### Phenomenal, Cosmic Power

**Summary**

Jafar is a slippery schemer who will use whoever and whatever he can to get ahead. Being a Djinn didn't work so well for him. But he could still really use those wishes...
Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

I think I have an obsession with Jay whumpage... probably not healthy. Anyway I love the idea of a genie Jay and decided to run with it. But I had to make it angsty too! Also let me know about any pairings you might want!

Every bone in his body was burning, and a thin sheen of sweat was coating his tanned skin, which - since it took a lot to get him feeling warm- was definitely odd. Outside a storm rumbled and Carlos whined before curling up closer to Dude. Jay tossed and turned under his covers as the burning aches grew worse.

"Come here, son. I need you to do something for me."

Jay was surprised but dropped the rag he'd been using to try and get the rust off of a battered old metal plate so that his father could claim it was brand new. Jafar waved Jay closer, and the preteen warily came to stand just in front of the ex-Sorcerer. Jafar had been drinking, Jay could smell it thick on his breath and clothes, and Jafar plus drink never ended well for Jay. Still, disobeying didn't end up all that great either and Jay didn't have any more baby teeth to sacrifice. If he lost any other teeth, it would be for good. "Yes, Father?"

Jafar pulled something out of his shirt and held it out with both hands. Jay recognized the burnished and dented lamp instantly, although it confused him greatly. "Do you know what this is, son?" Jafar asked, a strange gleam in his black eyes.

Jay fought the urge to shuffle where he stood. Jafar didn't like fidgeting. "... your lamp."

"That's right. This is the lamp that that filthy street rat trapped me in," Jafar spat. Jafar's twisted expression faded surprisingly quickly, and he turned his eyes to Jay. "Hold out your hands." Jay was beyond surprised but after a little more prodding from Jafar, did as he was told and held out both of his hands. Jafar put the lamp in Jay's grip with that same glint in his eyes as before.

Jay could only stare in disbelief at the cold metal he was holding. He had never been allowed to hold the lamp before. He'd rarely even seen the thing since his father kept it locked away. The nearly black surface had etchings all over it that a few dents interrupted, but there was something oddly beautiful about it still. Iago squawked from his perch in the corner and Jay couldn't help but look over his shoulder at the ragged parrot. Jafar caught Jay's chin with one thin hand and forced the boy to look forward again. "Pay attention when people are talking to you," Jafar growled.

Jay swallowed hard but then nodded obediently, not even bothering to point out that Jafar hadn't been saying anything. Jafar still looked annoyed, but he ran his fingers over the curve of the lamp in Jay's hands as if it was the most precious thing in the world. Jay felt stupid for being jealous over a piece of old dented metal. "This is going to be our vengeance, boy."

Jafar grinned widely, but Jay could only stare at his father. "I... don't understand," Jay admitted after a long moment of silence. Magic didn't work on the Isle. That was the whole reason his father wasn't in the lamp, to begin with. And without magic, the lamp was useless...
"Of course you don't," Jafar sneered. "You're a complete and utter moron."

Jay couldn't quite help the wince at the insult. He did try in school. Well, he used to. But the way that the words all swirled and random letters and numbers decided to bounce around made it hard to figure out what was going on so he'd eventually given up. Jafar was looking at him again with that disgusted, disappointed expression that made Jay want to shrivel up and die. Jafar hated having a stupid son since he was so proud of his own intellect and he wasn't shy about saying it. "I'll explain as simply as I can manage. Do try and keep up," Jafar commanded. Jay nodded again. "Despite what the Fairy Godmother would have everyone believe... magic can't be entirely purged from an area. There are plenty of things left on the Isle that have traces of magic still within them. It took me years to gather up enough for even a simple spell, but I finally have what I need."

"You've been collecting magic?" Jay hadn't even known that was possible.

"Why do you think I made friends with Maleficent and the Evil Queen? Their beauty and personalities?" Jafar drawled sarcastically. "The Magic Mirror of the Evil Queen and Maleficent's staff have some of the highest amounts of residual magic on the Isle. I've been siphoning it off for years, and now I finally have gathered enough for what is needed."

Jay still wasn't entirely sure where this was going. "So... you want me to make a wish?" he guessed. That was the only reason he could think that he'd be holding the lamp. If his father had gathered magic and the lamp was there, well, Jay wasn't so stupid as to miss the obvious.

"That's right," Jafar confirmed. "I need you to make a wish." The gleam was back in Jafar's eyes, and it sent a shiver down Jay's spine. "Wish to take my place as the Djinn."

Jay's face, which had been starting to brighten just a little, fell entirely. "W-what?"

"Wish to take my place," Jafar repeated louder and angrier.

Iago squawked again, but this time Jay didn't dare look away. "B-but then I-"

Jay's head snapped to the side, and his cheek stung from where Jafar slapped him. Jay felt the blood welling up where his father's ring had cut him on his cheekbone. "Don't you talk back to me," Jafar hissed. "Make the wish, you useless idiot!"

Jay hesitated, but his Father's hand was still free enough to hit him again. "I-I wish..." Jay swallowed nervously. Jay didn't want to be a Djinn. He'd never thought the idea of being a Djinn sounded that good. He liked wandering off and doing what he wanted, and Djinn couldn't do that. They were stuck in lamps all the time. Still, maybe his father was wrong? Jay licked his lips and eyed his father's hand and then the lamp. None of the other wishes that had been made since they'd been on the Isle had come true. Jay did his best to be hopeful that the wish wouldn't work. "I wish that... I was... that I was the Djinn of the lamp."

Jay felt a strange tingling sensation where his hands were connected to the lamp. His eyes widened as pressure built up within him. As if something were going to happen. The tension kept building uncomfortably higher and higher. Everything reached such maddening levels that Jay thought he might scream but then the pressure started to ebb. Jay almost sighed in relief that the magic was failing but before the discomfort could fall more than a fraction Jafar lunged. Jay let out a shout of surprise even as two heavy gold bracers slapped hard around his thin wrists. "Father!?!"

Light flashed, and Jay could feel painful lightning lance up his arms. His vision flickered and every muscle in his body was pulled tighter than they could go but somehow didn't snap or fray. He wasn't sure how long it lasted, but when his vision finally cleared, Jay was on the floor with the
lamp a few feet away and smoke coming from his skin. Every inch of him felt tender and raw like he’d just been scrubbed with a rasp. Jay stared down at the lustrous gold wrapped around his wrists and tried to pry one off. Unfortunately, the metal was real and just as inflexible as it should be. There wasn’t even a seam to be found where the bracers had fused together.

A thin hand reached down into Jay’s field of vision and picked up the lamp. Jay looked up in horror, only distantly noticing that the motion of lifting his head made something on his ears move. He would worry about that later, right now Jafar was looming with a smile. "You’re finally worth keeping around, boy," he said as he fingered the top of the lamp. "I have a Djinn again, after so much scheming... so much effort..."

"F-father... You-you will wish me free... won’t you?"

Jafar raised an eyebrow. "If you want to be wished free you had best find me another Djinn," he said.

Jay’s jaw dropped. "What?"

"I’m going to need all three wishes, boy," Jafar said almost kindly if it weren’t for the meaning behind the words. "So, if you want to be free then I suggest you find me another Djinn to take your place." Jay was feeling ill, but before he could respond, Jafar leaned down and grabbed him roughly by the bicep. "Come on!" he growled.

"Father!"

Jafar dragged Jay across the room and kicked open a trap door that Jay hadn’t ever noticed before. A thick rug usually sat in that spot. "Get in there!" Jafar shouted as he shoved the preteen down into the small dark crawlspace. Jay landed hard on the stone slab that was the foundation of the shop and quickly whipped around. "Itty bitty living space," Jafar said with a cruel laugh at the joke Jay didn’t understand before kicking the door closed again and sending the boy into utter darkness.

After a particularly loud crack of thunder nearby, Jay jerked awake breathing hard and eyes wide. Looking around, Jay slowly recognized where he was and lifted a shaking hand to his head. His hair had half come out of the loose tail he’d put it in before going to sleep and was sticking to his sweaty face and neck. His hand had never in his life shook so badly, but no matter what he tried he couldn’t get control of it.

Jay leaned over to try and calm his breathing, even though he felt sick to his stomach and bending didn’t really help him from wanting to throw up his dinner. His bones still ached and he fought the tears of pain that were building in his eyes. The longer they were off the Isle, the worse it got, but there wasn’t anything anyone could do. He was not going back where he couldn’t feel it, and he wasn’t going to help his Father get off the Isle either. There was an insistent tugging deep in his chest -as if someone had a tight grip around his heart and were pulling hard. The sensation compounded the pain in his joints and was probably the reason he was feeling so nauseous. But Jay was used to the tugging sensation and knew who was causing it. Only one person could make him experience that particular gut-wrenching feeling because only one person had access to the damn lamp. "No, Father," Jay hissed into his knees. "I’m not yours anymore..."

After a long moment, Jay carefully got out of bed and made his way to the bathroom. Each step was incredibly painful, like stepping on heated glass, but Jay didn't stop. The pain from walking seemed to gather and then explode from his joints at the slightest pressure, bringing tears to his eyes that he fought back. Jay finally reached the bathroom and closed the door as quietly as he could before collapsing. He nearly screamed as his knees hit the ground and felt like they’d
collided with landmines but managed to bite the noise back.

Jay crawled the short distance across the bathroom to the toilet and clung to the cold porcelain. He tried not to be affected but not responding to the summons of the lamp never really got more comfortable, and after only about fifteen minutes of huddling by the toilet, Jay was emptying his stomach into it. The heaving made his already aching bones and joints hurt even worse but he couldn't stop until everything he'd eaten at dinner was gone and then some. Jay rested his sweaty forehead on the rim of the seat and closed his eyes to just try and feel the smallest bit better.

There was another tug at his insides and Jay couldn't stop the heave from coming in response. There was nothing but acid left in his stomach but that came up anyway. His father was determined tonight for some reason, but there was no way Jay was going to even call the manipulative bastard. As Jay was wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, there was a knock at the bathroom door.

"Jay? You alright in there, bro?"

Shit. Carlos.

Jay cleared his throat as best he could. "Yeah," he called and winced at how much like a croak it was. "Yeah, I'm good."

The door to the bathroom opened and Carlos peeked in. "You sure?" he asked. Dude squirmed from where Carlos was carrying him, but the white-haired teen didn't put the little terrier down. Carlos' eyes widened almost instantly. "Jay, man, you look like shit!"

"Thanks," Jay grumbled unhappily. "Makes me feel so much better."

Carlos hurried into the bathroom and knelt down beside the older teen. Carlos reached out to put a hand on Jay's shoulder and quickly pulled it back just a second later. "You're burning up."

"Well, I am pretty hot," Jay attempted to joke but even he could tell it fell damn near flat.

"I'm going to get Mal and Evie," Carlos said as he got to his feet.

"No, Carlos!" Jay grabbed the slighter boy by the wrist. "Don't bug the girls. I'm fine." Jay insisted.

"Jay, you're in the bathroom at two in the morning puking your guts up with a fever," Carlos said. "You're not fine."

Jay grimaced at the all too accurate description. "Carlos, really. It's just a bug or something. I'll probably be fine in the morning. No use waking the girls and getting them worried." Carlos hesitated, but Jay could tell he wasn't exactly convinced. "Come on, Carlos... do me a solid here. You know how the girls get when they're worried." Evie got overly clingy when she worried, and Mal got aggressive. Neither reaction Jay really wanted to deal with. Not to mention the danger of someone hearing about him getting sick and looking closer at him. If anyone found out what he was, then he knew what would happen. He wasn't going to be a slave to anyone.

Carlos sighed and sat down beside Jay and put Dude firmly in his lap. "Can I get you anything at least?" he asked.

"A new stomach would be great, thanks," Jay muttered as he rested his forehead against the toilet again.

"Don't think I can whip one of those up with my printer," Carlos said with a wry smile.

Jay grunted. "Then what good are you?"
"Watch it. I can still change my mind and wake up Mal," Carlos threatened.

"Low."

Carlos rolled his eyes. "Don't be such an Auradon boy," he said as he scratched Duke behind the ear.

"Insults too now? Don't I feel loved," Jay muttered.

"You should. I wouldn't sit up at night with just any sick guy," Carlos said as he reached over to push the loose strands of Jay's hair back away from his damp face. Jay normally would have protested, but he felt too ill to bother with it. Carlos frowned even more at the lack of reaction. No matter what Jay said he was really sick, and if he wasn't better in the morning Carlos was going to go to Mal and Evie whether Jay liked it or not. Carlos winced as Jay suddenly began heaving again even though nothing was coming up anymore.

Jay was barely paying attention to Carlos sitting beside him, so when he lifted his head and was offered a glass of water, he was a bit surprised. "You need to keep hydrated if you're going to be sweating and throwing up like this," Carlos said. Jay wanted to come up with a snarky reply to that, but his head was too fuzzy from pain and exhaustion, so instead, he just took the glass and took a cautious sip. Jay slowly drank about a quarter of the glass before sighing and leaning back against the wall with his eyes closed. The yanking on his insides was finally stopping, indicating his father had stopped rubbing the damn lamp to try and get him to respond. "I think it's passing," Jay muttered.

"Good," Carlos said while eyeing his friend. "What did you eat at dinner?"

Jay snorted. "Isle kids are immune to food poisoning, Carlos." All of them had resorted to eating food that really wasn't so good to be eating. Their stomachs had learned to handle it, and the worst quality food in Auradon couldn't compare to the best on the Isle.

"Yeah, well, something obviously triggered this," Carlos said as he fiddled with Dude's fur. "Maybe you're allergic to something," he suggested.

"Or maybe I'm just incredibly unlucky," Jay countered. "Now... I'm going to bed again. I'm beat. Thanks for the help, Carlos." Carlos frowned and looked like he wanted to protest but Jay didn't give him a chance. He was already fighting back the pain and aches to get to his feet and leave the bathroom. Each step was still like walking on a field of tiny red hot needles, but Jay managed to not wince with every step.

Jay carefully put the water on the table beside his bed before collapsing on top of the kicked apart bedding. He didn't care enough to get under the sheets or anything like that. Plus the thief was still feeling a little feverish. Jay closed his eyes with a sigh and just let his aching body relax as much as he could into the impossibly soft beds of Auradon Prep. So much better than sleeping on a stone floor.

