God of the Sea. "This is our kingdom!"

"Zeus will pay for what he's done," Nereus said in his most spiteful voice. "He thinks Poseidon will be a better ruler than me, but I am going to prove him wrong."

"Are you sure all of this is worth it?" as certain as Nereus was that using their daughter to avenge them was what they needed to do to reclaim their power, she still had reservations. "Zeus asked for our understanding. He is not evicting us, he said we could stay here –"

"What is the purpose of staying here if we are not to rule?" he hissed in a whisper, careful not to wake the other little nereids up. "Zeus has humiliated me. I am the God of the Sea, not Poseidon."
"I understand your wrath, but does that justify using our child to get our power back?"

"If Zeus wants to take from me the sea that is rightfully mine, I shall find land to rule," Nereus calmly clasped his arms behind his body before he swam away. It was clear he had already made up his mind, but that didn't stop Doris from following him into the main room of their temple.

She took his hand in hers, trying to catch his attention as she sat in one of the giant shells next to him. "Having a land only for ourselves and our people is tempting, but not at the cost of losing Calypso."

"We won't lose her," he turned to her, a smile on his lips as he lifted her chin with his hand. "Calypso is stronger than you think. She is the fifth nereid, the most powerful of all."

"But what if it's too much for her? She is just a baby," Doris' shaking hands brushed her sea-weed hair away from her face as her maternal instincts sent her heart in a spin. Her hatred for Zeus was no less intense than her husband's, and the idea of conquering a land where their people could be protected and free from Poseidon's control was one she could not be opposed to. She just wished there was another way that did not involve giving up any of their children.

With a smile on his lips, Zeus dropped his hand from her chin and stretched out his hands as a round hand mirror appeared on one hand while the other held a sword with a golden guard and a round pommel with a deep blue jewel.

"With this mirror, we will always be watching her. She will never be alone." Doris followed Zeus' gaze and the mirror showed Calypso in her crib, still wagging her tail.

"And the sword… Is that-"

"The Fragarach, yes," Nereus didn't let her finish, lifting the sword so she could better inspect it. "You know this sword has belonged to my family for centuries. Its magical powers are tied to our blood. I want Calypso to keep it."

Doris started shaking her head. Surely her husband had forgotten about everything that sword could do. "No, if it ever gets in the wrong hands, this sword could kill her."

"I assure you it will not get in anybody's hands but Calypso's. Trust me," Nereus' confident look eased Doris. Her husband had always been a meticulous planner. If he was assuring her that the sword would never leave Calypso's side, she believed him. "Besides, with the Fragarach, Calypso will be even more powerful. The sword will help her know who she is and what she can do."

"But why must we send her away now? Why can't she stay with us until she's old enough to embark on her mission?"

"She must be raised as a child of Earth. She must know human selfishness," Nereus said. "If she doesn't, she will never be ready to turn against them, nor to conquer the land of our future kingdom."

"You want them to wrong her… because then she will hate them," Doris finished Nereus' thoughts as her husband's plan started making sense in her mind.

"There is no more powerful motivator than a heart filled with hatred," Nereus nodded in agreement. "That is the only way she will be ready to save us. And with the power that was granted to her, it should be easy for her to turn humans against one another."

A soft smile appeared on Doris' lips. She had to admit her husband had it all figured out. "And by
being able to turn them against each other, she will be one step closer to making them accept us as their new rulers."

The thought of letting humans purposely harm their child gutted Doris, but knowing that they would always be watching Calypso's every step eased her mind. There would be no damage inflicted on Calypso that they wouldn't be able to heal. Some day they would tell her the truth and she would understand their decision. This was their kingdom. Their daughter would understand they couldn't let Zeus take it away from them, not without a fight.

"What do we need to do?" Doris asked her husband, giving him her approval at last. They had never been wrong before. This surely wouldn't be the first time.

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

It had been a while since Anne had been this close to a lake. She wasn't even aware Storybrooke had such a beautiful lake park, but Calypso had decided to be her vicious self and brought her to the one place that resembled the secluded lake that had been part of their childhood.

Anne was sitting on the bench facing the water, watching Calypso's every move as she paced back and forth in the grass. She found herself wishing she had put two and two together and had realized that this Ethel she kept hearing about was none other than Calypso. Maybe then she could have done something - *anything* - to keep Calypso from ever getting near Killian and his family. Perhaps the warmth of Storybrooke and finally being near her son had given her the false impression that she was safe, that this time Calypso hadn't gone after her. But now, standing there, motionless and taking in the sounds of the lake water lapping by the shore, Anne realized there was no use crying over spilt milk.

A long time ago, Calypso's heinous ways would have awoken the dark side inside of her, much like her father's tyranny had brought to the surface her most vengeful self. But that was long ago. She wasn't that person anymore. She would never let Calypso hurt Killian or Emma, but as much as her body hadn't magically aged all that much, her mind carried the weight of centuries filled with pain and torment.

"My apologies," Calypso broke the silence first, but still didn't bother to meet Anne's gaze. "I had planned on saying 'hi', but given your past resilience, I decided to change tactics and hide from you for as long as I could."

Anne's only response came in the shape of an unimpressed look. She knew from experience that any attempt to talk to Calypso wouldn't get her anywhere. Besides, keeping silent seemed to bother her more than any angry retort Anne could come up with.

"So… any thoughts on your daughter-in-law?" Calypso's voice was higher than usual as she finally turned to look at Anne and sat next to her. "Personally, I find her rather annoying."

With Calypso's body so close to hers, Anne jumped off the bench like a spring, surprising even herself. Perhaps there was still some of that fire left in her. She only had to find it. Feeling a new surge of confidence, she shook her head repeatedly with all the energy she could muster.

"You have prevented me from being with my children for centuries and now you didn't even give me one minute to talk to my son," her words rolled out of her mouth in a harsh growl.
"Oh, I know. I keep taking everything away from you, don't I?" Calypso crossed her legs, her usual smirk lighting her face, and a glimmer of mischief sparkling in her blue eyes. "But just to show you that I do have a kinder heart than you think, here's a small gift before you die."

The minute Calypso flicked her wrist, a large whirlwind started forming in the soothing lake. Beads of water sprayed Anne's face as Calypso joined her by the shore, the two of them watching as something massive emerged from the lake bottom. The first thing that caught Anne's eye were the square-rigged sails that started coming into view before the water cascaded down the hull of the dark green ship she knew all too well.

Anne blinked a couple of times, trying to understand if what she was seeing was real or if it was another one of Calypso's twisted tricks. She kept waiting for the ship to disappear or to magically turn into something else, but when nothing happened, it finally hit her. It was there. Her ship was actually there, standing in all its glory and as if no time had passed by.

Years ago, Anne would've been delighted, but now all she could do was shut her eyes as tightly as possible, not wanting to take one more look at the brigantine she had once loved. Her trembling, sweaty hands covered her face as she turned her back to the water. She tried to ignore the dreadful images flooding her mind that wrenched at her stomach, but tears still welled up in her eyes.

"Aww, bad memories?" Calypso knew exactly what she was doing. She knew what bringing Anne's ship back would mean to her, how there would be no worse torture Calypso could inflict on her. It was only when she felt the ground balancing underneath her feet that Anne opened her eyes. They were now on the ship's deck and the threat of the familiar smell of wet wood sent Anne's heart racing. Suddenly, it was as if she had gone back in time and was living that moment all over again.

"Davy, we need to leave. Now!"

"Hide under your bed, Liam."

"Make it stop," Anne pleaded, covering her ears with her hands as her legs started buckling. "Please."

Calypso almost felt sorry for her, but there was nothing more pleasing than watching Anne Bonny practically on her knees, begging for mercy. The sight filled her heart with joy and she failed to resist the temptation of taunting Anne even more, well-aware that it would be like twisting a knife in her heart.

"Where was it, the exact spot?" Calypso's voice was sarcastic as she played dumb and started walking around the deck. "Was it here? Or in here?"

The absolute delight on Calypso's face had Anne fighting back her tears in a sudden urge to refuse giving Calypso what she wanted. The taunting was killing her on the inside, but this would not be her end. Not like this.

An image of Davy caressing her cheek flashing in her mind was the only fuel she needed for her legs to start responding. Calypso could have taken everything from her, but her memories would always be hers. All it took for her to stand up again were flashes of baby Liam and baby Killian, together in her arms.

"You heartless demon," Anne's voice came out in a low hiss that defied Calypso, who suddenly got more defensive under Anne's angry stare.

"I am just getting started."
Aegean Sea, Enchanted Forest – 250 years ago

Doris rocked baby Calypso in her arms, stopping only when Nereus leaned over to drop a kiss on the baby's forehead. It was almost time for Doris to leave with Calypso and he wanted to savor every single moment he had with his daughter.

"Goodbye, my Calypso. I will see you soon," his thumb caressed her chubby cheek. Unlike the restless night from the day before, Calypso was slowly drifting to sleep, clueless to what awaited her. "Are you ready?"

Doris felt her husband's eyes on her and she held Calypso tighter in her arms. She would never be ready to let go of their child, but this was what had to be done. At her hesitant nod, Nereus' bolt of magic hit her body, sending her into a tumble she had never experienced before. It was as if she were being sucked into a void until it all stopped in the most abrupt of ways.

The Earth. She was actually on Earth. There were trees all around her and the sky was as blue as the sea. The strange feeling of something underneath her was the first thing that Doris registered, and a loud gasp escaped from her lungs when she realized there were two legs where her fishtail used to be. Ignoring the sudden lump in her throat, her eyes drifted to Calypso, who was still sleeping in her arms. Her fishtail was gone too, making her look just like a human baby.

"Fear not, my dear wife," Nereus' face magically appeared in the trunk of the enormous tree in front of her. "Human legs and feet may be repulsive, but they will help you find whom we seek."

Nereus had shown her the place on Earth he would be sending her to, as well as the large tree that served as a portal to the Aegean Sea, but she was still finding it hard to believe that such a tall tree could exist. She could barely see the top of it, no matter how much she stretched her neck. An odd sword shape engraved in the wood of the tree caught Doris' attention and she leaned over to get a better look.

"Yes, it's the Fragarach," Nereus pushed Doris' curiosity away. "Only Calypso's magic will get the sword out of the tree. I told you I would find a way to prevent it from falling in the wrong hands. The sword will call to her when she's ready."

Doris had a smile from ear to ear. She knew she could trust her husband, he always thought of every detail. She just wished that his plan hadn't included turning her into an old woman, but as human logic would have it, an elder was more likely to be helped and that was vital to their plan. Still, her body felt heavy and more tired than usual, and a quick glimpse at one of her hands was enough to notice all the wrinkles that creased her palms. The realization had her in a state of mild disgust and she couldn't wait for this to be over, so she could return to her precious water.

"What shall I do now?" Doris took in her surroundings, hoping all the creatures flying around would not wake Calypso.

"You must find the weakest and the most selfish couple in this realm. But for that, you must test them."

"And how will we do that?"

"You will lure as many humans as you can find and ask them to find the tinder box lost on the hollow inside of this tree."

"The tinder box you stole from Mnemosyne?" she was teasing Nereus now, knowing how much joy
it had given him to steal that item from his pitiful half-sister. It had served her right for having
constantly terrorized him.

"Yes, of course. I strongly believe no human will be brave enough to retrieve it, but we should have
a valuable item waiting for them, lest they succeed."

"But if they do find the tinder box, they are not the people we are looking for," Doris wasn't certain if
she was following Nereus' logic, but all doubts vanished once he gave her a confirmative nod.

"Only the weak and the selfish will refuse to help an innocent, old lady. Those are the humans we
seek, for they will undoubtedly wrong Calypso."

An odd sound coming from the ground had Doris looking down and she was surprised to see it was
her own feet tapping the moss-veiled forest floor. She didn't know why she had started doing that,
but it somewhat helped her release part of the discomfort she was feeling. She had never interacted
with humans before and she truly had no idea if she would succeed in fooling them. Would she even
be able to choose the most suited people to stay with Calypso?

She caressed Calypso's forehead as Nereus kept giving her all the indications she needed. He
advised her not to go anywhere and wait until someone crossed paths with her. This realm was quite
vast and the people in it were not to be trusted. Once Nereus cast an invisibility spell on Calypso, his
image disappeared from the tree, leaving Doris alone to her task. If everything went according to
plan, she would return to the Aegean Sea that very same day.

It was impossible to tell how much time had passed, but it felt as if it had been years since Doris had
arrived. There seemed to be no living human soul in that forest and the monotony was starting to
drive her mad. Calypso was getting just as impatient, crying and kicking her legs while her little
fingers tugged at her mother's woolen cape coat.

"You're hungry, aren't you?" Doris smiled at Calypso as she took some seaweed leaves out of her
satchel and ripped it up in small pieces. "There you go."

As much as Calypso loved seaweed, the food quieted her belly, but not her crying. Tired of wasting
time, Doris decided to go against Nereus' orders and she ventured into the forest. Her old body
didn't allow her to walk as fast as she wished, but she wasn't in a hurry either. The more she trekked
the deep woods, the more she realized it all looked the same. There were trees and vegetation
everywhere, twigs crunching under her... feet. Those abominable and ugly things she had to use
now.

She stopped when she heard the faint sound of voices in the distance, before moving to hide behind
one of the trees. The voices were getting closer and it wasn't long until she could also hear the
footsteps coming in her direction.

"There could be a way, Nicholas. Magic." Doris peeked from behind the tree and realized the voice
belonged to a young woman with long, dark brown hair. She was accompanied by a man who,
judging by the look of disgust on his face, appeared to be extremely offended at what he had just
heard.

"You can't possibly be considering it. I will never resort to magic for anything. Ever."

"Not even if that was the only way for us to have a child?"

"No! Magic killed my family once," the man's loud yells made Calypso start crying again. It was a
good thing that only Doris could hear her cries, otherwise she wouldn't have been able to maintain
her discretion. "I will not let that happen again."

"I'm sorry, you're right," the woman had an apologetic expression on her face. "It is best if we stay away from any and all magic."

They weren't even out of sight yet when Doris felt a wave of thoughts push into her from every direction. By the couple's conversation, magic was something they loathed. And they seemed to be searching for a way to have a child together. What if this encounter hadn't been by chance? What if they were the ones destined to raise Calypso in this world? What if they were fated to be the ones wronging her? Giving a magical child to a couple who despised magic could only end in disaster. There was only one thing she didn't know yet: were they weak and selfish enough? With a triumphant smile on her lips, Doris dropped a kiss on Calypso's cheek. There was only way to find out – she had to test them.

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

Anne was quiet while her eyes wandered the cabin as if inspecting a crowd. It had been hundreds of years since the last time she had been on that bed. Much to her dismay, everything looked almost exactly the same. The small wooden oak desk was still strategically placed under the three large windows, between the spyglass and the now empty bookshelf. Even the old, dirty rug was still the one she had stolen from an antique seller in the village of Arbington. Her eyes lit up at the memories of that wonderful day. She and Davy had ported there to replenish their supplies of water and other refreshments and she had fallen in love with that rug. Buying it (or anything else, really) hadn't been an option and she had easily stolen it while Davy distracted the pompous man. Their actions had been more than questionable, but those had been the happiest days of her life. She missed it. She missed him. She didn't know if her mind was playing tricks on her, but as her hands ran along the mattress of the bed that used to be theirs, her fingers stirred a vestige of his scent from the sheets. That sweet combination of ale, sea and sweat that she would never forget. So perfect. So Davy.

The lump that formed in her throat made it difficult for her to swallow the sobs that threatened to roll out of her. She would have never imagined that one day she would be sitting on that same bed, all alone and a captive on her own ship. She had to be strong and fight back, but Calypso sure was making it hard.

"Ah, yes!" Anne's gaze locked on what Calypso was doing, trying to understand what had prompted her enthusiastic cry. There were small bottles and jars spread all over the oak desk as Calypso appeared to be bottling up her magic.

"What are you going to do with that?" Anne asked her, even though she wasn't really expecting an answer.

"This?" Calypso grabbed one of the biggest jars with light, blue magic glowing inside and shook it, pride glowing on her face. "This will make you feel exactly what I have felt for all of my life. Invisible. Rejected. Used. Hated. Soon everyone in this town will want you dead and I know I won't miss it for anything."

"You can make people hate me all you want, but you can't make them love you." The way Calypso's face fell was enough to let Anne know she had hit a nerve. Her words were bothering Calypso and that was the only encouragement she needed to keep taunting her in her own way. "You won't succeed. My son and his family won't let you."
"We shall see."

**Aegean Sea, Enchanted Forest - 236 years ago**

Doris clutched the mirror in her hands as a tear fell on the glass reflecting a heartbroken fourteen-year-old Calypso storming out of Nicholas and Isabella's hut. In her anger, she had tried to use her magic to make her adoptive parents love her, but her failure had only turned them against her even more. Doris knew in her heart that she should be pleased that everything was going according to what they had planned, but watching Calypso in such pain was more than she could ever handle. She needed to do something to help her child.

"Nereus," she called out for her husband, swimming as fast as she could to his throne room and handing him the mirror once she found him. "Calypso needs guidance, she's in great despair."

Nereus stood still as he carefully watched Calypso sitting on a rock by a lake, trying to suppress her cries. It was clear that she was in great pain and Nereus did not hesitate in giving his wife a nod of approval.

"It's time. You know what you must do."

All it took was a flick of his wrist for a small, blue bottle to appear in Doris' hands. Not too long after she chugged it down, a happy sob almost escaped her lips when she found Calypso's curious, tear-filled eyes staring back at her. Not a day had gone by that Doris hadn't watched her through the mirror, but seeing her in the flesh – even if it was through a magical potion – was enough to ease her worrying heart. Calypso was so tall already, so grown up. Her dark brown hair cascaded down her shoulders and her eyes were bright and alert, just like her father's.

"My sweet child..." Calypso took a step back as soon as Doris' voice echoed from the water. "Don't be frightened. I could never hurt you, Calypso. For now this is as close as we can get."

---

**Storybrooke – 1 month ago**

Rumplestiltskin held the pawnshop's door open for Belle, waiting for her to walk in. It had been a long evening and he knew how tired she was. After the Final Battle, he hadn't expected to be invited for a celebration dinner at Granny's, but Belle had insisted they accepted the invitation and he had been unable to say no to his wife. As delicious as the food had been, it hadn't made up for the awkwardness of the situation. Despite everyone's initial smiles, Belle and Regina had been the only ones acknowledging him once they had started eating and it had been quite clear that he was still the odd one out. Not that it bothered or surprised him. As far as he was concerned, the heroes were either potential useful allies when the situation called for it, or a means to convince Belle that he was a changed man. If it depended on him, he would gladly pass any and all group dinners with that crowd.

Once he stepped into the shop, the familiar whispers started taunting him, mercilessly seeping inside his mind. Although never gone since he had become the Dark One again, the dagger's murmurs had become more insistent after he had defeated his mother.

"I'm putting Gideon to bed," this time not even Belle's voice could make him ignore the shrill buzz
"I will be there shortly," he said as casually as possible, not wanting Belle to know what was happening to him. The smile she sent in his direction before she disappeared behind the curtain on her way to the upper floor revealed she hadn't been suspicious of anything. Once he no longer heard Belle's footsteps climbing the stairs, he moved toward his safe as the whispers became unbearable.

"What do you want from me?" frustration seeped through his voice as he looked at the dagger, confused as to what was happening.

"Look who is finally listening," barked a sharp voice from behind, a voice that he would forever be able to identify. Zoso. "It was about time."

When he turned around, what he found had his hands gripping the desk in front of him. Crowding his shop and staring back at him were all the Dark Ones who had ever lived. Nimue was the first one to approach him, leaning over his desk with her scaly face and unrelenting stare.

"We have been trying to get your attention ever since you've saved us," she poked him in the forehead with her glove-covered finger.

"He was too busy dealing with baby and mommy issues," the Dark Swan said with a mocking grin just as Dark Hook appeared from behind her.

"Aye, and being the coward that he is, he just ignored us," he said in a hiss as spiteful as ever. "But now that there are no distractions around, you will listen to us."

"I don't need you," Rumple's tone was determined and the twisted smiles vanished from the Dark Ones' faces. He knew this was all in his head, he just needed to be strong enough not to listen to any of them.

"I wouldn't be so certain," Nimue gawked at him with her demonic, green eyes. "Because of you, we are more powerful than ever. There are things we know now... Things we have never known before."

Rumple narrowed his eyes at the cloaked figures, his lips tightening as they all kept staring at him.

"You look a bit lost, crocodile. Let me help," Dark Hook swayed toward him in his usual extravagant way and the dagger magically appeared on the desk between them. "There has always been more to this dagger than meets the eye."

"What do you mean?" a loud laugh erupted from Hook's chest at the tinge of desperation in Rumple's voice. "What do you know that I don't?"

"Nothing. We are you," the Dark Swan stepped in, putting an arm around Hook's shoulder. "You have our power now. Use it."

Her words were still echoing on the shop when he found himself all alone again. The Dark Ones were gone and the sound of the wind blowing outside filled the air around him. He flinched at the light suddenly emanating from the dagger. There was something about it, something pulling him in. It was as if he had no control over his body as his hands reached for it and the whispers reverberated again in his ears.

"Do it."

"Touch it, crocodile."
"Don't let him destroy us."

As soon as his fingers touched the blade, an array of images flashed before him.

Zeus.

The Holy Grail.

Excalibur.

He fought for balance once the visions stopped. His hands trembled as he still held the dagger, his empty gaze fixed on the void ahead of him. So that's what the darkness was trying to tell him. Of course. The answer he had been searching for all his life had been right in front of him the whole time.

"Rumple? Are you alright?" he jerked his head Belle's direction. He hadn't heard come down. "I thought I'd heard you talking to someone."

"I was just talking to myself," he put the dagger away, his chest rising and falling with rapid breaths as he tried to appear calm before changing the subject. "Did Gideon fall asleep?"

Belle started talking about their baby's night routines, but her words were far from being Rumple's focus of attention. What he had just learnt could change everything. He had to find a way to get to the truth, no matter who he would hurt in the process.

---

Storybrooke – Present Day

The door's bell chimed when Killian barged into the pawnshop, closely followed by Emma. Their eyes landed on Rumple running a cloth over what looked like a candlestick. He lifted his gaze up to them when startled by their presence and before Belle could even greet them properly, Killian was pointing a finger at Rumple, the words falling from his lips with a fiery rage.

"You haven't changed one bit. You've been working with Calypso all along."

"What? Rumple, what is he talking about?" Belle turned to her husband, her brows bumped together in a scowl.

"He was never cursed and he tried to stop us from getting back," Emma took a step forward as her glare met Rumple's deadpan expression. Was he seriously expecting them to not let Belle know of everything he had tried to do when Calypso sent them to the Enchanted Forest?

The disappointment that washed over Belle's face felt like a punch in the gut to both Emma and Killian. As much as they wanted to expose Rumple, they didn't mean to hurt their friend. She had been through a lot, but she had to know the truth. She had to know, once and for all, that her husband was never going to change.

"Rumple, is this true?" there were tears forming in Belle's eyes as she shook her head. Part of her knew that Emma and Killian weren't lying, but the romantic in her still hoped that this was a misunderstanding and that Rumple hadn't tricked them all. Or lied to her. Again.

"I'm sorry, Belle, but they left me no choice," there was regret in his voice, but then he raised his hand and waved it, magically putting Belle to sleep as her body fell over one of the armchairs behind
the desk. Emma and Killian started running to Belle, but Rumple's magic stopped them and threw both in the air, trapping them against one of the walls. "I didn't want to do this, but if you insist…"

"Emma," Killian's gasp had Emma flailing her arms and legs as hard as she could, but she couldn't free herself. Rumple's magic was too strong. "You've defeated him before. You can do it again."

A relieved smile grew bigger on Rumple's face when Emma failed to use her magic against him. Back in the Enchanted Forest, he had seriously feared for his fate when her light magic had overpowered him, but it seemed that unlikely victory of hers had been nothing but a stroke of luck.

"It seems you simply caught me on a bad d-" before he could finish, a cloud of Emma's light magic blasted him as his body flew against one of the bookshelves and hit the floor with a thud. When Emma and Killian's feet hit the ground, hearts racing as fast as their thoughts, they stared at Emma's hands sparkling with magic. What the hell was happening?

Rumple got up from the floor faster than expected and he wasted no time in tackling them with his magic again. Without thinking twice, Emma shielded Killian as her own stream of light magic stopped every single surge of magic Rumple sent their way. His magic became stronger the more desperate he grew, but with one confident swoosh of her hand, Emma's magic completely snuffed out Rumple's.

Silence filled the room until the tiles creaked beneath Rumple's weight, his knees slowly hitting the floor as he curved his back and looked down in defeat. What had happened in the Enchanted Forest… it hadn't been a stroke of luck. His biggest fear had come true. It was too late. Miss Swan was now more powerful than him and there was nothing he could do to change that.

"Not used to losing, are you, crocodile?" Killian edged closer to Rumple's curled body on the floor and fought the urge to kick him. The image reminded him too much of that one time a crippling Rumplestiltskin fell on his ship, desperate to find Milah. Killian was aware he had been the villain in that tale, and he sure wasn't going to be one now, no matter how much the crocodile deserved to be skinned in every pitiless way imaginable.

"Wake Belle up," Emma's order had Rumple making another attempt to get on his feet, but his legs were as weak as water, and he ended up sitting on the floor. He carelessly let his back hit the wall behind him, the unfamiliar emptiness in his eyes making Emma and Killian think he was going to pass out at any moment.

A sigh escaped Rumple's lips as he thought of his options. The hard truth was that Emma Swan could do whatever she wished because her magic was now stronger than his. Defying her and fighting back would only lead to another round of humiliation on his part. If there was a time that called for him to be his slick self, it was now. He had to think of another way to best her. There had to be something he could do.

"You know there is only one way to fix this," Nimue's voice echoed in his ears as his gaze widened with curiosity.

"Kill her," it was almost as if he could sense Nimue's breath in his ear. "Kill him."

She was right. The darkness was right. If Emma Swan died, so would her magic. The only way for him to be safe was to kill the source of his problems. He had to kill Emma Swan. The only question was how. He couldn't count on his magic anymore. Unless…

Calypso. She was the only one who could harm Miss Swan now.
Life came back to his eyes when a brilliant idea invaded his mind. He knew exactly what he needed to do. His secret epiphany gave him the strength he needed to slowly get back on his feet. He beat the dirt off his suit as he stretched his back, studying Emma and Killian with his furtive gaze. He would do just as they said, collaborating with them as much as he possibly could. Without having to be told twice, he did as Emma requested, and his magic woke Belle up. He knew she wouldn't react well to what had just happened, but she would forgive him. She always did.

As Emma held her threatening hand in front of Rumple, Killian ran to Belle to make sure she was alright. She blinked at him for a second, confusion clouding her features until one glance at Rumple was enough for her to stand up.

"I don't even know why I allow myself to be surprised anymore," she walked to Rumple, standing in front of him and daring him to look her in the eye. "You will never change. You will always choose the darkness over everything and everyone."

"Belle..." Rumple tried to take her hand in his, but she pushed him away.

"What does Calypso want?" He looked down at her broken voice and she gave a sad, ironic laugh in response. After everything he had done, he wasn't even willing to tell her the truth. A knot of anger and betrayal burst through her as her face flushed. She was tired of always falling for his tactics, but not anymore. "Answer me or you will never see your son again."

Killian clutched his mother's sword in his hand, preparing to attack Rumple in case Belle's threat unleashed the Dark One in him. Much to their surprise, Rumple remained still. The hurt across his face caused Belle a brief twinge of guilt, but she wasn't going to regret her words. After Gideon had been turned into a baby again, she had warned Rumple that that would be his last chance for them to be a family. All he had to do was be honest and truthful with her. If he wasn't willing to be that man for her and for Gideon, she would stop playing fair. There was only so many times he could deceive her until she had enough.

"She's planning on transforming Storybrooke in a new kingdom where she and her family can rule," Rumple answered the question calmly, his eyes focusing on Emma and Killian specifically.

"What does my mother have to do with any of that?" Killian's voice was desperate as he put the sword down. Hopefully violence wouldn't be needed now that the crocodile seemed to be giving them the information they were seeking.

"Your mother and Calypso have a rather complicated history. It appears our goddess is keen on making this new kingdom one where everyone will hate your mother and, I dare say, you."

"That's it," Emma's words came out in a gasp of realization. She remembered how Chris, or rather his cursed version, had claimed that Anne had attacked him. He was so filled with rage that he was determined to make Anne pay for what she had done. And then there was Glenda confirming that Anne had been the one threatening to turn her into a fish. Anne had never done any of those things. It had all been Calypso's doing. She had enchanted Chris and Glenda and make them believe the things they were saying. That way she would turn them against Anne and make them all believe that she was the one who they had to go after.

"What is it, Swan?"

"Chris, Glenda, all those new people by the town line... She is enchanting everyone against your mom."

"I don't understand," Belle shook her head as she tried to follow Emma's train of thought. "If that's
true, why hasn't she enchanted us all yet?"

"I'm afraid it's only a matter of time," Rumple answered his wife's question. "Calypso's hate spell may be powerful but it has its restrictions." Emma, Killian and Belle sent him a look and waited for him to elaborate. Good, things were going exactly in the direction he wanted them to. "She is unable to enchant those who share either True Love or a blood bond with the person she wishes to enchant them against."

"That's it, there's no other way to stop her spell?" Emma wondered as Killian parted his lips and slightly raised his chin. If what the Dark One said was true, he was the only person in Storybrooke who couldn't be enchanted against his mother.

"If there was, why would I have needed to make a deal with her?" Rumple retorted with his cryptic tone, but Emma was not convinced.

"It depends, what was in it for you?" Emma sent him a sly smile. She knew that there was no way Rumple had allied himself to Calypso without getting anything in return. It took Rumple a while to respond, but eventually he turned his attention to Belle.

"She would leave me, Belle and Gideon alone," his voice was sincere, but Emma didn't buy it. There was more to it than him just wanting to protect his family.

"That still doesn't make what you did right," Belle huffed out in frustration, tired of his excuses. "Can't you see it?"

When Rumple began to explain himself to Belle, Killian pulled Emma aside with a touch of his hand on her elbow.

"I need to find my mother," he said in a whisper. "We have to save her."

"We will," Emma gave him a reassuring smile and squeezed his hand, but their moment was interrupted by Rumple, who clearly had been listening to their exchange.

"I wouldn't be so certain. You will not be able to save your mother. Not until you realize everything you have ever believed to be true is nothing but a lie."

"Then what do you suggest?" Killian bit out with impatience and he instantly felt his hand gripping thin air, his mother's sword suddenly gone.

"I take it this belonged to pirate momma," Rumple teased him as the sword magically appeared in his hand. "Allow me."

Rumple moved his hand over the blade and some kind of grey, gooey foam started coming out of the sword. It was the same weird substance that they had brought to Rumple just days before. Did that mean that those were-

"Your mother's memories. Everything you need to know is right in here," Rumple's finger pointed at the foam floating in the air. Killian's gaze was fixed on the small cloud of memories dancing before his eyes and he felt his heart pounding in his chest when the familiar tinder box appeared on Rumple's desk. "Are you ready to learn what truly happened to your mother?"

There was a chilly wind blowing in the clock tower that Calypso definitely hadn't experienced the last time she was there. That had been a fun night, enchanting her sword to attack the Charmings so she could save them from it and gain their trust. Part of her missed Ethel and the amusement that
fooling everyone brought her. Not to mention the best part of all: putting all the blame on Anne and watching them go after her, thinking she was the goddess threatening them all. She let out a scoff as she climbed the last step of stairs and reached the top. As if that idiot could ever be like her or have her powers. At first, she had been certain that nobody would actually believe that a poor soul like Anne Bonny could be one of the most powerful goddesses of all time, but she had overestimated the human capacity to think logically. Her parents were right – humans were the most dim-witted species of all. However, much as she despised them, they were essential for her plan to work.

After carefully opening one of the clock’s small windows, she magicked a big jar into her hand. Her triumphant smile glowed as bright as the light, blue magic trapped inside the glass as she put her hands outside the window. The crispy air chilled her fingertips, but nothing would stop her now. This was one of the moments she had anticipated the most and now it was finally here. She wrapped her fingers tightly around the lid of the jar, opening it with fierce determination as a massive cloud of magic started spreading out. Her eyes and nose crinkled when she started giggling, marveled at the sight of her spell swallowing the streets of Storybrooke. It was finally time for everyone in this town to be consumed by a mortal hatred for Anne Bonny and Killian Jones.

Killian’s fingers were starting to turn white from the strong grip he had on the tinder box with his mother’s memories floating inside. He remembered how this was supposed to work. A simple touch to the gooey foam was the only thing separating him from the truth. It was a good thing Belle had dragged Rumple out of the shop so they could all have their privacy. He wouldn’t feel comfortable with other people prying on such a personal moment.

"Are you sure you want me to go with you?" he felt Emma’s soft touch on his shoulder. "I understand if this is something you want to do alone."

Her tender voice and warm eyes provided some of the comfort he needed in this dire occasion. She was putting him at ease by offering to give him space and he loved her all the more for it, but there was nothing he wanted more than for her to accompany him in what could be one of the most important journeys of his life.

"I’ve had my fair share of solitude, love," there was a gentle smile on his lips as he stretched his hand to her. "There is nobody else I would want by my side."

Emma returned his smile with one of her own, taking his hand and lacing their fingers together. Clueless to the cloud of magic approaching outside, hand and hook touched Anne’s memories and magic sucked them into a purple vortex of light right before Calypso’s spell engulfed the empty pawnshop.
Blood, Sweat and Tears

Chapter Summary

Hook and Emma embark on a journey through Anne’s memories and finally learn the unexpected truth about Hook’s family.

Chapter Notes

This was without any doubt the hardest chapter that I ever had to write in my life. It was really challenging to find a way to properly deal with what was happening to the characters from the past and how those events affected Emma and Killian. I only hope that I succeeded in doing it well and that you enjoy this chapter. There will still be some unanswered questions, but they will be explained later on. Promise :)

The cool crispness of the wind blowing in their faces was the first thing Emma and Killian noticed before they took in their surroundings. There was an old, secular building in front of them and there were children running around the courtyard protected by a wooden palisade. There were mostly boys, dressed in typical, old-fashioned Enchanted Forest clothes. Some seemed to be playing an ancient form of soccer, while others were spinning a top near a water well.

"This looks like some kind of playground," Emma didn't bother to whisper. They remembered how this worked: no one could hear or see them. They were nothing but spectators in these memories.

"Aye, it's a grammar school. See the monks over there?" Killian pointed at the two men wearing traditional brown monk robes. "There is just one thing I don't understand. This is one of my mother's memories, but as far as I recall, grammar schools were exclusive to boys."

"Not this one. Look," Killian followed Emma's gaze and spotted a little girl jumping from one of the wooden benches to join the boys chasing after a rag ball. "Is that her?"

Killian focused all his attention on the little girl with blonde curls who seemed desperate to be given a chance to show her skills.

"Anne Cormac!" one of the monks yelled in the distance, before making his way to the little girl in order to drag her away from the boys.

"I guess that answers your question," Killian said, clenching his jaw at the sight of the monk gripping his mother's arm more harshly than necessary. It was a shame he could not interfere with any of what he was witnessing, otherwise he wouldn't mind showing that bloody monk that was no way to treat a child.

A gasp escaped Emma's lips when suddenly everything went dark as a swoosh sound engulfed them. They flinched when the sunlight reached their eyes again. They were still in the same courtyard, but closer to the fence delimiting the area on one of the sides. Same place, different memory.
The lost eyes of another little girl bore into their heads until she hid behind an isolated tree on the other side of the fence. It was only when Anne walked through them that they realized she had been the one the other girl had been staring at the whole time.

“Hi,” they heard Anne introducing herself, and the other girl looked even more frightened. “You don’t have to be afraid. I’m not going to hurt you.”

Swoosh.

Now they were in a lakefront, with tall cedar trees all around them as they watched Anne and the other girl throw stones into the water. It was obvious by the grins on their faces that they were having a good time.

“I do love water,” the other girl broke the silence that had settled between them.

“I do too. I’m going to have my own ship someday.”

“A ship?”

“Yes. I will travel the world on it, find the most brilliant treasures and explore unknown places. That’s what I have always fancied to do.”

“Like a pirate?”

“Perhaps.”

Emma’s mouth curved into a smile and she looked fondly at Killian. There had been something about the way Anne had said that. Something that reminded her of Killian’s resilience and determination. Killian lowered his head in response, a small smile tugging at his lips at fate’s work. Perhaps a life of piracy had always been part of him without him even knowing about it.

Swoosh.

“Do you think we can go to the lake again tomorrow?” the other girl inquired Anne as they were now in the middle of the woods, with nothing but a straw-roofed hut lost among the trees.

“Yes, now you have to keep practicing.”

“Good. See you tomorrow.”

“Hey,” Anne's voice stopped the girl from opening the hut's door, “I still don't know your name.”

“I’m Calypso.”

Killian's mouth gaped open the minute the words reached his ears and his first instinct was to turn to Emma, who looked no less surprised. This other girl was Calypso. And she and his mother had been...friends. What could have gone wrong? What had made Calypso turn against his mother? Why did she hate her so much now?

They could do nothing but stand there, still and silent as more of Anne's memories danced before their eyes: the growth of Anne and Calypso's friendship, the tyranny of Anne's father – Killian's grandfather – Calypso's difficult relationship with her parents, retrieving the Fragarach from the tree, Calypso lashing out at Anne for no apparent reason in what, so far, had been Calypso's last appearance in Anne's memories.

It was clear that this was a friendship that Anne's father had disapproved of, leading him to make her
a prisoner in her own home for a great part of her teenage years. Freedom was one's greatest treasure. How could a father do this to his own daughter?

"Well, at least she knew her way around a lock," Emma said as they watched Anne fumble with the lock of her bedroom's heavy wooden door before escaping unnoticed.

Good for her, Emma thought to herself. She would have done the exact same thing in Anne's position. It was then that a realization hit her: if Anne was so good with opening locks, that meant she could have escaped the prison cell Emma and Killian put her in on the same day they met her. Anne hadn't escaped because she hadn't wanted to escape. Guilt seeped through Emma at learning about this chapter of Anne's past. Had she unwillingly triggered unpleasant feelings in Anne by locking her up that one time?

It was the blaring swoosh sound that broke Emma out of her thoughts. The next thing they knew they were in a harbor. There were taverns, colored houses with pointed roofs and a busy crowd of villagers and merchants. Anne's father was pulling her by the arm as they cut their way to the dockyard.

"I have a surprise for you, but I need you to wait here," William told her as he stopped Anne next to some barrels. Anne's gaze became lost in all the ships moored only a few meters ahead of her. It was then that a smoky voice caught Emma and Killian's attention.

"Could you please move, milady?"

Emma could only blink to be sure her eyes were seeing what they were seeing. Standing behind a very distracted Anne, there was a man who was Killian's spitting image: he was tall, but not too tall, and his lean figure was shrouded in a dark grey leather vest over a loose white shirt with a plunging neckline that revealed some of his dark chest hair. His eyes were a darker shade of blue than Killian's, but the resemblances between him and her husband were enough for Emma to know that man could only be Brennan. Killian's father.

"You look just like him," her voice came out in a whisper as they watched Anne punch the man. Emma noticed the way Killian curled his fist and she suddenly wanted to slap herself. She should've kept her mouth shut. Of course this would be hard for him. She knew how much killing his own father still haunted Killian to this day. It couldn't be easy for him to see Brennan again, so real, so… alive. "I'm sorry. I know it's hard for you to see your father again."

Her hand started rubbing circles on his back and it surprised her how tense he was under her touch.

"That's the thing, Swan," Killian's voice trembled slightly, his eyes glued to the man. "That's not my father."

Wait, what. Emma frowned, her eyebrows pulling together as she darted her eyes to the left to where the man was standing. The smirk he was currently sending Anne's way made it even harder to believe he was not Killian's father, or at least related to him in some way.

"But he-"

"I know," Killian's incredulous voice matched the surprised expression on his face. "What kind of sorcery is this?"

There was a sheen of sweat starting to form along Killian's hairline. He didn't understand how this man could look so much like him. Was he some family member he had never heard of? But then, why did he seem to be flirting with his mother?
“Don’t ever touch me again,” it was blatantly obvious that Anne was furious, but also determined to let her eyes wander over the man’s body.

“I was simply trying to get you out of my way.”

“You could have asked.”

"I did, but you didn’t listen."

The man raised a suggestive eyebrow at Anne in an eerily familiar way, and Emma had no doubt that there had to be some connection between him and Killian. This couldn't be just a weird coincidence.

After exchanging insults with Anne, the man left her alone and disappeared in the crowd just before her father returned and directed her to one of the floating docks. Emma and Killian followed them until their eyes fell on the staggering brigantine ship before them. They could be trapped in a world of memories, but the smell of fresh paint hit Killian square in the nose. He closed his eyes for a second, letting the familiar fragrance invade his senses. It had been a while since he had been regaled with the sweet perfume of a freshly-painted ship.

“What do you think?”

“It’s beautiful.”

“Good. Because it’s yours.”

Killian's eyes snapped open. So this ship, this marvel, had actually belonged to his mother? It was only when William and Anne started walking towards the ship that Killian was able to see a man dropping a big black sheet, revealing the white letters that composed the ship's name: Anne Cormac.

"It… sails in the family," Emma said, half-proud, half-embarrassed of her pun. The ship was not as big or as majestic as the Jolly Roger, but impressive nonetheless. Unlike Killian, Emma didn't appear to be all that surprised to learn that his mother had owned a ship. Having grown up in the land without magic and having heard plenty of stories about Anne Bonny, Emma was sort of expecting it. There was a part of her that was somewhat scared of what else they would learn on this trip down memory lane. Anne Bonny's reputation in the real world was not exactly stellar. From what Emma remembered, she was as much of a famous pirate as she was ruthless. Emma's one and only concern was Killian and how he would react to Anne's past. He had to learn the truth about his family, but she didn't want him to suffer more than he already had.

Taking a glance at him, Emma shook those thoughts out of her head. Maybe those stories she had heard about Anne Bonny were wrong. If there was one thing she had grown to learn in the last couple of years was that Disney movies, myths and folklore were far from getting things right, with her husband's depiction in all those mediums being the most obvious example. Maybe there was way more to Anne's story than met the eye. Maybe she was not a treacherous, bloodthirsty pirate at all.

An honest smile formed on Killian’s stunned face at the way his mother was bursting with happiness. Their love of ships was another thing they appeared to have in common. There was only one thing he struggled to understand: from what they had seen so far, his grandfather was nothing but a pompous bastard who had no respect whatsoever for his daughter. Why was he now offering her a ship? In his many years of piracy, he had come across plenty of men like William Cormac – spineless, arrogant bootlickers who would do anything for wealth and power. This kind gesture towards Anne was undoubtedly an attempt at emotional manipulation, a sickening tactic to win her affection.
The next batch of memories they witnessed not only proved Killian right about his grandfather, but also left him at a total loss for words. His mother was very clearly developing feelings for the man she met at the docks.

The man who looked like his doppelgänger.

And whose last name was Jones.

When the facetious tavern owner had introduced himself as Davy Jones, his surname had instantly raised Emma and Killian's eyebrows, washing away any doubts that he was related to Killian. But just who was Davy Jones and what had he meant to his mother?

“Davy Jones as in… Davy Jones’ locker?” an intrigued Emma wondered, but Killian wasn’t of any help. He had heard all about the tales of Davy Jones’ locker and the threat it posed for sailors, but he had never given it much thought, dismissing it as just another nautical legend. Surely the fact that this man shared the same name was an unfortunate coincidence. Or was it?

An answer started taking shape in Killian's mind after he watched the man who had haunted him for centuries – his father – pretending to be a prince. At that point, Killian couldn't tell what astonished him the most: the fact that his father thought he could fool everyone into thinking that he was royalty, or the absolute disgust with which his mother looked at him whenever he was an active participant in her memories. There was never nothing but hatred and disdain on her gaze, her eyes only lighting up when she was with that man, Davy.

Upon the realization that his mother felt nothing but repulsion towards his father, Killian expected to feel a small dose of hatred for this man who had stolen his mother's heart, but he never felt it. For some reason, the blossoming romance that he was witnessing between her and Davy Jones felt right. His mother certainly seemed happy engaging in his not so subtle innuendos and advances, until she finally embraced her feelings for him on an adventure that had proved how the two of them made quite the team. Triggered by his own memories of a certain journey to the past, he sent Emma a knowing look. He knew all too well how an adventure with the person you love by your side could be life-changing.

"So… if your father is the pretend prince, who is this Davy Jones?" Emma wondered, her eyes fixed on the man as he helped Anne down a horse.

"The man my mother loved, I gather."

"Who happens to be a Jones and looks exactly like you?" Killian didn't need to look at Emma to know what she was thinking. He had thought it, too. How couldn't he?

"Do you think this man," he started, before drawing in a long breath as he dropped his gaze to the floor. "Could he be my real father?"

"I think it's obvious that there's a lot we don't know," Emma shrugged her shoulders, giving him her most reassuring half-smile. "Maybe you should be ready for any scenario."

As luck would have it, the scenes that unfolded next provided the answers they were looking for. After leaving Kinsale for good, images of Anne and Davy's happy life aboard the Revenge danced before their eyes. They would dock the ship whenever replenishing was needed, and they made sure to steal only from the wealthy, making them look like some sort of version of Robin Hood of the seas.

Swoosh.
When they got back to the ship's main deck, Killian froze and stared with wide eyes at Anne's slightly protruding belly, while a teary-eyed Davy showered her with kisses. He felt Emma's eyes on him, both reaching the same inevitable conclusion. Anne was pregnant, and there was only one man who could be the father.

"I know it's still soon, but we should start thinking about names," Anne laughed, placing one hand over her belly.

"Liam. Just like my grandfather," Davy's words pierced to Killian's core, the confirmation of his suspicions drilling a hole of doubt in his heart.

Davy Jones was Liam's father. And therefore his father.

Or was he? Could he even trust everything he had known to be true? Was it even certain that Liam was his biological brother?

As if that unsettling possibility wasn't vexing enough, one of the memories revealed an all too familiar scenario for Emma and Killian. While Anne and Davy were on their way to port, the ship started rocking back and forth with increased violence in much the same way as the Jolly had during their honeymoon. Soon enough, that same hedonic island with golden sand came into view.

"Okay, this is creepily familiar," Emma said, unconsciously leaning into Killian. They were at a loss for words when, not long after, a bright light erupted from the sand underneath Anne and Davy, the culprit being the one Emma and Killian already suspected: a small and mysterious wooden chest. It looked just the same as the one they had found, but there was a small difference that did not escape Killian's unwavering attention.

"Bloody hell," he said, eyes locking on the circular hole in the middle of its lid. When they had come across this chest, that same hole was empty, but now there was a stunning silver ring with a black stone in it. One ring he would recognize anywhere. "It's Liam's ring."

Emma immediately reached for her necklace chain, pulling it out of her neck to better inspect the ring and compare it to the one embedded in the chest hole. Killian was right. It was the same ring. He had always believed Liam's ring to be a family inheritance – perhaps a ring that had belonged to their mother, or one that had passed from generation to generation. It seemed none of that had even been close to the truth.

"What does it say?" Davy asked, letting his fingers trace a message carved on the inside of the lid. Killian and Anne's voices said in unison as they read the inscription.

"The one with the birthmark shall set you free," Killian frowned for a second, so deep in thought that he caught Emma off guard when he grabbed her left wrist and stared at her tattoo. "It's you, love. You have a birthmark."

"I do, but so do billions of people in the world," Emma said, casting a skeptical glance at her own tattoo. "How do we know it's me?"

"Has my mother ever mentioned your tattoo?"

"No, I don't think she has even seen it," she shrugged. "And it's not like anyone can tell it's hiding a birthmark."

Killian knew about her tattoo being the solution her teenage self had come up with to disguise the
black spot on her wrist, but nobody else knew the truth about the tattoo. Anne had never asked any questions about it and it hadn't even appeared that she knew about Emma having any kind of birthmark.

Standing motionless, Killian grinded his teeth at yet another unanswered question as another swoosh came over them. This time it took them to Anne and Davy's quarters, the two lying on the bed. There was a small baby between them and Anne's hand was ruffling his blonde hair.

"Liam..." Killian's words were barely a whisper, but they were audible enough for Emma to wrap her arms around Killian's waist. She could feel how tense and confused he was. The only thing she could do was offer him her comforting arms.

"I feel foolish for thinking that keeping the treasure would bring us bad fortune," Davy said, dropping a loud kiss on Anne's covered belly, before directing his attention to the baby sitting between them. "What say you, my boy? You will have a baby brother!"

Emma's curled fingers around his skin didn't stop Killian from taking a surprised step back, his lips pressed together in a hard line. His mother was pregnant again. With himself.

"It may be a lass."

"Sorry to disappoint you, darling, but it will be a boy once more," Anne rolled her eyes at Davy's confidence, trying not to laugh when he pushed the covers aside and exposed her pregnant belly. "Any suggestions for names?"

"Mary."

Davy couldn't contain the furrowed brow that accompanied his smile. "I would never oppose to honoring your mother, but I'm afraid it will be awkward for a lad to have such a feminine name."

"I can't think of any proper names for boys," Anne lifted her head from the pillow, leaning on her elbows. "None of the men I've met have been worthy of that honor."

"Killian," Davy's suggestion was followed by a silence. "It's a good man's name. A man of honor. I would want nothing more for my child."

"Killian Jones." Anne blurted out, a smile slowly forming on her lips. "I love it."

Davy smiled back at her, lowering her head to rub his nose against her belly, before whispering against her skin: "Hello, Killian. Papa's here."

Killian's mouth gaped open, hoping it would be easier for him to breathe, as he tried to fight back the tears that threatened to fall. There was no room for doubt now. Not any longer. Davy Jones was his father.

"It's okay," Emma's own watery eyes searched for his perplexed ones, pulling him in for a warm hug when he didn't look back at her, lost in his daze.

"I don't understand, Swan," she felt his hot breath on her neck. "How is this possible?"

As much as Emma longed to help him, she couldn't. She was just as lost as he was, if not more, and all she could do was hope that the following memories would help them solve this mystery.

Kilian buried his head in the crook of Emma's neck, accepting her warm embrace. At least she was there with him to help him deal with his burst of emotions. There was a panoply of questions in his
mind as he heard his father dropping kisses on his mother's pregnant belly, but he couldn't stop thinking about the man that, for more than two hundred years, he had believed to be his father. Brennan.

The one who sold him and Liam into servitude.

The one whom he killed.

Liam Jr.'s father.

Liam. The thought of his half-brother had him snapping his eyes open. If Brennan was not his biological father, he was not related to Liam Jr. at all.

The swoosh sound broke Emma and Killian apart as they prepared themselves for yet more memories. The more family moments he witnessed, the more Killian's frustration subsided and started giving way to a fuzzy feeling in his heart. Watching baby Liam crawling all over the main deck as Davy and Anne cheered him on was a sight he had never thought possible. Perhaps that was why he found in himself the ability to live in the moment and to cherish his mother's memories. It was going to take a long time for him to process everything he had just learnt, but this was still his family. It was still his Liam. His mother. His… father.

In one of the memories, Davy was engraving two silver nameplate bracelets under Anne's proud scrutiny as they took advantage of Liam's slumber.

"They're the bracelets you showed me," Emma wasn't sure whether she was surprised by Davy's engraving technique or by the visible jaw clench that resembled Killian's whenever concentration was in order.

"Aye. Liam was right. Our father was the one doing the engraving," Killian nodded, fascinated by the meticulous way with which Davy was using the knife's blade to cut through the metal. "I had just imagined a different man doing it."

Swoosh.

The ship swaying under their feet was the first thing Emma and Killian noticed in this new memory. Emma took a good look around, but there wasn't anything new to see. They were still in Anne and Davy's quarters, the bright sun rays barging through the windows letting them know it was still early in the morning.

Trying not to disturb a sleeping Anne, Davy shuffled through the desk's drawers in search of something. His efforts to be quiet were ruined when an agitated Liam crawled on top of Anne and wrapped his tiny fingers around her necklace, earning him a protesting grunt that was followed by a chuckle.

"Mama," Liam cooed, tugging on the black stone ring on Anne's necklace chain. It was the same they had found on the wooden chest. It appeared Anne had taken a liking to it and had it on a necklace chain around her neck.

"Good morning, bear," Anne rubbed her eyes with her fists, before playfully ruffling Liam's hair. "You just love that ring, don't you?"

Approaching the bed, Davy dropped a kiss on her forehead and then on her belly. "How is Killian?"

"He's hungry. I feel like I could eat an entire pig."
"No pigs aboard, but we still have lamb from yesterday," Davy chuckled as he got on his feet again. "I can prepare your breakfast before I go."

"No, it's too early. If I eat now, everything will end up in the ocean," she said, pulling Liam on top of her chest. "And where are you going? We're in open water."

"I anchored the ship to go for a hasty swim. It's a lovely morning."

"Then I'll wait for you, and then we can have breakfast together."

"I'd ask you to join me but alas your love for water doesn't seem to include swimming in it," Davy shimmied out of his clothes until he was only in his undergarments, and Emma had to avert her gaze. Seeing her father-in-law in his underwear was something she was most definitely not interested in.

"Be careful," Anne sent him a look, her face growing serious when Davy suddenly dangled a necklace between his outstretched fingertips. Emma and Killian recognized it immediately: it was the one with the magical stone Davy had stolen from the monk.

"Before I forget," Davy raised an eyebrow and placed the necklace inside one of the desk's lockable drawers, not wishing to lose it while swimming. He made his way to the bed once again and said his goodbyes to Anne and Liam. As soon as he walked out the door, Anne got up from the bed and put Liam on the ground. It was hard to tell how old Liam was, but judging by the way he started running once they were on the main deck, he should be about two years old.

"Do you want to watch papa?" Liam giggled at Anne's voice, dropping the large rope he was trying to pick up from the floor, before running to Anne, who promptly picked him up in her arms. She freed one hand to pull a spyglass from her trousers, bringing it up to one eye so she could scan the water in search of Davy.

"Me," Liam tugged on Anne's arm as if in protest. He wanted to look, too.

"There's papa. Look!" Anne brought the spyglass to Liam's eye, holding it tightly, lest the boy drop it.

"Papa!" Liam's arms were up in the air, waving in such an adorable manner that Emma and Killian couldn't help the smile that formed on their faces.

"You okay?" Emma turned to Killian, letting her fingers caress his hand. She didn't know how he did it. He had always been one of the bravest people she had known, but it took an extra amount of courage to stand there and watch the story of his family unfold before his eyes. Emma could tell by his slumped shoulders and the gentle trembling of his body that the things they had seen and learnt were starting to take a toll on him, but he didn't budge. He simply nodded, his gaze fixed on his brother and mother, his eyes desperate to know more.

Still holding the spyglass for Liam, Anne watched Davy cleaving the water with strong strokes that became more dramatic once he realized he was being watched. Anne fought the urge to laugh. He was always such an exhibitionist (and she loved it).

Out of the corner of her eye, a dark spot in the distance wiped the smile off her face. She took the spyglass from Liam and looked through it. What she saw coming in their direction had her heart twisting deep in her chest.

A ship.

A ship carrying a black flag with the figure of a man standing on two skulls.
A pirate ship.

"Davy!" he stopped swimming at Anne's scream. "Get back here right now!"

Not wasting another second, Anne put Liam down on the wooden deck and trotted to the ship's wheel. She struggled to find a comfortable position when her large, pregnant belly kept bumping against the wheel. Killian had no doubt that her heart was racing a mile a minute, but she appeared to thrive under stress.

Suddenly, it became hard to breathe. His mother still had to sail slowly towards the anchor to free it from its hold in the bottom. And then the heavy anchor needed to be pulled up. It was a hard and lengthy task and with the way the pirate ship was getting closer and closer, Killian knew they wouldn't have enough time to escape.

"We need to leave!" Anne yelled once Davy reappeared on deck, aided by a rope. Instinct taking over, Davy picked Liam up in his arms and helped him down the stairs that led to the quarters.

"Liam, listen to me," he looked from the main deck down at the boy's frightened face. "Hide under your bed and don't leave until papa or mama return. Promise me."

"I promise, Papa."

"Good lad," he smiled at his son, his large hand cradling Liam's much smaller head and pulling his forehead to his lips, before he watched Liam disappear down the hallway that led to their quarters.

"Davy!" at Anne's voice, he turned on his heel and ran to the chains that would lift the anchor. "No ship sails that fast. That has to be magic's doing."

Anne did have a point. In less than a minute, the pirate ship had probably crossed more than a mile, which was simply impossible for any normal ship.

"We're not going to make it!" the desperation was evident in Anne's voice as she turned the ship's wheel. Emma could hear Killian's shallow breathing (or was it her own?) as the pirate ship caught up to them, aligning itself close enough for the crew of about thirty men to throw hook ropes on the Revenge's deck. Knowing there was no use in trying the pull the anchor up anymore, Davy tried to stop the hooks at the end of the ropes from attaching to the gun ridge of their ship, but his strength was no match to that of thirty strong, built men. Before Anne had any chance of helping him, the pirates were gliding down the ropes, getting on the ship uninvited.

When the sound of heavy boots clacking against the wooden neck reached his ears, Killian pulled Emma's body closer to his. He knew that nothing could happen to them, but his first instinct would always be to protect Emma, even more so when standing before them was the man he recognized as the most treacherous pirate he had ever crossed paths with: Bartholomew Roberts.

Killian's heart pounded hard in his chest upon the realization that this would not end well. Roberts was one of the most respected pirates of the seven seas, but there had been nothing honorable about the way he had conquered that respect. His atrocities and fondness for torture were a combination that had terrorized even the bravest sailor. He was much younger than Killian remembered, his strong physique and lithe agility making him an even more intimidating figure now.

As Roberts' crew surrounded them, Davy and Anne pulled their swords out, their backs pressed together during a coordinated spin.

"Well well... isn't it our lucky day?" Roberts edged closer to them, a devious smile tugging at his lips. "Anne Bonny and Davy Jones."
Killian spotted Davy trying to reach for something on his neck, a hint of panic and disappointment reaching his eyes when his hand didn't find what he was looking for. The Chintamani stone. He had taken the necklace off to go swim. Not even that would help them now.

"What do you want?" Anne spit out the words, her anger encouraging the crew's burst of laughter.

"If it is wealth you seek, take me," Davy took a step forward, trying to intimidate Roberts in his own way. "I know plenty of buried treasure. All I ask is you leave her alone."

"That's terribly unfortunate. You see..." Roberts shifted from one foot to the other, averting his leering gaze to Anne and lightly running the tip of his sword over her pregnant belly. "My orders are to kill your precious little slag."

"No, please!" Davy pleaded, not ashamed of his blatant begging. "Don't kill her. Don't kill my child."

The trembling in Davy's voice matched the trembling in his hands as he held the sword tightly in his hands.

"She said you would beg," the pirate said, sending a taunting smile at Davy.

"She?" Anne gathered the courage to ask, obviously confused by that bit of information. "Who is she?"

"You are as pretty as you are curious, I see," Anne cringed at the smell of his rotten breath as he pulled her face to his. "Pardon me, sweetheart, but a deal is a deal." Without a hint of mercy in his eyes, Roberts smiled one last time at her. He pulled his arm back, sword in hand, eager to run her through.

"No!" Davy's desperate cry echoed far and wide as he pushed Anne aside, shielding her with his body. He arched in agony when the blade ran through him, the tip poking out through his back.

"Davy!" Anne's frantic screams were too much to take as Roberts drew the bloody sword out of Davy's falling body. Not able to bear the sight, Emma buried her face in Killian's shoulder, the scene reminding her too much of the cold night that witnessed her final moments as the Dark One. "Davy! No, no, no..."

Refusing to let go of Davy, Anne caught his body and held onto him among her convulsive sobs. Her tears damped his face as they hit the floor. He was struggling to keep his eyes open, his life escaping at each dying breath. Somehow, he still gathered the courage to lift the corners of his mouth in a hint of a smile, his glazed stare locked on hers. His cold hand cupping her cheek was the last thing Anne felt before the light slowly ebbed from his eyes.

"No, please don't leave me," her heartbreaking sobs were muffled by his skin when her face fell to his chest.

A wave of dizziness overcame Killian, his breath coming in labored gasps as he tightened his grip on Emma's waist. It was as if the ground was shaking underneath his feet and he couldn't find his balance. It was only when Emma's body started shuddering that he realized it was the ship that had started shaking uncontrollably. Roberts and his crew fell to the ground as Anne held onto Davy's body. What the bloody hell was happening?

Amidst all the grunts and gasps, Davy's lifeless body started floating in the air as a thick cloud of dark magic engulfed him completely. Magic swallowed his body whole, the sky rumbling like thunder before it all came to an abrupt end.
They waited for Davy's body to appear again on deck, but the only thing that fell from above was a small wooden chest.

The same wooden chest Emma and Killian had seen on that bloody island.

The same wooden chest Anne and Davy had taken the gold from.

The devilish thing was glowing and shaking in much the same way as when Emma and Killian had found it, a bright flash of light coming out of a small, circular hole in the middle of its lid.

"It's cursed! Abandon ship!" Roberts shouted, instilling chaos in his crew. His men wasted no time in getting up, their suddenly weak legs making their way to the hook ropes as they cursed and spewed nonsense in their frightened state:

"Davy Jones is a monster!"

"The locker sucked him in!"

"Davy Jones is a sorcerer of evil!"

Killian pressed his lips together, expecting that to relieve some of the tension he was feeling. He looked down at his feet when the sight of her mother curled up on the ground in despair, crying with her hands over her belly, became too much for him to take.

"I'm so sorry," Emma whispered into his neck, caressing the hair at the nape of his neck. This was exactly what she was dreading: all magic came with a price. While learning the truth would undoubtedly help them defeat Calypso, it would also carve new scars in Killian's heart.

"I can't even understand what I'm feeling," Killian whispered after a while, not really knowing what to do. Guilt seeped through him as anger and powerlessness consumed him. His father had just died before his eyes, and he knew exactly just how much his mother was hurting right now. And yet, there was nothing he could do. Nothing but stare and take in the fact that everything he believed to be true was... a lie. A misunderstanding of some sort. "All these years I thought my father was a bastard who had-

He couldn't finish, the knot in his throat swelling and making him clench his jaw.

"Now you know that man wasn't your father," Emma caressed his stubble with the back of her hand, hoping her words would help him.

"He died to save me. To save my mother," his voice came out in a shaky breath, his face twitching from how hard he was trying to stop his tears from falling. "He cared."

His tears triggered a rollercoaster of emotion in Emma. She had never seen him in such a vulnerable state, looking like nothing more than a little boy who had never known his father's affection. Her heart went out for him, feeling an overwhelming need to just hold him in her arms and let him know that everything was okay. He was going to be okay.