Carlos shuffled around in the bathroom for a few minutes before coming back out and get in his own bed with Dude. Jay only half opened his eyes and was glad to see that his friend really did seem to be going to sleep. Just as Jay was about to close his eyes and get to sleep again, he noticed that the storm had broken enough for some dim moonlight to peek through the clouds and window and had caught a flash of gold on his wrist. Jay quickly reached up to his leather bracers and fixed them so that once again every inch of gold was covered up under the leather. He was so glad everyone just assumed it was because he was from the Isle that he liked gloves and leather cuffs so much.
Chapter 2

Jay slumped down to rest his chin on the library table in front of him and glared at his homework. He really didn't want to bother trying to struggle to read the damn thing. He'd been putting in a lot more effort to his school work, now that they'd decided to stay in Auradon, than he ever had put in on the Isle, but Jay wasn't really in any mood to give himself a headache by forcing the massive jumble to form something resembling sense. The night before was still giving him phantom pains all over his body that wouldn't go away. "I don't think glaring at it is going to get it done, Jay," Carlos offered from his own spot on the other side of the table.

Jay scowled but then turned to Evie sitting beside him. "E!" he whined. "Chemistry is your wheel house... help me!" He put on his best pout and pleading eyes, but, unfortunately for him, Evie had long ago been over exposed to Jay's various ploys. Both her and Mal were entirely immune to his flirting, pleading, and even glowers. She also knew that 'help' really meant to give the answers. "I'm not doing your homework for you, Jay," Evie said as she scribbled a formula on her own paper.

"Did you guys know there's something called 'academic probation' in Auradon?" Jay asked, glaring at his paper again. "Coach told me that if my grades get too low they won't let me play anymore."

There was a moment of silence as that concept tried to sink into the minds of the Isle kids. "Auradon is weird..." Mal commented from where she was sitting beside Carlos. The others just nodded in agreement. They didn't understand the reasoning behind many of the rules they were now subject to but they all agreed that the benefits of Auradon outweighed the strangeness.

"It's to make sure that even the athletes get a good education," Doug explained from the other side of Evie. "To make well rounded students." Jay couldn't help but make a face. 'Well rounded' didn't sound that appealing to the thief.

"I guess you'd better get working on that homework then, Jay," Carlos said, pointing at the worksheets in front of his roommate.

"All of you are entirely unhelpful," Jay muttered without lifting his head.

"Aww, poor Jay," Mal said as she flipped a page in her book. Jay frowned and then sighed heavily. Here in Auradon he definitely felt like the weakest link and he wasn't a huge fan of the feeling. He'd always been one of the strongest and now, if it weren't for the fact that Auradon boys were so entirely pathetic when it came to physical activity, he'd have nothing at all to his name. Nothing but his father's reputation anyway and he really wanted to distance himself from that. His ability to fight and threaten and steal really didn't get him anywhere here. "So, anyway, Guys, I've been thinking..."

"That's usually a dangerous way to start a sentence..." Jay mumbled.

Mal cast him a half-hearted glare. "Now that we're in Auradon we're all... safer," she said somewhat awkwardly. She personally hadn't ever really felt unsafe on the Isle but then she'd never really feared her evil parent like her friends had. "But if anything happens there's still a chance our parents would try something. My mom's neutralized but your guys' parents are still out there on the Isle. And they probably aren't too happy."

Jay thought to last night and the very unpleasant sickness his father had caused and nearly cringed.
No, his father was definitely not happy with him. "That would be an understatement," Carlos said, already sounding nervous. "If she gets her hands on me I'd be dead..."

"So, I was thinking that we should come up with a plan for if they ever manage to break out," Mal said, leaning closer. "For our own protection."

"I don't think my mom would be that bad," Evie mused. "She just wants a castle again."

"And to poison anyone she thinks is too pretty," Jay pointed out without lifting his head.

Evie gave an awkward smile. "Oh, well, yeah, I guess there is that... I see your point."

"Hey guys," Ben greeted as he walked over with his own books slung over his shoulder. He got various hellos and even a 'sup from Jay as he sat down beside Mal. "What are we talking about?"

"Which of their parents is the next biggest threat without Maleficent around," Doug volunteered.

"But they're all on the Isle," Ben pointed out as he pulled out a text book to put on the table in front of him.

"You don't live long on the Isle by not thinking of all the ways things can go south, bro," Jay said as he finally lifted his head and instead resting his chin on his palm. He grabbed his pencil and looked down at his homework but didn't do much more than stare.

"I'm thinking Cruella or Jafar," Mal said as she fiddled with the corner of her book. "Cruella because she's just crazy and Jafar because he did wish to be the most powerful sorcerer before he was tricked into wishing to be a genie..."

Jay made a face. "Neither of them could get off the Isle though," Doug pointed out. "Cruella doesn't have magic and if Jafar left the Isle he'd be sucked back into the lamp."

"Not necessarily," Jay said before he could stop himself. All eyes instantly fell on him and he cringed. He really shouldn't have said that.

Mal put her pencil in her book to mark the page and then put it down to the side. "Jay," The thief reluctantly looked over at his leader. "What do you mean 'not necessarily'?" she asked in a somewhat dangerous tone that told Jay she wasn't going to let him dodge the question.

Jay scrambled mentally for an excuse that would explain why Jafar wasn't in danger of the lamp but also wouldn't get him caught out. "Well... um, if a Djinn and the lamp it's bound to are separated by the barrier... nothing will happen. Magic can't cross the boundaries of the Isle so neither would the Djinn be forced into its lamp... or to obey who had it, I guess."

"So, if Jafar leaves the Isle but the lamp doesn't... he's not going to be contained in the least," Ben surmised, sounding a little worried. "Aladdin and Jasmine won't be happy to learn that..."

"But he'd still have to break out of the Isle in the first place," Evie reminded. "If it were that easy to do then a lot more people on the Isle would have already done it. Jafar and my mother included."

The Evil Queen might not have any big plans to take over the world that someone like Jafar or Maleficent would but she certainly wasn't content where she was either. She was always griping about not having her castle or endless mirrors to admire herself in.

Mal frowned a little. "I wouldn't put it past any of your parents to somehow find a way off the Isle now that my mom's done it."
"And your dad knows this leaving the lamp behind trick?" Carlos asked Jay as he reached down to where Dude had half jumped up onto his lap.

"He's the one that figured it out, so yeah, he knows," Jay said uneasily. "Also, can we not talk about this anymore?"

Mal narrowed her eyes. "Not until you explain how your dad even knows that about the lamp not working to hold genies."

Jay sighed in exasperation. "The old man's been obsessed with Djinn and magic lamps longer than I've been alive, Mal. He's sort of got what they can and can't do on lock by now," he answered a tad snappishly. He wanted this topic, that was venturing much too close to things he didn't want to discuss, to be dropped.

Ben frowned in thought. "So... if he got to this side of the barrier... could someone on the other side still use the lamp to make wishes?" he asked uneasily. "Like to wish the barrier away?"

"No," Jay said shortly. "The barrier gets in the way."

There was thankfully some silence after that and Jay turned back to his homework. He would rather struggle with his chemistry worksheets than have any further discussion about Djinn. He was glad that they finally seemed to have dropped the topic of his father and magic lamps. Just thinking about all that gave him an urge to be a little sick from the memory of his insides being messed with.

Jay glared at his paper and the jumble of letters and numbers instead of looking at his friends. He saw, out of the edge of his vision, that Mal leaned forward across the table. "Jay."

"Mal, I'd really rather drop this," he growled out with only a brief glance up at her.

Mal ignored his not so subtle hint. "Do you know where your Dad keeps the lamp?"

That question startled him enough to look up fully. "What?"

"He still has it right? Where does he keep it?" Mal asked. Jay could practically see the plots and plans churning in her head from the glint in her eyes and it made him hesitate. That glint was a similar look to the one Jafar always got but Jay had never noticed that or felt uneasy about Mal before.

"Hey, Mal... no," Jay said. "Whatever you're thinking... just no."

Mal sighed. "Jay, if the lamp is only useful on this side of the barrier where it can contain your father if he gets off the Isle... it should be on this side," she reasoned. "You said yourself that the barrier would get in the way of anyone making wishes on it from the other side so it's not any danger."

Jay could only stare. "It does make sense," Carlos offered softly from beside Mal. "If he gets off somehow and leaves the lamp behind we'd be in trouble but if we have the lamp here and he gets off we can just trap him back up again."

"I'm not going to the Isle and stealing from my dad. That's a terrible idea on way too many levels," Jay said firmly. "And you can't make me."

"Jay, this is the advantage over your dad that you've always been looking for," Mal said. "If we had the lamp then Jafar couldn't do anything against us right? That's part of the whole 'master' thing?"
Jay's scowl deepened and he had a very unpleasant but thankfully quick memory of trying and failing utterly to punch his father in the mouth flashed in his head. "Yeah," Jay grumbled. "Djinn can't hurt their Masters." He'd tried quite a few times and had never managed to lay a finger on Jafar.

"Then we should definitely have it," Mal said. "It's insurance. Why would we ignore an advantage like that?"

"Lemme answer that question with another," Jay said. "Because I don't want to go back." Jay got to his feet as his friends frowned, slightly caught off guard by there not being a question like he said there would be. "I'm going to practice," he said before leaving with his books in a jumbled stack under his arm. Practice didn't start for another half hour but he didn't care. Jay wasn't going to sit there and let them try and talk him into stealing that damn lamp.

The others stared after him but none tried to keep him from leaving. They knew when to let each other cool off and the tension in Jay's body language said this was one of those times. "He's more against that than I thought he'd be," Evie said. Jay had always leapt to have advantages over people he saw as enemies before. She wouldn't have thought Auradon would have changed him that much in so short a time.

Mal huffed angrily and folded her arms across her chest. "He's never stood up to Jafar, I don't get it," she grumbled. Here they were finally with a lead on a way to keep her second-in-command safe from his abusive father and Jay didn't want to even risk crossing Jafar to get it.

"He might not be in the best moods to talk about this," Carlos mused as he pet Dude. "He got sick last night."

Mal and Evie looked over sharply. "Sick?" Evie echoed in shock. "Jay got sick?" She couldn't remember Jay ever having gotten sick before. Injured plenty but never ill. He had an impressive constitution.

Carlos nodded. "I woke up to him throwing up in the bathroom and he had a pretty bad fever," Carlos explained. "He didn't want me to come wake you guys up but he looked pretty bad. I almost came to get you anyway but then he went back to bed."

"Carlos, you should have gotten us anyway. You know the rule," Mal said sternly.

"I was with him!" Carlos argued. "If he were being stubborn about it I would have gone and got you but he wasn't."

Ben glanced between the three remaining Isle kids before looking at Doug, who also seemed confused. "What rule are you talking about?" he asked. Even after deciding to be good none of the four villain kids had ever really put much consideration into following rules. Well, they tried to follow the big ones but they were definitely still getting used to the concept.

"Don't worry about it, Ben, it's an Isle thing," Mal said dismissively. "We'll let Jay cool off and come back to this later. It isn't as if anyone is going to break out of the Isle tomorrow."

"Chances are nobody will be breaking out at all," Ben tried to reason.

Doug nodded in agreement. "It took help from out here for your mom to break out, Mal," he added. "And I don't see anyone helping the rest of your parents off the Isle. No offence."

"None taken," Carlos assured him. "We don't exactly want them free either."
Mal frowned but was determined to still find extra protection for each of her friends despite Ben's confidence. She'd seen each of them hurt far too often to take it on faith the barrier would be enough.
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

IAGO! I wished he was utilized more...

I just got the books the other day and started reading them so while there are parts I wrote before I had them that don't jive with the book canon, I couldn't help but include bits from the books.

Jay watched the sun setting from his spot on top of the dorms. The roof was more stable than he was used to and the breeze that stirred his hair didn't smell so foul but he was glad that there was somewhere in Auradon that he could use to get away from others. Jay was more of a people person than most of his friends but he wasn't in the mood to be social. Half of him regretted going to practice that afternoon even though it had been great fun and one of the few Auradon approved ways of him venting his frustrations. The half that wasn't still amused by how Chad had gone flipping through the air after a particularly great shoulder check was cursing himself because now his shoulder felt jammed. In fact, all of his already aching body had greatly resented him slamming into other people at top speed.

At dinner, the others had definitely avoided all mention of going back to the Isle for any reason and Jay figured that was to not trigger his anger again. He was too tired to be really angry at them right then but he appreciated their effort, even if showing concern and consideration would have gotten them in trouble across the water.

Jay brought the bottle he was casually holding in his hand up to his lips and took a drink of the amber liquid inside. He had snagged the alcohol shortly after they had first arrived in Auradon but he hadn't touched it after they'd decided to be good. He had sort of intended to get rid of the booze but he never had and Jay was now glad for that because he'd needed a drink. The alcohol burned just slightly all the way down his throat and Jay lifted the bottle enough to examine the label. The stuff was a lot easier to drink than he'd been expecting when he snatched it up, but maybe that was because it hadn't been brewed in someone's bathtub. Soap Scum Scotch had such a lingering and unpleasant aftertaste because of that.

With a shrug, Jay took another swig and then looked out at the horizon again. He hoped Mal's idea of stealing the lamp from Jafar would pass away like some of her other flights of fancy in the past had, but he had a feeling that he wouldn't be so lucky. He was never that lucky. Jay absentmindedly started peeling away the label for the bottle in his hands as he pondered different excuses he could give his friends for absolutely not going after Jafar's lamp. Other than 'I might be the one sucked into it,' of course.

Jay had made his way through about a fourth of the remaining liquid in the bottle when something odd in the sky caught his eye. He lowered the drink carefully and swallowed what he'd already swigged as he watched the little speck. He could tell it was a bird (because it was in the air and all) but the silhouette wasn't like any Auradon bird. Jay frowned as he tried to place the shape while the sky quickly grew darker.

The spec kept growing larger and more distinct and Jay straightened as he suddenly placed it in his memory. "What the hell?" he asked nobody. Jay could only watch as the colorful bird grew closer.
and closer and then landed on a squat decorative wall along the peak of the roof. "Iago?"

Iago fluffed up and then shook himself to flatten the colorful feathers back out. "There you are, kid. What are you doing at a school of all places?" he grumbled. "Do you know how long I've been looking for you?"