They stood there for a while, savoring each other's embrace, until his heart beat slowed to normal.

"Do you want to come back?" Emma asked, her eyes searching his. "I can try to use my magic to get us out of here, if you want to."

Killian declined her suggestion right away, his gaze on his mother, who seemed to be in a state of shock now. Her hands were still over her belly, but there were no tears nor sobs now. There was
such a distant emptiness in her eyes that she didn’t even seem to register the wooden chest vanishing into thin air all of a sudden.

"No, I want to know what happened," he said, eyes travelling back to his mother. “I need to know what else that demon did.”

Just as if his words had reached the memory world they were in, they got transported to another set of memories. They were on land now, lost among a crowd of villagers in what appeared to be a fair.

They could hear the loud cry of a baby, their eyes wandering until they found Liam bawling in Anne’s arms. She wasn’t walking so much as dragging her feet while cutting through the crowd. Her back was bent, almost as if she was afraid to get noticed.

“Thief! Stop that woman!” someone yelled in the distance and Anne tried to pick up her pace, but she couldn’t. Her pregnant belly was even larger than the last time they had seen her, and it was stopping her from moving faster – or fast enough to escape.

“Give it back!” a man ran through Emma and Killian, pulling Anne forcefully by the arm as his glare burned into her. He took her satchel, not caring if he hurt her in the process, and a grin formed on his face when he retrieved two small pieces of bread. “You think you’re so smart. You crook!”

“No, please. It’s for my son,” Anne’s plea didn’t seem to calm the man down for he kept looking at her as if she had committed the most outrageous crime. “He’s hungry and I can’t…”

She didn’t need to finish her sentence for Killian and Emma to know she meant she had no money to buy food. Ever since she and Davy had gotten on that ship, they had relied on the things they could steal from the wealthy noblemen. It was no different now that Davy was gone.

“I have a son, too,” was the last thing the man said before he walked away with his bread. An audible sigh escaped Emma’s lips, and she suddenly wanted to punch the guy. Her mind took her back to the time when she started stealing things to eat, the hole that was a constant in her stomach leaving her no choice. Now standing there, watching Anne go through pretty much the same thing while pregnant and with a one year-old on her arm... it gutted her. She had always thought that there weren’t many things worse than being left pregnant in prison, but at least in prison there was food. It could be disgusting and bland as hell, but it was still food. She couldn’t even begin to imagine the pain Anne must have gone through. Maybe that was why she had felt sorry for her when they first met her. There had been something about her that had stirred Emma’s compassion, and she had never really understood why. Maybe her fifth sense was trying to tell her that Anne was safe. And that they had more in common than she realized.

Swoosh.

The next memory brought them to a room with walls covered with paintings of naval officers. The sharp seagulls’ cries outside were a clear indication that they had to be close to water.

“I will give you no more than 1500 shillings,” a man wearing a navy uniform informed Anne, not even bothering to look at her as he kept scribbling on some papers.

“1500 shillings?” Anne almost jumped from her chair, but she managed to control herself. “Do you have any idea how much that ship cost?”

Her aggressive tone prompted the man to finally meet her gaze, looking at her over the top of the glasses that had slid to the tip of his nose. He then dropped on the desk numerous rolls of coins in a way that was enough for Anne to know he wasn’t willing to negotiate any further. It was either the
1500 shillings or nothing. She hung her head in defeat, shaking the man’s hand with the resignation of someone who had been backed into a corner.

“Wonderful! I assure you she will be in good hands.”

“She sold her ship,” Killian said, watching Anne sweep the coins into her satchel. He may not have known a whole lot about his mother, but he would always recognize that unique twinkle in a sailor’s eye whenever he caught sight of his ship, his everything. It had been the same twinkle he had seen in her eyes when her father had told her the ship was hers.

“She did it for you and Liam,” Emma’s comment deepened his conflicting emotions. He was moved with his mother’s act of love, but upset that she had given away the ship that she loved so much. He was no stranger to sacrificing ships for the well-being of loved ones, but coming to terms with all the hardships she had to face after his father’s death made his blood boil. It wasn’t fair.

Swoosh.

The secluded area they found themselves in was in between two abandoned cottages, only the silver moonlight brightening Liam’s frantic attack on the piece of white bread he held in his tiny hands. The broad smile that grew on Anne’s face as she watched Liam devour the first meal he had in many days was the happiest they had seen her since Davy’s death. It was the type of motherly smile that Killian had always longed to see, one that made him wish that he could hold his mother in his arms and apologize for his belligerent behavior when they were together. But he couldn’t. That would have to wait until they returned and defeated Calypso.

After making sure Liam’s appetite was sated, it was Anne's turn to stuff her mouth with her own piece of bread. Her eyes closed for a moment, enjoying the sweet flavor of sacrifice. She inhaled the food with such haste that Emma and Killian worried she might choke, waiting for her to take a breath. She was still chewing when the sound of footsteps made her pause, bringing her into a sense of alertness. As the footsteps got closer, she jumped out of the tree trunk she was sitting on, pulling Liam behind her.

"Who's there?" she held her cutlass out in front, the other hand covering her pregnant belly as a silhouette emerged from the bushes.

"Hello, Anne," the figure's face was still in the shadows, but Killian had no doubt as to who that voice belonged to.

"Brennan," Anne's high-pitched voice mingled with the chirping sounds of crickets. "What are you doing here?"

"It's lovely to see you, too," he said, letting his eyes wander to Liam and her belly. "Congratulations."

"What are you doing here?" she repeated, never putting her cutlass down. She had never trusted him and that wouldn't change now.

"Your father spent these last two years looking for you. He appointed me to conduct the search.”

Anne raised her chin, distrustful gaze bearing down on him. "He still thinks you're a prince."

"You and I both know that fooling William Cormac was never a hard task," he replied with a hint of mischief. "He thinks I'm the perfect son-in-law."

"And what now, you'll be that perfect son-in-law that he believes you to be and take me to him?" she
took two defensive steps back as her pupils flared. From everything they had learnt about William Cormac, it was a given that the last thing Anne wanted was to let that man in her life again.

“Not necessarily,” he lifted his shoulder in a half shrug, taking one step towards her. “I’ve been following you for a couple of days. When I saw your ship ported and realized you had sold it, I knew something terrible had happened. I may not be your husband by heart, but I know you would only give that ship up out of desperation.”

“I did what any mother would do,” Anne didn’t fall for his sympathetic words, her brows furrowing in a scowl. “What do you want? You wouldn’t be here if turning me in wasn’t in your best interest.”

“But turning you in is not in my best interest, my dear,” he took another step, invading her personal space. “I have a proposition to make. A deal that will ensure we both get what we want.”

Anne put the cutlass back in her pocket, curiosity clouding her features as she waited for him to elaborate.

“I have a house in a village near Kinsale. It’s humble and small, but I would gladly welcome you and your younglings there,” he said, eyes lingering on her belly. “Your children would get a soft bed to sleep in every night, a food-filled kitchen to satiate their ever-growing hunger. And, more importantly, a safe environment for a robust childhood.”

Even from afar, Emma and Killian could see how Anne’s eyes lit up as she took in everything Brennan said.

“What about my father? I don’t want him to know about me. Or them,” she put one hand over Liam’s head, and the other over her belly.

“The house is isolated, he wouldn’t have to know a thing. I would tell him that I couldn’t find you, that you are still on the run with Davy Jones.”

Her expression hardened at the mention of Davy. “What’s your price? What do you want in return?”

“Always to the point, I see,” his laugh filled the space between them. “I ask for two things in return, actually.”

“What things?” she tried to hurry him up, the tension beginning to build within her.

“I am still your husband by law,” he retorted, lifting his ring finger, his shiny wedding band a stark reminder of a day she had tried to erase from her mind. “And you shall never petition for the dissolution of our marriage.”

“What else?”

His hesitation as he scratched his beard had her crossing her arms impatiently, nervous about what he would demand next.

“You are your father’s only descendant. What I ask in return is your renouncement of whatever you inherit from him, so I can become the heir of his fortune,” he added, a wicked smile spreading on his lips.

Anne raised a surprised eyebrow at him as Liam started pulling on her hand out of impatience. There was no bewilderment on her features, only the keen realization that Brennan’s one and only motivation was money. As always.
“I am not your wife. I never was and I never will be,” her words were harsh, but they didn’t seem to bother Brennan.

“I don’t want you to be my wife, at least not in the practical sense of the word,” Brennan clarified. “I am free to be with whomever I wish, and so are you. Our marriage will continue to be nothing more than scribbles on a piece of paper.”

She dropped her shoulders in relief, shifting her weight from one foot to the other as she considered his proposition.

“I promised myself I would never set foot in Kinsale again and risk seeing my father,” she shook her head. "Not after everything he did to me."

“It seems to me you only have to ask yourself one question,” he said, holding a key in front of her. His house’s key. "What do you love more, your pride or your children?" 

Anne's cold gaze fixed on his with sullen intensity before she yanked the key off his hand without thinking twice, sealing the deal between them.

"Lead the way."

The corners of Killian's mouth quirked up at yet another proof of his mother's loyalty. Once again, she had chosen him and Liam over everything else. As the next memories demonstrated, going back to that land had been an absolute nightmare for her, with the presence of Arietta, her maid, being one of the few things that had left her heart brimming with joy. Apparently, Arietta had been dismissed from the Cormac mansion due to her old age. Believing that her presence would be a welcoming help, Brennan had brought her to his and Anne's house. From the conversations Emma and Killian had heard so far, Arietta was in on Brennan and Anne's deal, trying her best to stay out of it and focus her attention on Anne and her boys. Her hand had been the one Anne had squeezed in a cold, dark room amid shrill screams and hoarse pants as the world welcomed one Killian Jones.

"Hi, Killian," Anne’s breathless voice greeted him, dropping her lips to his small head, trying to soothe his cries. They were like one, Anne’s gentle caresses as Killian snuggled closer to her.

Watching himself be born was an odd experience, but one that made his heart grow even fonder of his mother. Her look of pure love as she held his baby self in her arms, smiling and cooing him, was the same he had spotted in Snow after she had given birth to the little prince. The same look of fierce protection and warm devotion that could only be found in a mother’s eye. In that moment, he knew that his mother had always loved him. He still didn’t know what had happened, but her love for him had been right there from the start.

“You were such a cute baby,” Emma dropped her head on his shoulder, smiling at baby Killian’s chubby cheeks. The sight stirred something inside her and she couldn’t help when her thoughts wandered. Would his babies – their babies – look this cute? What would it feel like to hold them in her arms?

The familiar (and annoying) swoosh sound interrupted her thoughts as another series of memories paraded before them. Liam and Killian grew at each passing moment until they appeared to be about three to five years old. Having to be careful not to get noticed by anyone, Anne and Arietta had spent most of their time inside the house, the backyard being one of the two places where Liam and Killian could play and run around in the fresh air. The other one was the lake that Anne knew so well. The one she and Calypso had vowed to never stop visiting. The boys seemed as fond of it as Anne was, always asking their mother to let them splash about in the water for a little while longer.
The formality of the relationship between Anne and Brennan didn’t come as a surprise to Emma and Killian. They shared a house, but slept in different bedrooms and they only interacted out of strict necessity. That, however, hadn’t stopped Brennan from taking a liking to Liam and Killian. Often times, he would arrive home with spinning tops or stick horses for them to enjoy, perhaps his own way of giving the boys the fatherly affection that had been taken away from them. Watching them playing with Brennan, it wasn’t hard to understand why they had grown up believing that man was their father, despite Anne’s best efforts to convince them otherwise.

After a batch of domestic and heartwarming memories, they were now standing in the middle of the woods, following Anne trekking through the forest. At each step she took, her expression was carefully arranged in an attentive look, her body in high alert. As she barged towards what appeared to be a shortcut, a strong male hand grabbed her shoulder, turning her around with unnecessary harshness. Horror dawned on her when she realized the hand belonged to a man dressed exactly like one of her father’s guards.

She tossed around, trying to resist his hold on her. "You can tell my father that –"

"Your father is not behind this," the feminine voice startled Anne, putting her fidgeting to a stop. "Not this time, anyway."

"Calypso?" Anne’s mouth gaped open, her wide eyes and raised eyebrows affirming her surprise at the unexpected reunion. "Tell him to stop."

Emma and Killian noticed the distinct gleam of deviltry in Calypso’s eyes, the same they had witnessed at the docks, right before she had taken Anne. The sound of a neck cracking filled their ears when Calypso flicked her wrist.

Anne barely registered the loss of the tight grip on her as the guard’s dead body fell on the ground with a loud thud. Her gaze traveled up to Calypso with grave apprehension, her defensive posture giving away her astonishment at Calypso’s brutal ways. Clearly, this Calypso was no longer the one who had been her best friend. That girl would have never done something like this. Before Anne could say anything, they got magically transported to the lakefront that even Emma and Killian knew by heart now.

"Much better. So much more poetic," Calypso said with a sardonic smile, taking a deep breath of fresh air before turning her attention back to Anne, inspecting her from head to toe. "You look shorter up close."

“Up close?”

"Oh, sorry, did I forget to mention I have been watching you every day for the last three years?"

Anne grew even more dumbfounded when Calypso held a round hand mirror in front of her and images of the past three years started dancing in the glass. Anne and Davy leaving Kinsale, Liam’s birth, Davy’s death, Anne and Brennan returning to Kinsale… Calypso had been watching everything all along.

"Why?" Anne's mouth twisted in a wry grimace, desperate to understand what was happening. Or why Calypso's blue eyes were cutting her like daggers.

"Do you seriously think that after ruining my life I would just move on and disappear?" Calypso pounced on her with bitter words, her anger seeping through her voice.

"Ruin your life?" Calypso kept pressing against her, making her walk backwards towards the water.
"What are you talking about?"

"Because of you those fools I believed to be my parents abandoned me. You told everyone about my magic even when you promised not to!" Calypso's threatening closeness kept propelling Anne backwards just as a clash of thunder rumbled in the far distance.

"What? But I never told anyone about your magic."

"You stole Davy from me. You took everything from me!" another loud clap of thunder rumbled through the air, sounding like dynamite at first. "And even when I tried to make you pay for everything you've done, Davy was the one paying the price."

"You knew Davy?" the sound of Anne's breathing amplified, the revelation leaving her oblivious to the freezing water slowly lapping around her ankles.

"You were the one Roberts was supposed to kill. Your soul was supposed to be the one forever trapped within that locker!"

"It was you," Anne murmured, a moment of horrified realization strapped to her face. "The woman he mentioned. It was you. You killed Davy."

Anne's voice grew angrier as she stopped walking backwards. She let out a harsh breath, her face and neck turning red as her hand reached for her cutlass.

"No. You killed Davy," Anne's cutlass flew with a wave of Calypso's hand, leaving Anne disarmed. "You were the one who wanted to keep the treasure. You are the reason he's cursed and his soul is trapped in eternal misery."

"Eternal misery?" Anne shrank into herself, the water now reaching her waist.

"The treasure you found was cursed. Anyone who touches it will be condemned to an afterlife of pain and suffering. It's just like hell... only in a wooden chest."

"And Davy is..." Anne grappled with the words, the need to suck in more thin air unbearable.

"His soul is trapped there, being tormented until the end of time," Calypso kept taunting. "Because of you, his spirit will never move on. Of course, the best part is that the same fate awaits you once you die."

"All curses can be broken," Anne said, a renewed determination taking over her as she recalled the inscription she and Davy had found carved on the inside of the chest's lid. "The one with the birthmark shall set you free... I just need to find that person."

"It's funny you mention that. Because that is exactly what brought me here today," in one swift motion, Calypso used her magic to throw Anne up in the air, a sickening laugh escaping her throat when her archrival started choking. "I will make sure that you never find the one destined to break your curse."

Emma had to hold Killian in place. He knew there was nothing they could do, but it was hard to silence his protective instincts while seeing that demon hurting his mother.

"Even dead, I will find a way."

"What, do you think I'll kill you? And reunite you and Davy?" Calypso said with mocking laughter in her voice. "No, I want you to live a miserable and lonely life first."
A smirk hung on Calypso's lips as she stretched her arm, a cold and dark blue cloud of magic engulfing Anne's body. The bright flash of light stemming from the black stone ring Anne wore around her neck forced Emma and Killian to close their eyes. When the gleam subsided, their attentive stare bored into Anne's body. Their mouths gaped open in unison when they watched skin give way to scales, Anne's legs turning into a bright blue, shimmering tail.

"What better way to hurt you than to hurt the two people you love the most in the world?" Calypso's sneer was now a smile, making Anne land on the water with a loud splash.

"No, I will not let you do anything to Liam and Killian!" Anne yelled, frustration seeping through her voice when not even her desperate fidgeting allowed her to move. "Turning me into a mermaid won't stop me. I will never leave them."

"Oh, I know. You will never leave them because this curse ensures that you will forever be bonded to your precious boys. You will see them every single day for the rest of their lives. You will go wherever they go, but you won't be able to reach them... talk to them... hug them when they need their mother..." Calypso stuck out her bottom lip in a fake pout. "You will see them suffer and it will crush your heart when you realize you can do nothing to stop it."

"No!" Anne kept doing her best to reach the shore, but didn't move an inch. Killian gritted his teeth, his eyes set in a deadly glare that burned into Calypso. By now, he had an inkling that this demon was the one responsible for taking his mother from him, but this was the confirmation he needed.

"And do you know what the best part is?" Calypso magically pulled Anne to her, one hand enclosing around her neck before letting her lips touch Anne's ear, whispering the one thing she knew would hurt Anne the most. "They will hate you because they will think that their mother abandoned them."

"I will never stop trying," tears welled up in Anne's eyes, tired resignation on her face. The emotional and physical exhaustion was too much for her weakening body to handle.

"Don't bother. You see, if you as much as set foot - oops, how insensitive!" she said, feigning remorse and giving her a mordant smile before reformulating. "The minute you set your tail on land, your boys die."

With one final magical flick of her wrist, Calypso threw Anne in the water again, this time followed by an amused wave of her hand. "Be careful with the hooks!"

Swoosh

They followed Anne underwater and as she began to learn how to use her tail properly, Emma tried to soothe the rage that ripped through Killian.

"I knew that demon was to blame for my mother leaving," Killian's voice was louder than he anticipated. "The woman we have come to know in these memories would never willingly abandon her family."

A nod of agreement and a caress to his hand was the only response he got from Emma before another memory took over.

"I remember this," Killian said, watching a younger version of himself and Liam running on the stone-covered floor of the same lakeside. Despite the weight burdening her heart, Emma found herself looking fondly at the two brothers having fun. They were taller now, but still young enough to take interest in a game like hide and seek.

Anne was watching both from afar, her head emerging from the water just enough to follow their
movements without being seen. When Killian started counting out loud, facing a tree with his eyes closed, Anne swam close to the lakeshore and let go of her necklace chain with the silver, black stone ring, hoping the gentle lake waves would wash it ashore. Luckily, she didn't have to wait for too long until Liam found the necklace lost in the pebble.

"You didn't hide!" Killian protested when he joined Liam, his gaze falling immediately on the ring. "Where did you get that?"

"I just found it," Liam put the necklace around his neck, his fingers tightening around the ring. "It's mine now."

"Can I keep it, too?" Killian tried to reach for the ring, but Liam started running away before Killian could grab it.

"Absolutely not. I found it," Liam laughed in the distance. "And besides, I'm the older brother. I get to keep it."

Not too many waves away, the proud smile on Anne's lips told Emma and Killian that her plan had worked. One of her boys had found the ring. Now they just had to figure out why Anne had wanted Liam and Killian to keep it. Was this some sort of sentimental move, a way of making sure that her boys would get to keep a piece of their mother? Or was there something more to it? This was the ring that was etched on the lid of the cursed wooden chest. Could it have some sort of magical powers?

The following moments were filled with memories of Anne's underwater adventures. She easily built friendships with other fellow mermaids, explaining to them what had happened to her. Some were more understanding and helpful than others, but most were kind enough to help Anne feel at home.

Among one of her conversations with Neri – the mermaid who had become her closest friend – Anne learnt that King Triton and Queen Athena of the underwater kingdom Atlantica, were the ones with enough power to help her set Liam and Killian free from Captain Ahab's vicious authority. From what Anne was able to gather from afar, Killian was beginning to look more and more like Davy, but his short temper and impulsiveness were definitely traits he had gotten from her. Unlike Liam, whose serenity reminded her of Davy's relaxed attitude, Killian would spend part of his nights pounding his fists on the ship's railing. Whenever he started that painful ritual of his, she would always sway her tail above the water, both as a distraction and as an attempt to calm him down. He would always growl and curse in return, but she never stopped doing it. One day, tired of her powerlessness, she decided she could do something else, something that perhaps could free her boys from that miserable life.

At first, his prejudice towards humans had made King Triton skeptical of helping Anne, but Queen Athena had convinced him to help. As parents of seven daughters, they knew how grateful they would be if someone would save them from whatever perils they encountered. Using his magical trident made of gold, a bolt of magic hit the skies. The clouds thickened and the ocean morphed into a black swirl of angry waves, practically swallowing Ahab's ship. When Liam and Killian fell on the water, Anne held onto their unconscious bodies and dragged them to the closest beach. Careful not to touch the sand, she dropped them on the shore, but not before dropping a kiss to each of their foreheads.

"It was her," Killian's words caught in his throat. His mother had been the one freeing them from Ahab. "She saved us."

"She did," Emma smiled gently at him. He had told her all about his time spent on the _Pequod_ and how he and Liam had miraculously woken up on shore after falling off board amid a storm. It had all been Anne's doing and her respect for the woman who was her mother-in-law skyrocketed.
There was a quick batch of memories flashing before them, with Anne being magically transported
to any body of water that allowed her to follow Liam and Killian. There were moments that were
darker to watch than others, such as Liam and Milah's deaths. If it weren't for Emma hugging him
and giving him the strength he lacked, Killian was certain that he would have let his heart be filled
with darkness again, even if momentarily. Witnessing his mother grieving Liam's death also provided
him the comfort of knowing he had never been alone – he still wasn't alone – and that ignited the
motivation to keep learning more about his mother's past. Bonded to him by the curse, Anne had
spent all those years with Killian and his crew in Neverland, which explained why she appeared to
be older than them, but not too older (and certainly not old enough to be the mother of an already
200 year-old pirate).

Swoosh.

For the first time that day, the memory that ensued was one both Emma and Killian remembered.

"We don't have to do it this way," Regina said, stepping on sand. "I can fix the Jolly Roger. My
magic is powerful enough. We can execute the pirate's plan."

"Sneak attack?" Emma's own voice echoed in the air. "Let's not be naïve. Save your magic, we'll
need it later, because Pan already knows we're here."

"This was when we first got to Neverland," Emma said, trying not to feel too creeped out at
watching her past self convincing everyone to believe in each other.

"She was watching us all along," Killian concluded, looking at his mother's careful gaze on the
group as they ventured into the jungle. It should not come as a surprise that she was able to follow
them even into the jungle. With the ridiculous amount of lakes, swamps, creeks, seeps and lagoons in
Neverland, there was probably no place on the island that his mother did not have access to, no
hidden crevice she couldn't peek into.

Swoosh.

As if thinking about water summoned it, the next memory allowed them to see Anne hiding carefully
in the clear waters of a small lake (or was it a pond?) as her eyes bored into two figures standing far
away, almost hidden by the dense vegetation of the jungle.

"You really saved his life?"

"That surprise you?"

"It's us," Emma blurted out, watching herself give Killian his flask back. She giggled at the raised
eyebrow and lewd smirk she got in response, both knowing very well just what was about to happen
between them. Killian searched for her hand, his fingers locking with hers as they waited for the
moment their past selves gave in to the mutual attraction they had felt from the start.

The minute their lips crashed against each other, a gleam of light burst out of Anne. It was a shade of
blue that matched the smaller glow they could see emanating from the right pocket of Killian's pirate
jacket. Back then, they had been so lost in the kiss they hadn't noticed anything unusual besides their
wild, beating hearts. With a final vortex of light surrounding her body, Anne's blue, shimmery tail
transformed back into legs.

"Calypso's curse. It was broken," Emma's voice was cheerful as she smiled at the sight of a thrilled
Anne wiggling her toes, curling and stretching them against the mud and the leaves of the jungle
floor.
"That was…"

"A one time thing."

"Was it our kiss?" a baffled Emma turned to Killian, who appeared just as dazed as she was. Could it have been a True Love's kiss even back then? She knew it was possible. After all, her parents' first kiss was a True Love's kiss. Could the same have happened with them?

"What else could break a curse?" Killian wondered, a tint of a blush staining his skin before he closed his eyes at the feel of Emma's lips against his cheek. His heart would never not pound faster at the sight of pure joy and happiness across her features. He knew they were True Love, but learning that the power of his and Emma's love had freed his mother from her curse was another piece of this puzzle that shook him to his very core. It was as if he and Emma were always destined to find one another. Perhaps Emma was the one destined to break his parents' curse, too. Perhaps fate had always put them in each other's paths since the very start.

With Anne no longer cursed to follow Killian wherever he went, the following memories revealed her efforts to escape Neverland after the rest of the group and Pan left. After a long and fruitless search for a magic bean, Anne decided to get in touch with Neri and other mermaids she had befriended. Thanks to their magical abilities, they were able to help her travel across the realms, with Storybrooke as the destination.

When she finally set foot on Main Street, she took her time to take in her surroundings. The way she paced the streets while attentively scanning every shop was an indicator of her unfamiliarity with the town's modernity. Neither Emma nor Killian could tell just at what point in time this memory took place, but the town looked conspicuously quiet.

The ship's wheel on the bakery's window halted Anne's movements, her curious glance examining each inch of it. Had that been the reason why she had broken into the bakery?

"Maybe she thought the ship's wheel was somehow connected to you," Emma's remark had him wondering if he had unwittingly voiced his thoughts. "She probably wanted to know more about you."

"Perhaps. We know that story about her being a baker was nonsense."

Before they could keep connecting the dots, the memories abruptly came to an end as a cold burst of air enveloped them. The next thing they knew, they were back in Gold's empty shop.

Everything still felt surreal to Killian. These memories had turned his life upside down. His brain was telling him to move, but for some reason his body wasn't responding, begging for rest. But there was no time for such thing.

His mother was in danger.

Storybrooke was in danger.

In that moment, there was only one thing in his mind. One mission. One target. Calypso was going to pay for everything she had done. She had already taken too much from him. He wouldn't let her take anything else.
The Light One

Chapter Summary

With their family and friends under Calypso’s spell, Hook and Emma find themselves alone on the mission to rescue Anne as they face an important and unexpected decision.

Chapter Notes

I can tell you that what happens in this chapter was what gave me the final push to start writing this story. This is also quite possibly the most important chapter of the whole fic, and it is definitely the one I enjoyed writing the most. I hope you like it :)

Storybrooke – Present Day

Killian remained still, his eyes practically drilling holes in the pawnshop's wooden tiles. He was determined to find Calypso and end this centuries-old feud for once and for all, but his body felt heavier than usual and it was hard to move his feet. Even if they defeated Calypso, what would he say to his mother afterwards? There were far too many words to say, too many feelings to share – and still plenty of answers to demand. When exactly had she arrived in Storybrooke? Why hadn't she reached out to him sooner? Why did his and Emma's kiss break her curse?

With a slight hunch to his shoulders, he reached for Emma's hand. His life had completely turned upside down in only a matter of hours. How was he supposed to deal with all of this? How was he supposed to feel about a great part of his life being a lie?

"All this time I thought my mother had abandoned us, but she was always with us, with me," he muttered, taking some comfort from the way Emma's thumb caressed his own. "I have to get to her."

"Killian, wait," she stopped his hasty march to the door, one hand wrapping around his arm. She could sense how unsettled he was, his droopy posture and bowed head a clear indicator that he was struggling to coming to terms with what they had learnt. She knew from experience that jumping into the next crisis without properly dealing with overwhelming feelings would only make it worse. "I know how you feel. After I broke the curse, I didn't have time to process the truth about myself, because the next thing I knew I was getting sucked into a hat that took me and my mother back to the Enchanted Forest."

Her words had Killian lifting his head, encouraging her to go on. "And while that ended up leading me to you, I still didn't have time to make peace with the fact that my parents were fairytale characters who had never stopped loving me. I felt like I was going crazy. I don't want the same thing to happen to you."

There was a soft smile on Killian's face upon the realization that this unexpected reveal about his parents was very much similar to what Emma had gone through after she broke the curse and found out the truth about herself and her family. Kindred spirits, indeed.
"We will find your mother, I promise. But you need to breathe first."

"What do you suggest, Swan?"

Answering him without words, she flicked her wrist and poofed them to their kitchen. There were two hot cups of chamomile tea on the table, its delicious aroma tempting him into taking a seat and revel in the comfort of its warm flavors.

"If there is one thing all those sessions with Archie taught me is that we should take a moment for ourselves before getting into the next crisis," Emma said, taking his mother's sword from his hand and putting it on the table, before pulling a chair for him. Her effort to tend to him stirred the butterflies in Killian's stomach and he accepted her silent invitation.

"Do you know what was the hardest part about learning the truth about my parents and the real reason why they gave me away? It was knowing that the one thing that had caused me so much pain for twenty-eight years was a lie, a misunderstanding," she shrugged her shoulders before holding a cup in her hands. "For years I let the fact that my parents didn't want me shape the person I was."

"That's only natural, love, you-"

"I know," she didn't give him a chance to finish. "But learning that my parents never stopped loving me and were trying to save me all along? It took me a long time to accept that. It was like someone had pulled a rug from under me."

"Aye, it feels as though part of your suffering was in vain."

"Yeah, it does. And suddenly you don't know who you are anymore. But you know what? That's crap, because even though you have spent most of your life believing a lie, it was still real to you. And so was your pain and everything you felt during all that time."

There were tears pricking her eyes, both for herself and for Killian, but she was still able to flash him an encouraging smile as she held his face in her hands. It took some seconds for his gaze to finally meet hers, the love and pride he saw swirling in her eyes making his heart flutter.

"You are a hero, a captain, a pirate, a brother-"

"A husband," he added, cupping her hands with his hand and hook.

"And a son. You are all of them," she said in a soothing voice, happy to finally spot a smile that reached his eyes again. "You once told me I inherited the strength of my parents' love. So did you. Their love is what you're made of. Now remember who you are."

Killian threw his head back, giving her a grateful smile at the familiar words she borrowed from him. She was right. Nothing of what Emma had gone through had erased the scars from her heart. She was still Emma. The woman he loved – the woman he had always loved. Why should it be any different with him? It didn't matter if his past turned out to be different than what he had believed. He was still Killian Jones. Captain Hook. Nothing would ever change that.

Bringing one of her hands to his lips, he dropped a kiss on her smooth skin, just as he had done on that looming day in the vault. "My father died to save me and my mother. I won't let Calypso take that from him."

"Then let's stop her," Emma's voice was confident before her face fell, her slightly trembling fingers tucking a strand of hair behind her ear. "But before we go, I need to ask you something."
"What is it, love?"

"You're my True Love, Calypso can't turn me against you. But there's a chance she will enchant me against your mom," her words caught him off guard. With everything going on, he hadn't even thought about that threat. If what Rumplestiltskin told them was right, Calypso would never succeed in enchanting him against Anne because they shared the same blood. But not being related to his mother nor sharing a True Love bond with her meant that Emma was just as susceptible to Calypso's spell as everybody else in Storybrooke. "If she does and if I try to hurt your mom, don't be afraid to stop me."

"It won't come to that, Swan," he said in a dismissive tone, grabbing his mother's sword from the table. He wouldn't even give that demon a chance to turn Emma against his mother.

"But if it does-"

"I will never hurt you, Emma," he said in a mix of harshness and honesty, not wanting to even think about the possibility of having to choose between the two women.

"Just don't let me hurt her either," she whispered, focusing on the hard clench of his jaw. "Killian, please." Emma knew he wouldn't say the words, and she had to settle for nothing more than a half nod from his part. She had no doubt that he would do anything he could to keep her and Anne safe.

"I will never hurt you, Emma," he said in a mix of harshness and honesty, not wanting to even think about the possibility of having to choose between the two women.

"Just don't let me hurt her either," she whispered, focusing on the hard clench of his jaw. "Killian, please." Emma knew he wouldn't say the words, and she had to settle for nothing more than a half nod from his part. She had no doubt that he would do anything he could to keep her and Anne safe.

Watching Emma's magic seep through her fingers, they let the locator spell engulf his mother's sword and followed it out the door.

---

**Enchanted Forest – 196 years ago**

*There was nothing that brought Calypso more joy than to watch Anne in the most desperate of states. She held the mirror tightly in her hands and savored Anne's countless attempts at trying to get in touch with Hook. Her youngest son had recently arrived in Neverland, determined to find a way to seek revenge on the Dark One after he had killed his wife, the pirate's lover. Calypso had been concerned at first, not being entirely sure if the spell she cast on Anne would work across realms, but all her worries vanished when Anne was dragged to the island of the lost boys along with Hook.*

"The sweet taste of reeeevenge," a high-pitched voice startled her, and she couldn't help the chill that traveled down her spine when she recognized the person to whom it belonged.

"Rumplestiltskin."

He giggled in his usual way, swaying his arms before bowing to her. "Charmed to meet you."

Calypso raised an eyebrow at his overdramatic antics, but at least he seemed to be in a better mood than when he had crushed his wife's heart.

"I didn't know you lurked Kinsale."

"How could I not?" he fake-clapped in an exuberant way. "It's not everywhere you get to see a beautiful deity walk on land like a mere mortal."

She laughed at his appreciative perusal, knowing exactly just what he was trying to do. Her encounter with Zoso all those years ago had been enough for her to know how the Dark One worked. Rumplestiltskin wanted something from her and he was trying to woo her with compliments.
"You don't need to charm me with flattery. I'm familiar with the Dark One's tactics," she said, taking a step toward him. "What do you want?"

Another giggle escaped him at her forwardness, a smug smile tugging at the corners of his lips as an empty potion bottle magically appeared on his scaly hand.

"There's an ingredient I need. An ingredient only you can get for me," one of his black fingernails ran over her cheek before he shook the bottle in front of her. "Five drops of water from the River Lethe."

"How am I supposed to help you? That river's in the Underworld."

"Yes, it is," he giggled again. "But legend says the river's headwaters are in the Aegean Sea, where only Gods are allowed..."

"What do you need the water for?" she wondered, still giving him the stink eye.

"For a potion, of course!" he lied through his teeth. Calypso did not need to know that water from the River Lethe was one of the ingredients necessary to create the Dark Curse. The one magical item that would wipe away everyone's memories.

"And what do I get in return?"

"I may not know why you're seeking revenge on that woman," he pointed at Anne's reflection on the mirror, before cupping Calypso's chin in his palm and lifting her face to his. "But I know how to recognize a lonely soul when I see one. Get me that water and I will put on your path someone who will always be your side. Someone who will never betray you. Someone who will...wuv you for all eternity."

Calypso's breath hitched in her throat as she considered his proposal. Having somewhat of a sidekick would certainly be useful, and the idea of having someone entirely committed to her and her cause was even more appealing. What would it even be like to have by her side someone who loved her? Someone who would do anything for her? Her eagerness to find out almost had her shaking his hand in agreement, but she hesitated. As attractive as his deal sounded, Rumplestiltskin was still a Dark One. She couldn't trust him. But then again... what did she have to lose? Going back home to get five drops of water from the River Lethe's headwaters would not be a problem for her, and whatever he needed the water for would not affect her in any way.

"Do we have a deal?" he asked in his most charming voice, stretching his hand to hers at the same time he wiggled his fingers in anticipation. Another one of his giggles filled the air between them when her hand touched his, sealing their deal with a long handshake.

Getting the water had proved to be a more prolonged task than she had expected. Her parents – her real parents, the ones who had reached out to her and helped her learn the truth about herself not too long ago – had insisted that she visited their home and met her sisters, but she still wasn't ready to get acquainted with the rest of her family. Despite her parents' efforts, they were little more than strangers to her. She loved the Earth, she wanted to spend the rest of her life on land. And, most importantly, she had a mission. Starting a new life close to her family – a family that still chose to give her away for their own benefit – would get in the way of her mission to get revenge on Anne.

When she returned with the potion bottle full of the magical, transparent water, she wondered if she had made the right decision by accepting Rumplestiltskin's deal. She had heard things about him, about how he always honored his deals. Certainly he wouldn't simply take the bottle from her without fulfilling his end of the deal. Would he? She almost lost her balance when something crashed
into her – or rather, someone – just as she was walking home. She was already prepared to insult this careless person, but when she saw a handsome man smiling at her, only inches away from her face, the words never left her mouth. He was tall and lean, his dark brown eyes staring into hers as if she was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen.

"I would apologize, but I can't say I'm sorry that I crashed into you," his voice was low and deep, his gaze instantly falling on her lips. There was a twinkle in his eyes, almost as if he was completely taken aback by her beauty. It was then that her breath was held in a gasp of realization. He had to be the man Rumplestiltskin had sworn to put on her path. The one who would always be loyal to her. The one who would love her forever.

"Where are my manners, I forgot to introduce myself," he added, and Calypso couldn't help but notice how his muscles rippled when he stretched his hand to her. "I'm Scott."

A smile tugged on her lips as her hand touched his. She knew Rumplestiltskin wouldn't disappoint her. "Calypso."

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

Emma and Killian had expected the sword to guide them anywhere but the lake park. They hadn't been there since before being sucked into Zelena's time portal. The place still looked the same, but they were certain that the brigantine ship docked on the north side of the lake had never been there before.

"It's your mom's ship," Emma said, recognizing the painting and the square-rigged sails.

"They have to be in there." As if to confirm Killian's suspicions, the sword smashed into the ship's hull before falling on the lake's muddy floor. Emma and Killian exchanged a knowing glance and agreed to get on the ship as silently as possible. It shouldn't be too difficult for them. While they had recently started working together as Sheriff and Deputy, they were already used not only to working together as a team, but also to finding the best ways to walk into a place unnoticed.

When they barged into what used to be Anne and Davy's quarters, they found Anne tied to the bed, a piece of cloth stuffed in her mouth, while Calypso looked out the window without a care in the world.

"Hello there!" she greeted them with mocking enthusiasm. "What took you so long?"

Determined to free his mother, Killian ran to her, clutching onto the sword that had once belonged to her, but before he could reach her, Calypso's magic shoved him against one of the walls. Anne's grunts were muffled by the blaring sound of Calypso's blue stream of magic hitting Emma, who tried to fight against the power of the spell being inflicted on her.

"Emma!" Killian's worried voice was the last thing Emma heard before her eyes itched and her vision became blurry. Killian tried to get back on his feet, but there was an invisible force pinning him to the floor and stopping him from moving. He could feel his heart beating against the cold tiled floor as his dilated pupils settled on Emma's face. Panic set in when he watched her hazel green eyes turn blue from Calypso's spell. No, he wasn't going to let Calypso enchant Emma against his mother. A new surge of strength coming from deep within him allowed him to raise his torso from the floor, but it still wasn't enough to get him back on his feet. From the corner of his eye, he could see his mother on the other side of the room trying to get rid of the ropes around her wrists, but neither of
them could free themselves to stop Calypso.

When Killian was already thinking of ways to break the spell on Emma once they got out of there, Calypso's magic unexpectedly dissipated into thin air as the spell broke, the blue shade in Emma's eyes being replaced by their natural color. What had just happened?

"No, it's not possible," Calypso wrapped one hand around her wrist, her eyes burning with disbelief as she stared at Emma.

"I guess your little spell didn't work, uh?" Emma prepared to tackle her with her light magic, just as she had done with Rumple before, but Calypso was quick to react and poofed herself and Anne away just in time to prevent Emma's magic from hitting her.

Damn it.

"Are you alright?" Killian rushed to Emma, his hand cupping the back of her head as he sized her up.

"Yeah, I am," Emma hugged him, thankful that he wasn't hurt either. She didn't know why Calypso's spell hadn't worked on her, but she wasn't going to complain. The adrenaline still rushing through her body had her darting her eyes to the floor in search of the one item that had brought them there in the first place. "She took your mother's sword.

"And now we can't find them," his voice broke in response. "Bloody hell."

"We should tell everyone what's going on and try to come up with a plan to get your mother back."

---

**Storybrooke – Six days ago**

After being certain that not one soul had followed him, Rumplestiltskin knocked on the door and waited patiently for her to answer. He would be lying if he said he wasn't feeling a smidge of regret for coming here in the first place, but this was what was better for his family. Unlike what the heroes believed, sometimes it was inevitable to do the wrong thing for the right reasons. In the end, Belle and Gideon would thank him.

When the door finally opened, his mouth curved into a smile. He had been right once again and looking back at him was exactly the person he was expecting to see.

"Can I help you?" the female voice inquired, and Rumple could tell she was putting on act and pretending she didn't know who he was.

"You may stop playing the part of the nice new woman in town who doesn’t know who I am, dearie," he sneered, "or should I say... Calypso?"

The woman’s eyes narrowed as if aiming a gun, tilting her head and pressing her lips together before they broke into a surrendering smile.

"Sagacious as always, I see" she sniggered, "what do you want?"

"To make a deal, of course."

Taking one step to the side, Calypso invited him in. His eyes darted across the room, not surprised to
see that the decoration in Granny's Bed and Breakfast was still stuck in 1955.

"To what do I owe this pleasure?" she asked, sitting in one of the armchairs and encouraging him to do the same.

A corner of his mouth lifted as he turned to look at her, declining her offer to sit.

"Given how successful our first partnership turned out to be, I was hoping you'd agree to do some more business with me."

"Just because I agreed to make a deal with you once doesn't mean I'll do it again," she said, getting up from the armchair and walking past him towards the mini bar.

"I know Storybrooke and its people better than you. I know their strengths, their weaknesses, their secrets..." he tried to persuade her again. "You need me."

She poured some whisky in a glass, lost in thought. She hadn't thought of seeking the Dark One's help, but perhaps she could benefit from his presence. Especially after she had witnessed on that same day how powerful Emma and Regina's combined magic was. She hadn't expected their protection spell on Snow and Charming's farmhouse to be so strong.

"Need is too strong of a word, but you can certainly be useful," she smiled suggestively at him, shaking her glass and swirling the ice. "In fact, today I witnessed something that can pose a hindrance in the future. The Savior and the Queen... their magic combined seems to be quite powerful."

"Indeed it is. Not many are able to resist the power of light and dark magic coming together."

"That's exactly why I'm not willing to take any chances. I need to find a way to stop those two from working together," she brought the glass to her lips and took a sip, her eyes never leaving his. "Tell me one thing that could turn Emma Swan against the Evil Queen and I will help you with whatever you need."

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

Their run to her parents' farm house was going smoothly until a group of Storybrooke citizens led by Grumpy and Granny started going after them, vowing to get Killian and to make him pay for everything he and his "devilish mother" had done to them. It was only when Granny attempted to hit Killian with her crossbow that they realized the real danger they were in.

"She enchanted everyone against you," Emma said almost out of breath once they managed to hide in an alley. The spell had turned these people, their friends, into maniacal versions of themselves who only cared about getting revenge on Killian and Anne. "We need to find my parents."

"What if they hate me now, too?" he wondered with a great deal of worry and Emma's heart broke for him. It had taken so much effort on his part to win her parents over, to make them believe that he was a changed man and that he was worthy of a second chance, only for a stupid spell to ruin that.

"They won't hurt you," she held his hand reassuringly.

"But I will," Regina's voice echoed from behind them, a ball of fire already beginning to form in her hand.
Emma instinctively pushed Killian behind her, trying her best to shield him. "Regina, you don't want to do this."

"Do you seriously think I'm going to let the traitor get away with what he's done to us?!"

“Sorry,” Emma said before stretching her hand and letting her magic knock Regina unconscious. She was surprised to see her magic being that effective, but then again she had been able to defeat Rumple twice in the recent past. Something was going on with her magic, but there was no time to think about that now. With the rest of Storybrooke and the new residents Calypso had recruited out there trying to kill her husband, Emma simply poofed them into the farmhouse's yard. It was safer this way.

The sound of birds chirping and the wind blowing through the trees was a welcoming change to the slur of threats and insults they had escaped from. Everything seemed quiet and Emma hoped that the spell hadn't reached this part of town. Having her parents on her side could be the key to finding Anne and defeating Calypso.

When she opened the front door, a wave of relief hit her when she found her parents and Henry sitting on the kitchen table.

"Emma!" David was the first to hug her, pulling her close to him before Henry and Snow joined in on the hug.

"Thank God you're okay," Emma said once when they pulled away, one hand rubbing Henry's back. "It's Calypso. She's enchanting everyone against-"

“Don’t worry, honey, we know you have nothing to do with this," Snow said, cupping Emma’s cheek in her hand, but her touch seemed different. Colder.

“But he does,” David's bitter tone matched the angry gleam of his eyes as he turned to look at Killian. “He’s the son of that witch, he doesn’t deserve to be part of this family.”

Emma's stomach dropped, a sudden feeling of nausea hitting her at the realization that her parents were under Calypso's spell too. She searched for Henry, noticing that his eyes were trained on the floor, almost as if he was trying to fight against whatever the spell was making him think. Despite the tension of the moment, she found herself happy that Henry and Killian's bond was strong enough to at least make Henry fight against this spell.

"If you don't leave our daughter alone, we will make you," Snow pulled out her bow, directing it at Killian, who just stood still, trying to hide his disappointment.

“If you want to hurt him, you’ll have to get through me first,” Emma put herself between them. She wasn't going to hurt her parents, but she sure as hell wasn't going to let them hurt Killian. “You will come to your senses, I promise.”

Not giving her parents a chance to say anything else, Emma got herself and Killian out of there, taking them back to the safety of their living room.

"I'm sorry," she rested her forehead against his once they sat on the dark brown couch.

"Don't worry, love. I know it's not their fault."
"I can’t say I’m impressed. You were always quite efficient," Calypso said, carefully placing the gooey foam with Regina's memories inside the tinderbox. If everything went according to plan, soon enough Emma Swan would want nothing to do with the reformed Evil Queen.

"And now for your end of the deal..." Rumple held his Dark One dagger in front of her face, redirecting her attention to what truly mattered. "This dagger used to be part of a very special sword."

"Excalibur, yes. I'm familiar with that tale."

"Then you should know this is all left of the Holy Grail created by Zeus."

Calypso rolled her eyes at the mention of the God who had been responsible for ruining her family's kingdom in the Aegean Sea. The least she heard about that imbecile, the better.

"Yes, and what do I have to do with that?"

Rumple's gaze suddenly lingered with hesitation, recalling the events from the month before. The other Dark Ones had warned him of there being something more to the dagger than it seemed. With his senses heightened by their suggestion, his fingers had touched the blade, triggering the revealing images that ended up urging him to find Calypso. Now that he knew what the Dark Ones had been trying to tell him, he couldn't ignore any of it. Disclosing such precious information to Calypso was a risk, but one he had to take. As much as it angered him, he needed her to finally get what he wanted.

"This dagger is inscribed with an invisible message that is of my utmost interest: the way to destroy the darkness for once and for all," he said, fighting to keep any sign of nervousness away from his body.

"You're the Dark One, can't you reveal it?"

"A God's magic created the Holy Grail and this message, only a God's magic can reveal it," he clarified, a slight hint of bitterness detectable in his voice. "Not even Merlin himself was powerful enough to make it visible."

Of course Merlin wasn't powerful enough to make it visible, Calypso thought to herself. He may have been the most powerful sorcerer of all the realms, but he was still human, not a deity. Just like the man standing before her. A Dark One, but human underneath.

"You want to know how the darkness can be destroyed so you can prevent it from ever happening," Calypso raised one eyebrow at him. "You want to keep your power forever."

Rumple assented, an enigmatic grin on his face. "And as luck would have it, you are a Goddess who owns me a favor."

She returned his smile, taking another step toward him. This was something she would happily do – her plans would not be tampered with and on top of it she would get to infuriate Zeus. Wonderful!

She tried to reach for the blade, but Rumple quickly yanked it away from her hungry grasp. "Sorry dearie, but no one but me is touching the dagger."

He held it out for her instead, impatience taking over as he waited for her to get on with it. She lifted her shoulder in a half shrug and waved her hand over the sharp blade. Within seconds, the sparks of
her magic wiped out the Dark One’s name, the silver grey “Rumplestiltskin” inscription giving way to a new combination of glowing letters. Eager to read the two sentences that gleamed from the blade, Rumple narrowed his eyes at the message:

“When two products of True Love join one another in a matrimonial union of True Love, they shall conceive ‘The Light One’ and his light magic shall destroy all the darkness in the world.”

The bedroom clock beat in time with Rumple’s heart, his gaze so fixed on the words that he failed to notice Calypso leaning over to peek at the message.

"Of course," his words came out in a breath as he processed what he had just read. "True Love’s the rarest and most powerful magic in the world. The one thing that can destroy the darkness."

“You sound awfully pleased for someone who’s just learned he’s doomed,” she said, curiosity sipping through her somewhat cheery voice.

With a smile on his lips, Rumple lifted his gaze to meet hers. "There are only two products of True Love in this town. And luckily for me, they are brother and sister, not husband and wife."

Calypso’s whole face lit up at the realization that he was only taking into consideration the Savior and her baby brother.

"So you’re not concerned about the Savior and the Pirate?" she asked, tongue in cheek, wanting to make sure he truly believed that Emma Swan and her brother were the only products of True Love walking around Storybrooke.

"Why would I be? Miss Swan may be the product of True Love, but the Pirate sure isn’t," he said, his voice more confident than ever. "Which means there is no one in this town who will be able to conceive the one thing that can destroy me."

Calypso had to hold in a laugh. Rumplestiltskin really was just as clueless about the past as everybody else. It wasn’t that surprising – he wasn’t the Dark One at the time any of those events took place. She suddenly wanted to burst with happiness at what this could mean to her plans, but she contained herself. She wouldn’t ruin the leverage she now had over the Dark One.

"Right…” she ended up saying, enjoying the false relief spreading across Rumple’s face. He had no idea what was about to hit him.

---

Storybrooke – Present Day

"Why are we back here?” Anne asked once her body fell again on the bed of her old quarters.

"I need to do something before we leave," Calypso's reply was barely audible as she set a small metal box on the desk. "And now that your offspring and his escort are gone, I don't have to worry about intruders."

"Whose heart is that?” Anne's eyes popped out of her head once Calypso retrieved a bright red beating heart from the box. That heart belonged to someone, and a bad feeling took up root in her stomach at Calypso’s silence. "If there is something that Killian and his family have taught me is that it's never too late to believe in love. You won't win. True Love will prevail."

"God, what spreads this optimistic nonsense around here?” Calypso rolled her eyes, having none of
"Is it the water? The air?"

The way she then rushed to the cabin's door made it even more obvious that her question had been rhetorical and that she had no interest in listening to a hope speech. At this point, Anne wasn't sure she would be able to give her one, either.

"I'm feeling generous and I won't tie you this time. You can't leave anyway, Calypso gave a dismissive wave of her hand, reminding Anne of the protection spell she had put on the ship. "Have fun!"

Once Calypso was out the door, Anne jumped off the bed like a spring and scooted towards the desk. In her grieving haze following Davy's death, she had forgotten to take most of her possessions with her when she had sold the ship. Mentally telling herself not to get her hopes up, she tried to open one of the drawers, but let out a frustrated sigh when she realized it was locked. She pushed the sleeves of her white shirt up to her elbows, not giving up just yet. She had worked her way around thousands of locks in the past, she wasn't going to let a locked drawer get the best of her now. She took a bobby pin from her hair, sticking her tongue out in concentration as she picked the lock to the drawer.

"Yes!" she gushed to herself when the familiar click reached her ears. She still got it.

She pulled the drawer out, setting it on the desk as her frantic fingers rummaged through its contents. She sighed in relief when she finally found what she was looking for, a bright smile adorning her features. She couldn't believe it. It was still there, even after all these years.

"Seriously, don't these people get tired?" Emma closed one of the window's blinds a little more angrily than intended. More and more Storybrooke citizens kept flooding their driveway, daring them to come out and face all the people they had "wronged". She had to give it to Calypso: to make her friends and family hate Killian – and her by extension, for protecting him – was possibly one of the worst things she remembered experiencing in Storybrooke. Regina, August, Granny, the dwarfs, Marco… Even Ashley and Thomas were out there yelling and shouting the nastiest things.

"Nemo," Killian murmured as he peeked outside through the white curtains, finding his friend among the crowd. He frowned when his eyes searched for Liam, but he was nowhere to be seen. He wasn't his brother, or even half-brother, but the bond they had developed was enough for Liam's absence to afflict him.

"We need to find a way to get the Fragarach back," Emma said as she walked back and forth across the living room, trying to come up with a plan. "It's the only thing that can give us leverage over Calypso."

"Aye, but how? With everyone enchanted to hate me and my mother, it will be hard to find assistance."

"I don't even want to imagine if she had been able to enchant me against your mom, too."

Killian shrugged, still looking outside. “It certainly wasn't for lack of effort.”

“That's what I don't get. Why didn't it work?" Emma was now standing beside him. That question had been plaguing her mind, but she had ignored it. Until now. Maybe understanding the reason why she had been unaffected by Calypso's magic would help them defeat her. "Gold said Calypso’s spells have no effect on the ones who share blood or True Love with the person she tries to set them up against. I share neither with your mom.”
Killian nodded, his eyes traveling from the crowd outside to his wife's pensive gaze. He wished he could give her all the answers she was looking for, but he could only think of one reason as to why Calypso's spell had failed on her. “Unless the Crocodile was lying, as is his custom.”

“He wasn’t,” Calypso's cold voice echoed behind them, her sudden presence leaving a trail of ocean blue smoke in her wake.

“Where is my mother?” Killian bit out, pulling his sword out at the same time Emma aimed her gun at Calypso. They knew none of that could hurt her, but what else could they do?

“You look even more like your father when you're angry,” Calypso leered at him. "Your mother is fine. For now.”

“If you’re here to try to enchant me again, you’d better step up your game,” Emma tried to get a rise out of her, hoping to see that hint of failure and disappointment in Calypso's eyes one more time.

“Oh no, darling. I already know that won’t work on you. You see, a little unexpected accident happened that tampered with my original plan,” her words became even more cryptic once she started walking in circles around Emma. What the hell was she talking about? And why was she grinning like an idiot?

“I must say I was quite baffled to see my spell had no effect on you. After all, you don’t share True Love with your mother-in-law, but you have no blood relation to her either… So what could have possibly happened? And then it dawned on me…” she paused to lean over Emma before whispering in her ear. "You don’t have Anne's blood running in your veins, but the child growing inside of you does.”

The room fell silent for a second, the drumming of Emma's heartbeat in her ears the only sound she registered as she stared wide-eyed at Calypso. No, it couldn't be. She was… pregnant? Her pulse sounded even more unnaturally fast this time, and it was as though the floor had opened under her.

“What?” Killian's words trembled with emotion, a mix of confusion, fear and happiness swirling in his eyes as his gaze immediately fell on Emma's stomach.

“Congratulations, Captain. You can take that as a sure sign that you’re the baby’s father,” Calypso said, enjoying the shocking daze she had left them in as she turned to Emma again. "That's also why you are stronger than the Dark One now. You have a very special child growing inside of you.”

---

**Storybrooke - Three days ago**

In the darkness of the street below, the eyes of two carefully hidden figures observed the shadows of stepfather and stepson, moving behind the curtains.

“Aww, the pirate is such a good father. It runs in the family,” Calypso tried to provoke her late-night companion.

“What do you want?” There was a mix of bitterness and menace in Rumplestiltskin’s voice.

“Someone is impatient.”

“You may be a goddess, but I am the Dark One. Do not waste my time,” his face was mere inches away and his breath blew in her face. “I gave you the tinderbox with Regina’s memories. My end of
the deal is done.”

“Oh, I know. But why not extend our partnership when we share a common interest?” Calypso took a step back, careful to avoid the fading light of the street lamp. “We both want to make the pirate miserable. I know you still hate him. You always have.”

“You and I both know that the pirate isn’t your main target.”

“But a target, nonetheless,” she ran her index finger over his lapels. “I need one last favor.”

“One would think you would know by now that I don’t do favors. And certainly not to you.”

“What if I told you that there is one tiny, little piece of information I have that you will most definitely want to know about?”

That got Rumple’s attention and he roughly grabbed her by the arm. “How do I know you’re not lying?”

“You don’t. You’ll just have to trust me,” Calypso shoved his arm away, turning to look at Henry and Killian as she waited for Rumple’s answer.

“Very well, but I shall remind you,” he almost whispered in her ear, “you are in no position to play games with me. Not unless you want Miss Swan and company to know that the person they’ve been looking for has been under their nose the whole time.”

Calypso smirked, staring off into the distance. That wouldn’t be a problem. She wasn’t playing any games.

"Soon enough they won't even be a problem," she said. "For my plan to work, I need to get those heroes out of Storybrooke."

"And how exactly will you do that?"

"A dark curse," she grinned. "However, there is one ingredient missing. One ingredient that you happen to have."

"The information first and the ingredient later," his demand came through gritted teeth, his patience running out.

"What if I told you there is more to the past than you know?" She inched forward, her chin resting on his shoulder as her hot breath seared his skin. "What if I told you that Killian Jones is a product of True Love?"

The color drained out of his face as he stared at her, his mouth slightly gaping open before a smile washed over him. Calypso could tell this wasn't one of his usual brash smiles. This smile was nothing more than a cloak to hide his fear and uncertainty.

"You're lying," he managed to say, his face now merely inches away from hers, but the only response he got from her was a smirk. His gaze dropped to her hands when the familiar tinderbox magically appeared in her palm.

"If you don't trust me, trust my memories," her outstretched hand encouraged him to take her memories and use the tinderbox so he could see for himself that she was telling the truth.

With his own fate at stake, Rumplestiltskin did as she dared. He extracted the dark grey foam of her
memories and placed it inside the tinderbox, getting sucked into it once he let his fingers touch the substance. He was gone for no longer than a minute, but once he reappeared on the sidewalk, the moonlight lit his horror-filled face. There had been plenty of memories he had seen, but the one where Calypso had failed to enchant Davy Jones against Anne Bonny was the one playing over and over in his mind, the reason of Calypso's failure churning a hole through his soul: True Love. Davy Jones was Anne Bonny's True Love. Hook's parents had shared True Love. Just like Snow White and Prince Charming.

"Is it hard to swallow?" she taunted him, pride setting in at having bested the Dark One. "The Savior and the Pirate are both products of True Love who also happen to share a matrimonial union of True Love, which means-"

"They can create The Light One," he finished her line of thought, still not quite believing the words that came out of his mouth.

"And the minute Emma Swan gives birth to that child, you will be destroyed."

Calypso's prophetic sagacity had him closing his eyes as he shrank into himself, feeling like the crippled, weak coward he once was. "You knew all along."

"Yes, I did. But I couldn't risk losing such a wonderful bargaining chip, could I?" she laughed into the cold night air. "You see, if I cast this curse, I can keep your memories and you can stop Emma Swan and Captain Hook from falling in love with each other again."

His defeated face switched to a hopeful half-smile as he let the implications of her plan sink in. "And if they never fall in love, the Light One will never be born."

Calypso flashed him a smirk once again. Finally, he was starting to think like the Dark One again. "Do we have a deal?"

Storybrooke – Present Day

Calypso thrived on the power she held as she studied Emma and Killian's taken aback expressions. She had no interest in their baby, but she could certainly use this pregnancy to her advantage. Getting Anne away from everyone was still her main goal. She had thought the Dark Curse would do just that, but she hadn't expected the Savior to be pregnant already. With her and her child's combined power surging through her, Emma had easily defeated Rumplestiltskin and the plan to prevent Savior and Pirate from falling in love had run aground. That darn spawn wasn't even born yet and it had already caused chaos, she thought with a mental eye roll.

"I would offer to be the godmother, but surprisingly I'm not very good with rug rats," Calypso said with sarcastic haughtiness in her voice. "So... what name will you choose? Graham? Milah?"

Her fingers barely grazed Emma's stomach before Killian pulled her hand away.

"Stay the bloody hell away from her," Killian growled, a vein popping out in his forehead.

"Why are you here? You wouldn't be doing this just to taunt us," Emma glared at her, not even noticing the way her own hands dropped protectively over her stomach. "Not unless there was something in it for you."

"You got yourself a smart one," Calypso looked at Killian with mocking wide eyes, but soon her
face grew serious again. "I'm here to offer you a peace deal."

"A peace deal? With you wanting to turn Storybrooke into your parents' new kingdom?" Emma asked skeptically, feeling the warmth of Killian's fingers enclosing hers.

"We sure won't be making any deals with you," Killian added, but his determination was not enough to stop Calypso's persistence.

"If you agree to leave me and Anne alone, you will not have to abide to my parents' rules. And I will break the spell on your family and friends and stay away from all of you, including your unborn child."

The tension in the air grew even thicker and more palpable as Emma and Killian blinked in unison, their dumbfounded state momentarily tempted by the promise of a less turbulent life.

"You have until sunset to decide. I'll be waiting for you in that greasy diner," Calypso's voice reverberated around the walls before she poofed herself out of there, disappearing just as quickly as she had appeared.

Still consumed by a flood of emotion, Emma let herself fall on the couch when her knees gave away, her body sinking into the cushions as a plethora of thoughts flittered through her mind. Had this whole thing really happened or was she about to wake up from a bad dream? But if Calypso was telling the truth, could this even be considered a bad dream? No, she shook her head gently. Having Killian's baby could never be a bad thing, even if the timing was... not good. But what if it wasn't true? What if Calypso was using a possible pregnancy to manipulate them into accepting her deal?

"What's going through your mind, love?" Killian's hand cupped the top of her knee, squeezing it gently as a wave of guilt washed over her. She had been so absorbed by the burden of Calypso's revelation that she hadn't paid attention to him. The cushions shifted under his weight, and she could tell by his quickened breath that he was just as confused as she was. Ever since they had met, he had always been able to read her like an open book, even when she had gone out of her way to keep every word and page hidden from his perceptive eyes. This time, however, the mix of emotions emanating from her was so vast and intense that his own dazed state prevented him from knowing what she was thinking.

"We don't even know if she's telling the truth," Emma's reluctant eyes landed on his. "I haven't felt anything different."

There had been some headaches and a slight soreness to her breasts, but nothing too unusual to even have her wondering if she could be pregnant. Everything had seemed normal. Everything except one thing.

"My magic... that's been different," she pointed out, recalling once again how she had overpowered Rumplestiltskin on not one, but two occasions. But how could a baby influence her magic? And what kind of special child had Calypso been talking about?