"How are you here?" Jay asked, still staring. He hadn't seen the bird in a long time and had come to terms with the idea that he never would be seeing him again. Especially after Jay had left the Isle. Iago flew from his perch over to where Jay was sitting. The thief automatically leaned back so that his knee could serve as a new perch for the surprisingly healthier looking bird. "You look good."

"I slipped out when the barrier fell a while back," Iago said as he ruffled his feathers. "I figured you'd be long gone."

"You've been looking for me. Why?"

Iago gave Jay a very unimpressed stare. "Don't be stupid, Jabir. Why do you think I've been looking for you?"

"My winning personality?" Jay suggested as he lifted his bottle again. He thought about protesting Iago using his proper first name but then decided to not bother. Chances were he wouldn't be able to convince the parrot to not use it no matter how he protested.

Iago let out a noise that was half a scoff and half a caw. Iago eyed the bottle in Jay's hand and reached out a claw to grasp the top of it. "What is that anyway?"

Jay lifted an eyebrow. "It's called booze, Iago. I'm sure you recognize it."

"I do," Iago grumbled. "And I thought you were smarter than that."

"You just called me stupid two seconds ago," Jay drawled.

"I said 'don't be stupid' that's not the same thing," Iago argued. "How much of this have you drank?"

Jay rolled his eyes at the question. "Don't worry, I haven't downed this whole thing today or anything. I've only drank about," Jay put his finger on the glass at where he approximated the liquid had started, "that much." Iago still looked unhappy but lowered his claw. "I'm not a kid, Iago."

"You are a kid, kid," Iago said. "Now, why are you at a school? You hate school. And not just any school... an Auradon school."

"We decided to try and be good," Jay answered.

Iago eyed the bottle in Jay's hand critically. "So how's that going for you?"

"Shut up," Jay said without much venom. "I've had a tough day."

The parrot gave his caw-like scoff again and adjusted his feathers. "Why are you trying to be good in the first place? I thought you enjoyed making other people miserable?"

"I wasn't so fond of being miserable myself," Jay answered as he lifted his bottle again. "Dad just keeps getting worse and even making other people miserable wasn't making me feel better anymore. Then again, I'm not exactly cut out to be here either..."
Iago didn't respond right away and used his claws to pick at Jay's leather pants. Jay just let the bird sit there since his pants were plenty thick enough to protect him from Iago's wicked claws. "I'm glad you're here rather than there," Iago said finally.

Jay paused halfway in bringing the bottle up again. "What?"

"I'm glad you're here rather than there," he repeating in an annoyed huff. "You should have been over here to begin with. You should have been Prince instead of a thief." Jay had heard that before but it sounded... different coming from the bird rather than his father. The teen couldn't place what about it was so different but the familiar phrase didn't make him roll his eyes this time. "Did the other hooligans come with you?" Iago asked after an awkward silence.

"You mean Mal and the others? Yeah, 'course they did," Jay answered. Iago made a noise that Jay couldn't really decipher. Over the years Iago had gotten less and less willing to voice his opinion since Jafar had gotten less and less willing to listen. But, even if he didn't speak up as often anymore, Jay knew that Iago always did have things he could say. "What is it?" Jay prompted when it became clear that the bird wasn't going to speak up.

Iago flapped his wings a few times but stayed where he was on Jay's knee. "Nothing. Just surprised that Maleficent's daughter would want to be good all of a sudden."

"I'm not sure how 'sudden' it was," Jay said. "Right up until the very end I think she was determined to steal the wand for her mother. Up until Prince Ben told her she could be good. That we all could..."

"Well, of course you could be good," Iago said. "I just want to be sure that you wanted to be."

Jay was quiet as he thought about his answer. "... it's harder than I thought it would be," he admitted. "A lot of times I wish were were back on the Isle just so I could punch Chad a few times in the face with nobody getting upset but him. But punching a Charming in the mouth isn't enough to make it worth sleeping on the floor and eating mouldy bread."

"You do look better filled out," Iago said with a head tilt. "Your cheeks aren't as sharp."

"My cheeks were sharp?" Jay asked. "I always thought I was in better shape than most."

Iago flapped his wings again. "Better than most but still not like you should have been. It's all those muscles. Harder to keep those up on the Isle. You look better here."

"Thanks, Iago," Jay said as he leaned back across the roof to look up at the stars that were starting to come out. "You look better here too. Your feathers aren't as tattered and you look like you've actually been flying around again rather than cooped up inside all the time."

"That's because I have been," Iago said. "Speaking of. We should go inside. It's getting cold out..."

"We?" Jay echoed.

Iago huffed and rearranged his feathers. "Of course we! I'm not staying out here in the cold!"

Jay chuckled at how mortally offended the bird sounded. "There's a dog in our room already," he warned.

"A dog?" Iago echoed. "I'm not afraid of stupid dogs! Take me in already! Hop to it!"

"You are so bossy," Jay complained without moving. "You could always go back to Dad."
"The barrier closed again," Iago replied with another huff. "Even if I wanted to I couldn't. So come on already! Before you catch a cold or something!"

Jay rolled his eyes. "I don't catch colds, Iago. You don't have to worry about me."

"Who's worried about you?" Iago demanded. "If you catch a cold then who's going to get me something to eat? Do they have macadamia nuts here? I haven't had any in a while and I want some. Find me some."

"Yes, they have macadamia nuts, but I'm not going to go get you any right now," Jay said. "You'll have to wait."

"Dates?"

Jay sighed and lifted his head to glare at the parrot on his knee. "Is food all you think about?"

Iago paused and tilted his head from side to side in consideration for a moment. "Yes. Feed me."

Jay couldn't quite help but laugh and put the top back on his bottle.

"Alright alright," Jay said as he pushed himself up from the roof with a groan. Iago flew off his knee but then landed again on Jay's shoulder as soon as he was fully standing. He was still sore but it had been dulled down a little from the alcohol. "Let's go get you something to snack on. I have a stash in the room."

"A stash of what?" Iago asked. "Junk food?"

"Maybe," Jay answered as he went to the edge where he could climb down and reach his and Carlos' window. "Are you going to complain about junk food, feather brain?"

"I don't complain," Iago protested. Jay paused in his climb and looked to his shoulder. "Oh, wait...yes, I do. That's my thing," Iago corrected and Jay chuckled while continuing to lower himself to the window ledge. Jay was able to shimmy the window open and slip into the room.

Dude stood up from his bed and Carlos looked over in surprise. "Is that where you were? The roof? And is that Iago? Where did he come from?" he asked as the parrot shifted to be better balanced on Jay's shoulder.

"Apparently he followed Mal's mom through the hole in the barrier and now he's stuck in Auradon with us," Jay explained as he put what remained of his alcohol into the secret compartment he'd made under his bed and then went to his side table. He dug around for a moment and then pulled out a few bags of snacks.

Iago leaned over to look at what Jay was pulling out. "Oh! Gimme that!" Iago commanded with a few flaps of his wings.

Jay let out an annoyed noise and ducked as Iago's wing slapped him upside the head. "Give you what?" he demanded.

"Those nuts! Gimme!" Iago screeched.

"Alright, jeeze, don't scream in my ear," Jay said grumpily as he held up a pecan to the demanding bird. The nut disappeared with a snap and Jay rolled his eyes as he picked out a few others and then put them on his windowsill. Iago abandoned Jay's shoulder to sit beside his treat instead. "You only came here because you were hungry," Jay accused as he sat down on his bed.
"I told you that already," Iago chirped before swallowing another nut.

Dude carefully edged closer to the window where the bird was eating and began to sniff around. "Dude, you really don't want to mess with him," Carlos warned. Iago had a bit of a reputation for biting those that got too close although he never seemed to do that to Jay or Jafar.

Iago watched the dog come closer while still scarfing down the nuts that Jay had laid out for him. Just as Dude dared to put his nose to the edge of the windowsill, Iago screeched and swung his claw. He missed Dude's nose but the dog yelped and ran back to the safety of Carlo's lap. "Back off, mutt!" Iago ordered with a few flaps of his wings.

"I warned you," Carlos said as he cuddled the spooked dog.

"His squawk is worse than his bite, Dude," Jay said from where he was reclined across his bed.

"Says the guy who's never been bit before," Carlos muttered.

Jay just shrugged a little in response and popped a candy in his mouth. Iago finished the last nuts that Jay had picked out and then turned to face the teen. "What's that?" he asked, craning his head.

"Not something for birds," Jay replied. "Be happy you got what you did."

"I've been flying all day!" Iago complained.

Jay's eyebrows shot up. "Not my fault."

There was a knock at the door. "Come in!" Carlos called.

Mal opened the door. "I thought I heard-" she stopped when she saw Iago sitting on the windowsill. "... a bird." Evie gasped from just behind Mal's shoulder and hurried both of them inside the room. The door was shut and locked as soon as Evie was through it.

"Iago! What are you doing here?" Evie had always rather liked the most colorful inhabitant of the Isle of the Lost, even if she hadn't really seen him since that fateful sixth birthday party.

Iago ruffled his feathers. "Why are you all asking me that? Where else should I be?" he demanded.


"I don't talk to him anymore," Iago said resolutely looking away from them.

Mal, Evie, and Carlos looked at Jay who sighed and mouthed 'don't ask' at them. The fallout between Jafar and Iago was still volatile at best and Iago had a pair of lungs on him when he got ranting. Jay doubted the other inhabitants of the dorms would like to hear (ad nauseam) about what had finally been too much for Iago to forget about. "So how long are you staying here?" Mal asked. "Because I'm pretty sure we're not allowed evil minions here."

Iago huffed and flapped his wings. "I go where I want. And I'm staying as long as I want."

Mal looked to Jay who shook his head. Arguing with Iago just wasn't worth the time and effort. The parrot would just repeat his points over and over until you were worn down and gave up. Besides, chances were that Iago would get bored and fly off sooner or later.
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

Iago just cannot keep his beak shut...

Jay was entirely expecting Iago to fly off even before breakfast but the parrot did not. In fact, he seemed to have attached himself to Jay in a way that made the thief a little uncomfortable. The only person Iago had hung around this much before was Jafar. Jay got more than one curious look at breakfast at the fact that Iago was again on his shoulder, having absolutely refused to not be taken to breakfast. "Man, they'd finally stopped staring at us," Carlos muttered as the four of them took their usual table against the wall and near two easy escape routes.

"Why are you hanging around me anyway?" Jay asked as he dropped his tray on the table and went to sit down. Iago moved to stand on the table and grabbed a piece of toast right off Jay's tray. "And that is mine."

Iago didn't seem to care and just continued to tear into the pilfered toast. Jay could only roll his eyes and turn to his own breakfast. Around that time, Doug and Li Lonnie came over with their own trays. The two of them didn't always join the four Villain Kids for breakfast but the addition of a colorful parrot to the breakfast table had drawn them over immediately. "Where did the parrot come from?" Doug asked with wide eyes. Parrots weren't exactly native to this part of Auradon.

"This is Iago," Jay said with a sigh. "Apparently, he followed Maleficent out of the barrier and now is pestering me."

"Iago as in your dad's bird?" Lonnie asked.

"The one and only," Jay agreed dryly as he watched Iago gulp down the last bit of bread. Already the parrot was looking to Jay's tray again. Jay quickly shifted his tray further to the side. "My breakfast, you pig."

Iago flapped his wings several times. "This is the thanks I get for checking in on you," he accused dramatically. "Ungrateful!"

"Yup," Jay answered before shoveling a bunch of eggs into his mouth. "You can't come to class with me, by the way," he added despite not having fully swallowed his food.

"I go where I want!"

"It was hard enough to get the teachers to let Dude into the classroom," Mal argued. The debate over Dude had lasted a solid two weeks and only was resolved when Ben stepped in, which wasn't even counting the many objections about Carlos having a dog in the first place. "There's no way they'll let you in too, Iago." The parrot just repeated that he went where he wanted. "Yeah, you said that already."

Jay shook his head and quickly scooped up more of his breakfast. They would learn pretty quick that Iago didn't really care if he was repeating himself or not. "Maybe we should just let Fairy Godmother handle it..." Carlos said as Iago again repeated his supposed defense.
"Yeah, good luck with that," Jay muttered into his breakfast. The only person Iago had ever listened to was Jafar and Jay was convinced that was only because the ex-vizier had offered more freedom than was typical of exotic animals in Agrabah back then. Of course, it was for evil scheming purposes but that was besides the point. It still kept Iago from being essentially a living decoration in a gilded cage.

"I am much better than some stupid dog! You can't keep me out! I go where I want!" Iago was ranting.

Jay reached over and gently but firmly clasped Iago's beak closed. "I think they get the point, Iago. Have some more toast," he said pushing the second piece of cooked bread that he had been saving closer to the irritated macaw.

Iago continued to grumble for a moment under Jay's fingers. After he finally shut up, the thief let his beak go and Iago immediately turned his attention to the toast. "Could use peanut butter," he muttered unhappily.

"Get over it," Jay replied. "I didn't get it for you."

"So... I've never understood... How does Iago talk like that?" Doug asked. "He's not magical is he?"

Jay shrugged. "I think Dad enchanted him or something when he first got him. On the Isle really the best he could do was repeat things but he could repeat anything someone said. Out here he can just ramble whatever he wants," he explained as he watched Iago go to town on the bread. "No echoing required."


"I think it's wonderful he's here," Evie said lightly from her seat. The Isle Princess reached over and gently ran her fingers over Iago's crimson head and back. Jay was impressed she kept all of those perfectly slender digits but maybe that had something to do with the fact that Iago was still eating. Or wait... didn't Evie's Mother keep birds too? "Parrots are such beautiful creatures..."

Iago preened under the attention. "Of course we are! So much better than dogs."

"Dog is man's best friend," Carlos said under his breath as he scratched Dude where the dog was eating his own food on the floor.

Jay sensed more than anything the fact that someone was behind him but he didn't stop eating to see who it was. Mal across from him had a wary look in her eyes but nothing that said Jay was in any immediate danger. The thief would keep his guard up but act casual until Mal showed some sign that defense was required.

"Where did he come from?"

Jay paused at the familiar accent from the person behind him. Ah. Aziz. Crap. Jay straightened and turned to face the Agrabah Prince. "I take it you know how the birds and the birds work, Aziz... spare us the need to explain it over breakfast," he quipped as he leaned with faux casualness against the table. He had avoided Aziz for the most part. Jay didn't want to have the same issues that Mal had with Audrey. He had enough problems just trying to actually struggle his way through classes and keep his rampant kleptomania (that's what Carlos called it, anyway) at bay.