"We need to be certain," Killian smiled with a nod of his head, desperately trying not to let any kind of joy bubble up through him. If Emma truly was with child – his child – they would have to reconsider not only their priorities, but also their plan to get his mother back.

He felt Emma pulling on his hand and he followed her upstairs, his legs trembling with fear and excitement at the prospect of becoming a father. It had been soon after they had first started dating when he had known without a doubt in his heart that he wanted to build a family with Emma. Fearing that his fatherhood wishes would scare her and bring her walls back up, he had kept those
very thoughts to himself for a long time, and it had only been on that night spent on the Jolly Roger that they had openly talked about having children. He had been over the moon to learn that they were on the same page, Emma's enthusiasm at the thought of having his babies making him feel like the luckiest man on the planet. Regardless, they had agreed to wait and to enjoy their children-free marriage for a little longer. They had certainly kept practicing – *a lot* – but none of those endless lovemaking sessions had happened with a pregnancy in mind.

"Remember that night on the Jolly when we talked about having kids?" Emma asked as she opened one of the drawers of her bedside table. He had just been thinking about that night and a smile reached his lips in response. "I decided to buy one of these after that night. Just in case we had a scare or something."

He took an eager step forward, his eyes narrowing on the small, light blue box Emma held in her hands.

"I take it that’s one of the magical sticks you have to pee on to find out whether or not you're pregnant?" he frowned, looking at the box as if it was the most fascinating thing he had ever seen.

"Yeah," she answered almost dismissively as her fingers struggled to prop open the flap of the box. She grunted when the damn thing insisted on not opening and, in a fit of anger, she ended up tearing the box open.

"Hey," Killian pulled her to him with the curve of his hook, knowing she was starting to let her distress get the best of her. "No matter what that tests says, we will be fine."

"I know we will," Emma took a deep breath and nodded. "I just want to know already."

They sat on the bed and carefully read the instructions. If they were going to do this, they were going to do everything they could to get the most accurate results.

"Yes, good," Emma blurted out, and Killian sent her a questioning look. "It says here the test has a 99% accuracy when taken up to four days before the period is due."

"Aye…"

If it wasn't for the tension of the moment, Emma would have laughed at Killian's confused expression.

"My period is only due next week, which means I'm not taking the test *too* late," she clarified.

"So whatever results we get will be 99% accurate?"

"Yes."

Their gazes lingered on one another until Killian's hand cupped her cheek, and she leaned into his touch before a nervous smile crept across her face.

"I'll be right back."

As she disappeared into the bathroom, Killian paced around their bedroom, his thumb frantically twisting his wedding ring. He was certain that he would end up inadvertently tearing a hole in the floor if she took too long. As he waited, he found himself imagining what holding a baby in his arms would feel like. Would the child like to listen to lullabies? Would he or she smile at the sound of his voice? Would the gentle sway of the Jolly Roger soothe him or her?
He turned around when the bathroom door flung open, Emma’s hands pinching her own skin as her arms wrapped around herself.

"Five minutes," she said with a half-shrug and he was quick to hold his arm out for her to take. These would likely be the longest five minutes of their lives and they would spend them in the comfort of each other’s embrace.

"Do you want me to be pregnant?" Emma rested her head on his shoulder once they sat on the bed, breaking the brief moment of silence. The question caught him off guard and he started rubbing her arm more vigorously as he thought of the right thing to say.

“I know the timing is far from ideal, love,” he started, letting the words get off his chest. “But the thought of you carrying my child will never be one to make me sad.”

“That’s what I think, too,” Emma smiled, holding her head up to look at him. “I really want us to have a baby together. Now is not the best time at all, but if that test comes out positive, I won’t be sad. But with Calypso in town and…”

The words died down on her lips. It was a mix of feelings difficult to explain. Ever since having another baby became a real possibility for her, she had wished for it to be everything that her first pregnancy wasn’t: calm, safe, quiet and, above all, happy. She had envisioned Storybrooke to be at peace by then, with no monsters or witches or any threats that would prevent her and Killian from focusing solely on their unborn child. And yet, if in three and a half minutes there was a plus sign on that white stick, they would have to protect their baby from a town cursed to hate and kill its father and grandmother.

“If you are pregnant, Swan, we will not let anything happen to our child,” his tender voice soothed her worries. “And if you’re not, then we can rescue my mother and try again when all of this is over.”

“We will rescue your mother either way,” she reassured him, her hand closing around his hook. “We’ll find her.”

“Are you sure it’s a good idea for you to be around Calypso if you’re with child?”

“Killian, pregnancy isn’t a disability,” she said in a somewhat aggrieved voice. “And besides, you know I can protect myself.”

“I know you can, love. I just… I would never forgive myself if something happened to you and our little cygnet while trying to rescue my mother.”

“Nothing’s going to happen to us, okay?” she kissed him soundly on the cheek, neither noticing that they were already talking as if she was pregnant. “And you said it yourself: we won’t let anything happen to our child.”

The alarm on her phone went off, sending a jolt of electricity up their spines. It was time. This was it. The moment that could change their lives forever.

They reached for each other’s hands at the same time, their clammy fingers lacing together as they sprung from the bed and made their way to the bathroom. Their eyes instantly fell on the white stick on the vanity countertop, hearts catching in their throats at each step they took.

There were no words spoken, the confident nods of their heads giving Emma the courage to pick the stick up as their eager eyes landed on the result window. Her mouth gaped open when she saw the pink plus sign staring back at her.
"I’m pregnant,” she whispered almost breathlessly. “We’re pregnant.”

"We’re having a child?” Killian’s eyes lit up in delight, his voice trembling as he rushed forward to hug her. Part of him couldn’t believe it. It was true. He was going to be a father.

“We’re having a child,” she repeated, her giggling voice muffled against his cheek as she kissed him there. It was only when he buried his head in the crook of her neck that she felt his tears dampening her skin. Feeling him so overcome with emotion triggered her own tears of joy and they kept holding onto each other, basking in the news.

It took some time for them to come back to reality. A reality where a mundane thing such as a visit to a doctor to confirm the pregnancy wasn’t even attainable. Not with everyone cursed. With the daunting weight of Anne’s fate on their shoulders, Calypso’s proposition invaded Emma’s mind again. Her face fell slightly as she wiped the tears from her eyes, her grave voice flicking with concern as she looked at her husband.

"What do we do now?"

Anne didn’t know for how long Calypso had been gone, but with nothing else to do, she had lied down on the bunk bed. Maybe her memory was playing tricks on her, but she was under the impression that the mattress was more comfortable back then. Softer, more stuffed. Maybe her aging process going back to normal was finally taking a toll on her. Or maybe having Davy by her side all those years ago had made the lousy thing seem like the best mattress in the world.

"Is the old age getting to you, grandma?” Calypso laughed as the cabin’s door barged open. The word “grandma” echoed in Anne’s ears and prompted her to get on her feet, a frown digging lines into her face. "Oh, that's right, you didn't know. It appears your son will be a father."

Anne’s eyebrows shot up and a smile curled the corner of her mouth. "Emma's pregnant?"

"Another orphan on the way," Calypso’s sarcasm was met with a glare from Anne. "Don't look at me like that. You know better than anyone that this family excels in child abandonment."

"Because of monsters like you."

"Of course this means that now nobody will be doing any effort to save you," Calypso ignored Anne’s remark. "I've offered them a deal: if they don't go after me and you, I will leave their child alone. Certainly they won't choose you over their baby."

"I wouldn't let them," Anne’s determination got her an eyeroll from Calypso, who leaned over the window sill and looked at the late afternoon sky outside.

"Now I'll just have to wait until the sun sets to meet them at that rat hole diner and seal the deal. And then you and I will be finishing what we started."

Trying to appear as inconspicuous as possible, Anne sat on the bed again, carefully studying Calypso’s face.

"Can I go with you?" just as Anne had expected, the casualness in her voice had Calypso diverting her attention to her. "I want to see my son one last time. I don't believe that's asking for much."

Conflict registered on Calypso’s face as she pondered Anne’s request, but she eventually assented to it, a smirk glowing across her features. Saying goodbye one last time would only make them more miserable. And she would never deny Anne Bonny of pain and misery.
When the sun’s orange hues finally merged with the sky and twilight set in, Killian closed the living-room curtains and stormed to the kitchen.

“It’s time,” he said, watching Emma sip a glass of water by the sink. There was a streak of fear running through their eyes, now locked in understanding. They knew what they had to do over the next couple of minutes: they would tell Calypso they agree to her deal, and after she broke the curse on their family and friends, they would still try to find Anne. They knew that would breach their agreement, but giving up on Anne had never been an option. With the kind of evil they were dealing with, how could they even trust Calypso to stay true to her word if they were to abide to the deal? The best thing they could do was ignore her manipulative ways and try their best to get their families back, Anne included.

“Let’s get this over with,” with most of the town still surrounding their house, Emma had no choice but to magically transport them to Granny’s. When they looked around once they got there, they were surprised to see that Calypso wasn’t alone. Sitting opposite her in one of the booths there was Anne, a grin taking over her as her gaze landed on Killian.

“Mother,” Killian’s voice was barely audible, his eyes wrinkled in a smile. There was a sudden urge to run to her and hug her, but his feet didn’t move.

"I was starting to think you wouldn't show up," Calypso rose from the booth, but what caught Emma and Killian’s attention was the bright, red heart she held in her hands. Whose heart was that? "Liam?"

Their faces twisted in confusion when Liam emerged from the diner’s hallway. His movements were stiff as he motioned towards them, his empty eyes radiating bitter frustration. Killian knew that look all too well. That was the look of man who had been stripped of his own free will, and he realized in that same moment that the heart in Calypso’s hand belonged to Liam. She had been controlling him all along. That’s why he hadn’t seen him among the crowd earlier that day.

"You heroes are too predictable and I can't let you try to take Anne away from me," Calypso said, paralyzing Killian with her magic, and nodding toward Emma immediately after. Unlike Killian, Emma had magic and it would take more than a simple flick of Calypso’s wrist to paralyze her. “Do it.”

"I'm sorry," Liam found the strength to say, but he was unable to fight against Calypso’s order. Under Anne’s worried gaze, Liam opened the small jar of squid ink and threw it over Emma, every muscle on her body slowly becoming immobilized until she and Killian were nothing more than two living statues.

**Storybrooke - Three days ago**

*It was a chilly morning, with the first rays of sun barely filtering through the clouds when Liam closed the front door of the Swan-Jones household. He walked out as quietly as possible, careful not to disturb Emma, Killian and Henry’s sleep. They had welcomed him into their home in the warmest of manners and he wasn’t going to let his early rising habits get in the way of their sleep. The previous day had been one of the Mother’s Days he had enjoyed the most, with having the chance to spend it with Killian, and even earning an honest apology from him. It had meant the world to him to know that his half-brother truly regretted what he had done, and Liam had been ready to forgive him and turn over a new leaf. Killian and Nemo were the only family he had left and he wasn’t*
going to ruin it now that they were both in his life. In fact, that had been part of the reason why he had accepted Emma and Killian’s kind invitation. He wanted to get closer to his half-brother, and temporarily exchanging the Nautilus for the comfort of a real house had seemed like a wonderful idea. However, he didn’t want his presence to be a burden to any of them and he had tried to go as unnoticed as possible. The only exception had been the first meal of the day – taking advantage of his cooking skills, he had decided to cook breakfast for the entire family and he had left a stack of pancakes in the oven with a thank you note. He just hoped that Emma and Killian were fans of pancakes.

With a duffel bag on his shoulder, he opened the white fence gate and turned left down the sidewalk toward the shortcut to the docks that Killian had showed him the day before. The streets were empty, something he was still getting used to, but he enjoyed the feeling of having the town to himself, even if it was only in the crack of dawn.

“Hello, Liam,” Calypso appeared out of nowhere, her low voice making him jump in surprise as she blocked him from going any further. “You are quite the cook, but how good of a puppet are you?”

“Who are you?” Liam took a step back, a bad feeling running through his body as his eyes scrutinized her from head to toe. He had never seen this woman before. How did she even know his name?

“That doesn’t matter,” she answered before her hand pierced through his chest, his wailing scream echoing across the neighborhood’s desert street. His eyes widened in horror when he saw his heart glowing in her hand. “What matters is that from now on you will do everything I say.”

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

Emma’s mind was running a mile a minute. Calypso had Liam’s heart and suddenly everything became clearer.

“That day when you went to the station and told us that Anne had attacked you… Of course she never did,” Emma said, the squid ink preventing her from looking directly at Liam, but she could still watch his face contort with guilt from the corner of her eye. “Calypso made you say that so we would all think that Anne was the one we were after.”

“Leave my brother alone. He has nothing to do with this,” Killian blurted out to Calypso once he put two and two together.

“Brother? I thought we were long past that,” Calypso laughed, picking a piece of lint from the sleeve of her dress. "Now on to what truly matters: do you accept my offer or not?"

"We do," Emma answered right away. "But Liam’s family. You're going to give him his heart back."

Calypso blinked, trying not to look too taken aback by Emma's demand. Liam had served his purpose, and she wouldn't need him any longer from now on. If that's what it would take for her to have Anne all to herself, so be it.

"Fine. I won't need him where we'll go anyway," Liam gasped in relief once Calypso smashed her hand against him, putting his heart back in place. His eyes flared like flashlights in the dark at the
feeling of his wild heartbeat against his chest, and he nodded his head in appreciation in Emma and Killian’s direction.

"Bring back the rest of our family and friends and we will leave you alone," Killian said, his gaze searching frantically for Anne's, trying to let her know without words that they were not giving up on her, but this was what they had to do for now.

In less than a second, everybody else was joining them at Granny's: Snow, David, Henry, Regina, Ashley, Thomas, Granny and the dwarfs, Marco, August, Nemo… They were just as immobilized as Emma and Killian, but the lack of threats and insults towards Anne and Killian was enough proof they were no longer cursed.

"There. I have honored my end of the deal. I expect you to do the same," her threatening voice matched the glare in her eyes.

"Wait!" Anne shouted just as Calypso prepared to magically poof them out of the diner. “I want to say goodbye.”

Despite the wobble of her legs, Anne gathered enough strength to slowly make her way to Killian, stopping only when there was barely no space between them. Her glittering eyes filled with tears as she cupped his face in her hands. There was so much of Davy in him that sometimes it was hard to tell them apart. He had been through so much, and yet the man standing in front of her was the man she had always known he could be. One she took pride in calling her son. Her lips quivered when Calypso ordered her to hurry, the cruel realization that this could be the last time she saw him making her stomach flutter. She couldn’t leave without telling him, without letting him know.

“I love you,” she smiled, the salty taste of tears burning her mouth. “I always have.”

He wanted to say it back, his own teary eyes boring into hers as he mentally cursed Calypso for not letting him move. He would have been ready to hold Anne in his arms, believing that his embrace was enough for her to know that he loved her, too. He didn’t know why he wasn’t able to get the words out, but they never came out and his mother’s understanding smile was the last thing he saw before she turned to Emma.

“Thank you,” Anne said with an appreciative smile, her hands slowly going around Emma’s waist, pulling her in for a hug. Surprised by such an intimate contact, Emma didn’t say a thing either, and it was only when Anne pulled away that Emma saw the wink sent her way. Before she could even think about what that had meant, Anne and Calypso were disappearing among a cloud of magic.

With Calypso gone, they were all able to move again, free of the magical paralysis they had been put under.

“We’re so sorry for the awful things we said,” Snow rushed to them, but her and David’s worried gaze fell exclusively on Killian.

“We didn’t mean any of it,” David clarified, his voice filled with concern.

“You needn’t worry,” Killian reassured them. “I know better than anyone how a curse can make you do and say things you don’t mean to.”

Hugs and apologies were shared and it wasn’t long until Thomas and Ashley were joining the group.

“So Morgana – Anne – is your mother,” Thomas said, while Ashley pulled Emma in for a side hug.

“Aye, and now she’s gone.”
“We have to get her back,” Henry blurted out, his hopeful determination eliciting a smile on Killian’s face, happy that the lad cared enough about him to want to get his step-grandmother back. And judging by the smile on Emma’s face, she was no less pleased.

“We will, kid. We will,” Emma put her arm around Henry’s shoulder and her mind couldn’t help but wander to her other kid. How would Henry react to the news of her pregnancy? Would he take it well? Would he think that they were somehow trying to replace him? She and Killian had decided to keep the news to themselves until they were able to schedule a doctor’s appointment. Rescuing Anne was the priority right now and she didn’t want to deal with everyone’s questions and congratulations. Killian had tried to dissuade her from going to wherever Calypso would be taking Anne, but she had insisted on going. How could she not? It would be worse for her and the baby to not know about Killian’s whereabouts, or how he and Anne were doing. There was no way in hell she would be staying in Storybrooke. She was going and they would both be even more careful than usual.

“We just have to find a way,” Killian added, right before they all jerked their heads toward the diner’s door, its bell chiming as Belle and Rumplestiltskin walked in.

“Perhaps I can help,” Rumplestiltskin said as he ignored the dirty, unwelcoming looks he got.

“You want to help now?” Emma asked disbelievingly, her eyebrows raised in suspicion. “Why, what will you get in return?”

“Nothing,” he promptly replied, only pausing to look at his wife. “Belle convinced me that helping you find Calypso is the right thing to do after what I have done.”

Everyone seemed to believe his carefully chosen words – everyone except the two people who had conceived the culprit of his announced demise. He didn’t have Emma Swan and Killian Jones’ trust, but they were not aware that he knew they were expecting a child. They didn’t know that his number one priority was to ensure the darkness was never destroyed, and for that he needed to prevent The Light One from being born. Luckily for him, aiding them to get to Calypso – the powerful goddess they were about to wrong by not fulfilling their end of the deal – increased the chances of the Savior and her unborn child getting killed. With his magic now overpowered by Miss Swan’s, all he could do was lead them to a mortal dead end under the guise of helping them.

“How can we trust you?” Killian’s growl was so loud that it was probably heard outside.

“You can trust him,” Belle held up the Dark One dagger for all to see. “I will not use it to control him, but I won’t let him wrong us either. Not anymore.”

Rumple pretended to be hurt by his wife’s gesture, but he secretly hoped that being under Belle’s supervision would make everyone accept his helping offer. He didn’t need the dagger. All he needed was to get them wherever they wished to go and then, with any luck, Calypso would do all the dirty work for him.

As if to make his offer more appealing, Rumple made the magic locating globe appear in his hand. “I believe you are all familiar with this item.”

“It’s the globe you used to track Baelfire and Henry,” Regina said while inspecting the object. Emma’s eyes searched for Killian’s. They both knew what this meant and as difficult as it was to admit it, Rumple could easily lead them to Anne. They still didn’t trust him, they never would after everything he had pulled off on them, but they could benefit from his help. After all, they would be one step closer to save Anne if they knew where she was. They were willing to take that chance and let Rumple guide the way.
“Captain,” Rumple inched closer to Killian, holding up the globe to him. “A simple prick of your finger and your blood will tell us exactly where your mother is.”

Silence took over the diner, and before Killian had a chance to do anything, David took a step forward, placing a comforting hand on Killian’s shoulder.

“Wherever she is, we’re going with you,” he said, his demonstration of support triggering everybody else in the diner to do the same amidst a surge of “me too’s”. The smile that tugged at Killian’s lips grew wider as each person took a step forward. He had never thought the people of Storybrooke cared so much for him, but there they were, willing to follow him into possibly another realm to get his mother back. Henry, Emma’s parents, Liam, Nemo, Thomas and Ashley… Everyone wanted to help.

“Anne is part of this family,” Snow said with a smile. “And we never give up on family.”

There was a big, proud grin on Emma’s lips at the public show of love for her pirate and that, together with the support he got from everybody, was all Killian needed to gather the courage to prick his finger on the spindle. When a drop of blood fell on its surface, the globe lit up at a location not all of them were able to identify.

“Where is she?” Henry asked impatiently as he tried to get a look at the globe. A smirk highlighted Rumplestiltskin’s features before Emma and Killian answered in unison.

“Neverland.”
Restless

Chapter Summary

The heroes travel to Neverland, where they cross paths with some familiar faces that help them on their quest to save Killian’s mother from Calypso.

Chapter Notes

I'm very sorry for taking such a long time to update. Besides life being hectic, I was feeling down about the story and the lack of response I've been getting, which resulted in a long hiatus filled with writer's block. I hope you enjoy this one!

Storybrooke – Present Day

The boisterous sound of Granny's dishwasher echoed through the suddenly silent diner, the magic locating globe's revelation grabbing everyone's attention and eliciting a series of frowns and shrugs.

"Why Neverland?" Emma lifted her eyes to Killian's in search of an answer, but he seemed to be just as lost and surprised as she was. In their haze, neither noticed Rumplestiltskin hiding the smile that had started to form on his lips.

"Your guess is as good as mine, love. But if returning to that land is what it takes to get my mother back, I will gladly do it."

"Anton has some magic beans saved," Snow took a step forward, her hand suddenly resting on Emma's arm. "I'm sure we can convince him to give us one."

"You mean two," David corrected her. "We'll need another one for the return trip."

"If we do return…” Regina's voice was accompanied by an exasperated sigh that Emma chose to ignore, turning to her parents instead.

"Mom, dad, can you talk to Anton while we prepare the Jolly Roger?" Emma's prompt request was met with a nod from her parents. "We'll meet at the docks in an hour."

"I'll go to my vault and see what I can find there that may be useful in Neverland… again," Regina's determination was interrupted by Emma's grip on her arm, stopping her from reaching the diner's door.

"Actually… I think it's best if you stay here."

"Excuse me?"

Regina's offended glare pierced into Emma, who was not in the least bothered by it. Unfortunately, she had been on the receiving end of that look all too often.
"Look out there. Calypso wants to transform Storybrooke into her parents' new kingdom. We have no idea what this cursed army of hers is capable of," Emma told her sternly. "We can't all go to Neverland and abandon the people of Storybrooke."

"And why does it have to be me staying?"

"Because you're the mayor, remember? You have magic, you can protect them," Emma said, before directing her attention to Henry, who was only a couple of feet away from them, flipping through the pages of his storybook. "And I don't know about you, but I don't want Henry to ever set foot on that place again."

Regina kept staring at her, annoyance flashing through her gaze until her eyes darted to Henry. She studied him for a moment, pondering Emma's words and slowly accepting her suggestion. As much as it bothered her getting left behind, Emma was right. It was too dangerous for Henry to pay Neverland a visit again.

"Fine."

"Mom, I want to go," Henry's voice coming from behind her had Emma jolting in surprise. Henry had seemed completely enthralled in his book, but apparently he had been listening to their conversation all along. "She's my step-grandmother."

Emma felt something tug at her heart the moment Henry's voice almost broke. He was pleading – something he rarely did these days, his teenager self too proud to beg for anything – and she knew without any doubt that he really wanted to help them rescue the woman he already looked at as family.

"I know, kid. But Neverland is still dangerous. The Lost Boys may have a vendetta against you because of what happened to Pan," Emma's voice was gentle, her arm going around his shoulders to comfort him. "We're not taking any chances, you're staying."

"But mom-"

"You're staying," Emma insisted in a harsh tone, her reprimand making some heads turn in their direction. She had always hated to scold Henry in public, but sometimes he left her no choice.

"Emma's right, Henry;" Regina cut in, pulling him to her. "You'll be safer here with me."

"Can I at least help you prepare the Jolly?" Henry looked up at Emma, trying his luck. There was no resentment in his voice, but his lips were pressed together in what was a very clear sign of annoyance.

"Of course," she said, Henry's smile triggering her own as she watched him leave, eager to join Killian and Thomas in one of the diner booths.

"You know, I can still go to my vault and-"

"No, thanks," Emma didn't let Regina finish, her cold words doing nothing to ease the awkward tension between the two women. "Just focus on keeping everyone safe, okay?"

Emma looked down at her feet as soon as the words left her mouth. She felt somewhat guilty for lashing out at Regina, but right now she didn't particularly care about any of it. Her mother-in-law had been kidnapped and taken to freaking Neverland by an immortal goddess who wanted to hurt her and Killian, Storybrooke was about to be invaded by who even knows what, she had just been told that she's pregnant and good gracious…. she just wanted to punch so many people it wasn't even
funny. Besides, Regina had still killed Graham and hadn't told her a thing about it, so what if she wasn't exactly the nicest person to her? Screw it.

"Fine. I will be at the Town Hall if you need me," Regina's words were laden with bitterness, sending an icy look in Emma's direction before she barged out of the diner.

"Regina, wait," Zelena ran after her half-sister, but her shouts weren't enough to make Regina stop her angry march through the sidewalk. "I don't understand why you're so upset. As much as it pains me to admit it, Emma is right. Someone has to stay here to protect Henry and Storybrooke."

"No, don't you get it?" Regina finally snapped, turning around in a huff. "This has nothing to do with Henry or Storybrooke! They don't want me to go because they don't think of me as family. I'm the odd one out. I always was, and I always will be."

Enchanted Forest – 227 years ago

It was a dark night, the cold mist enveloping the small, secluded house like a blanket. The stillness in one of the rooms, unbroken but for the sounds of the flames flickering in the hearth, was not enough to calm Killian. It was rare for him to have a peaceful night of sleep, his restless legs fidgeting and turning almost in sync with his coos and whimpers. Anne would never leave his side on such occasions, quickly jumping from her bed and joining him on his. Her warm embrace was usually enough to soothe him, her loving caresses on his cheeks chasing the nightmares away.

"It's alright, Killian. Mama is here, I won't let anything happen to you." Anne whispered against his forehead as she pulled him against her chest. "Can you please light a candle, Arietta? He doesn't like the dark."

The old maid smiled at Anne in response, neither of them noticing Brennan peeking through the door crack, having been awoken by Killian's cries.

"He takes after you," Arietta said as she gently placed an iron candlestick on the small bedside table. "Do you remember what your mother used to tell you whenever you would wake up frightened in the middle of the night?"

"I do," there was a hint of a smile on Anne's face just as she directed her attention back to Killian, the words falling from her lips effortlessly. "Whenever you feel scared, all you have to do is look inside. We're all braver than we think, if we just look deep enough."

Almost as if the words had a magical effect, Killian closed his eyes, finally willing to welcome the sleep.

"Like I said, he takes after you," Arietta whispered, holding in a chuckle. "You wouldn't sleep either, not until she said the words."

The old, blurry memories of her mother tightened Anne's chest and tore at her throat. She missed her so much. She missed watching the ships with her, listening to her tales and imagined adventures. She missed it all. She missed Davy and everything about him. She missed his liveliness, his charming wits, the way he would look at her as if she was the only thing that mattered in the world...

She shook her head, fighting away the tears that would always begin to form. They were both gone now and as much as the pain was unbearable at times, her boys and Arietta were all she had left in the world. She had to be strong, for them. And for herself. Neither Davy nor her mother would want...
her to give up. They would want her to find the will to keep living, and she would not let them down.

"I am going to the market tomorrow," Anne whispered back, changing the subject. "Can you please tend to the boys?"

"Of course, with pleasure."

---

**Storybrooke – Present Day**

Emma groaned loudly as she hugged one of the barrels on the Jolly Roger's deck, trying her best to pick it up. She had no idea what the heck her husband had stored in there, but they sure were heavy as hell. No matter how much she tried, the damn barrel wouldn't even move an inch. It was only when she felt a bout of pain in her back that she realized she shouldn't be lifting any heavy things. At all. Without a second of doubt, she dropped the barrel and straightened up, just in time to see Killian walking in her direction.

"Allow me, love," he said, quickly grabbing the barrel and expertly using his hook to move it to a corner where it wouldn't get in the way. With nine people on board, space had to be economized.

"Thanks. I'm still not used to it, you know?" she smiled at him once he finished the task, the back of her hand caressing his bearded chin. He took advantage of it and moved his head slightly to drop a kiss on her fingers, but there was something different in him. She knew how much all of this was taking a toll on him and it was clear that all the worry had finally reached his eyes. He was putting up a front and trying to be strong for them – the three of them – but she knew him like the back of her hand and she had none of it. Later, when they weren't on a schedule, she'd encourage him to let it all out.

"How is our little cygnet?" he whispered in her ear, his tender words combined with the feather-light graze of his hand against her stomach making her giggle.

"Okay, all the beds are ready!" Ashley's voice interrupted their quiet moment as she joined them on deck. They knew she had volunteered to prepare the Jolly's cabins and berthings, but they hadn't expected her to finish so quickly – which had clearly been a miscalculation on their part... she was Cinderella after all. "Is it ever cold in Neverland? I hope not, because I could only find summer sheets."

"I'm afraid we won't be spending more than one night on the ship," Killian said, quickly dropping his hand from Emma's stomach and putting some distance between them. They had agreed on not telling anyone about the pregnancy yet, and he intended to honor that. "Summer sheets will do just fine."

Much like Killian, Emma smiled back at Ashley, secretly hoping that her friend hadn't noticed how awkwardly she and Killian had reacted to her sudden reappearance on deck. "Are you sure you want to come with us? You know you don't have to."

"Emma, please. It's the least we can do after all the awful things we said."

"That wasn't your fault."

"But we still want to help," Thomas walking up the ship's ramp had everyone jerking their heads back. He was accompanied by Henry and Liam and they were struggling to carry three crates of fruit and five water jugs. Emma, Killian and Ashley promptly offered their assistance, five extra hands and a hook speeding up their preparation.
"So… this is all pretty crazy. How are you holding up?" Thomas sent a questioning look to Killian when the two of them finished putting all the fruit crates inside one of the storage compartments on the Jolly's deck.

"I've been better," Killian grumbled as he shut the storage trap door. "But all I want now is to get my mother back and bring her home."

"You will. You mustn't forget you are part of a family that always wins in the end."

"Aye…"

There was a slight lack of confidence in Killian's voice that didn't go unnoticed by Thomas. Their friendship was somewhat recent, but the former prince was perceptive enough to notice that something was wrong with Killian.

"But you're still worried."

Killian couldn't help but nod reluctantly. Of course he was bloody worried. Who could blame him? After everything that Calypso had pulled off, was it that surprising that he wasn't entirely confident that everything would end well?

"I am. Especially about Emma and —"

"— You always worry about Emma," Thomas interrupted him, holding in a chuckle as he crossed his arms over his chest and leaned against the ship's hull.

"Aye, but…" Killian found himself at a loss for words, his fingers anxiously gripping his belt as if such gesture would magically gift him with the right thing to say. He couldn't tell Thomas the real reason behind his overly concern about Emma, and so he settled for a vague truth. "It's different now."

"Why?"

Thankfully, Snow and Charming's arrival provided enough distraction for Killian to break free from Thomas' eager curiosity. He sighed in relief, silently thanking his parents-in-law for their splendid timing.

"Sorry, that took us a little longer than expected," Snow said, taking David's helping hand as they climbed up the ramp. "Anton is still cursed and we had to convince him we needed the beans to help Calypso."

Emma pulled her brows together in a frown at that bit of information. "And he believed you?"

"I can be very charming," her father winked at her in response, before throwing the small bean bag at Killian, who aptly caught it. "We brought three beans. For a rainy day."

It was close to midnight by the time everything had been put into place and everyone was ready to go. Rumplestiltskin and Belle had been the last to arrive, Belle's moist eyes a clear indication that another argument between the couple had been the culprit of their tardiness. With most of the town still under Calypso's spell, Henry, Regina and Zelena had been the only ones present to say goodbye. A large group of people gathered at the docks could easily raise suspicions, and they'd agreed that it would be best for the dwarfs, Granny and Archie to stay put and be as discrete as possible. Since Blue had been the only fairy godmother Calypso had freed from the spell, she had happily volunteered to look after Neal and Gideon while their parents ventured into Neverland.
"Is everyone ready?" Emma's breath curled in the cold night air, her eyes inspecting everyone aboard like a true quartermaster. When approving nods were all she got in return, she held onto a rope with one hand, reaching for Killian's arm with the other. Her lower lip trembled with both apprehension and determination when their eyes met. This wasn't going to be easy, but they were going to save Anne no matter what.