"He's supposed to be locked up with Jafar," Aziz prompted.

"He's a bird. Hardly a threat," Mal snapped. Jay was a little surprised at her support since she didn't
really like Iago but maybe that was just the Isle instinct to push back against anything Auradon.

"You would be surprised how much damage a bird can cause," Aziz said, still eyeing Iago with distaste and suspicion.

Iago turned to face the Prince down. "You're not even supposed to be a Prince, street mouse." Jay would have found the look on Aziz's face hilarious if he weren't currently scrambling to think up a way to diffuse the entire situation. "Agrabah Law says you get what your father has and your father doesn't even have a pair of shoes to his name."

"My father is sultan," Aziz snapped and Jay saw his fists clench.

"He shouldn't be," Iago chirped. "He's only that way because your grandfather had to go and change the laws. Jafar was at least a sultan in his own right. Jabir has more claim to being prince than you do," Iago continued with a very superior tone that he copied right off Jafar.

Aziz, Jay was pretty sure, would have been blood red with rage if his skin wasn't already tanned. "Jafar made a wish to be sultan. That's not legitimate," he hissed.

"Neither was your father wishing to be a prince," Iago shot back.

Jay reached over and grabbed Iago by the beak again. "Okay! How about you go back to my room now, Iago?" he grit out. Iago thrashed and Jay had to let go so as to not be clawed by bird. He immediately started protesting that he 'went where he wanted' again and Jay felt the situation spiraling. "If you don't leave now I'm not bringing you macadamia nuts after class," Jay threatened.

Iago paused in his histrionics and eyed Jay carefully. "How many macadamia nuts?" he asked suspiciously.

"A whole bag," Jay said instantly. "But only if you leave now." Iago still looked very unhappy but flew off and left the hall through a cracked open window. Jay almost sighs in relief that the parrot is gone but manages to hold back. He turned to the still angry looking Aziz and shrugged. "Birds right?" he said with an awkward laugh.

Aziz looked like he was going to start ranting when suddenly Lonnie was beside him. "Alright, let's all calm down. It isn't like Jay smuggled Iago in or anything. There's no rules about keeping pets on campus. Come on, Aziz, let's head to class. You can rant at me in languages I don't understand," she offered while practically pushing the Arabian Prince towards the exit.

"Well, that could have gone better," Carlos muttered.

"I'm so going to hear about that later..." Jay moaned.

Evie reached over to put a comforting hand on Jay's shoulder. "I'm sure that things will calm down, and you said yourself that Iago probably won't stick around long," she said.

"Maybe he should," Mal said darkly.

"Mal, don't be vindictive," Evie scolded lightly. "We're being good now."

Jay sighed and shook his head. "Luckily, I only have two classes with Aziz... and we sit on opposite sides of the room from each other." He should be able to avoid the prince easily enough.

"Lonnie is usually pretty good at calming people down," Doug ventured although he looked a little uneasy still. "I'm sure by the time classes start Aziz will be back to normal."
"Joy," Jay said sarcastically.
Chapter 5

Jay was definitely not procrastinating going down to the tourney field. No, definitely not. Allie’s hair was just really cute today, and she deserved to know. Plus old habits were hard to break and flirting with everything that moved had served him well in the past. Either by getting people to lower their guard for a quick pickpocket, or getting him out of trouble on the rare occasions he was caught, or by setting up other methods for getting money that he still didn’t want to think about too much. Jay leaned closer to Allie and played with a strand of her blonde hair. She giggled and fluttered her eyelashes in a way that Jay was very familiar with but then, from further down the hall, Audrey called out to the other girl.

Allie blushed and said a quick goodbye before ducking away and leaving Jay who sent her a quick wink. She blushed even brighter pink as she and Audrey left to go get ready for cheer practice. Jay’s grin faded quickly, and he leaned further forward to rest his forehead on his arm where it was propped against the wall. He let out a long breath and then took another in through his nose.

His entire body was aching and he really just wanted to go back to his dorm room and lay down. Jay stayed standing there for several minutes just taking slow, deep breaths. He had been mostly fine that morning at breakfast but as the day had worn on he had felt less and less comfortable until it was a legitimate chore to get up and go to another class. Now classes were finally done, but the far more difficult task of going to practice was looming. Jay honestly didn't know if he was up for running up and down the field for an hour.

Then again, tourney was the one thing that Jay was always at. He still occasionally skipped classes from time to time or forgot about things he’d promised to do, but tourney was the thing he was reliable about. So, Jay pushed his aches out of his mind and headed down to the locker rooms. He might be running a little late, but he would show up and put in as much effort as he could scrounge up.

Jay’s locker in the changing rooms was tagged with one of Mal’s Evil Lives designs, this one featuring a particular red Djinn. Jay wasn’t sure when she’d sneaked into the boy’s locker room and done it, but he took it as a sign of support, so he didn’t mind. As Jay was fastening his chest pads, he spotted Aziz, already fully geared up, walking towards the exit. Jay came to an impulsive decision and hurried forward. “Hey, Aziz!”

The son of Aladdin stopped and turned to face Jay, looking a bit perturbed. "What?" Aziz asked with his arms folded across his chest disapprovingly.

Jay hesitated for a moment. He had perhaps a little more experience than Mal with apologies but still not a whole lot. "Look," he said before he could second-guess himself. Jay figured it was probably best to just barrel forward and hope his apology was taken seriously. "I'm sorry about what happened at breakfast. Iago's just... well, he's a jerk."

"Why did you even bring him into school?" Aziz asked with a frown.

"I really didn't," Jay said honestly. "And I even wanted him to stay in my room but... as you might have heard... he goes where he wants."

"Goes where he wants," Aziz said in time with Jay. "Yeah. I think I heard that somewhere."

Jay gave an awkward but charming smile. "He is a parrot still. They sort of repeat themselves," he explained. "And, just to be clear, I have no problem with my dad being on the Isle or you being a
prince instead of me. And unlike Audrey and Mal, I actually do mean that."

Aziz had gone from looking annoyed to somewhat amused. "Yeah, no offense but I can't really see you as a prince."

Jay made a show of looking shocked and putting a hand to his chest as if wounded. "Ow. Harsh. Totally uncalled for Mr. Goodie-Goodie."

Aziz snorted. "I'm not Ben," he said. "Anyway, you should finish getting ready or coach won't be happy. I'll see you on the field," he said. Jay nodded a little and watched the other Arabian leave the locker room. The apology thing had gone better than he'd thought. Maybe he should make a habit of doing it more often... he quickly discarded that idea though. It made him itch uncomfortably.

Getting finished with changing only took another five minutes and then Jay was out on the field. The coach was indeed not happy that Jay was late and made the thief do extra sprints because of it. Not that Jay normally would have minded but his feet and legs were already sore before he started the drills and extra sprints would not help with that in the least.

After he did his punishment drills, he was allowed to rejoin the rest of the team. Chad seemed particularly peeved, but Jay figured he was still upset over last practice's shoulder check. Chad was gunning for him the whole practice, and though Jay was able to dodge most of it and was used to a little rough and tumble, he felt certain he'd still get more than a few bruises coming up soon. Jay was almost impressed. Almost.

Maybe Chad would have done alright on the Isle after all if one little shoulder check got him this worked up. He seemed to have gotten a little bit of a vindictive streak, though where he would have gotten it from Jay had no idea. He wasn't actually related by blood to the Tremaines. Jay wondered how that meeting would go: Chad Charming and Anthony Tremaine. Jay snorted at the very idea of two of the snootiest boys he'd ever met being in the vicinity of each other. It would be historic.

At the end of practice, Jay felt like he'd been run over by Cruella's car or something but stood there with everyone else as the Coach had a quick team meeting. They had a game against the Wonderland Jabberwockies that weekend, and though the team from Wonderland was not usually one that Auradon Prep had to worry about, the Coach still seemed to think a pep talk was in order.

Jay found the pep talks to be perhaps the most tedious part of being on the tourney team. He wasn't even used to the concept of an adult trying to bolster confidence, much less hearing it, so his attention tended to wander. So as Coach was going on about working together and putting in hard work for the upcoming game, Jay was noticing something entirely different. Iago was sitting in a nearby tree watching. He had to admit the idea of being watched by Iago was a little unsettling since he could not actually guarantee that the bird wasn't here on Jafar's orders somehow, although Jay did find it unlikely. Not after what had happened when Jay was thirteen.

Jay was trying his absolute best to not show any emotion on his face. His Father was ranting about money. Again. It wasn't Jay's fault that he couldn't get anything else from the Bazaar. There was just nothing there to steal. The barges weren't set to come in for another three days. There was nothing left out there worth a wooden penny. Jafar probably knew this and probably didn't care. That wasn't going to stop him from displaying his unhappiness.

Jay already had blood on his chin from his split lip, and he knew he was going to get so much worse. His eyes kept drifting over to the moth-eaten oriental rug that was so embedded with dust as to be mostly grey and brown rather than whatever wonderful colors it had initially been. The rug was covering the trap door that Jay was forced to be in if he wasn't good enough. He couldn't
breathe in that hole and just thinking about it made his heart-rate skyrocket. Jay much preferred when he was allowed to sleep in the actual shop when he could curl up under some shelves but wouldn't feel as if the walls were crushing him.

"You are absolutely useless!" Jafar shouted, and Jay couldn't help but flinch. It wasn't his fault that he couldn't grant wishes here. Jafar never had been able to just grant wishes either. Not until he'd spent all of Jay's younger years stealing what little magic he could find. Jay'd only been wearing the manacles of a Djinn for a little less than two years.

Jafar let out a long hiss. "You'll just have to go get me more," he said with a sneer.

Jay looked up. "But Father there isn't anything more!" he protested. "I gave you everything that's left!" Jay pointed at the pile of trinkets on the counter that had been his haul that day.

"There's always something left!" Jafar snapped. "You just have to be cunning enough to find it! Or are you that stupid you can't even figure out where people hide their treasures?"

"There are no treasures!" Jay pointed out, somewhere between exasperation and desperation. "Nobody has anything but trash here!"

The slap echoed through the store and Jay felt his cheek throbbing. "Don't you use that tone with me," Jafar hissed, eyes blazing. "If you're going to be this difficult I'll just have to get your quota myself."

Jay blinked away the tears and looked up in confusion. Jafar wasn't much a thief really. He was a schemer and a con-man, sure, but he didn't have any natural finesse for removing necklaces without the wearer noticing or slipping his hands into other people's pockets. Plus, as Jay had told him, there wasn't anything left to steal. Jafar looked over his shoulder and Jay followed his eyes over to where Iago was sleeping in a cage. "You know," Jafar mused quite a bit quieter than he had been. "Cruella's really more into fur... but I'm sure she wouldn't mind a new feather boa."

The blood drained from Jay's face at the mention of Cruella. Even on the Isle, nobody in their right mind gave Cruella de Vil an animal. She caught them sometimes, but nobody gave them to her. And she was always desperate for any sort of new accessory. Jay knew it was probably a weakness to care what happened to the bird, but he couldn't help it either. As his Father got more and more interested in counting money all day rather than anything else, Jay had taken over things like feeding Iago and remembering to occasionally let him fly around. And Iago was the one that often checked on Jay rather than Jafar. "N-no," Jay said quickly as he looked back to his father. "No, I'll get the money. I promise."

Jafar 'tsked' lightly. "Are you sure? You said there was none left," he said mockingly. "I wouldn't want you to have to actually try or anything ridiculous like that."

Jay fought the urge to swallow from nerves. "I'll get you the money, Father. I swear I will."

"Hmm, go on then. I'll give you till dawn," Jafar said with an imperious wave of his hand.

Jay practically ran from the shop. He reminded himself that he shouldn't care if the bird, that often annoyed him, got turned into a boa or not but he couldn't shake the desire to not let that happen. Jay didn't like admitting it, but in a lot of ways, Iago was more like a father than Jafar was. At the very least an older brother or Uncle.

Unfortunately, Jay hadn't been lying when he said there was nothing left to steal in the bazaar. He found a few broken watches that wouldn't really give much money at all and certain wouldn't make
up his missing quota, but that was it. Jay glanced up at the hazy moon that was starting to head down. He didn't have much time left. The young thief sat down heavily on a step and struggled to come up with some sort of plan. There wasn't really anywhere he could snatch actual gold or gemstones. That didn't exist on the Isle. Jay was feeling somewhat panicked as his mind quickly went through all the different villains on the Isle and what they might have. He hated the idea of going into their homes to steal (he knew most would have terrible traps), but he didn't see much else in the way of options.

"Hey there," a voice suddenly said.

Jay looked up and saw a dirty and slightly overweight pirate looming above him. He had a crooked grin that showed three missing teeth. "What's a kid like you doing all the way over here?" the pirate asked.

Judging by the hook-shaped patch on the pirate's belt, Jay guessed this was one of Captain Hook's crew. "What's it to you?" Jay asked back in his best nasty tone. He wasn't in the mood to deal with dirty pirates.

"Pretty little boys shouldn't be out on the streets this late at night, kid," the pirate leered.

Jay's eyes narrowed, and he quickly got to his feet. "Go play with Tick-Tock, bilge breath, before I remind you what 'little boys' do to pirates," he snapped viciously. He wasn't afraid of someone who routinely got bested by a group of boys with sticks and rocks and a little pixie dust.

The pirate, who Jay later learned was named Edward, leaned closer. He was still smiling, but it seemed a shade more forced than it had been. "You're not too friendly, kid," Edward said although his eyes drifted down Jay's body. The thief instantly didn't like it and shifted further back, but he, unfortunately, didn't have very many escape routes. Damn him for getting distracted. "We can be friends can't we?"

"Why would I want to be 'friends' with you?" Jay asked in disgust.

Edward's grin widened. "I know about you, kid. About what you care about. Everyone knows you're only interested in one thing," he said before pulling a pouch up. He shook it a little and Jay heard the familiar rattle of coins. "This is why you want to be friends with me." Jay's expression evened out instantly. He had no idea how much money the pirate was carrying, but it sounded like enough to save Iago's feathers.

Jay reminded himself that he shouldn't care. Iago was an annoying pest that ate far more hard-earned food than he was worth. But Jay found his eyes drifting from the bag of money to Edward's grinning greasy face. "How much is that?" he asked although he wanted to slap himself. This was Not. Worth. It.

The bag of coins shook again, "Enough." Jay had to bite his tongue. Maybe he could swipe the money and run... no, Edward was too big and blocking the only easy escape route. Jay could feel his heart slamming in his chest even as Edward's meaty hands reached for him. He clenched his hands tight but found no protests would come out.

"Jay!"

Jay jerked and turned to look at who called him. "What?"

"Practice is over," Aziz said with a gesture to the quickly emptying field. A few people had stopped to look back at them, but most were heading to the locker rooms.
"Oh, right. Zoned out for a second," Jay said with an attempt at an easy smile. Aziz didn't look entirely convinced but then nodded and left. Jay sighed and tried to shake off his memories.

As Jay was gathering up his stuff, Iago flew over and landed on his shoulder. "You okay, kid? Looked like you were thinking hard," he said.

"Fine," Jay answered, not wanting to get into it. When Iago had found out about Jafar threatening to sell him to Cruella and what Jay had done to prevent that, he'd been livid. (Jay hadn't meant to tell Iago about it, but the next day he'd never felt so horrible and found himself blabbing the whole story before he could stop himself) Iago had even left the house to 'make sure it didn't happen again' or something. Although, he did come back somewhat regularly. "Just thinking about things."

Iago shuffled on Jay's shoulder. "What sort of things?"

"Stupid things, don't worry about it," Jay said dismissively.

Iago narrowed his eyes. "Don't you think you can hide things from me, Jabir."

Jay sighed. "You really should stop calling me that," he said as he headed into the locker rooms with his own gear.

"It's your name, and it's a good one. So I'm using it," the parrot said firmly. Jay rolled his eyes but decided to not argue further. He was dead tired and really wanted to just go back to his room and pass out. Maybe he'd finish off that bottle of booze while he was at it. Better than leaving it sitting around where it might get discovered and get them all in trouble.
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Not a super long chapter but I want to keep up my pace and I thought this scene was important to show for later stuff. Also cookies for who figure out where the coach's name is from! (Its not really that hard)

Fairy Godmother frowned down at the different sets of paperwork that was spread out on her desk. Teachers had been complaining about the Villain Children since before they had even arrived, but she had managed to keep the worst of the issues to the private teacher's lounge. But one of the children's teachers had brought something to her attention that now was very worrisome. All four of the kids had been in enough classes and doing enough work now that patterns were emerging and while some patterns were very encouraging such as Carlos' excellent scores on everything and Evie's science aptitude. Others were far more alarming like Jay's scores in, well... most subjects, if she were being honest.

She was certain that it wasn't down to just lack of effort like some of the teachers had claimed. Jay always did well in Remedial Goodness Class, which was now more of a general Auradon culture lesson since they'd made the biggest hurdle of choosing to be good. But Fairy Godmother looked at the examples of tests in front of her and felt the unpleasant sensation of having missed something. The scores on the tests were, well, abysmal. Jay did slightly better in math than the other subjects, but if the barely passing and flailing scores of the other tests were any indication, there were fundamental gaps that would need to be addressed. Fairy Godmother knew that there was a school on the Isle and that it focused more on evil plotting and being nasty, but there were basic courses such as math and reading as well. She shuddered to think what reading material they were given, but that was not the point.

Fairy Godmother scolded herself mentally for not having tested the kids for aptitude when they first got to Auradon. She was so worried about filling in the moral deficit they had from their parent's upbringing that she hadn't put much thought into any educational problems.

Fairy Godmother called the school's Coach and physical education teacher into her office. He was the one teacher in the school that Fairy Godmother felt that would have the best idea of Jay's true potential and Goodness Knows calling the boy's father was out of the question. Coach Bubbles (that preferred just being called Coach rather than bring up his surname) seemed a little worried to be called to the Headmistress' office but took the seat that she offered him and gave a nod of greeting. "Fairy Godmother."

"Hello, Coach," Godmother said with a warm smile. "I called you in here to talk about Jay. His grades really are not improving much at all, and I'm worried."

Coach frowned. "I explained Academic Probation to him and I know he's trying very hard to bring his grades up," he said. Jay had seemed very upset at the idea that they would cut him from the team due to his grades in school. "He's not cutting class anymore is he?"

Godmother shook her head. "He still has once or twice but those days seem to be when tests are going on and judging by these previous tests I can see why he'd want to avoid them," she said
handing the Coach a science test. Coach Bubbles frowned as he quickly flipped through the packet. "I'm fairly certain that he guessed on a lot of those answers."

Coach nodded a little even as he continued to flip through the pages. He hadn't seen as many test booklets as Fairy Godmother had, but he could still tell when a student was putting in an answer at random in a desperate hope they might be right. Plus there were some heavy erasure marks all over the book where Jay apparently struggled with different parts. "Are all of his tests like this?" Coach asked.

"His math scores are better by a little," Fairy Godmother said as she picked up the only test that had just missed being a C by three points. She handed the math booklet over to the Coach and let him flip through it. "I want to ask you what you thought his potential was. There seems to be something larger going on here, and we need to get to the bottom of it." Jay was already near the end of his education and to be struggling this badly indicated something had not been dealt with for a very long time. Hardly surprising, but tragic.

"He's got loads of potential," Coach answered instantly. "He's a smart kid... if you explain things to him right. He didn't get the rules of tourney at all until I sat down and actually explained them to him one by one. Honestly, it felt like he hadn't even read the rule book I gave him but considering everything going on at that time's understandable."

Fairy Godmother thought about that for a moment. She looked down at the booklets in front of her and noticed something that she'd dismissed before. Rather than spelling his name 'Jay' on the front of the booklets, he had just used the letter J. Fairy Godmother had just assumed that Jay had added it last moment after forgetting to put his name on the test, but as she looked, each of the test booklets had the same single letter. "May I see that again?" she asked with her hand out for the math book.

Coach Bubbles shrugged but then handed it over. Fairy Godmother quickly flipped through the book to where the word problems were. This was where Jay had faltered the worst on the math test. She could see based on the work beside each problem that he did usually manage to pick out the numbers but not always what he was supposed to do with them. His writing wasn't so fantastic either. She could indeed read it, but his spelling was off more than it was right.

Everything clicked into place. No wonder Jay was doing better in Remedial Goodness than any other. That was almost entirely an oral lecture class. And if it took the Coach verbally explaining the rules for Jay to understand them that would make sense with the explanation that she was thinking of. Fairy Godmother looked up at Coach, "I think Jay needs to be evaluated for learning disabilities. I'm almost positive he's dyslexic."

"Dyslexic?" Coach echoed in surprise.

Fairy Godmother nodded. "Yes. And judging by his performance on these tests, he is either quite badly dyslexic or, probably more likely, he's never been given any methods of coping with it." Treating learning disabilities on the Isle of the Lost didn't seem like something that would be high on the priorities of the villains there. They reportedly didn't even care if their children were properly fed much less if they were having trouble reading. She sighed and once again felt the familiar guilt she always felt when thinking about the children over on the Isle. Fairy Godmother should have followed her instincts and taken away all the children immediately not waited until they were all so damaged that they might never recover. But right now wasn't the time for guilt. She had a child in her school that needed assistance. "I do wish we could speak to someone who would be able to tell us more about Jay's developmental history," she said.

"You could ask the bird," Coach said.
Fairy Godmother looked up sharply. "What bird?"

"Apparently, Iago slipped through the barrier. He's been hanging around the school for the last few days," Coach Bubbles said, somewhat surprised that Fairy Godmother hadn't spotted the parrot yet. "I saw him watching the other day at practice. And I hear he caused an incident at breakfast. Didn't you hear about that?"

"I most certainly did not," Fairy Godmother said, slightly irritated that she hadn't been informed immediately. "I suppose that is better than nothing." She still should have been informed of the parrot being on school grounds immediately though. "I'll start a formal evaluation to see if I'm right. Thank you for your help, Coach."

The man nodded and got to his feet. "I'll be happy to help however I can," he offered, although he wasn't sure in what way he'd be able to help.

"I'll keep that in mind, thank you," Fairy Godmother said with a smile. She took the future of her students seriously and especially the ones of the four Isle Children who, unlike their peers, had most certainly not had a fairy tale life so far. The Coach left, and Fairy Godmother sighed as she studied the papers in front of her again. This was her fault. She should have considered such possibilities long before now. She should have thought that incomplete education, in general, would be a worry. Fairy Godmother prided herself on being a good and effective teacher for all children, and yet she had failed to do even the most basic things because she had been worried about other things. Important other things, but she could have been more thorough with her efforts. But, there was still time to fix things.
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Because last chapter was short, have a second!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Iago wasn't so hard to find when Fairy Godmother actually went looking for him. The parrot was a bright crimson dot sitting on top of King Beast's statue. Fairy Godmother frowned at the distinct white globs on the statue's face and made a mental note to call the cleaning crew when she was done this talk. She cleared her throat and tried to smile pleasantly. "Hello there, Iago. Could I have a word?" she asked.

Iago turned but didn't come down from his perch. "What is it?"

"Well, I am a little worried about your presence here on campus, to be honest, but really I need to ask you some questions," she said. "Perhaps you could come down here where I won't have to shout?"

"Questions about what?" Iago asked, still not moving.

Fairy Godmother's smile faded almost entirely. "Well, about Jay."

There was a long silence where the bird stared at her. Finally, Iago left the statue's head and landed on the back of a nearby bench. Fairy Godmother almost sighed in relief as she walked over to it. She really hadn't wanted to have to shout a conversation with a parrot to half the schoolyard. Especially one that should be private because it dealt with a student. "Thank you," she said as she sat down on the bench. Iago dug his claws into the back of the bench but said nothing. "Now, Jay's been having some trouble with his classes, and I was wondering if you could tell me anything about his early development."

"Early development," Iago echoed flatly.

"Yes," Fairy Godmother began somewhat hesitantly, "for instance, what age did he start to walk and talk... did he start to read at the right age. Things like that."

"Early development," Iago repeated. "Early development, early development, what makes you think that any child on the Isle has anything close to normal early development?" he demanded with an impatient flap of his wings. "Jay goes by Jay because Jafar got so annoyed when he couldn't read or spell his name properly that he beat him. Mal doesn't even have a proper first name because Maleficent said she wasn't worth one. Carlos had to teach himself how to read, and it's lucky he's so smart or he'd never have managed it. Evie's mother was so worried about having a 'fat baby' that she barely gave Evie enough food to grow properly. And that's just the four here!"

Fairy Godmother tried to not let her reaction show, but she knew that she failed. "You... seem to know a lot about all of them," she said shakily. She was surprised at that. She had figured that Iago would only know about Jay. And she was caught off guard at the tidbits of information he had shoved in her face.
Iago nearly screeched and hopped closer to the Fairy Godmother. "Do you know what is really the most valuable thing Jafar sells on the Isle? Information. Oh sure, he gets money for trinkets and scams people for junk, but everyone knows who to go to if you want the dirt on someone. And he charges everyone quite a pretty penny for it. And I sat on his shoulder and heard it all," Iago told her. "And quite frankly, you showing interest in them now is insulting."

"I'm just trying to help them!"

"Where was your help when they were born?" Iago demanded. "When Jay was getting locked in tiny cupboards? Or when Carlos was getting cigarettes put out on him? Or how about when Evie was being told she was so ugly she could never be loved? Or when Mal was punished for helping a goblin pick up apples that they dropped?"

Fairy Godmother took a deep breath and tried her best to remember that the kids didn't have to put up with things like that anymore. They were safe in Auradon. "I can't change what happened. But doing nothing to help them when they are right here in my school is simply not acceptable. So, help me help them. That is all I want."

Iago dug his claws into the smooth wood of the bench and ripped off several splinters. "Why should I tell you anything more? You don't deserve to know."

"Maybe not," she said. "But if I'm going to help them I need to."

"I'm not going to just give you information on them for free," Iago said.

Fairy Godmother tried to not sigh or show her annoyance. She should have known that Jafar's bird would want something for helping even though he had sounded, for a moment, like he had actually cared. Iago was a parrot though, and they were masters at copying others. Even, apparently, other people's emotional range. "What do you want?"

"I get to stay on campus as long as I want. Nobody, not you, not the King, nobody, can kick me out," Iago said firmly. "And... you want to do anything with the kids you have to come to me first. I approve whatever touchy-feely Auradon crap you want to pull."

Fairy Godmother knew her mouth was gaping open, but she couldn't help it. "Y-you... you want to be their guardian?" That was essentially what the bird was describing after all.

Iago fluffed his feathers. "If that's what you want to call it, then yes. You're the ones bumbling around blindly here. If you come to me first, I can tell you if whatever you want to do is a stupid idea or not."

Fairy Godmother's first instinct was to say 'absolutely not' to such a price. There was no way an evil parrot could be in any way an effective guardian for four abused and neglected teenagers. But, she forced herself to think about his price for more than just a split second. Having someone that knew the kids' histories could very much help her in helping them. Still, she wasn't sure if Iago really was the only source she could use. "I could contact Yen Sid," she mused more to herself than the parrot.

Iago squawked in a way that sounded very much like a snort. "Yen Sid doesn't know them outside of their school and Evie and Jay were gone from there more than they attended. Not to mention Mal and Jay didn't even have Yen Sid's class. I don't know what you thought you were pulling by sending him to the Isle in the first place. I mean, really, one wizard to teach science is going to somehow persuade an entire generation being raised by their parents to be better? It's ridiculous! The most token effort I've ever seen! And I lived with Jafar, the sultan of token gestures!"
Fairy Godmother felt her cheeks burning. "It was done with the best intentions!"

"Just ask the villains of the Isle and half of them will say their crimes were done with those same 'best intentions,'" Iago replied. "Now, are you going to give me what I want or not?"

There was another awkward silence as Fairy Godmother thought the proposal over. She could always work to help the kids without Iago's information, but it would take longer and be much more difficult. Having the evil bird on campus, however, made her uneasy. She couldn't say she trusted Iago, but Fairy Godmother also wasn't sure she could afford to not take what he was offering. Iago continued to tear into the back of the bench while Fairy Godmother debated the pros and cons to herself. Finally, she sighed and nodded. "Very well," she said. "I agree to your terms."