Not wasting another second, Killian threw the magic bean in the ocean, the familiar appearance of the light blue portal pushing the still waters to a mountain of restless, angry waves that began to swallow them into the hazardous jungles of Neverland.

---

**Enchanted Forest – 227 years ago**

"Something isn't right. Miss Anne should have arrived hours ago," there was worry in Arietta's voice as her feet hammered against the tiled floor, just before she turned her head to the window. Twilight had set in and Anne still hadn't returned from her excursion to the market.

"I wouldn't worry, Arietta. Anne knows how to handle herself," Brennan said, hoping that the cup of tea he offered her would wash away her worries. Anne was the strongest woman he knew and he was more than confident that she knew what she was doing. Or at least that's what he told himself for the first two days that Anne had been missing. When a whole week had passed and there was still no sign of his pretend wife, his faith in her self-preservation skills started to crumble. He searched for her all around Kinsale, to no avail. It was as if she had simply vanished without a trace.

It had been one of the worst weeks of his life, not so much because of Anne's disappearance as because of the consequences of it: Liam and Killian had been so agitated that not even old bag Arietta had been able to calm them down. Without their mother around, the boys had done everything to get his attention and he simply did not have the time - or the patience - for it. He would always find an excuse to stay away from home for as long as he could, hoping that the boys would be asleep by the time he got back. He would be lying if he said he didn't have fond feelings for Liam and Killian, but he was not their father and he was under no obligation to act like one. If anything, one day the boys were the ones who should thank him for providing them and their mother with food and shelter.

It was a particularly brisk night when a white envelope dropped by the door caught his attention as he returned home after another long day of pretending to be royalty. He picked it up with a shaking hand, fearing the worst.

"Arietta!" he shouted as he barged into the house and stormed through the living room, eyes frantically searching for the old maid. When he finally found her in the kitchen peeling potatoes, he turned her around and showed her the envelope. "Do you know who left this on the doorstep?"

Arietta examined the piece of paper, the deep wrinkles around her eyes becoming even more prominent as she realized both of their names were written on the envelope.

"No…"

At Arietta's stunned reply, Brennan ripped the envelope open and pulled out a small note, reading it out loud.

"Dear Arietta, dear Brennan,
Consider this letter as my apology for my unanticipated departure. It was never my intention to alarm you, and I know I should have confronted you before leaving, but the truth is I failed to find the courage to inform you of my decision: I have received an invitation to be a servant in the king’s court. After months of careful consideration, it dawned on me that this was a far too irresistible offer for me to decline. I do not expect you to understand my decision, nor do I need your approval, but do know that I wish to be left alone. After everything I have endured, it is now time to spread my wings and start this new journey on my own. To succeed, I must be honest with myself – I was never born to be a wife, or a mother. My spirit longs for freedom, and I believe this is the path to it.

Love,

Anne

Stark silence filled the kitchen until Brennan crumpled the paper in his hand, his usually pale face now tinged with red as he processed what he had just read.

"I can’t believe she did this!" he pounded his fists on the counter. "I should have never trusted her."

"No, it can't be..." Arietta's trembling voice was no consolation, her own heavy gasps of confusion growing ever louder. "I know miss Anne since she was born. She would never abandon her boys!"

"Really? Then why did she write this garbage?" Brennan growled at her, one finger pointing at the crumpled paper on the floor. "It's her handwriting!"

"It is, that I can't deny... but perhaps she was obliged to write it," Arietta countered, and not even Brennan's sarcastic laughter in response deterred her from trying to convince him that something wasn't right. "There has to be an explanation. I swear on my life that miss Anne wouldn't leave willingly."

"You shouldn't be so trustful of people, Arietta. They will do unthinkable things when their most selfish needs are within reach."

"Just because you bathe in your selfishness does not mean that everybody else does," Arietta knew her words hit a nerve when a glare was all she got in response. She took off her apron with renewed confidence and started walking away.

"Where are you going? I need your help!"

"I am going to find miss Anne."

---

**Jolly Roger – Present Day**

The sea was surprisingly calm, nothing to do with the agitated waters and nefarious mermaids they had encountered the last time they'd been on their way to Neverland. They were sailing for a couple of hours now and everyone had retreated into their cabins, leaving the moon as Killian's only companion. He didn't mind – after all, this was what his existence had boiled down to for centuries – and although he wouldn't trade his current life for anything, it was nice to be alone with the Jolly every once in a while. Emma had wanted to stay with him at the ship's wheel, but she'd been so tired that he had insisted on her taking some well-deserved rest. He was grateful that his family and friends were staying by his side and helping him retrieve his mother from Calypso's claws, but deep in his mind, he still felt responsible for this perilous trip. Not to mention the disturbing fact that the Dark One was accompanying them. Again. As was custom, he was wary of Rumplestiltskin's presence.
He could never trust that demon, not even when Belle had his dagger in her possession, lest he try something against them.

"Once you learn how to sail a ship, you never forget it," Liam's voice brought him out of his thoughts, and he gave his brother a half-smile.

"Aye, as they say in the land without magic, it's like riding a tricycle."

"I think it's a bicycle," Liam squinted at him, his unsure words causing Killian to cock his head to one side as if Liam had uttered the gravest offense ever.

"Tricycle."

"Bicycle."

"It doesn't matter," Killian said somewhat aggrieved, before waving his hand in the air and flashing a sarcastic smile. "It's like riding a non-motorized contraption."

"Killian," Liam broke the comfortable silence that had settled between them. "I wanted to apologize… for what Calypso made me do."

Killian fought the urge to smile. He and Liam were not related by blood, but he sure seemed to share the same self-blame tendencies that Killian knew so well.

"I know what it's like to not be in control of yourself," Killian said, sincerity glowing in his eyes. "You have nothing to apologize for, brother."

"I guess calling me that is no longer adequate, uh?" Liam shrugged in a nonchalant way, but Killian could catch a hint of disappointment in his voice.

"I've always considered you a brother. If you are not opposed to it, I would like to keep treating you as such."

"I don't mind, but I thought you were doing it just to be nice."

"Learning the truth about my past was enlightening, but it did little to ease my guilt," Killian tore his gaze from the sea to Liam's stern face. "I still killed a man believing he was my father. No hidden truth coming to the surface will change the fact that I took your father from you, nor the shame that accompanies it."

Killian was expecting Liam to say something, but all he did was stay still and look at the smooth ocean waves. What could he say? They had talked about this before, and perhaps it was best to leave it at that. Killian would always feel guilty for orphaning Liam and the only thing he could do now was to spend the rest of his days making up to Liam and helping him in whatever way he could.

"What do you say to steering the ship for a while?" Killian's suggestion was followed by a quizzical smile that caught Liam's attention.

"Really? You wouldn't mind?"

"My lovely wife is waiting for me below deck, and to be fair, I could use some rest."

"Alright. I guess it's not too different from steering the Nautilus," Liam's entire face lit up with joy, and Killian smiled in response, moving aside so Liam could take over at the helm. "It'll be a pleasure to sail the infamous Jolly Roger."
"I know she'll be in good hands."

When Killian got to the captain's quarters, he found Emma with her back to him, standing in front of the bookcase, and he quickly noticed that one of its drawers was open. She was holding an oxidized, crumpled piece of paper in her hands. He was expecting her to read it, but she started going through the drawers instead, clearly in search of something.

It was only when she spotted his figure from the corner of her eye that she jolted in surprise. "Whoa, you scared the shit out of me."

"Sorry, love. I didn't mean to frighten you," he apologized, but his eyes darted immediately to the piece of paper she was still holding. He would recognize that thing anywhere.

"I was looking for some matches and I found it in one of the drawers," she said, afraid that he would think she'd been snooping through his belongings. "I didn't read it. I was just wondering what it was about. It looks so… old."

"You can read it, love. And then you can burn it, if you wish," Killian took off his jacket and dropped it on the back of a chair, his face serious as he sat down. "Do you remember when I told you my mother had left us a letter after she abandoned us?"

Killian needed to say no more as realization hit her. The piece of paper she was holding was that letter. Accepting his silent invitation, Emma sat on one of the chairs next to him, carefully studying him for any sign of discomfort. When he gave her an encouraging nod, she unfolded the paper and took her time to read its content.

"Well, now we know this isn't what happened to your mom," Emma said, folding the paper in two once she finished. "Someone wrote this pretending to be her. Calypso."

"Aye. Which means that the one letter that has haunted me for centuries was nothing more than a piece of paper filled with that demon's lies," he tapped one finger forcefully on the desk.

"We'll get her," Emma put her hand over his, knowing such gesture usually soothed his anger. "And we're going to make sure she won't hurt you or anybody else again."

She grabbed his hand when he still wouldn't look at her, trying to pull him up with her. He obliged, his eyes softening at how much Emma always tried to make him feel better. Her cold fingers rested against his chest and it didn't take long until she started unbuttoning his vest, making him raise his eyebrows suggestively.

"Let's lie down for a bit," she got on her tiptoes and laid a kiss at the corner of his lips. He let her guide them to the bed, neither bothering to take off their clothes before falling on the hard cushion of his small bed. They found a comfortable position within seconds – all too used to it by now – Emma's head resting on Killian's chest as he pulled her against him. Things had been so hectic lately that they didn't have a moment to lay in each other's arms and just… breathe. For a moment, it felt as if everything was right in the world again: no threats or worries, only the two of them and their love.

"Sometimes I still can't believe it," Killian muttered, the tip of his hook tracing cautious circles on her arm.

"What?"

"That you are carrying my child."

"I know. It's pretty surreal, isn't it?"
Emma's giggles filled his ears, but they quickly died down once she noticed the serious look plastered on Killian's face.

"Do you have any preference?" he asked her in his grave voice. "On the gender, I mean."

He was curious to know whether Emma favored the idea of having a girl or a boy, perhaps because he couldn't quite decide himself. He just knew that both possibilities terrified him in equal measure.

Emma was taken aback by his question, staring at him with half-lidded eyes as she thought about her answer. On the one hand, she would love to have a daughter, maybe a tiny version of herself on the outside, but all Killian on the inside. On the other hand, the prospect of raising another boy warmed her heart too. How could she ever choose?

"No," she finally admitted. "With everything that's happened, all I want is for our baby to grow healthy. Boy or girl."

"Aye, love. Me too."

"But I'm concerned, because of what Calypso told us," her words made Killian stop rubbing her arm, his gaze meeting hers for clarification. "You know, about our baby being special and my pregnancy being the reason why I'm stronger than Gold now."

"I assumed that was because our child is a product of True Love."

"But now we know both of us are products of True Love. And yet our moms didn't get any special powers while they were pregnant with us."

"But our mothers aren't Saviors, Swan. They don't even have magic," he countered. "You do."

"Yeah… Maybe that's it."

"When we find Calypso, we'll make her talk," Killian assured her, this time pressing a kiss to the top of her head. "Then I'll make amends with my mother, and tell her what I couldn't earlier today."

Emma could feel the regret in his voice, knowing right away that he was talking about Anne's "I love you" at the diner. Emma had suspected that Killian not having been able to say it back was eating him up inside, but now he was finally admitting it. She caressed the bits of chest hair peeking through his shirt, telling him without words that it was okay to talk about it. "She was right there, holding me and telling me that she has always loved me… I don't know why I couldn't say it back."

"You weren't ready. Sometimes it takes a while for people to voice their real feelings," Emma said, not so subtly talking about herself. "You've been through a lot in these last couple of days. Cut yourself some slack. She knows you love her. We wouldn't be here if you didn't."

"Aye, I just hope sh-"

"Help! Somebody help!"

A disconcerting scream echoed in the cabin, interrupting their quiet moment. Their eyes locked for a brief moment before they disentangled themselves and sprang from the bed in alarm.

Liam.

They ran up deck as fast as they could and once they got there, they found Liam, Snow and David throwing a rope into the water.
"What's going on?" Emma shouted, following Killian as he leaned over the side of the ship to take a gander.

"There's someone in the water, we have to pull them up!" David shouted back, holding the end of the rope as tight as he could when the person in the water pulled on it.

Thomas, Ashley, Belle and Rumplestiltskin had joined them on the deck by the time they managed to bring the drowning person aboard. They couldn't tell if they'd rescued a man or a woman, the person's large red cloak hiding their figure, but not their growls mingled with their labored breath.

Taking a step forward, Snow pulled the wet cloak off the figure, a gasp escaping her lips when she found a familiar pair of eyes looking back at her.

"Mulan?!" Snow blinked in confusion, trying to make sense of everything. What was Mulan doing in Neverland? And how had she ended up almost drowning in those dangerous waters?

"My God, are you alright?" Belle kneeled next to Mulan, brushing a couple of strands of wet hair away from her friend's face.

"I am," Mulan said, almost running out of breath as she raised her head to the group. "Thank you."

While the group comforted Mulan, Killian left them to find a warm blanket. After a hot cup of tea and a change of clothes had warmed Mulan up, she started talking about how her attempt at rescuing the Lost Boys had almost gotten her killed.

"I was feeling worthless after spending months trying to mend my broken heart. It was only when I helped Ruby and Dorothy find their way to each other that I decided to stop feeling sorry for myself," Mulan confessed, her eyes fixed on the mug of tea she held in her hands. "I became a warrior after I joined the Emperor's army, to save my people from Shan Yu's viciousness. I thought that maybe helping someone again would help me remember who I am."

"That's why you decided to rescue the Lost Boys," Snow concluded with a smile.

Mulan assented with a shrug. "I thought I could help them find a home."

"As honorable as your intentions were, lass, I'm afraid the Lost Boys are beyond salvation. They've been far too manipulated by Pan. And for a long time, too," Killian added. He knew those little devils for a long time and he simply didn't believe they could be redeemed, or at least not in the near future.

"I happen to believe that they aren't a lost cause," Mulan replied somewhat defensively. "If everyone were to think like you, nothing would ever change."

"Yes, because you have clearly succeeded in changing their minds," Killian's sarcastic reply was met with a glare by Mulan. He knew he should have kept his mocking remark to himself, and bowed his head in apology.

"Nothing will stop me from trying, Hook."

"If you wish to give the Lost Boys a second chance, you are welcome to accompany us, but do know that my focus will be on saving my mother, not on pubescent boys who tried to burn me alive just months ago."

"Guys, I hate to interrupt," David chimed in, all eyes turning to him and following his outstretched arm to a large, dark mass emerging through thick fog. Emma's heart pounded in her chest when the
Enchanted Forest – 227 years ago

When the castle's thick, white-washed walls surged in the distance, Arietta sighed in relief, despite still being hours away from reaching royal lands. She had been walking for almost a day and her elderly legs were starting to burn with fatigue. She sat on a rock staring across the open field, catching her breath and trying to think of what she would tell the castle's guards once she got there.

Always with her plan in mind, she took a bit of barley bread out of her satchel and nipped off two small pieces of it. She was certain that something had happened to Anne and she would only leave that darn castle with her by her side.

"Avoid those who don't like bread and children, they said..." a cold voice made her jump after some relaxing minutes. Right next to her stood a woman in a silk blue dress with a dark emerald collar full of scales. Arietta studied her with apprehension, wondering where she had come from. There was something very intimidating about her figure, and she decided that perhaps it was better to be graceful with the sinister woman, offering her some bread.

"Do you want some?"

"No, thank you," Calypso replied, picking the tail of her dress up to sit on the rock next to Arietta. "I hate bread."

"All the more for me."

Bothered by the woman's unsolicited closeness, Arietta got back up on her feet and resumed her walking.

"Going to the castle, I assume?"

"Yes. Why? Are you going there, too?" Arietta jerked her head in Calypso's direction, but never stopping her march.

"No, I'm afraid not. I am just looking for some flowers."

"Good luck with that, then. Have a nice day."

"Likewise," there was a twisted smile on Calypso's lips, similar to that of a hunter about to kill his prey. "Oh, and Arietta? Before I forget..."

Arietta stopped dead in her tracks the minute she heard her name being called out. How did this woman know her name? Terror overtook her face, but before she could even turn around to confront the woman, everything went black. The crunching sound of a neck breaking was followed by the loud thud of Arietta's lifeless body hitting the floor.

Calypso slowly approached the old woman's body, contemplating her victim. For the first time, she hadn't enjoyed killing someone, but Arietta had left her no choice.

"If only you had stopped poking your nose into my business," Calypso kneeled on the floor next to Arietta's body, closing the old woman's eyes with her hand. "Rest in peace."
**Neverland – Present Day**

When they set foot in Neverland again, the first thing Emma noticed was how different the weather was from the unbearably hot humidity of the last time they had been there. Now everyone seemed to be either shivering or chattering their teeth – everyone but Killian, because did that man ever get cold? – and Emma was suddenly grateful that she'd remembered to bring her coat with her, wasting no time pulling it around her shoulders.

"We must be cautious not to draw the Lost Boys' attention," Killian warned, offering Ashley a helping hand to help her walk down the ship's ramp.

"I still don't understand why she brought Anne here of all places," Snow said once her feet hit the sand, and this time the soft smile that grew on Rumplestiltskin's face didn't go unnoticed.

"You know why," Killian stormed towards Rumple with bulging eyes. He knew the Dark One better than anyone and he was certain that he was hiding something. "Why did Calypso bring my mother here?"

Everyone kept silent, all eyes falling on Rumplestiltskin, but only Belle's demanding gaze provided enough of a threat to make him talk.

"She wants to resume her curse on Anne Bonny," he finally said, the corners of his lips slightly turned up as he looked straight at Killian.

"What does that even mean?" Emma questioned, joining Killian in giving Rumple a dirty look.

"It means she wants to undo the breaking of the curse and transform the pirate momma back into a mermaid."

"Is that even possible?" David asked what everyone was wondering. "Can broken curses be… unbroken?"

"I assure you they can."

"Then why has it never happened before?" Killian barked, his breath blowing Rumplestiltskin's face.

"Because you need to crush the hearts of those who broke the curse, on the exact same location where the curse was broken," Rumplestiltskin's frustrated revelation sent the group back into silence.

Emma and Killian shared an uneasy look, one that revealed precisely what was going through their minds. They had been the ones breaking Anne's curse, which meant…

"She knew we'd come after her. That's what she wanted all along," Emma said, dumbfounded. She couldn't believe that Calypso had tricked them again. The deal she'd made with them had been nothing but a manipulation to get them to follow her to the one place where she could crush their hearts and resume the curse on Anne.

"Calypso is an astute opponent," Rumplestiltskin's unrequested reminder almost made Emma punch him in the face. "Unless you want your hearts turned into dust, I would advise you and your husband to stay far away from the exact place where you broke the curse."

"And you waited until we got here to tell us that?" David himself was unable to control his anger,
pulling on Rumple's arm with a firm grip.

"Would it have made any difference? Miss Bonny would still need to be rescued, and you would have all still marched your way here. Isn't that what you always do?"

Killian felt his blood boil, not sure of whom he wanted to kill first: the crocodile or Calypso. His heart thumped angrily in his chest and it was only the sound of footsteps coming from behind them that blocked his murderous thoughts.

All heads turned in unison as the footsteps grew louder, everyone getting into an attacking position until a small, thin woman appeared from behind one of the trees.

"It's okay," Killian slumped his shoulders, putting down his sword as he greeted the woman. "Tiger Lily."

"Why is it that every time I see you there's a crisis of some sort?" Tiger Lily smiled at him before casting a shy glance at all the unfamiliar people in the group.

"I haven't seen you before," Mulan frowned at Tiger Lily, scrutinizing her without an ounce of subtlety.

"I'm usually on the northeastern part of the island, far away from the Lost Boys. When I saw Captain Hook's ship in the distance, I needed to see if he was in need of assistance."

"Actually, we are," Snow said, taking a step closer to Tiger Lily. "We are looking for someone."

"Aye, my mother. She's been taken here by a goddess named Calypso. Have you seen anyone new on the island?"

"No, sorry. I haven't seen anyone."

"But if Calypso wants Emma and Killian to go back to the place where they broke the curse —"

"—that's probably the place where she's keeping Anne," Emma finished her father's thought.

"Aye, she may be using my mother as bait," Killian assented, feeling eager to leap into action. "We have to go there."

Falling into their usual routine as a team, Emma reached for her cutlass while Killian pulled his sword from its sheath, a confident and focused expression on their faces as they prepared to barge into dense vegetation.

"Where are you going?" Mulan stepped in front of them, stopping them from going forward. "The Lost Boys are everywhere, you can't just go in there expecting a sword and a cutlass will keep you safe."

"Mulan's right," David joined Mulan at her side. "We need to think of a plan."

"Do you think I am just going to stand here while my mother is in the hands of that monster?" Killian failed to hold in his frustration.

"If Calypso wants to get you and Emma to go to the place where you broke the curse, maybe it's not the best idea to give her what she wants," Ashley was the one unexpectedly raising her voice at Killian, her harsh tone meant to discourage his sudden bout of impulsiveness. Her words echoed in his mind as Killian stared at her, bug-eyed. He could still hear the beat of his own heart in his ears,
but found the strength to take a deep breath.

The baby.

He couldn't put Emma and his child in any danger. There was nothing in the world that would make him take them to the place where he and Emma had shared their first kiss. Ashley was right.

"Ashley, it's fine," Emma said. "We can pro-"

"Ashley's right, love," Killian interrupted Emma, pulling her cutlass down with his hook and giving her a look that only she understood. "You can't go anywhere near that place, Swan."

"Neither of you is going," David told them sternly. "I'll go, and then we'll know for sure if Calypso is keeping Anne there."

"I'll go with you," Snow pulled her bow from her back, her free hand reaching for David's arm.

"You're coming with us," David told Rumple in his most demanding voice. "We can use some magic."

Enchanted Forest – 220 years ago

Time heals everything – or at least those were the whispers of lost words that had reached Calypso's ears since ever. She didn't know which poor soul had come up with such a hopeful remark, but her existence was proof that time did not heal everything.

It'd been seven years since she'd cursed Anne, but there was still one final punishment, one last torment that would shatter her enemy's heart in pieces. Calypso had been patient, waiting the necessary time for her plan to work exactly as planned. Initially, she'd been afraid that Brendan would ditch the boys once he became their sole caretaker after Arietta's death, but her close monitoring of the dysfunctional family had revealed that the vain man had grown attached to Liam and Killian enough not to abandon them without a care in the world.

"Not for long", Calypso thought to herself. Brennan could care for his borrowed sons, but there was one thing he loved more than anything: money. It was time to show the world just the kind of man Brennan Lester truly was. It was with great joy that she spread the news all over Kinsale that the charming Prince Brennan was none other than an impostor – with the small village's gossipy tendencies, it was only a matter of time until the rumor reached the Cormac mansion, but she wouldn't leave it to fortune. A real goddess knew better than to leave her fate to chance.

Calypso's eyes crinkled at the corners as she knocked on the varnished door. A pair of confused, blinking eyes was all she was greeted with as William Cormac's old, wrinkled face stared back at her.

"You don't know who I am, do you?" she threw back at him the words that he had taunted her with all those years ago when he'd gone to her hut and turned her life upside down.

"You…" he gulped at how close Calypso was now leaning over him, pushing him inside his office and closing the door behind her. His eyes darted all over her, the color slowly draining from his face as his mouth twisted in recognition. "You're the witch who used to be friends with my daughter."

Calypso's triumphant smile stretched across her lips, the delicious taste of revenge filled her heart
with joy.

"Not a fan of necklaces anymore, I see," her cold fingers teased the skin of his neck and she could feel him tremble. How the tables had turned: now he was the frightened little man scared of her, not the other way around.

"What do you want?"

"I am here to thank you," she said, letting go of him to better inspect her surroundings. "You were the first person to make me realize who I truly was, what I was destined to become."

"I... I don't understand."

"Oh yes, I forgot I'm talking to the man who has been fooled by an impostor for over twelve years," she snorted. "How silly of me to expect you to understand."

"Fooled by an impostor? What do you mean?"

"Don't you think it's rather bizarre that in all these years your dear son-in-law has never taken you to his precious kingdom of Thevor?"

He was taken aback by the mention of Brennan, his brows pulling together in a frown.

"The kingdom... It's still in reconstruction after the Golems War. It's not safe. The Golems that managed to survive are intent on destroying any progress ma-"

He was cut off by Calypso's burst of laughter, tears almost damping her eyes. She didn't know whether she should laugh at the pathetic excuse Brennan had come up with or at the fact that William had fallen for it.

"Do you know why no one has ever taken you seriously?" she sauntered to him still chuckling. "Because you are a pathetic, naïve fool that everyone uses and laughs at. You are still that gong farmer that is so infatuated with power that he can't even recognize an impostor right under his nose."

His face tinted with red as he finally gathered the courage to glare at her, not able to ignore the crushing blow to his ego. His lips pressed firmly together, but no words ever came out - once a coward, always a coward.

"You have never been to Thevor, because that kingdom does not exist. Your dear Prince Brennan is nothing more than a thief, an impostor who married your daughter to extort you."

"I don't believe you," he said, but his shaky words and trembling chin told her the opposite.

"I think you do."

---

**Neverland – Present Day**

The jungle of Neverland was still as dense and as beautiful as Snow remembered. They had been walking for well over an hour and yet it seemed like they were in the exact same place, always surrounded by either a cool breeze that would chill their bones to the very marrow, or a blast of hot humidity that made it hard to breathe.
It was only when they came across the familiar place they had once used as their meeting point that they realized they couldn't be far away from the spot where Emma and Killian broke the curse.

"It appears it's safe to assume that neither Calypso nor Miss Bonny are here," Rumplestiltskin said before they kept searching for any clues that could lead them to the two women's whereabouts.

"Gold?" David halted his step, turning around to see why Rumplestiltskin had fallen behind. Instead of following them, he was now standing motionless, staring at a large rock that had caught his attention. "What's wrong?"

No answer ever came, with Rumple simply holding his hand up, silently telling the Prince to shut up.

"Isn't that Neal's cave?" Snow whispered in David's ear as they watched Rumple pull on the rope that confirmed they were most definitely looking at Neal's cave. They followed him inside and quickly noticed that everything looked exactly as before: the walls were still covered in marks and scribbles, and the objects sprawled on the floor were still a vivid reminder of the time young Baelfire had spent trapped on the island.

Rumplestiltskin's head tilted downwards as sorrow consumed him. The chaos and the desperation, the reeking of hopelessness…. It was all his fault. If he hadn't been a coward who'd put magic over his own son, Baelfire would've never gone through the misery of having to face Neverland's perils on his own. Rumple put a hand over his heart, feeling as though an invisible force was gripping his chest. When he finally lifted his gaze, he focused on one of the many drawings Bae had managed to carve on the walls. A shiver ran down his spine when the tip of his fingers softly touched the carvings, his eyes brimming with tears that he didn't bother to hide.

"No, you're not the same. You came back for me, papa."

"I love you, papa."

Baelfire's words echoed in his mind and it was as though all air left him, the memories before him serving as the salt in the wound left by his son's death. It was too much even for the Dark One to take, and he could do nothing more than to allow himself a moment of weakness.

"Bae…"

"I have never seen bushes this tall in my life," Belle protested, trying not to impale herself with one of the sharp branches that kept slowing down her and Mulan's march. They'd been entrusted with the task of finding a safe place for them to spend the night, while the others went to explore the northeastern part of the island.

"It could be worse. We could be searching for a beast called Yaoguai," Mulan's reply earned a laugh from Belle, the memories of their mission to stop the Yaoguai to destroy Mulan's village still very present in both women's minds. Mulan couldn't help but smile back at the woman whose company she'd enjoyed so much those years ago. It was their team effort that saved Philip from the curse, in what had ultimately led her to meeting Aurora. Mulan shook her head, trying to push those thoughts out of her head. She'd accepted that Aurora loved Philip and she'd moved on. She wouldn't let herself fall into that hole again.

"And at least your leg isn't bleeding this time," Belle's remark came just in time to help Mulan focus on their mission. "I think it's very nice that you tried to give the Lost Boys another chance."
"I haven't given up yet, but I'm starting to think maybe it wasn't the best idea."

"I know what that feels like," the sadness seeping through Belle's voice had Mulan stopping in her tracks. "I have spent many years giving Rumple chance after chance, but I can't keep doing it. Not anymore."

"I'm sorry," Mulan said, the honesty in her words putting Belle more at ease. It was as though for the first time there was someone other than her close friends who actually seemed to care about how she was feeling. There was something about Mulan and the way she was looking at her that made it easy to talk to her.

"I think part of me always knew that he was never going to change, but this last time I really wanted to believe he would, for Gideon."

"Who's Gideon?"

"Uh, Gideon is our son," Belle clarified, a smile reaching her eyes at the thought of her baby. "He's in Storybrooke."

"Oh… Congratulations! Although I'm sure that doesn't make things any easier to deal with."

"It doesn't. Rumple is still his father," Belle's breathing became sharper and Mulan could tell that Belle could use some rest.

"Maybe we should stop for a minute. You're tired," Mulan put a hand on Belle's back, and even though Belle's fatigue was emotional rather than physical, she guided her to a fallen tree trunk and encouraged her to sit. They sat in silence for a while until Belle finally felt comfortable enough to keep opening herself up to Mulan.

"I don't think Rumple will agree to a divorce."

"Nobody can force you to stay in an unhappy marriage, not even the Dark One."

"But he won't take it well. I have no idea what I'll do. I don't even know if I can do it," Belle's voice cracked and Mulan grabbed her hand in hers.

"Of course you can. You have a warrior spirit, remember? You didn't think you could defeat the Yaoguai, but you did," Mulan said with a smile. "You went against the Dark One, your husband, in order to do the right thing and help your friends. You are one of the bravest people I know."

Their eyes locked and held, neither of them looking away as Belle grinned at her. When had been the last time her own husband had reassured her like that? Made her feel like she mattered? It was only then that Belle noticed Mulan's hand was still on hers, and it was as if the inside of her stomach was being tickled. It was a feeling she couldn't quite explain, but one that felt both right and wrong.

"Uh…" Belle got up, trying to run away from whatever had happened, pretending to be entirely focused on what had brought them there in the first place. "I think this could be a good place to spend the night."

"Yeah…" Mulan said, trying to hide her disappointment at the distance Belle had put between them. "I think it is."

When night inevitably fell, they gathered the group and guided it to their chosen location. With no one having found any sign of Anne or Calypso, they all agreed to settle for the night. This time they'd brought tents, the mosquito bites they had endured the last time they'd been there still very
present on their minds… and skin.

It was a couple of hours later when no one but Emma and Killian witnessed the bonfire finally burning down. Everybody else had already retreated into their tents, ready to put the day behind them.

An overwhelming hot wave engulfed Emma the minute they got in their tent, the unbearable heat licking at her face. What the hell? She didn’t get it. Just minutes ago, she had gladly welcomed the warmth provided by the bonfire, and now she just felt like taking her clothes off and go take a bath in the lake's cold water.

"Ugh, what is up with this weather?" she groaned, having no qualms about taking her shirt and bra off. Killian almost choked on his tongue at the unexpected sight of a topless Emma. His heart skipped a beat and he couldn't help but follow her every movement as she laid down next to him, his eyes always glued to her bare skin. It could be the power of suggestion, but he'd swear that her breasts looked slightly bigger than usual. Wanting his wife to be as comfortable as possible, he reached for his satchel, pulling a small scarf and a bottle of water from the inside. He dampened the cloth, purposely letting the water seep through his fingers.