"Good. Ask away then," Iago said.

Fairy Godmother hesitated and thought about what best to ask first. She wanted to press about some of the abuse that Iago had hinted at a moment ago, but that wouldn't help her diagnose Jay's difficulties. "You said Jay had trouble with his actual name? What age was that?"

"Five or so, I think," Iago supplied. "Jafar was very annoyed."

Fairy Godmother frowned. "I take it there isn't a history of problems like this in Jafar's family?"

"If there is he wouldn't have mentioned it," Iago said. "Jafar hates stupid people and with how he thought Jabir was stupid being related doesn't seem to change his opinion any."

"He thinks Jay is stupid?" Godmother asked, a little shocked even though a tiny voice in her head said she really shouldn't be.

Iago let out that snort sound again. "I don't think Jabir's ever finished reading a book in his life because it was so frustrating for him. So, yes, Jafar thinks he's stupid. Says it often enough, too. Not that Jafar ever helps when he plays his games."

"What games?" Fairy Godmother asked, instantly not liking the way Iago had said that.

"He'd ask Jabir a question that he had absolutely no way of knowing the answer to and get mad when Jabir guesses wrong," Iago explained. "After a while, Jabir just stopped answering at all because he couldn't win."

Fairy Godmother thought that over for several moments. The reading difficulties definitely followed with her tentative diagnosis. "When did he start talking then?" Fairy Godmother asked.

"I'm half sure he was born talking," Iago muttered. "That was never a problem for him. Practically a parrot himself when he was little. Repeated everything anyone said around him."

"I see. Can he actually speak his native language?" Fairy Godmother asked. "I've never heard him do so but then he's never had an opportunity, I don't think."

Iago shuffled along the bench. "Jafar wouldn't teach him because he was, according to Jafar, too stupid to make it worth his time," Iago supplied, sounding very bitter. "Of course, he ignored the fact that Jabir picked up goblin words from hearing them in the shop. He'd never have a chance in hell at being able to spell the damn words, but he can say them... or grunt them. Whatever."

Fairy Godmother filed the information away before turning to the bird more directly. "Do you know what Dyslexia is?" she asked.
"Something about reading right?" Iago asked back.

"It's a reading and language learning disability, yes," Fairy Godmother said. Well, that was a fairly simplistic definition, but it would work for the moment. "That's what I think Jay has. But I need to do some evaluations of his skills to be sure."

Iago somehow managed to look unhappy despite birds not being able to convey a great amount of facial expression. "... fine," he said. "If it'll help Jabir do your silly evaluation."

"Thank you," Fairy Godmother said as she got to her feet. She felt silly thanking Iago for basically what needed to be done, but he had been helpful she reminded herself. Iago nodded and moved to the end of the bench and spread his wings as if to leave. "One last thing!"

Iago stopped and turned again. "What?"

"Can Jay spell his name now?" Why that question occurred to her, she wasn't entirely sure, but maybe it was because the idea that someone of that age not being able to even spell his name greatly unnerved her.

"... yes," Iago said. "I taught him."

And with that Iago flew off. Fairy Godmother watched as he made an arcing path back towards the dorms.

Chapter End Notes

I'm just tickled by the idea of guardian parrot Iago... He's not as tough and ornery as he pretends to be.

Also, salty Iago might have voiced some of my own criticisms for how the Isle works and how Auradon deals with it...
Jay nearly groaned as he woke up and sat in bed for several minutes just trying to regain his bearings. He was so sore. Well, sore didn't seem like a good enough word for it. 'Sore' implied something along the lines of 'oh that aches just a bit, but rub it out and it'll be fine' whereas Jay's pain was much closer to 'oh, Evil, that hurts! Don't you dare touch it, I think my muscle will actually explode' in his mind. He hadn't slept well at all that night. The day before he'd finished off the last of his hidden alcohol so Jay had tried to sleep without it and the experience had been a miserable failure.

Now, on top of being in pain, he was tired from tossing and turning all night. Jay reached up and rubbed his eyes to try and wake up more fully. He was oddly glad he didn't have practice today since there was a game tomorrow. Jay had never been glad to not have practice before but he honestly didn't feel up to playing that afternoon.

"Yo, Jay. You alright?" Carlos asked as he came out of the bathroom with his hair still damp but fully dressed.

"Yeah," Jay said as he wiped the pain and exhaustion off his face as best he could. "Yeah, I think I just overdid it at practice yesterday."

Carlos' eyebrow went up. "I didn't think you knew what that meant."

"What?" Jay asked with a frown.

"Overdid it," Carlos answered. "But if you need it there's an aspirin in the second drawer. Lucky we don't have practice today."

Jay nodded. "Yeah, I'll probably be good with a day off," Jay answered as he got to his feet and pushed the urge to wince down. He grabbed his red towel from where it was hanging on the back of his desk chair and headed off into the bathroom.

The air was still warm and moist and the mirror was fogged from Carlos' shower but Jay could see the lighter space where Carlos had clearly wiped away the fog to see what he was doing. The mirror had fogged up again remarkably quickly. Jay made sure the door was firmly closed behind him before starting to strip out of what he wore to bed.

One of the best things about Auradon, Jay had found, was that they never seemed to run out of hot water. He wasn't sure how they managed it but he was very thankful as he stepped into the steaming hot stream of water. The shower felt both good and horrible against his body. His muscles and nerves appreciated the heat but his skin most certainly did not. Jay didn't care though. He rested his forehead on the still somehow cold tiles of the shower and let the hot water beat across his back and shoulders. Why did it have to hurt so much? Jay wanted to cry but he didn't. Jay hadn't cried about a little pain since he was maybe fourteen and even then it was rare.

Jay wasn't sure how long it took him to go from just standing there to actually taking a shower but it was probably longer than usual. He was just rinsing the last bit of shampoo out of his hair when he heard a knock at the door. "Jay, you haven't drowned yourself have you?" Carlos called.

"Piss off, Carlos!" Jay shouted back.
"I can't, you're in the bathroom!"

"Smartass," Jay grumbled as he reluctantly reached over to turn the shower off.

"I'm heading down to breakfast. I'll see you down there," Carlos said through the door.

"Right right," Jay said as he started drying himself off. Jay heard the door to the room open and then close again. The thief wasn't exactly rushing to go down to breakfast since he really just wanted to go back to bed, but he figured that if nothing else, he should really take the aspirin that Carlos told him about.

Jay quickly found the bottle and popped two of the little white pills before running his fingers through his wet hair. Classes were going to be a complete pain to deal with. Using his towel, Jay wiped a new space on the mirror clean of condensation. The sight startled Jay and he stumbled back with a cry of shock. He tripped and hit the wall with a wince before sliding down to the ground.

"What the hell?" he asked nobody as he stared at the mirror that he could no longer actually see into from his angle on the floor.

Jay forced himself to take a few slow breaths before grabbing the edge of the counter and hauling himself up. Jay uneasily glanced up into the mirror again and almost sighed in relief. Nothing about his reflection was abnormal. That weird golden glint in his eyes must have been some trick of the light or something. "I really didn't sleep well," he muttered as he finished drying off and then headed out into the bedroom with his towel around his waist. He usually took everything he would change into with him but he hadn't bothered that time knowing Carlos had already finished.

"You okay, kid?" Iago asked from his new perch on an old coat rack by Jay's desk. "Sounded like you fell."

"I did," Jay said as he pulled out fresh clothes. "I thought I saw something weird in the mirror. Must not be fully awake yet."

Iago tilted his head to the side as he watched Jay pull on some jeans and one of his leather vests. This one didn't have a giant cobra on the back, but did have one on the front up by Jay's neck with little rivets running along the snake's back. "You sure you're alright?" Iago asked as Jay pulled his leather cuffs on over the gold ones and fastened them tightly.

"I'm sure," Jay answered as he grabbed his beanie from where it had ended up on his desk last night.

"You were pretty stiff looking this morning," Iago commented.

Jay paused at that observation and looked over at the parrot. "It hurts is all," he muttered. "I'll deal. It's fine."

Iago didn't look happy and hopped over to the other side of the coat rack. "You should probably mention it to someone," Iago said. "That stupid blue djinn with the annoying personality is probably still around somewhere. Make him be useful for once."

"I'm not about to say anything at all and you better not either," Jay snapped. "It's fine! A little soreness never killed anyone or anything crazy."

Iago flew off the coat rack completely and landed on Jay's shoulder. "Kid, don't be stubborn."
"I am not going to be anyone's magical slave," Jay hissed. "Bad enough I always had to do what Dad said! Here I don't have to be that!" He was not going to give up his new life freely or easily.

"They don't even use magic here anymore. I doubt they'd even know what to do with a djinn," Iago argued.

"Not the point," Jay grumbled. "All it takes is one person to get a little greedy and bam, guess who they're going to come to? Besides, the second I say 'djinn' they're going to want to go and get that lamp even more. It's not happening, Iago."

"Growing up on the Isle made you paranoid," Iago grumbled. "These people are too much goodie two shoes to do anything like that."

Jay scoffed as he bent down to pull on his combat boots. "You act like everyone here is perfect or something. They like to think they are but there's just as much spite and pettiness here. These heroes just hide it better," he said while tying his shoe laces. "You should have seen when Mal and Audrey first met... it was cringey, man."

Iago hummed a bit. "I suppose so," he agreed, although not entirely happily. "But this will continue to happen whether you want it to or not. Jafar was all giddy that you would be sent here. Figured that actually having magic in the air would finally finish what his spell started."

"Yeah, I'll bet he was," Jay muttered. "But how do you know that? Spying on him again?"

"For someone who used to send me everywhere to spy on others he forgets to close his curtains an awful lot," Iago said, puffing his chest feathers up proudly.

Jay snorted a little laugh before reaching up to brush down his feathers. "Alright, feather brain, no need to look so proud of yourself. Like you said, he doesn't exactly make it hard for you," Jay said. Iago grumbled but Jay ignored him and grabbed his school bag and then left the room. "Besides, he probably thinks you'll come back sooner or later. You usually do."

"I don't come back for him," Iago said.

Jay halted mid stride and turned to look at the parrot perched on his shoulder. That was about as close as the bird had ever come to saying that he actually cared what happened to Jay, and the teen was shocked. Hearing people even imply that they cared for him was still new and surprising for the thief. For all of the Isle Kids, really.

"Don't give me that look," Iago grumbled. "I'm hungry. Let's go, kid. Breakfast awaits."

Jay shook his head and then started walking again. He was glad that Iago wasn't getting all mushy. Jay didn't know what he would do with a sentimental parrot. The very concept didn't seem possible. The bird was the epitome of ornery. The pair of them still got a few odd looks as Jay walked through the halls to reach the cafeteria but fewer than when Iago had first showed up.

Jay sat down heavily with the others and let Iago hop down his arm and onto the table. "I see you made it out of the bathroom," Carlos said with a grin.

"Ha ha, you're so funny," Jay said as he leaned over his tray. He looked around though when he noticed something off. "Where's Mal?"

"Having breakfast with Ben," Evie said with a smile. "It's so romantic. Ben is just the sweetest. I'm glad that Mal's not giving up on being with him." There had been a period, just after the coronation, where Mal had freaked herself out over the very idea of being with Ben even though she had
announced to pretty much the entire world that she was 'really happy' with him. Luckily, Evie managed to talk sense into her by telling her that her and Ben could 'go slower' now that there wasn't a looming invasion to plan.

Jay grunted. "As long as she's happy," he muttered. He had never really thought of Mal in any terms relating to romantic relationships so her being in one was still a little strange. Especially considering it had started with a love potion spiked cookie.

"Is that jealousy, Jay?" Evie asked coyly.

"Hardly," Jay said. "Mal can do whatever she wants. I'm fine how I am." Jay wasn't sure he would ever feel comfortable enough lowering his guard like Mal had. There was just far too much that could go wrong. Too many secrets could get leaked out and Jay did not even want to imagine how that would go. He just couldn't be that exposed and vulnerable.

"I'm sure lots of girls will be upset to hear that," Carlos said. "Pretty sure there's a running betting pool on who you'll finally start dating for real."

Jay snorted at that. "Surprised you'd pay attention to that."

Carlos rolled his eyes. "They wanted me to make a website for the thing," he said with exasperation. "I swear you have a legitimate fan club already that rivals Ben's."

"Ben has a fan club?" Jay asked.

"Makes sense," Iago said as he ripped a piece of muffin off of Jay's tray.

"They are very jealous of Mal," Evie supplied. "But they're also really scared of her so it's pretty harmless. I guess, when you turn your mother into a lizard, you send a message to not mess with you."

Jay hummed a little even as he finally turned to his breakfast. He wasn't in a rush to finish and go to class but if he didn't start eating it, Iago was sure to decimate his tray. He was so busy eating that when Evie let out a long 'ooh' he was caught a little off guard. Jay looked up and saw that Evie was staring at her phone with big eyes. "What?"

"Allie's in the lead to be your girlfriend," she said before turning the phone around to show a bar graph. A pink and purple striped bar was currently the largest. "Apparently you spoke to her the other day."

Jay couldn't help but make a face. "I don't think I'd do well in Wonderland," he muttered. "Too much crazy."

Evie laughed some and turned the phone back around to scroll across the screen. "Next up is Lonnie," she said. Jay shrugged some and went back to his breakfast. At least Lonnie had some spunk, but Jay still wasn't interested in anything like an actual girlfriend. Auradon girls were nice to flirt and play around with but he was pretty sure he would mentally scar any that tried to actually get to know him. Better for everyone if he just stayed single.

"First one that comes over with a lady parrot gets my vote," Iago said.

Jay rolled his eyes. "Now I feel like a parrot pimp," he muttered.

"Blue would be preferable," Iago continued as if Jay hadn't said anything. "Blues are wild, dirty little birds."
"Gross."

Carlos frowned. "Don't parrots mate for life or something?"

"Detail details," Iago dismissed. "I'm one of a kind. Only natural I buck the trend. I can't keep all this amazing to myself."

"I'd prefer it if you did," Jay said before draining his juice.

"Ungrateful!"

Jay ignored Iago's screech and got up to throw his trash out. That aspirin really wasn't helping him in the soreness department but now that he was up and moving it was getting easier. "Hey, Jay!"

He turned to see Terrance, son of Tarzan and one of the other members of the tourney team, coming up to him.

"What's up?"