"Oh," a quiet moan escaped Emma's lips once she felt the wet cloth tracing patterns all over her exposed skin.

"Better, Swan?" 

"Hmm, that feels so good," she moaned, louder this time. The contrast between the cold fabric and her fiery hot skin had her inhaling sharply, blood buzzing in her ears. Killian was mesmerized, his dazed gaze lost on the way her chest heaved rapidly at his touch. Her grunts sent a jolt of heat straight to his core, and he splayed his hand across her belly, his moist fingers teasing her.

"Killi-" he cut her off with a kiss, his lips tenderly enclosing around hers. And then a pang of guilt hit him: his mother was missing, her life was in danger. He shouldn't be thinking about the pleasures of the flesh, he shouldn't be thinking about himself at all. Just the thought of his mother had him pulling away. This wasn't fair to Emma either. He couldn't be with her with his mind elsewhere.

"I'm sorry, love. I…." he closed his eyes, resting his forehead against hers before he rolled over to the side. "I can't."

Emma leaned over, looking at him from beneath her puckered forehead. Judging by the obvious erection that he was sporting, his body was responding just fine, but his mind wasn't ready for it.

"It's okay. You're worried," her hand gently caressed his cheek as she tried to lighten the mood. "To be fair, I wasn't expecting sex when I took my clothes off."

"Aye, love, I-"

"Hook! Emma!"

A hoarse whisper sounded from outside in what was their second interruption of the day. Some things never change, not even in freaking Neverland… Emma quickly put her clothes on before she opened the tent's zipper only enough to see who was calling for them.

Tiger Lily.

"Everything okay?" Emma wondered as she and Killian got out.
"I heard someone," Tiger Lily replied, fear tainting her voice before she looked at Killian. "Someone calling for you."

"We haven't heard a thing," Killian said, taking a look around but finding nothing suspicious. Everybody was still asleep, only the faint sound of the Neverland creatures reaching their ears.

"It was just now. And I also heard footsteps," Tiger Lily said with a head tilt back at the jungle. "They seemed to be coming from there."

Emma and Killian exchanged a confused glance. They had been well awake and they hadn't heard a thing, but perhaps that had been Calypso's intention. She could be toying with them, trying to taunt them.

"You should stay here, Swan. I'll-"

"No, I'm not leaving you," Emma told him firmly. "Killian, I won't let anything happen to… me." He knew she'd meant the baby, having to speak in code due to Tiger Lily's presence. Knowing fully well that it would be pointless to try to convince his wife to stay, he nodded at her, getting ready to find out just who had been calling out his name.

The night's cold breeze brushed Emma's face and the shiver that ran down her spine prompted her to rush to the tent to get her coat – if nothing else, this freaky weather was going to be the end of her.

---

Enchanted Forest – 220 years ago

"No... No!" Brennan's desperate grunts filled the air as he held a piece of paper in his hands. Beads of sweat started to drip down the side of his forehead as he looked at his own face accurately drawn on the paper, right under the words WANTED. His biggest nightmare coming true. What had happened? Why now?

"What do I do?" he yelled, pacing back and forth while scratching one of his stubbled cheeks. Run away... yes, that was the only possibility. It was highly likely that William had already learnt of his deception. Or worse... what if he was the one spreading these posters all over the village? "What do I do?"

"Such a frequently asked question and yet one nobody ever seems to know the answer to..." Calypso made herself announced, appearing out of nowhere. She tried not to laugh at the way Brennan jumped at her presence, the absolute terror in his eyes amusing her to no end.

"Such an unflattering drawing," she mumbled, walking flirtatiously around him and taking a peek at the paper.

"Who are you? Please don't turn me in," he pleaded. "I have two young sons to tend to."

Calypso gave him a lopsided grin. He truly was a fool... Using the father excuse when it was only convenient to him.

"Oh, I know you have two children... That's why I'm willing to help you."

"Why should I trust you? You don't even know me."

"Because I can't bear the thought of innocent children losing their father simply because he's a
wanted thief,” her words seemed to have pushed away the fear in Brennan's eyes. "I can offer you a ship for you to run away with your boys."

Just as she finished talking, she swooshed her hand in the air, her magic taking them to the privacy of a ship’s cabin. Brennan gasped in surprise as he lost himself in a thorough inspection of the ship. He had no idea what he’d done to deserve such kindness.

"Misthaven is the safest kingdom in the Enchanted Forest. Your best option is to go there," she said, handing him over a map.

"And you want nothing in return?"

"All I ask is you leave tomorrow night," she answered with the sweetest smile she could muster.

"Why are you doing this?"

"Let's just say I'm your fairy godmother."

Neverland – Present Day

There was a layer of sweat all over Rumplestiltskin's body as he thrashed around in his sleeping bag, clawing at the material that seemed to be suffocating him. Dark Ones didn't sleep, but experience had taught him that lying down for a couple of hours not only made him feel better, but also invigorated his magic. Tonight, however, his rest was only driving him into a frenzied rage. The dark symphony of whispers coming from his dagger taunted him in the worst possible of ways and he squeezed his eyes shut, hoping it would all stop soon.

"You failed me."

His head was pounding so hard that he barely caught the words echoing from outside the tent. Something was wrong, something he couldn't control, and he slowly felt himself drifting into a limbo between sleep and hallucination.

"You failed me, papa."

His eyes sprung open when he recognized the voice, and he found himself in the middle of the jungle, surrounded by nothing but large trees and thick fog. What was happening? How did he get there?

He caught a glimpse of a dark figure walking past him, its steps growing louder and ever closer until they stopped. The figure stood with its back to him, head hanging low and its body covered with a long, dark gown. Despite the menacing appearance, Rumplestiltskin didn't sense any malice oozing from it and he slowly let his hand touch its shoulder.

"Bae?" he whispered into the night, hope seeping into his eyes as he turned the figure around, finding his own son staring back at him. "Bae!"

It took everything in him not to pant in surprise when he took in Baelfire's face. His somber, cold eyes pierced him like needles, the dark red circles under his eyes making him look like more of a demon rather than his own son.

"Bae?" Rumple repeated, desperately trying to get Baelfire to say anything.
"I was wrong. You're still the same."

"No, Bae," he shook his head in denial, holding a hand over his own chest. "I have changed."

"Then why do you want to get Emma and her baby killed?" Rumplestiltskin glanced away when he couldn't find an answer to Baelfire's question. "You haven't changed. You're still the same disappointment you always were. You let me die for nothing!"

The harshness of his son's words felt like a kick in his stomach, and before he could even explain himself, he was back in his tent, with his body lying down on the sleeping bag just as it had been moments ago. His hands were trembling with repressed anxiety, and his shifty eyes darted back and forth as he tried to make sense of what had happened, but the only thing he could be certain of was that the whispers coming from the dagger had finally stopped.

---

**Enchanted Forest – 220 years ago**

Calypso stepped confidently aboard the old, small vessel currently docked at one of the least busy ports in all the realms. She wasn't surprised to find mostly children scrubbing the decks, after all that was exactly what had brought her there in the first place. She'd heard all about an indentured servitude market in the outskirts of Kinsale, and her mind had immediately thought of Liam and Killian. What better punishment for Anne than to force her to watch her children be stripped of their own freedom? It was the perfect fate for the boys – but of course she'd had to wait until they were the right age: old enough to become eligible servants and to remember their father's abandonment.

"I don't usually appreciate it when people get on my ship uninvited," a raspy voice had her turning her head and she found an old man's wrinkled face staring menacingly at her. She'd been told the person controlling the entire servitude market was an aged man, too thirsty to find young children whom he could recruit into his service. Judging from his appearance, especially his spiky white hair, she had a feeling she'd just found who she was looking for.

"Not even when I come to let you know of an irresistible opportunity for your business?"

There was reluctance in his movements, but eventually the man let his guard down. "Do tell."

"There is a fugitive who will set sail towards Misthaven tomorrow. He has two young, strong boys with him," the corners of the man's lips turned up in a grin, knowing exactly what Calypso was trying to get at. "I'm sure he'll be more than willing to negotiate with you once he learns there are soldiers waiting for him on the next fort."

---

**Neverland – Present Day**

The torch Tiger Lily held in her hand lit up the way, nothing but barely penetrable vegetation ahead of them. They'd been walking for some time now and there was still no sign of any whispers or murmurs.

"You sure you weren't dreaming?" Emma asked as she put her coat on. It felt like they were in freaking Arendelle now.

"It wasn't a dream," Tiger Lily kept cutting her way through the greenery. "I didn't sleep a wink."
The two women kept walking, but their words didn't register for Killian, who was too focused taking in their surroundings. He knew this island like no other, and there was a spark of recognition when he realized just where Tiger Lily was taking them. He stopped without hesitation, his hand pulling on Emma's arm, preventing her to go on.

"Stand back, Swan," he said, shielding her with his own body. "That's not Tiger Lilly."

Tiger Lilly stopped at the accusation, turning around to look at him, wrinkles across her forehead as she silently demanded an explanation. When neither Emma nor Killian fell for it, a devious smile etched on her face until a cloud of blue smoke engulfed her body and revealed Calypso in her place.

"It was the nose, wasn't it? I couldn't get it right," she said with a chuckle before magically taking them to the exact place where Emma and Killian shared their first kiss.

With adrenaline pumping through her veins, Emma stretched both hands in Calypso's direction. She'd overpowered her once, she could do it again, but seconds turned into hours when no stream of magic ever left her the tips of her fingers.

"Sorry, Savior. I can't let you cheat," Emma's eyes flickered with confusion at Calypso's remark, a quick perusal of her wrist showing her just why her magic wasn't working – an enchanted cuff.

"No!" Emma and Killian only had time to see Anne trapped in a cage before Calypso was using her powers to pin them both to the nearest trees. "Let them go!"

"Mother," Killian's strangled gasp stirred a blaring rage within Anne's heart. No, she wouldn't let Calypso take anything else from her. She'd already taken too much from her. Images of her mother and of herself holding a baby Killian in her arms started flashing through her mind.

"It's alright, Killian. Mama is here, I won't let anything happen to you."

"Whenever you feel scared, all you have to do is look inside. We're all braver than we think, if we just look deep enough."

In that moment, something changed in Anne's eyes: fear and defeat gave way to anger and bloodthirst as her hands curled into fists. There was only one thing she was certain of: if it was up to her, Calypso wouldn't live another day.
Fiddler's Green

Chapter Notes

I don't know if anyone is still reading this story, but I promised to finish this fic and I intend to keep that promise (even if it takes me a while to update).

Neverland – Present Day

Emma twisted and turned the best she could, struggling to get free, but no matter how much she writhed, Calypso’s invisible magic kept pushing her into the tree.

“Let Emma go,” she heard Killian’s plea amidst desperate grunts. “She has nothing to do with this!”

His words prompted instant attention by Calypso, a grin on her lips as she lifted them up in the air. Their feet dangled fifteen feet off the ground, and Emma was unable to tell if the thumping she heard was her heartbeat or simply the wind blowing wildly in her face. They were so far up in the air that Calypso’s words became barely perceptible murmurs.

The iciness of Calypso’s stare contrasted with the eagerness plastered all over her face. The moment she’d waited for centuries had finally arrived. She would get her revenge. Her sparkling eyes fell on Killian as she raised the Fragarach up in the air in some sort of twisted, victorious ritual.

“If you lay a hand on them, I—” Killian’s growl was cut short when Calypso released the magical hold that pinned him to the tree. Everything was a blur after that. All Emma could see was Killian’s body falling. She felt her lips moving, screaming his name at the top of her lungs, but for some reason she couldn’t hear her own voice. She couldn’t hear anything other than the loud thud of his body hitting the floor. The same floor that had witnessed the beginning of their love. Emma’s legs wobbled, her fingers and toes as cold as the shiver running down her body. She closed her eyes, ignoring all the voices in her head telling her he couldn’t have survived the fall. Against all logic, a small smile stretched across her lips. Killian was alive. She could feel him. She didn’t know how, but she could feel the beat of his heart in her own. The reassurance brought her back from her panicked haze just in time to hear Calypso gloating.

“She’s so much more tolerable when he’s not talking,” Calypso said, kneeling in front of Killian’s sprawled body. “I am going to enjoy crushing his heart.”

“No, stay away from him!” Anne yelled from her cage as she looked just about ready to murder Calypso.

Emma felt her blood boiling under her skin, a rush of adrenaline coursing through her as she found herself wishing she was on the ground, preferably without the cuff blocking her magic, and with Calypso’s sword in her hands so she could end this for once and for all. Oh, how things would—

Before she could even finish her own thought, she found herself on the ground, free of Calypso’s hold on her. Emma’s mouth fell open when she realized just what had happened. There was no magic cuff on her wrist and her eyes nearly popped out of her head when they took in the large sword she was holding in her right hand… The Fragarach. Her wish… it had come true somehow.
It wasn’t until she saw Emma Swan standing in front of her that a tingle of fear crept up Calypso’s spine. How was this possible? The Fragarach was in her possession just a second ago. What kind of dark magic had the Savior used? Taking advantage of Emma’s surprised stupor, Calypso buried one hand in Killian’s chest, taking his glowing red heart out without an ounce of mercy.

“Come any closer and your pirate becomes soil conditioner,” Calypso squeezed Killian’s heart enough to make Emma take a step back. Emma could feel the pulse in her fingers as she pointed the sword at Calypso, her shifty eyes darting back and forth as she pondered on what to do next. Throwing the sword at Calypso was risky – she could crush Killian’s heart before the sword even reached her. “Why don’t we make one last deal? You give me back my sword, and I’ll give you his heart.”

“Emma, no! She’s trying to trick you,” Anne shouted from behind Calypso. “If you give her the sword back, nothing will stop her from still crushing Killian’s heart.”

Emma swallowed the lump that had just stuck in her throat as she stared at Killian’s heart in Calypso’s hand. It was still as bright and glowy as the last time she’d seen it. And it would soon turn into dust if she didn’t do anything. There was no room for error. She had to find a way to stop Calypso without giving her the sword back.

“You don’t have to do this, Calypso. I know what it’s like to be abandoned, to feel worthless…but it’s not too late,” Emma said in the calmest voice she could muster. “You can change if you want, you can build a new life and get over the pain you’ve been through. Things can get better, trust me.”

There was something in the way Calypso reacted to the encouraging words, an innocent, hopeful spark that Emma had never seen swirling in her eyes before. For some naïve seconds, Emma believed her words had gotten through to Calypso, but it didn’t take long for all hope and indecision to vanquish from the goddess’s stare, leaving nothing but a hate-filled glare in its place.

“It will only get better if I get my revenge.”

“No!” Emma instinctively lunged at Calypso, holding the tip of the Fragarach at her throat, but quickly pulling it away when she started squeezing Killian’s heart more forcefully.

Calypso laughed in defiance, Emma’s intakes of breath growing louder.

“You heroes don’t have it in you… You won’t kill me.”

“But I will,” Anne’s voice came from behind Calypso, a sharp blade cutting through the goddess’s back before she even had a chance to turn around. Anne wrapped one arm around Calypso’s waist, her forehead resting against the crook of her neck as the sword pierced Calypso’s heart. Anne’s eyes squeezed shut when her former friend’s gasps turned into anguished whimpers. For a minute it was as if they were back to their lake, back to the time when being together and throwing stones into the water was all that mattered in the world.

“Please, don’t tell anyone that I can do these things. Please.”

“I won’t, I promise. You’re my best friend, Calypso.”

“You were my best friend,” Anne whispered in Calypso’s ear, her sad words echoing in the cold, dark night. Calypso’s knees started to buckle, a sharp surge of pain making her lose her balance and fall into Anne’s embrace. Emma Swan’s figure right in front of her slowly became clouded by fog, but she could still make out the Savior catching the heart that had fallen from her hands. Hands she could no longer feel, Killian’s heart slipping away from her fingers without her even noticing.
It was only when her back hit the floor that Calypso garnered enough strength to drag her eyes up to Anne. She was clouded by fog, too. Everything was clouded by fog, even the tip of the blade that had just run through her. The Fragarach. Anne had stabbed her with the only sword that could kill her. But… how? Emma Swan was the one holding the sword and… It became hard to even form her own thoughts, a pained grunt escaping her lips when Anne pulled the blade out. An excruciating bout of pain hit her so hard that she started kicking her legs in a hopeless attempt to ease her agony, but all it did was increase the growing deterioration of her body. Her flesh started turning into water, slow at first, but then faster and faster. Tears fell down Calypso’s eyes, perhaps in recognition of her doomed fate… or perhaps her body’s self-destruction had finally reached her eyes. She didn’t understand it herself, far too weak to think… to breathe. The scent of death enveloped her, and Anne’s own teary-eyed face was the last thing Calypso saw before all there was left of her was a large puddle of water that fed the jungle’s thirsty floor.

The silence that had settled between Emma and Anne was broken when Emma rushed to Killian, his heart carefully protected in her hands as she kneeled next to his unconscious body. They had done this before, but this time she was going to be as gentle as possible.

“Please wake up,” Emma whispered, putting his heart on his chest and letting magic do the rest. Anne joined her, one trembling hand resting on Emma’s back as both women waited for Killian to open his eyes and ease their worried minds. “Killian, wake up!”

“Emma, kiss him. Only you can save him,” Anne’s encouragement stopped Emma from shaking Killian’s body, her heart nearly sinking when she still got no response from him. No, she couldn’t lose him. She wouldn’t lose him. Maybe Anne was right, maybe this called for the power of a True Love’s Kiss. Emma leaned over him without a second thought, but stopped just before her lips could touch Killian’s. Anne frowned at Emma’s hesitation at first, sending an inquisitive look her way when their eyes met.

“I think you can, too,” Emma said with just a hint of a smile on her face, encouraging Anne to be the one waking Killian up with a True Love’s kiss. Emma knew how powerful a mother’s love could be, and after everything Anne had done for Killian, she had no doubt that her love for him was as true as her own love for Henry. And if a True Love’s kiss had worked for her and Henry twice in the past, why wouldn’t it work for Anne and Killian now?

A single tear ran down Anne’s cheek in a silent thank you to her daughter-in-law. She would properly thank her later, for now her number one priority was to save her son. Once Emma stepped aside, Anne ran her eyes through Killian’s body. Images of Davy lying dead on the deck of her ship haunted her and she couldn’t help but close her eyes. What if the kiss didn’t work? What if Killian didn’t wake up? No, failing wasn’t an option. She wouldn’t let Davy down, she would save their child. Pushing the ghosts away from her mind, Anne took Killian’s hand in hers. He looked so beautiful, so peaceful, and yet all she wanted in that moment was to see those blue eyes of his one more time. She slowly stroked some dark hairs away from his forehead and garnered the courage to lean down.

As soon as her lips touched Killian’s forehead, a rainbow-colored burst of magic enveloped them, spreading all over Neverland. It was only when a loud wheeze came from Killian’s chest that Emma and Anne felt like they could breathe again. He was okay, he was alive. His eyes blinked slightly, as if all life had just come back to him.

“Killian!” Emma lost no time in wrapping her arms around his neck, reveling in the feeling of having his arms around her again.

“Thank you, love,” he grinned at her once they pulled away, assuming she’d been the one saving
him with a True Love’s kiss.

“Actually… It wasn’t me this time,” Emma’s gaze fell on Anne, who smiled shyly back at her. The corners of Killian’s lips turned down once he realized what Emma had meant. His mother had saved him… Her love for him was true. Before he could do anything, Anne was pulling him in for a hug. There was a strange panoply of feelings coursing through him that he hadn’t quite experienced before. There was a warmth swirling in the pit of his stomach at being held by his mother, the mother who had never stopped loving him. It was all still so surreal and so intense that he closed his eyes, wrapping his arms around her to hug her back.

“I never wanted to leave you,” he felt Anne’s breath against the skin of his neck, and he hugged her even more tightly in response.

“I know, we saw your memories. I know everything.”

They pulled away, but Anne still wasn’t willing to let go of him. Both her hands caressed his cheeks as she flashed him a radiant smile that reminded him so much of Liam’s. “I’m so happy you’re alright and that this nightmare is finally over.”

“Calypso… Is she…?” Killian’s eyes darted to Emma.

“She’s gone. For good,” Emma nodded at him. “Your mom saved us.”

“You did, too,” Anne was quick to counter, turning her head just slightly to look at Emma. “If you hadn’t wished to be free and to have the Fragarach in your possession, I wouldn’t have been able to kill her.”

“Yeah, why… how did that happen?”

At Emma’s question, Anne let go of Killian and reached for the pocket of Emma’s jacket. Surprise took over Emma and Killian’s features when they saw Anne taking a necklace from Emma’s pocket and dangling it in front of their faces. The Cintamani stone. The magical stone that grants any wishes in moments of danger.

Emma’s eyes narrowed as they followed the necklace’s movements. How the hell had that ended up in her pocket? The only time she’d even seen the magical stone was in Anne’s memories. When she tried to remember their last moments in Storybrooke before leaving for Neverland, there was one moment that stood out, and suddenly everything made sense.

“You put it in my pocket when you were saying goodbye at Granny’s, didn’t you?” Emma guessed, remembering the wink Anne had sent her way and how she’d pulled her in for an unexpected hug. The glowing appreciation on Anne’s face was the only confirmation Emma needed.

“When I found the necklace on my ship on the same place where your father had left it, I intended to leave it with you, for an emergency,” Anne said, turning to look at Killian. “But then Calypso told me that Emma was pregnant and I thought you’d want me to leave it with her instead.”

“But what about the Fragarach?” Emma asked, staring at the two identical swords that were now laying on the floor. “There’s two of them?”

“I knew that you had created a fake version of the sword and had given it to Regina. I stole it as soon as I learnt Calypso was in town. I knew she’d be going after me and I thought a fake version of her sword could be useful for what was to come,” Anne continued explaining. “It was only until we got here that Calypso left me alone with the real sword.”
“And you switched them…” Killian said with a proud look on his face.

“Calypso knew many things about me, but apparently she thought I wouldn’t be able to open the lock of that thing she trapped me in. While she was posing as Tiger Lilly, I got out of my cage and switched the swords.”

“If you got out of the cage, why didn’t you just escape?” Emma wondered.

“I couldn’t, there was a protection spell in the cave she had us in. That’s when I decided that I had to make her think that she had me trapped, that I wasn’t a threat to her. That was the only way I could surprise her when she least expected.”

“Well… Thank you,” Emma bobbed her head in appreciation. “If it wasn’t for you, we would’ve probably never got her.”

“Thank you. For everything.” Anne caressed both Emma and Killian’s cheeks, before she pulled them for a hug again. She didn’t care if she was being pushy or too sentimental. She had waited centuries for this moment and she wasn’t going to hold back. She was so ecstatic she couldn’t even remember the last time she’d felt this happy or this fulfilled.

Except she did remember. This was how she’d felt with Davy, on their last day together. Just the four of them, enjoying their time together as a family. The memories of that day had Anne breaking the hug, a somber look on her face that didn’t go unnoticed by Emma and Killian.

“Mother? Are you alright?”

“I know there are plenty of things we need to talk about, plenty of questions that I still need to answer, but there is something I need to do first,” Anne paused for a second before carrying on. “Calypso was the one who created the curse that imprisoned your father’s soul. Now that she’s dead, I need to know if he’s finally free.”

“What can we do?” Emma asked, ready to get some work done. If there was a way to free Killian’s father from eternal misery, they’d find a way to do it.

“That bloody chest is still somewhere out there, and I’m going to find it.”

“But how?”

“With the ring,” Anne answered Killian’s question by pulling on the chain around Emma’s neck. The necklace chain of Liam’s ring. “This ring was a part of that wooden chest. It was never supposed to be removed from it, but I took it. I didn’t think anything would happen, but I was wrong.”

“So the ring is cursed?” Emma’s question was followed by a curious look sent in Anne’s direction.

“The curse is attached to it. Whenever it senses the chest calling for its return, the ring will follow the signal.”

A bolt of realization hit Killian. Of course, it made sense that the ring and the chest were somehow connected. Emma had been wearing Liam’s ring on their honeymoon. That’s why they’d been dragged to that desert island – the chest had been calling for the ring, guiding it to where it belonged.

“I believe this lad was also the reason why your True Love’s Kiss broke my curse the last time you were here,” Anne said, still holding the ring between her fingers. “You had it with you at the time, didn’t you, son?”
“Aye, I’ve always carried it in my pocket. That is until I gave it to Emma in Camelot.”

“I had the ring around my neck when Calypso cursed me. It must have absorbed that dark magic, but your True Love’s kiss lifted it.”

A chuckle escaped Anne’s lips when she realized how Killian and Emma’s cheeks had turned a little pink. It was amusing how all of a sudden they were acting all shy and awkward. Oh young love… She was about to tease them – how could she not when they looked like two bumbling teenagers in love around her? – but she was forced to keep her remark to herself when Emma picked up the two versions of the Fragarach from the floor. How could she not approve of Emma Swan? Always ready to get down to business.

“Do you think that if we get on your ship, the ring will lead us to the wooden chest again?” Emma’s gaze sought Killian’s as she placed a delicate hand on his shoulder.

“There is only one way to find out.”

The large vegetation of Neverland was just starting to be bathed by daylight when Mulan yawned and stretched, pulling herself up from her tent as she prepared to welcome a new day. She’d spent the whole night dreaming about the Lost Boys being attacked by stranger figures while she watched, powerless to do anything to save them.

“Good morning,” a voice brought her out of her thoughts and when she turned around, she found Belle drinking water from a coconut just a couple of feet away from her. Everybody else was still asleep, but Belle seemed just about ready to take on the day.

“You’re up early.”

“Apparently I’m not the only one,” Belle smiled back at her and gestured for her to take a sit on one of the rocks next to her, an invitation that Mulan happily accepted.

“I can’t stop thinking about what else I can do to help the Lost Boys… or if I should even keep trying.”

“Can I ask you something?” Belle asked, hoping Mulan wouldn’t take offense to her question. “Why are you really doing this? I know that you have the best intentions, but why now?”

“I was tired of wallowing in self-pity,” Mulan let out an ironic chuckle. “After I left Oz, I decided to keep following Ruby’s advice that maybe helping somebody else find their path would help me with mine.”

“Is it working?”

“It is. I’m a warrior. I want to help people. And these boys… they never had anyone who cared about them. If they agreed to come with me and join the Emperor’s army, they would have a family.”

Belle stayed silent for a while, her gaze falling both on Mulan and on the coconut she was holding. There was something about Mulan that she appreciated fondly: her strength and determination to overcome her heartbreak, her compassion for the Lost Boys… It was inspiring, and she found herself smiling from ear to ear.

“You know, it’s not just the Lost Boys you’re helping…. I needed a reminder to still believe in the
Belle didn’t need to say it, Mulan knew that she was talking about Rumple and how his continuous betrayal had taken a toll on Belle’s faith in people. And in love.

“It’s going to be alright, I know it. You can overcome this,” Mulan rested her hand over Belle’s, and they both looked down to their joined hands. The hair on their arms prickled in stimulation when they locked eyes, until a loud cough brought them out of their charged moment.

“Am I interrupting something?” Rumplestiltskin’s tone was menacing as his eyes fixed on Mulan and Belle’s joined hands. Belle quickly pulled away and got up, instinctively trying to put some distance between her and Mulan.

“Hey, has anyone seen Emma and Hook?” the awkwardness of the moment was interrupted by David’s concern as he and Snow joined the group. “They’re not in their tent.”

“I woke up about an hour ago, I haven’t seen them,” Belle said. “I thought they were still sleeping.”

“We’re okay. More than okay, actually,” Emma’s voice prompted everyone to turn their heads in time to see her, Killian and Anne emerging from one of the jungle’s many paths. There were some blinking eyes and raised eyebrows when all attention fell on Anne, whose cheeks turned pink as she fought a smile. Sensing her discomfort – after all, she’d lied to all those people – Killian took her hand in his and guided her towards the group.

“Allow me to introduce Anne Bonny. My mother,” Killian still couldn’t believe his own words, his incredulity plastered on his face in the form of a foolish grin.

“Actually, I… I prefer to go by Anne Bonny-Jones,” Anne stuttered, her confidence waning under scrutiny, but still not stopping her from facing the stares sent her way. “I apologize for not being truthful to you, but I—”

“Welcome back!” Snow was the first pulling her into a hug, not even letting her apologize properly.

“We’re just glad you’re okay,” David added with a smile of his own as he gripped Anne’s arm in an affectionate way.

A sense of relief washed over Anne when she realized that Snow White and Prince Charming held no resentment over her behavior since she’d arrived in Storybrooke. It shouldn’t come as a surprise, after all they were Emma Swan’s parents. Her daughter-in-law had to have gotten her kindness and compassion from someone.

It was only after Emma and Killian explained everything that happened to Calypso that Anne noticed him. What was the Dark One doing in Neverland, with them? And why did he look disappointed that Calypso was dead? A new burst of anger erupted from somewhere deep within her and before she knew it she was making her way to him. Rumple scowled at her defiantly, the slightly mocking smirk vanishing from his face once her fist smashed right into his nose.

“That’s for everything you’ve done to my son,” Anne shook her hand, trying to relieve the pain as David dragged her away from a Rumple struggling to regain balance. “Oh please, don’t pretend that hurt. You’re the Dark One.”

“I see where your son got his finesse,” was the only reply she got while Rumple massaged the bridge of his nose.

Anne resisted the urge to glare back at Rumple, turning her attention to her son instead. “What is he
doing here?”

“It's... complicated,” Killian lowered his head, one finger scratching the back of his head in that nervous habit of his. “I will explain later. I believe we have more important business to tend to.”

It was when they had finally finished packing everything and were preparing to leave for the Jolly Roger that Mulan started to say her goodbyes. Not ready to turn her back on her mission, she would be staying in Neverland for a little longer and keep trying to convince the Lost Boys – or at least some of them – to leave with her.

She bit back the tears that threatened to fall by the time she reached Belle, welcoming the hug her friend pulled her into. Despite the sadness that ate at her over saying goodbye to Mulan (again), Belle never asked her to go with them. She knew how determined Mulan was and how important helping the Lost Boys was to her.

“You can do it, I have no doubt about it,” Belle whispered so only Mulan could hear her, pulling away from the hug, but her hands still holding Mulan’s as their gazes locked.

“So can you,” Mulan didn’t want to let go of Belle, giving her a silent nod of encouragement to keep being strong against Rumple, for herself and for Gideon.

They let go of each other reluctantly under everyone’s stares and it was with a final wave at the group that Mulan disappeared through the trees.

“Alright, we should probably get going,”’ Killian’s instruction was all the group needed to start following him, or at least for most of the group to start following him... As everybody else kept trekking through the jungle, Belle halted her step when she noticed Rumple had fallen behind. His back was turned to her and she started walking towards him as silently as possible, but the sound of twigs crunching under her feet gave her away.

“Ever since we arrived on this island, I’ve been hearing Bae’s voice inside my head,” Rumple confessed, no trace of surprise on his face once he turned around to find Belle staring at him. “I think it’s because I haven’t let go of him. I need to do this, Belle. I need to say goodbye to him one last time.”

“Let’s go then,” Belle said after a moment of silence. She started to make her way towards the path that would lead them to Neal’s cave when she was stopped by Rumple’s hand wrapped around her arm.

“Belle, please. I know you don’t trust me anymore, but I would like to have this moment alone with my son.”

Belle studied him for a while, trying to detect any hint of trickery and deceit. Rumple sounded very honest, even desperate...

“Okay, I’ll wait here for you.”

“Thank you,” Rumple flashed her a soft smile, unable to hide the satisfaction at having fooled his wife again.
Enchanted Forest - Present Day

Despite Rumple and Belle’s tardiness and the typical bumps of being swallowed by a magical portal, the trip back to the seas of the Enchanted Forest had gone smoothly. Aware that mother and son needed to make up for last time, everyone had given Anne and Killian their own space, hoping it would help them reconnect.

Killian encouraged Anne to sail the Jolly Roger, standing by her side and appreciating the brilliant captain her mother was. Regardless of the group’s best intentions, however, not much had been said between them, both too lost on the thought of getting to the wooden chest. Killian didn’t know a whole lot about his mother, but he could tell by the way she was gripping the ship’s wheel that she was uneasy – afraid even. He put his hand over hers, trying to reassure her without words that everything would be alright. They’d been through so much already… They would get through this, too. But still, he couldn’t blame her for being anxious. What if they found the chest, but couldn’t free his father’s soul from eternal misery? Would they even find the chest at all? Almost as if answering his doubts, the ship started tilting harshly to the left in a way that was all too familiar to him.

Everyone held onto the nearest thing that would help them keep their balance as the ship rocked back and forth. Emma, Killian and Anne had experienced such incident before, but for some reason, it seemed more intense this time around. When it was all over and the ship came to a sudden stop, Ashley and Thomas were almost thrown overboard, only Snow and Liam’s help keeping them from falling off.

“Is everyone alright?” Anne yelled in true captain fashion, checking to see if everyone was safe, but sighed in relief once she realized there was no one missing.

“Mother… look,” Anne followed Killian’s gaze. Her mouth hung open when she saw a desert island mere feet away from them. She knew that island all too well, its golden sand bathed by jewel-blue water having haunted her dreams for centuries now. Nerves coiled in the pit of her stomach, but she still reached for the ropes that would help them climb down the ship. The chest was there, Davy’s spirit was there. She could feel it.

Tension filled the air as the group lowered Emma, Killian and Anne down to the water. The waves were gentle and swimming to the shore wasn’t as hardous a task as they had expected – the adrenaline that rushed through their veins was partly responsible for it, as well. The minute they set foot on the sand, Emma’s left wrist started burning, almost as if there were ants crawling up her skin. She resisted the urge to scratch, holding her wrist up to the sunlight instead. Her eyes narrowed when she noticed the big red batch of skin around her tattoo. What the hell?

“Your birthmark, love,” Killian reached down for her wrist and pulled it up towards him, looking at the round, black spot disguised as the center of her flower tattoo. Killian was right. The wooden chest’s prophecy… Her left wrist had itched like crazy the last time they’d been on this island, her birthmark had to be connected to it.

“Wait, is this a birthmark?” Anne’s hand gripped Emma’s wrist as she closely inspected her tattoo. She had noticed Emma’s tattoo before, but she’d never thought the ink was hiding a small black spot. Anne couldn’t believe it. She’d spent years fruitlessly trying to find the one with the birthmark, only to now learn that the person she’d been looking for all along was her daughter-in-law. “It’s you?”

There were tensed muscles around Emma’s closed mouth, her shoulders shrugging just slightly. What was she even supposed to say? “Yeah, I guess I’m the one who’s destined to save your True Love’s soul from hell”?

Killian let go of Emma’s wrist as his wet clothes clung to his body. “You didn’t know Emma was the one destined to set father free?”
“No…” Anne shook her head, still trying to process everything. “I… I spent my many years as a mermaid in the underwater realms looking for the one with the birthmark, but I never succeeded. And once the curse was broken and I got back to land, finding you was my priority.”

“Well, I guess none of this will be of any help if we don’t find this chest thing,” succumbing to the unbearable itch, Emma started scratching her wrist as she took a couple of steps forward into the beach, her feet sinking in the sand as she walked. Anne and Killian followed suit, their heads turning in every direction and taking in every single inch of the wide sandy beach.

“Davy… Where are you?” there was desperation clinging to Anne’s voice as she searched for any trace of the wooden chest. It had been so easy to find it the first time around, but now it was as if it was hiding from them.

It was soon after Emma’s hand started shaking that a hole opened in the golden sand, some sparkling sand grains flying around the ever-growing crater. The bright light that erupted from it blinded them momentarily, catching them off guard. When they were able to open their eyes, words failed them as they stared at the wretched wooden chest, glowing as if magic was about to burst from it at any second.

Anne and Killian’s sudden paralysis had Emma reaching for the ring necklace around her neck. There was a flicker of light filtering through the small, circular hole in the middle of the chest’s lid, and it was easy to infer that hole was where the ring used to be before Anne had stolen it. Now the chest was calling for the ring, waiting for it to return to where it belonged.

“It should be me,” Anne outstretched her hand to Emma, her eyes never leaving the faint glow of the chest in front of her as she waited for Emma to give her the ring.

Anne could feel the pulse in her temple at each step forward she took. If regret could kill, she would be long dead. She should’ve never stolen the ring all those years ago, she should’ve listened to Davy and not have touched the thing, but she had been desperate. And careless. She’d thought that the treasure would allow them to provide for Liam and Killian, give them the life they deserved. There would have been no more shortage of food, no more sleepless nights aboard their ship with Liam crying of hunger. It had just seemed so easy, so… magical. She closed her eyes for a moment, her hand closing around the ring, holding it as tightly as she could. She’d made a mistake once, but she wasn’t going to do it again. This could have all been her fault, but now she had a chance to fix it. And she would fix it.

Kneeling on the sand without thinking twice, her hand reached for the wooden chest before she put the ring back in its place. It was a perfect fit, a union that should’ve never been broken in the first place. Anne held her breath, waiting for something to happen, anything that would let them know Davy was free. Emma and Killian exchanged a worried glance when after a minute or so there was still no sign of anything unusual.

A lonely tear rolled down Anne’s face, clinging to the bottom of her cheek before dropping off and landing on the sand. She pursed her lips in frustration, tasting the salt in them as she lowered her gaze. Could she have been wrong? Perhaps Davy’s spirit wasn’t there, perhaps he had been freed the moment Calypso died. But then why was there a lump in her throat cutting into her flesh and why couldn’t she swallow it? She was so frustrated that everything around her started spinning like a whirlwind. The stress and tension were undoubtedly driving her mad, making her see things. From the corner of her eye, she saw Emma and Killian struggling to find balance, holding onto each other as the ground shook violently underneath them. It was only then that Anne realized that she wasn’t seeing things: everything was spinning and the ground was shaking. The trepidation was gentle at first, but it became heavier once the chest burst into a thousand pieces, exploding right above their
heads in a big cloud of smoke and sending out a thick shower of small, sparkling wood splinters around them.

When the floor under her feet stopped moving and her vision cleared, Anne took in the ghost-like figure that emerged from the smoke, standing with its back to her. She could see the ocean through the dark grey leather vest the figure was wearing and suddenly it became hard to breathe. She knew all too well who that leather vest belonged to...

“Davy?” her voice cracked and she burst into tears when the figure turned and all she found were Davy’s watery blue eyes burning into her. He was there, not his actual body in the flesh, but his soul – a thin, transparent layer staring at her and still looking as breathtaking as she remembered. He was floating in the air above her, the soft smile that grew on his face at the sight of her making her heart hammer in her chest, a loud sob escaping her. She’d been right. Davy – or at least some part of him – had been there. She didn’t know how or why, but she’d felt him.

Prompted by desperation, she tried to pull him in for a hug, but her body passed right through him, washing away the teary smile on her lips at the realization that they couldn’t touch each other. Davy never stopped smiling, though, flashing her that dashing smirk that she’d always loved so dearly. It was so gorgeous, so his... Anne could hear her own breath and the uneven thump of her heart under his sweet scrutiny. Even after death, he still managed to look at her with such love and such tenderness swirling in his eyes... There was a crackle of electricity when he slowly reached for her, one hand softly cupping her cheek, and even though she couldn’t quite feel him, the warmth of his touch still caressed her skin. Davy remained silent, his spiritual state not allowing him to speak, but words had never been needed between them anyway. A simple look or touch had always been enough for them and now was no different, for Anne knew exactly what Davy was trying to tell her.

“I love you, too,” she cried, leaning into him in response, never wanting to let go.

Tears pricked Killian’s eyes even as a smile grew on his lips. The sight of his father’s soul right before him tugged at his heartstrings, and he reached for Emma’s hand. Holding her always made him feel better, but in the back of his mind he needed a reminder that his True Love was well and alive, right next to him and ready for their happy beginning. Ready for the chance their parents never got.

He was still appreciating his parents’ love-filled gazes when his eyes locked with his father’s. A shiver ran down his spine, feeling for a moment as if he was looking at a reflection of himself. His father’s face was slightly less oval than his, and the nose was different too, but the way he pinched his lips in a reserved smile... that was exactly the same as his. The sense of peace that traveled down Killian’s body caught him off guard, his knees buckling a little at how much he could feel his father’s loving energy even without touching him. Much like what he’d done to Anne, Davy reached for Killian, taking his face in his hands as he studied his son’s face. There was so much Killian wanted to say, so many things he wanted to do, and yet all he could do was stare at his father as he let Davy’s curious eyes travel all over him. There was a mix of pride and love in his gaze, one that only a father can give to his son, and Killian was so overcome with emotion that he was unable to hold back the tears. It was then that Davy’s timid smile turned into a wide grin, sheer happiness written all over his spirit as his thumbs caressed Killian’s cheeks.

Being hit by a wave of emotion, Emma teared up at the sight of father and son both meeting and saying goodbye. There were no words to describe how heartwarming this whole experience was. The trip to Neverland and the entire journey of defeating Calypso had been a bitch, but seeing Killian’s ecstatic smile over saving his parents from a far more cruel fate... that was worth it all. She’d do it all over again. Of course she hadn’t dared intruding – this was a family moment and although she was family, Anne, Davy and Killian needed this moment for themselves – and that is
why she wasn’t expecting Davy to acknowledge her at all, but when he let go of Killian, his gaze fell on her. It was crazy how much he resembled Killian, sharing that same expressiveness and intensity in his eyes. He flashed her a smile, followed by a quick appreciative nod of his head, thanking her without words. For everything. She nodded back at him, welcoming the arm that Killian had wrapped around her shoulder as Davy’s spirit started to fade, his grateful eyes the last thing they saw before he disappeared into thin air, his soul flying away like the unfettered bird he always was.

Anne squeezed her eyes shut, heaving a long sigh of relief that she’d been forced to hold in for centuries. It was okay now, she could breathe and let go of her guilt. Davy Jones was free at last, ready to rest in peace.

"I need to lie down," Anne's voice faltered a little as soon as they entered the captain's quarters, and Emma and Killian helped her to the bed. Their trip back to the Jolly had been mostly silent, tender images of Davy's soul still clinging to their minds.

"Here, have some water," Emma offered Anne an uncapped bottle of water and watched her nod in appreciation. She couldn't even imagine how hard this had to be for her mother-in-law. Killing Calypso, freeing Davy, finally getting to be with Killian… She would've probably lost it if it had been her. It was a wonder how the woman hadn't passed out by now. But then again… she was Killian's mother. Vigor most definitely runs in that family.

"I can't believe he's finally free," Anne's voice cracked again, and it was obvious that she was in dire need to get a lot off her chest.

"I'll be up there. Call me if you need anything," Emma's words came out as a whisper as she kissed Killian on the cheek. Anne and Killian needed space, their own privacy to discuss family matters, and intruding was the last thing Emma wanted.

Killian waited for Emma to leave the cabin to sit on the bed next to his mother. He remained silent as he inspected her hands, clutching at the water bottle Emma had given her. There were some fine lines and wrinkles on her skin, but not too many. Certainly not as many as he had expected to see on the woman he'd end up calling his mother. How bloody ironic that both he and Emma were now the same age as their parents…

"It was all my fault," Anne said, interrupting his thoughts. "I should have never taken the ring from that cursed chest."

"You didn't know it was cursed, mother."

"But I should have known better. I was so scared and desperate…” She looked so fragile in that moment, so vulnerable that Killian put a tentative arm around her back. "We had nothing and I thought keeping the treasure would help us give Liam a better chance."

"I know. Everything you have ever done was for us."

His words had Anne throwing her arms around Killian, burying her face in his neck as quiet sobs filled the cabin. She didn't even know why she was crying, her own guilt and love for Killian coming together and urging the tears to dampen her son's warm skin. The force with which Killian hugged her back was the only thing to put somewhat of a smile to her face again.

"I'm so sorry," Anne held his face in her hands, much like his father had done just moments ago. "For everything."
"It's alright. I know Calypso was the one responsible for everything that happened."

"But that still doesn't change the fact that you have spent most of your life alone, thinking that I had abandoned you."

"Aye, it doesn't. But it does changes how I look back at things," Killian comforted her, fighting back his own tears. "I've seen how hard you have always fought for me… and for Liam. You saved our lives even after Calypso cursed you to a life as a mermaid. You kept putting us first."

"How couldn't I? You were my little bears," she laughed amidst her sobs, her thumb caressing his cheek. "And now you're my big bear… I can only imagine how overwhelmed you must feel right now."

He didn't know why, but in that moment Killian avoided eye contact, aiming a shy smile at the floor instead. "Aye, it's still hard to believe this is real and not some bizarre concoction of my imagination."

"I want you to know that I understand if you don't feel comfortable having me around. It's alright if you need time to come to terms with… this, with me."

Killian knew what that was about, he could feel it in the way his mother's voice trembled with eagerness. She was feeling so ashamed and guilty that she was giving him an out, even if it broke her own heart.

"You once told me that unless we find the courage to forgive ourselves, we will always be consumed by our past. Perhaps we can help one another…" he said, lifting his gaze to hers. "Though that would obviously require you to stay by my side."

Anne's dimpled smile grew wider as she processed Killian's words. Her son wanted her to stay. He actually wanted her by his side.

"Good, because I really didn't want to go anywhere," her words came out as she pulled him to her.

In the early morning sunlight, Emma stood on the main deck, feeling the gentle breeze blowing against her face. Ashley, Thomas and her parents had decided to have a breakfast picnic on the lower deck and their laughter echoed through the entire ship. She supposed she should join them, but she couldn't help but focus on Liam's look of exasperation as he steered the ship.

"You alright there?" Emma approached him, sticking her hands in her jean pockets when Liam diverted his attention to her. He didn't look as frustrated as before now that they had sailed over a wave larger than usual.

"It's not like sailing a submarine, but I think I got it."

"I can take over if you want to eat something," she said, waving a hand at the cheery group having breakfast. Liam had been steering the ship for a while now and he could certainly use a break.

"Shouldn't you ask for the Captain's permission first?" he asked jokingly, his hands still firmly holding the steering wheel.

"Wife privileges," they both laughed at her quip before Emma's eyes traveled back to the group practically attacking their breakfast. "But really, suit yourself. There's only bread and some pop tarts,
"It's okay, I'm good. But thank you anyway," Liam was as polite as possible and Emma didn't insist. He may not have been Killian's biological brother, but she had spent enough time with him to know he was as adamant as her husband.

"You're welcome to join us if you change your mind," she then started walking away, but his voice halted her in her tracks.

"Uh… Emma?" he avoided her gaze when she turned around and sent a quizzical look in his direction. "Putting the tinderbox in the office… that's the only thing Calypso made me do. I was scared you'd think she had me spying on you, but she never did. I wanted you to know that."

"Forget about it," she brushed it off, having a feeling that he was beating himself over something he wasn't responsible for. Wasn't that familiar? "You weren't in control of yourself."

A couple of hours had gone by, the ship tilting ever so gently with the waves as Killian and Anne immersed in conversation. Time sure seemed to fly when they shared all kinds of stories about themselves. Anne's strength and determination never ceased to amaze Killian, and little by little he started seeing bits and pieces of himself in her. There had been few things in his life that had simply felt right, as if everything made sense, and reconnecting with his mother was certainly one of them. He had listened to every detail, every moment Anne had shared with him and he could do nothing less than return that trust, recounting his own tales of piracy and a certain partnership with a flock of princesses to get a magical compass.

"And then Emma stepped up and she climbed the beanstalk with you…" his mother's voice was filled with amusement, almost like that of a mother teasing her son about the girl he likes.

"Aye…" Killian couldn't help but blush a little. It was somewhat awkward to know that his mother had watched him fall in love with Emma, and he wondered if this was a natural feeling at all. He was an adult, his mother was an adult – 200 and 250 year old adults, to be precise – and yet the thought of her watching him being affectionate towards Emma made the tips of his ears flush red. Perhaps this was why he could sometimes sense some discomfort in Emma whenever they kissed in front of her parents.

"I knew right away just by the way you were looking at her. I knew in that moment that she had stirred something in you. I had never seen you look at a woman that way."

"The virtue of True Love," Killian scratched his ear, still not really sure of what else he could say.

"Not that you need it, but you have my approval. You couldn't have chosen a better person to spend the rest of your life with," the wide smile on Anne's lips ascertained her honesty. "I was so happy when I heard you two were engaged."

"Then I assume you were already in Storybrooke when that happened?"

"After you and Emma broke the curse, I was trapped in Neverland. I was no longer a mermaid and realm crossing stopped being an ability at my disposal. It took me some time to get out of there, and I arrived in Storybrooke the day before you two got engaged."

"Were you at the wedding?" He hadn't remembered seeing her there, but between the preparations and dealing with the threat posed by the Black Fairy, it had been a rather busy day. He could easily
"I managed to find a good hiding place on the opposite rooftop," Anne said with a chuckle, remembering the amount of time she'd spent inspecting the Modern Fashion's rooftop for a good spot. "It was one of the happiest days of my life, even if I couldn't properly share it with you."

That's what Killian still couldn't understand. Why hadn't she simply come to him and tell him who she was?

"Why did you hide?" he asked without hesitation, finally digging for the answers he needed. "Why did you pretend to be somebody else?"

Anne's face fell at Killian's inquisitive tone, but she couldn't blame him. How could she? She hadn't been honest with him and it was only logical that he wanted to know the truth.

"I was afraid that you would push me away. And you were all dealing with the Black Fairy, and Emma's vision… I didn't want to burden you with all of this," she admitted, her shoulders drooping slightly. "But being near you without being able to talk to you, or even just make my presence known to you… that became unbearable, and I figured that maybe if you didn't know who I was, it would be easier to truly get to know you."

"I would have understood," he wasn't mad, he truly wasn't, but there was a part of him that wished that she'd been honest from the start.

"Yes, but I'm pretty certain that at first you wouldn't have even let me talk," Anne gave him a pointed look and his lips parted slightly as he arched his eyebrow. Perhaps she was right. "You're just like your father."

"What was he like?" he wondered after a moment of silence, looking just like a little boy who couldn't get enough of his mother's stories. "Tell me more about him."

Anne gripped his hand tighter, etching a smile across her face as tears formed in her eyes. She'd never thought she'd live to see this moment and yet here they were. She didn't know where to start, where to end, but that was a dilemma she would gladly welcome.

By the time Killian and Anne reappeared on deck, the group had already finished their breakfast, satisfied smiles plastered across everyone's faces now that they had killed their hunger.

"Oh, you just missed breakfast by a few minutes," Snow was the first one to acknowledge their presence. "But there's still plenty of food here."

"Swan, can I have a word with you?" Killian's eyes met Emma's and she quickly followed him below deck, back to the captain's quarters while Snow, David, Ashley and Thomas engaged in casual banter with Anne.

The first thing Emma noticed was how different Killian seemed, almost as if a weight had been lifted off his shoulders. The skin around his eyes was crinkled from the gorgeous way he was smiling at her and there were no longer visible veins pulsing in his neck or temple from all the accumulated tension.

"I take it by that handsome smile that the conversation went well?" she guessed, sitting on the edge of the desk.
"Aye, love. It was quite a fruitful moment. One I had never thought I would be able to share with my mother."

His eyes lit up as he spoke, and it hit her how much she had missed seeing that spark in his gaze, his joy suddenly overwhelming her. His happiness never failed in warming her heart and she was determined to revel in the feeling. They deserved it. He deserved it.

Her fingers started toying with the lapels of his jacket in a not so innocent way, pulling him to her as a smirk took over her face. "You look even more dashing when you're happy, you know?"

"I always look dashing," Killian said, his voice dropping a few notches the way it always did when his wife teased him. Or when she sent bedroom eyes his way. Or when she did or said anything seductive, really.

"That you do," her voice became a moan when he started dropping soft, sloppy kisses all over her neck. God damn him, he always knew exactly how to make her weak on the knees, to the point she could already feel her skin prickling with want. It had been so long since they'd been together… So long since they'd had a quiet moment…

But no.

As much as she wanted it, now wasn't really the time to go for a quickie in his cabin. It took everything in her not to let her hands wander down his body, moving them to his chest instead to pull him away.

"Easy, tiger. We'll have enough time for that once we get back," she whispered as he pressed his forehead against hers. "What did you want to tell me?"

He didn't answer her right away, placing a soft kiss on her lips first.

"I was wondering…" his reply was sheepish at first. "I know Liam is still staying with us, but we do have three spare bedrooms and-"

"Yes," Emma blurted out, knowing exactly what he was trying to get at. "I think it's a wonderful idea to invite your mother to stay with us for a while."

"Really?" Killian's surprise didn't prevent him from flashing her a smile as big as their love.

"I'd already thought about it, actually. You two need to spend time together."

"Thank you, love," he didn't give her a chance to say a word, pressing his lips to hers once again. He was tender at first, but she couldn't stop her moan when his kiss grew more urgent. "You're even more irresistible when you're with child."

"Speaking of child," she laughed into his mouth as she playfully pried his hand away from her butt. If she didn't, she'd ultimately convince herself that boning her husband while their parents were gathered up deck and could walk in on them at any moment was actually a good idea. "What do you say we go see an obstetrician in Boston?"

"A what?"

"An obstetrician… you know, a doctor who specializes in pregnancy and childbirth," she clarified as the curve of his hook caressed her tummy. "I don't really trust Whale and besides, the whole town would know in a second that we're having a baby."
"Aye, I think it's a wonderful idea."

When they finally arrived in Storybrooke, a large crowd awaited them at the docks, roars of applause greeting them and making them feel as if they'd become some sort of movie stars overnight (a sure sign that Calypso's hate spell had been lifted). Emma narrowed her eyes against the glare of the early morning sun, trying her best to find Henry among the crowd. She found him in no time, spotting him next to Regina, that radiant smile that warmed her heart spreading across his face when his eyes met hers. Henry could barely get a word out when she enveloped him in a tight hug.

"I missed you so much, kid."

"Mom, you were gone for a day…"

"I know, but I still missed you," she mumbled, tears prickling her eyes. God… Why was she getting so emotional? She didn't know if it was the pregnancy already taking its toll on her or if seeing Killian reconnecting with his mother made her even more grateful that she had Henry in her life.

"I missed you too," Henry said just before his gaze fell on Killian and Anne, who had just joined them. Anne looked hesitantly at Henry, awkwardly stretching her arms to him.

"I guess you're my step-grandson…" She wasn't sure if she was being too forward, not knowing whether Henry would take her in so easily, but she decided to take her chances. It didn't surprise her when he leaned in and gave her a shy half-hug.

"Hi, step-grandma. It's nice to see you again," Henry ran a hand over her shoulder. "I knew they were going to find you."

"Gotta keep up with the family tradition…" Regina joined them with a typically sarcastic comment that everyone ignored.

"So… things are back to normal?" Emma said as she took a look around all the familiar faces.

"If they weren't, don't you think someone would've already tried to kill Morgana by now?" Regina couldn't hide her annoyance, her eyes almost rolling to the back of her head. Seriously, what was wrong with the woman?

"Curses and spells come and go, but your bad manners are forever, aren't they, your Majesty?" Killian flashed her his very best "fuck you" smile, letting her know that he wouldn't tolerate her rudeness toward his wife.

As much as Emma appreciated Killian's urge to stand by her, she knew that things would only get worse if they started bickering with Regina. Now was not the time for that, not in front of Henry, or Anne.

"What about the people who came from the Land without magic?" Emma wondered, trying to redirect everyone's attention to what had happened in Storybrooke during their short absence.

"They vanished once the spell was lifted," Regina replied, somewhat more relaxed. "We assumed they got sent back to where they belonged."

"I don't mean to interrupt, sisters, but we've been here for hours," Leroy appeared out of nowhere, a fake smile plastered on his grave face. "We could use some rest…and food."
The other dwarfs cheered in agreement, their enthusiasm spreading over the crowd. They had won, another villain had been defeated. In good Storybrooke fashion, that could only mean one thing: party at Granny's.

Just as Emma expected, the party began with her parents making a long, warming toast to Anne, welcoming her to Storybrooke and the family. The speech was filled with their usual remarks on second chances, hope and always finding the ones we love. It's funny how a couple of years ago she would've found all that optimism infuriating, but now she understood it. Hell, she even felt it. She felt it when she looked at Henry, she felt it whenever Killian smiled at her, she felt it just thinking of the baby she was currently carrying… She'd become a hopeless romantic and there was no turning back.

As she set in one of the stools, her eyes followed Anne. She kept wandering around the diner, answering whichever questions the curious Storybrooke inhabitants had for her. Although she was a two-hundred-something year old woman from another realm, she seemed very comfortable and in her element.

"She seems happy," Ashley said, sitting on the empty stool next to Emma.

"She's not the only one," Emma replied, her gaze falling on Killian smiling at Anne. Damn, her husband was looking fine tonight.

"Here, I got one for you," Ashley handed her a glass of champagne. "You're welcome."

"Uh… Thanks, but I'm not really in the mood for alcohol today," Emma blurted out, not sounding convincing enough. "I'm driving."

"You just got yourself a mother-in-law, beat the crap out of Calypso and you can literally get yourself home if you snap your fingers… Live a little, you deserve it."

"I'm fine, really."

"Oh my God."

Ashley's expletive sent Emma into a frenzy. Had she been too obvious? Had Ashley realized just why she was turning down alcohol? She only relaxed once she noticed Ashley's surprised stare wasn't directed at her, but at the two figures who had just walked into the diner. She was the last one to turn around, her mouth gaping open when she found Ursula and Poseidon standing by the door.

"Greetings, Storybrooke," Poseidon's voice was still as croaky as ever.

"Ursula? Poseidon?" Killian got up from his stool and approached them, still baffled that his old acquaintances were back in Storybrooke.

"Captain," Ursula flashed him a smile. Long gone were the days she had her tentacles around him, trying to make him pay for his betrayal.

"We apologize for intruding your celebration, but it came to our knowledge that you've returned from Neverland and we wanted to thank you," Poseidon's remark had everyone sharing confused looks that gradually disappeared as the God of the Sea kept talking. "If not for you, we would have never learnt about Nereus' plan to destroy our kingdom and rule yours."

"So Gold was right. Calypso wanted to turn Storybrooke into their new kingdom…." Emma barely whispered, recalling Rumple's words from when they'd confronted him.
"Nereus admitted that their ultimate plan was to conquer Storybrooke," Poseidon confirmed with a nod. "But that ceased to be possible once you defeated Calypso. In his wrath after his daughter's death, he attempted to overthrow me, but his army was no match to ours."

"We've sent him and his wife to Tartarus, a sea prison not even other gods have been able to escape from," Ursula added. "Your land is safe."

The stark silence that followed was only interrupted by a great roar of cheers as most of the guests went back to their chatter.

"Thank you," David said as the Charming clan approached Poseidon and Ursula. "After Calypso, the last thing we needed was an enraged godly invasion."

"Despite our differences in the past," Poseidon gave Killian a pointed, friendly look. "Nereus was my responsibility, I could never let him hurt you or your people."

Always with a warm smile on her face, Snow raised her glass and proposed a toast.

"To Ursula and Poseidon."

The cold breeze of the night did nothing to cool Emma down as Killian pressed her back against their shed's wooden doors. It had taken everything in them to not just sneak out of the party before it was over, but every single soul in the diner would've noticed their absence – and possibly assume just why they had snuck out. Despite that, Emma was starting to regret not having done just that, but the way Killian's tongue was currently laving her neck could be affecting her judgment. It had been too long and they deserved to have this moment for themselves, everything else be damned. What was the point of being the Savior if she didn't get to put herself first from time to time? That was a lesson she'd learnt by now. She wanted to ravish her pirate husband after almost losing him again and she would never feel guilty about it.

"Perhaps we should get inside, love," Killian dropped a kiss just under her ear, sending shivers down her spine.

"No, right here," she was quick to answer, wrapping her legs around his waist with ease as she began rubbing her body against his.

"Are we certain there -" she cut him off by crashing her lips against his, which earned a happy grunt from Killian, "- won't be any rude interruptions?"

Killian could feel the grin on Emma's lips as she eagerly started unbuttoning his vest. "Henry's with Regina, Liam's with Nemo and your mom told you she's staying on her ship, right?"

"Too right," Killian resumed kissing her, recalling how his mother had turned down their invitation to live with them for a while, claiming that she wanted to make peace with her past by getting reacquainted with her ship. He'd been slightly disappointed at first, but now that she was going to live permanently in Storybrooke they would have plenty of chances to make up for lost time. And if he was being honest with himself, it was bloody great to have more privacy with his wife again.

"You are so bloody perfect, Swan," a growl escaped his throat as Emma's fingers started fumbling with his belt buckle. She plunged her hands inside his briefs, one anxious hand grasping his erection, her fingertips running up and down the length of his shaft – until the sound of a gasp that didn't belong to either of them ruined it all.
"Oh," Anne shrieked as she pointed a flashlight in their direction, leaving little to her imagination as to what was going on between her son and his wife. "I'm so sorry! I… I didn't see anything."

Emma shoved Killian away, dropping her hand from inside Killian's pants as fast as she could. This could not be happening.

"Mother?" Killian squinted at the light as he tried to fix himself. It was a good thing his face was the only thing her mother could see. "Wh- What is this? I thought you said you were going to your ship?"

"I was… And I did," Anne answered right away, trying not to make the situation more awkward. "But it's quite chilly and I was wondering if I could borrow some blankets? I knocked but no one answered, so I decided to check the backyard… Which probably wasn't the best idea."

"It's… alright," Killian said reluctantly and Emma could tell how embarrassed he was by the way he was scratching the back of his head.

"Are you sure you don't want to at least spend the night?" Emma wondered, trying to change the subject as soon as possible and forgetting about what had just happened.

"Oh please, I don't want to interrupt your lovemaking even more," her bluntness had both Emma and Killian staring at her wide-eyed. "But as Killian's mother I should advise you both to keep your clothes on while doing it. You could catch a cold."

Still appalled, Emma could do nothing but shake her head in confusion before storming toward the house, muttering an almost inaudible:

"The blankets…"

Oh boy… Having her mother-in-law around had just got more interesting. And terrifying.

A knock on the door had Rumplestiltskin jerking away from the desk in his bedroom. He and Belle were still living together, but he had been relegated to the guest room until he found a new place to live.

"Everything alright?" Belle asked him in a cold tone, peeking inside. She'd been checking on him regularly since they'd returned from Neverland, insisting that something was amiss with him, but he'd given her nothing more than empty reassurances.

"I would rather spend the night in my actual bedroom, but other than that, everything's alright indeed."

"Good night, Rumple," Belle didn't take the bait and closed the door behind her more forcefully than needed. Once she was gone, Rumple made his way back to the desk: He carefully opened one of its drawers and pulled out a small jar that contained a transparent, glowing liquid: the water remains of Calypso.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!