"Coach said he wanted to have a quick meeting after class. Said he'd order some pizza and make a sort of pre-game party out of it," Terrance said. "Wanted to be sure I spread the word."

Jay nodded. "Sounds good. I'll let Carlos know." It didn't really. Jay would rather head back to bed as soon as he could, but he wasn't about to say that. Plus it wasn't like he would have to do much at a party.

"Sweet, see you then."

Jay made his way back to the table and sat down a little harder than he'd meant to. "What's up? What'd Terry want?" Carlos asked.

"Team Party today after school. Coach is getting pizza," Jay informed. "So I guess, don't bother stopping to get dinner."

"Maybe I should join a club," Evie mused. "You guys always seem to have things to do."

"What kind of club would you want to join?" Jay asked.

Evie put a finger to her chin and thought about that. "Well, there's a decorating committee looking for members for castle coming. That sort of sounded like fun," she mused.

"Go for it. I bet you'd decorate the crap outta this place."

"Thanks, Jay. Maybe I will."

Just then the bell rang and the three Isle kids sighed before getting up to go to their first class. Though they enjoyed classes more than they had when they were just pretending to go to school for the wand, it was still a bit of a drag to go to morning classes.

Chapter End Notes

I don't know really where the discussion of Jay's lovelife came from but feel free to chime in on it. It would be kinda nice for Jay to be with someone by the end of this but
idk who I'd want...
Jay ended up glad he'd gone to the impromptu team party because it got his mind off of other, less pleasant, things. Of course, now that he was dead tired and just wanted to sleep he was again running into the same problems he had the night before. Jay couldn't for the life of him find a comfortable position. He'd even stuffed his pillow down under his back in a vain attempt to get more support so he would hopefully not ache as much.

After an hour or two of rolling over every ten minutes and trying out different positions that were no better than the others, Jay pushed himself up. Why did this have to be happening now? He had a game tomorrow, and he really needed to be well rested.

Jay sat in bed and thought for a long minute before getting up fully and going to the bathroom. He found the bottle of aspirin and quickly downed four before heading back out to bed. Hopefully, that would help at least dull the pain enough to sleep a little bit. Trying to play tourney on no sleep seemed like a disaster just waiting to happen. Especially with how Jay played, or rather, his reputation. He didn't usually take it easy, so other teams knew by then to come at him hard. If Jay weren't at the top of his game, he would get hammered. He was just glad they weren't up again The Olympians or Li Shang's little warrior bunch. Li Shang did not play around, and with Herkie transferring to Auradon Prep, the Olympians had developed a bit of a grudge against them.

The aspirin didn't end up helping very much, but Jay was able to get at least a little shut-eye, so he wasn't entirely dead on his feet for the game. He cursed himself and how soft Auradon had made him. Jay used to routinely go several days in a row with only a few hours of sleep every so often to keep him running. Especially near the end of the barge schedule where the supply of new junk started to run low, and it was harder to get his quotas for his father. Now, one day without full sleep and he felt like he was trying to play with an entire haul of stolen goods hidden on him and way more bruises than normal.

He ended up getting slammed pretty hard because he wasn't as fast as he usually was on his feet. They still won the game and Jay didn't feel as if he had done a particularly bad job or anything, but he was definitely not the two hundred percent he usually gave. Probably closer to one eighty or something, he thought.

Jay trudged through the locker room after the game with even more aches and pains than he started with and handed his stick off to Carlos who volunteered to put them all away. "You okay, Jay?" Carlos asked. "You really hit the ground hard there when Chester pulled that fake out move." Chester was perhaps the best defensive player ever. He could show up seemingly from nowhere and disappear again if you so much as blinked. Jay had not quite managed to change directions fast enough about halfway through the game and had gone flipping over the smaller boy. He had landed hard flat on his back, which had actually taken him a minute to shake off. "Yeah, I'm alright," Jay said as he rolled his shoulders. "Just took me a minute to shake off because of how hard I hit."

"I think I felt the ground shake from back on defense," Carlos said.

"Wouldn't doubt it," Jay grumbled as he went to start undoing the buckles and straps of his pads. He'd already shed his team jersey and tossed it onto the bench in front of his locker. "Probably the
hardest I've ever been hit here in Auradon, and it was gravity's stupid fault."

"Gravity isn't stupid," Carlos said. "It keeps us from flying off into space."

"Sounds like fun," Jay replied.

"Wouldn't be so fun when you were suffocating from lack of oxygen," the dog-loving teen shot back.

Jay thought about that for a second. "Yeah, I guess not. Suffocation is the worst."

Carlos scoffed. "Burns are the worst. The pain there lingers."

"At least it isn't an open wound. If you get something in those then it stings, and you have to clean them again, and it's the biggest hassle," Jay complained. "I hate having to do that."

"Baby," Carlos accused.

"Hey, who cried for hours over a broken wrist?" Jay asked in annoyance. "It wasn't me, pup."

Carlos scowled darkly. "It was my dominant hand! It took weeks to heal."

Jay rolled his eyes and hung up his helmet in his locker. "Wah wah wah," he said sarcastically. "You still had the one hand." Carlos was about to say something in reply when he noticed they had an audience. He hit Jay's arm lightly a few times to get his full attention. "What?"

Jay turned and saw the team staring at them with wide eyes. "Oh. We're scaring the Auradon boys again..." he muttered. "Uh, time for a topic change, Carlos."

"Er, right. Got the new update for Shovel Knight," Carlos said with as much cheer injected into his voice as possible. "Pretty awesome. You can play as different characters now. We should totally check it out when we get back to the room."

"Yeah, sure," Jay said as he quickly finished shoving his things for tourney into the locker. Jay and Carlos both found it awkward when the team caught too many hints of life on the Isle. The tidbits always shocked the princes and for several days after Jay and Carlos would have to endure pitying looks and an altered play style. Carlos didn't mind the latter as much as it saved him some bruises, but Jay found the less aggressive blocks and checks to be both irritating and insulting. As if he couldn't handle what the pampered princes dished out? Hardly.

"Did... you guys..." Herkie's question faded off awkwardly as Jay stared them all down with a raised eyebrow. "... nevermind."

Jay nodded and shut his locker. "Right then, let's go, Carlos."

"Right behind ya," Carlos muttered as he quickly finished shoving his own things away and then closed his own black and white crossbones decorated locker.

The two Isle boys left the locker room and the Auradon boys behind. As they made their way past the bleachers, Mal and Evie joined them. "Good game guys!" Evie said, practically bouncing. "At this rate, you'll definitely win castle coming too. That would make the dance so much better."

"Course we'll win castle coming," Jay answered. "We haven't lost a game yet."

"You still have to deal with the Olympians first," Mal pointed out. "They're on a winning streak too."
Jay waved his hand a bit. "They're just all hurt feelings because Herkie is at Auradon even though he's Hercules' kid. They're still just a bunch of spoiled, prissy lords. They won't be so tough."

"You say that every time," Carlos complained as Dude bounced around at his heels. "But then you get slammed to the ground like a sack of potatoes."

"We still won," Jay pointed out while giving Carlos a shove. The smaller boy had to take several quick steps and awkward hops to avoid falling over or stepping on Dude.

"Hey, watch it!" Carlos protested.

Suddenly, Ben came running up behind them. "Hey guys!" he greeted as he fell into step beside Mal. "Sorry about the locker room, guys," he said to Jay and Carlos. "You just caught them off guard."

"What happened?" Mal asked with a frown.

"We just forgot we were surrounded by Auradon kids for a minute," Jay answered. "It was no biggy. They'll just get all mushy around us for a practice or two. Then it'll go back to normal. Nothing to get all upset about."

"Yeah, you don't need to apologize, Ben," Carlos said as he swooped down to pick up Dude. "It was our own fault. We're just sorry we made it all... awkward again." The initial discord between the Isle boys and their Auradon team had taken a solid month of daily practices to melt away. Things got strained again whenever Carlos or Jay said the wrong thing and reminded their teammates that they came from a place where there was no such thing as team sports and harmless games. Or safety gear for that matter.

Ben frowned slightly. "I'm still sorry. I'll have another talk with them."

"Really, bro, not needed," Jay said. "That'll just make things take longer to get back to normal."

"And we're not offended or anything," Carlos chimed in.

"It's just a little... weird knowing that our daily shit is so disturbing to them," Jay explained. "Best to just let it settle and pretend we didn't say too much."

Ben sighed. "You shouldn't have to be forced to watch what you say though," he argued weakly.

"Don't worry about it, Ben," Evie advised. "It's not anyone's fault or anything like that. We aren't mad at anyone."

"It's just that we're from very different worlds," Mal added. "We've all found it best to just not mention the Isle as much as possible. But slip-ups happen, and we'll deal. We're big boys and girls. We can manage."

Ben sighed. "It still feels like you four are being treated like outcasts and you shouldn't be."

"But we are, bro," Jay said.

"We'll never be from Auradon. No matter how much we might wish we were," Evie explained. "But with how much better things are here it's worth the occasional faux pas."

Jay frowned. "Fake paws?" he questioned. "Man Carlos' mom would hate those..."

Evie sighed. "Faux pas, Jay. Pas as in; P-A-S. It's French for step."
"Oh. Well, not my fault their words are weird," he said.

"I'm sort of surprised you knew what 'faux' meant..." Carlos admitted.

"She uses that one more," Jay said matter-of-factly.

Evie nodded. "That's true. Faux fur, faux leather, faux feathers... there's lots of faux materials in fashion," she said. "I never thought you were listening to that, Jay. I'm impressed."

Jay shrugged a little. "I am a wealth of unexpected talents. Including listening to fashion ramblings while playing video games, apparently," he said. "I have no idea what most of it means, but I do hear it. When I actually start being able to tell what a... handkerchief hem, or whatever it was, is... then we should all be worried."

"Maybe I should make you my assistant," Evie teased.

"Please don't," Jay said instantly. "I will deliberately pick everything wrong just to prove what a bad idea that is. Also, I wouldn't want to step in on Doug's spot... you never know when those Dwarf kids'll snap."

"Oh, what would they even do?" Mal asked with an eye roll. None of the cousins were that threatening. Not even Grumpy's son Gordon managed to be a blip on their radar.

Jay frowned in thought. "Didn't they, like... push Evie's mom off a cliff or something?"

"I thought she fell off by herself..." Carlos mused.

Evie sighed. "It doesn't really matter. And I was joking anyway. You'd probably never pick any fabric other than leather anyway. I'm shocked as it is you wear denim sometimes."

"I stick with what works."

Evie let out another sigh. "You are just as hopeless as Carlos..."

"Hey!"

"Would you please at least try something green or blue for once? Could it really hurt?" Evie asked in exasperation.

"This from Princess Blue on Blue?" Carlos shot back.

Evie folded her arms across her chest. "When you have blue hair, you work it," she said. "You and Jay don't have that excuse."

Jay rolled his eyes, and Carlos sighed. "Alright, alright," Mal said. "Let's all just drop it before we end up having another 'Experimentation Incident,' shall we?"

"Experimentation Incident?" Ben echoed with a slight smile. "What's that?"

"Once we all actually tried some advice from each other," Evie began to explain.

"It ended bad, bro," Jay finished. "Just... so bad."

"Mentally scarring on some level," Carlos muttered.

Ben looked between the four of them several times. "Okay, now I have to know what happened,"
he said. All four teens shook their head in denial. "Oh come on! you can't just tease something like that!"

"Jay wore a dress," Carlos burst out.

"And I looked amazing!" Jay shot back. "... Although I am glad we did all that in private... would have had some nasty problems the next day if anyone outside of you guys saw that..."

"You're kidding..." Ben said. Jay gave the stunned prince a huge grin, but none of the four would confirm or deny no matter how much Ben begged them to.

Chapter End Notes

I'll let you all decide if they're messing with Ben or not there at the end.
A week after the game with Wonderland, Jay was becoming increasingly miserable. The aspirin he had been taking no longer did anything at all even when he took more than was probably healthy. He hadn't slept in days and had even gotten physically sick the night before when his father tried to use the lamp again. Luckily, Carlos didn't wake up that time to witness it. That was plenty embarrassing enough just happening once.

But Jay was becoming desperate. Even on the Isle he usually didn't go so long with no real sleep, but nothing was helping him overcome the pain that was keeping him tossing and turning all night long. The only thing that had helped since the pain started keeping him up was when he finished off the stolen alcohol. So, Jay decided there was nothing really for it other than resorting to old habits. But only because he had no other options.

Jay waited until he was sure that Carlos was definitely asleep before getting out of bed and quietly redressing. Iago was staring at him and, after Jay slipped out of the room with an empty bookbag slung over his shoulder, flew along beside the thief.

Iago waited until Jay was out of the dorms before landing on the strap over Jay's shoulder. "What are you doing?"

"What I have to," Jay muttered as he tried to both hurry and not be obviously in a hurry, at the same time.

"Which would be?" Iago asked.

Jay sighed but didn't actually answer. Instead, he just made his way down different streets and avenues. Eventually, he reached an alleyway that emptied out on the road just a half block down from a store that had a huge, fanciful sign saying Spritely Spirits. Jay narrowed his eyes at the dark windows and almost rolled his eyes. Only in Auradon would a liquor store be closed at eleven at night. Still, the store wasn't entirely unwatched. There was one camera on the corner of the building. "Iago... go land on that camera would you?"

The parrot rustled his feathers. "Why?"

"Because your tail feathers will block the view and won't seem suspicious... just unlucky," Jay replied with a glance at the bird on his shoulder.

Iago huffed. "Still not sure why this is my job," he grumbled before taking off to do as he had been asked. Jay watched carefully as Iago took a very wide circle so that the camera wouldn't see what bird was landing on it.

Once Iago had settled, and his feathers were blocking the camera, Jay allowed himself a smirk and then hurried across the street to the store. There was a backdoor that was nearly impossible to see from anywhere around the store due to a large dumpster right beside it. Jay shook his head at how
unaware Auradon people were even as he quickly began to pick the lock.

Jay scoffed when the door swung open within moments and entirely silently. Not even an alarm. Jay knew that they had alarms in Auradon. He'd tripped one himself when trying to steal the wand, which Mal still held over his head despite everything working out. But so few places in Auradon seemed to bother with the most basic security. They were really making things just way too easy. Just as Jay was about to close the door behind him, Iago flew in after him to retake his position on his shoulder. "You were supposed to stay outside," Jay grumbled, although hopefully the camera was angled just far enough to the side that it wouldn't catch the door having been slightly open.

"I made sure to take off hard, so the camera is facing the dirt now," Iago said. "You think I'm new at this or something, Kid?"

"I would never presume," Jay said sarcastically as he made his way to the back storage area. He had to pass several shelves filled with all different bottles that were just begging to go into his bag, but he had other plans in mind. He'd really rather not have his theft caught out immediately.

"Why are you doing this anyway?" Iago asked as Jay picked the second lock in his way.

Jay didn't answer right away and just stepped into the storage room that was stacked full of crates of different kinds of booze. "Alcohol dulls the pain and lets me sleep," Jay answered as he headed to the back of the room and started to pry the top off of one box. "I just can't take it anymore, Iago. The aspirin does shit and if I don't find something I might do something even more unpleasant."

Iago made an odd noise and went to perch on another box as he watched. Jay didn't really care what he grabbed so long as there was a lot of it. He did make an effort to not snatch anything really expensive, though. Jay wasn't stealing just for the sake of it and the few times he'd had really expensive sips of booze he hadn't liked them anyway. He had no idea why anyone would charge so much for something that tasted so much like crap. Well, not when noncrappy options were available. Charging a lot for lousy quality made a whole lot more sense on the Isle.

Jay carefully put bottle after bottle into his bag and then threw an envelope into the box before closing it back up. "What was that?" Iago asked.

"Well, I would just buy the stuff if they'd let me," Jay told him, trying not to seem embarrassed even though he had no reason to be. Leaving a bit of cash to make up the loss of the product made it... less evil right? He was trying damn it! "But they have really weird ideas about 'drinking ages' or something. Apparently, I'm too young or something," he added with a snort. He'd been drinking various kinds of moonshine and alcohol since he was ten. True, he'd stolen most of that, but he could handle his liquor.

Jay had been genuinely baffled when he went into a liquor store, and they'd kicked him out. At first, he'd assumed it was because he was a villain's kid as they had only just transferred over. That the store owners had just jumped to the (entirely correct, but not the point) conclusion that he was up to no good. But then Jay found out there was something called a 'drinking age' in Auradon, and he was under it. None of the group had been all that happy to learn that. Carlos did like him a Gin anything, and Evie was all about that red wine. Even Mal had a fondness for the burn of whiskey that she wasn't too keen to give up. They'd abided by the bizarre rule after they turned good, though, aside from a few minor lapses.

Jay just couldn't afford to wait a few years to be legally able to buy the alcohol that so far was the only thing that dulled the pain even a little. So, desperate time and measures and all that. Jay carefully put the bag full of bottles over his shoulder and jerked his head to the side. "Come on, Iago. We're done here."
"Not even going to steal from the register?" Iago asked as he flew over.

"Shut up," Jay snapped. "I'm not doing this because I want to. When do I ever steal because I want to?"

"You seemed to grow pretty fond of it as you grew up," Iago pointed out.

Jay scowled. "Because it saved me from worse," he muttered.

Iago didn't have an answer to that and just sat on Jay's shoulder as the teen relocked the storage door and then slipped out the way he'd come. Jay even took the time to lock the back door back up so that nobody should be able to tell when the pilfering had occurred.

An unfamiliar feeling was building in Jay's gut and chest as he walked back towards the campus. It wasn't the same feeling of his father trying to summon him with the lamp, but it still made his stomach churn. Jay grimaced and tried to ignore it, even while trying to puzzle out what might be wrong with him now. About halfway through the hike back, Jay realized he felt guilty which made no damn sense because it wasn't like he didn't pay for the bottles or anything. True he had no idea if he'd paid enough or too much or what but it wasn't like he'd just cleaned them out or anything.

Jay tried his best to ignore the unfamiliar emotion. He had no reason to feel guilty. He'd done a lot worse than just take a few bottles of booze and leave some money in place of them. So, so much worse...

"Well, well, well, if it isn't Jay!"

"Hi, Harry... looks like your nose healed straight. That's a shame. We could always try again."

"Aww, come now... we could always be friends again..."

Jay felt a sharp pain in his ear and jerked hard. "Ow! The fuck!? Iago!"

The parrot landed on a nearby swing set looking very unrepentant for having just bit Jay's ear. Jay hissed and felt where the pain was coming from and felt something wet. "You ass! Why the hell did you bite me?" Jay demanded as he examined the red on his fingertips.

"You're welcome," Iago replied. "Your eyes were starting to glow a really weird gold color. Thought that might give you away a bit, but next time I'll just let you be freaky. I'm sure that couldn't end badly," he added sarcastically.

"You're still an ass," Jay grumbled as he wiped the blood off on his pants.

Iago settled himself more completely on the top bar of the swings. "What were you thinking about anyway?" he asked.

Jay shrugged. "Nothing worth mentioning," he muttered as he looked anywhere but the bird. For the first time, he realized that he had wandered into a kid's playground. The concept wasn't entirely foreign to the Isle thief. They had a 'playground' on the Isle too. Well, that's what it was called, but really it was a deadly obstacle course just tacked onto the back of the rundown church that Frollo had claimed as home.

The Auradon version was so entirely different Jay struggled to think of a way it could be any sort of fun. There wasn't even a half-filled swimming pool full of crocodiles to swing across on ropes of questionable quality and origin. Still, Jay went over to where the boring and rust-free swings were to sit on one. He carefully put the bag down beside him and pulled out the first of the bottles that
he'd taken.

"If it weren't so absolutely horrible living with Dad I'm not so sure I would have stayed here," Jay muttered as he cracked open the seal. "Everything's just so... different, you know?"

Iago peered down at Jay from his perch. "I don't believe that," he said after a few minutes. "I think that's the pain talking."

Jay mused on that for a moment before taking a long drink. After several swallows without a break, he lowered the bottle again. "Maybe," he said. "It's hard to pretend to be happy when I can barely get through a practice. I just about walked off the field yesterday."

"Do you want to quit?" Iago asked.

"No," Jay said instantly. He sighed and rested his temple against the chain of the swing he was sitting in. "No, I like it too much. I'm actually good at something not terrible for once," he muttered. "I just don't know..."

The silence dragged on for a few moments. "Don't know what, Jabir?"

"How long I can keep doing it," Jay admitted softly. "I want to make it to the end of the season at least. There's not too many more games. Maybe then... when I actually finish something for once... it'll be worth it."

"... the pain or you?"

Jay stiffened where he was sitting. "Don't ask me that," he whispered. "Please... you do not really want my answer to that, and I don't want to say it out loud."

Iago flew off of his perch and circled around to land on Jay's knee, which was up high from sitting in a young kid's swing rather than a real chair. "Why do you still listen to him when he isn't even here?" Iago demanded harshly. "Listen to me! I'm here! And I'm telling you that Jafar is a terrible judge of people! He needed a damn ring and a machine to find Aladdin in the first place, and he was just in the city market giving bread to orphans!"

Jay didn't answer and instead took another long drink from his bottle. Iago dug his claws in, but they didn't pierce the leather that Jay was wearing. "Talk to me!" Iago demanded. "You talked to me more when I couldn't even talk back properly! You know he's full of it so why are you letting him get to you?"

"Because he's my Dad, Iago!" Jay said though his voice was rough from being forced to come out despite his throat feeling so knotted up. "What am I supposed to do? Just... forget that?"

"Yes," Iago stated. "Forget him. He's never been right about you. Not once."

Jay chewed on his bottom lip for just a moment and studied the deep amber liquid he was drinking. "Then why does it always feel like everything he says is always right? I've always been a stupid, lazy, no-good disgrace. I'm not any better here... they just don't know it yet."

Iago screeched in frustration. "No, you aren't. Everything that Jafar told you is a complete lie. If you think about what he told you just assume the opposite is the truth." Jay fiddled with the bottle in his hands for a moment before taking another drink. Iago sighed and loosened his claws. "What if you just... don't think of yourself as Jafar's son anymore?"

"I'm not sure I can do that..." Jay muttered. "That's all anyone thinks when they see me."
"I don't think that," Iago said. "And I bet those miscreants you run around with don't either. And that's all that should matter." Jay didn't answer and continued to sit in the swing. Iago wished he could have gotten more of a response but didn't press for one. Jay finished half the bottle he was drinking before finally getting up and heading back to the dorms.
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

Thing are getting for real now. Jordan's gonna make Jay's secret real hard to keep since ya know... she IS a Djinn...

I gave her a non-English name like I did Jay because why would they have English names?

Evaluations, Jay decided, were just as bad as tests were. Maybe even worse than tests really. Because at least with tests, it was only one period of torture. These evaluations that Fairy Godmother had decided on were taking the whole day and were giving him a headache. Or, that might still be the hangover from drinking over half a bottle of spiced rum by himself the night before. Either way, the whole day was turning out miserably. He wanted to go back to his dorm room and curl up to sleep off the rest of his headache. The only plus side was that Fairy Godmother had decided all of the Auradon transfers from now on needed Educational Evaluations to figure out their 'strengths and weaknesses' so Mal, Carlos, and Evie were all in the room filling out endless bubbles and writing paragraphs to answer reading questions along with him.

Jay noticed that they weren't the only students in the room either. Freddie Facilier had just come over from the Isle the night before and was sitting off to one side looking just as confused as Jay felt. She had taken off her tiny top hat and was fiddling with her skull shaped pen topper as she read her test questions with a frown. Jay figured she was caught off guard by the lack of bloody imagery and word problems about sharing and cute puppy dogs. There wasn't a sacrificed chicken anywhere in sight.

Herkie wasn't included in the evaluations because he had actually transferred between years rather than during the year like all the others. Jay hated him a little bit after finding that out.

Then there was Jordan. That wasn't her real name, but that was what she had asked Fairy Godmother to call her because 'it was easier' than her real name of Jathibiyya, which Jay thought was fair enough (he didn't go by his real name either, after all). Jay was finding it very difficult to focus on his work with the second new girl sitting just a few rows ahead of him. Mostly because he could already see a rose gold lamp half sticking out of her bag. Jay did his utmost to not show he had noticed. His hand was itching to grab it but Jay wouldn't. He was too scared of what would happen if he actually touched a Djinn lamp. True, it was clearly not the etched black lamp that his father tormented him with, but Jay wasn't about to take the gamble that nothing would happen either. Jay had tried to sneak peeks at his father's books and notes on Djinn but had never been able to read them so he was more clueless than he would like.

As soon as the Evaluation finally ended, Jay tried to not bolt and instead act as casual as possible. There was an uncomfortable sort of fission in the air like too much static was building up and was about to explode. Jay made sure to not look behind him to acknowledge it, but he was convinced that the feeling of lightning about to strike was because of where Jordan was a few feet behind them. He wouldn't be at all surprised if his hair was starting to stand up, it certainly felt powerful enough.

Jay really would rather be on the left side of their diamond where Carlos was, but his spot was
always in the back so that their less capable fighters were well protected. Freddie was chatting with Evie about something relating to fashion from in the middle of the diamond and Mal was leading them like she always did. They didn't even think about it they had been used to walking in formation for years already. Formation was the only way to go anywhere in the Isle, and all the gangs had their own distinct ways of doing it. Mal really liked sturdy and well-protected diamonds.

"Jordan!" someone called, and Jay did his absolute best to not pay attention to what was going on a few feet behind him. He wished his instinct to bring up the rear of their gang's formation wasn't as unbreakable as it was because there wasn't anyone between him and the other teens from Agrabah to act as a buffer.

"So, who are you rooming with?"

Jay could make out the familiar voices of Aziz, Amir, and even Madhi. Jay didn't mind Aziz as much; since they were on the field with each other every day and had reached an understanding. Amir and Madhi however, were sons of some of Aladdin's advisers who had been fired and imprisoned when Jafar was briefly sultan. As such, Amir and Madhi held a bit more of a grudge against Jay than Aziz did. Amir had even quit tourney in protest of Jay being put on the team (something that Chad hadn't even bothered to do, despite having lost his starting position).

"Are you crazy?" Madhi hissed although not very quietly. "You brought your lamp!?"

"Well, yeah, I kind of live in it," Jordan replied sarcastically.

There were a few whispers that Jay didn't overhear and then Jordan spoke again, "You can't separate a Djinn from their lamp. That's the whole reason Fairy Godmother allowed me the exception in the first place. It would be absolute torture!" Jay flinched. He knew first hand how horrible it was, but the alternative wasn't much better for him.

"But the son of Jafar is here!" Amir tried and failed to whisper. "He'd definitely steal it!"

Suddenly, Mal whipped around, revealing that Jay hadn't been the only one overhearing the conversation. "Jay wouldn't want your stupid lamp!" she snapped. Jay wouldn't be surprised if her eyes were that close to burning venomous green. Jay tried to not look uncomfortable as everyone in the hall stopped, and all attention went right to where they were standing.

Carlos, Evie, and Freddie all turned too, and Jay sighed. He would have preferred they just continue on as if the idiots hadn't said anything, but he wasn't nearly lucky enough for that. Jay reluctantly turned as well to face the four teens from Agrabah. Aziz looked particularly uncomfortable. "I know he wouldn't, Mal," Aziz said. "Amir's just being stupid."

"How can you even say that, Aziz?" Madhi demanded. "Think of who he is!"

Jordan was looking between the three boys with her, Madhi and Amir had stepped directly in the way very protectively, but Aziz was beside her with his arms now folded. "Jay isn't his father!" Evie snapped, taking several steps closer.

"Oh no?" Madhi challenged. "Then why is there a 'Lost and Found' box filled with people's things in the dorm common room? Everyone knows that's the 'Jay stole it' box!"

"You have no proof of that!" Carlos pointed out angrily. He was meticulous to slip Jay's thefts into the box when nobody was around. Jay had a hard time controlling the impulse to pickpocket since he had done it for so long, but he never kept the stuff he grabbed anymore. If he didn't realize he'd stolen something before getting back to their room (and thus couldn't slip it back into the victim's
pocket), he gave it to Carlos to get into the box. Jay never trusted himself to actually do it or to not take something back out of the lost and found.

Amir scoffed. "Oh, please, everyone knows it!"

"I have no interest in her lamp," Jay said as he crossed his arms. "In fact, I will promise that I won't even touch the stupid thing."

"Nobody believes that!" Madhi argued.

"I believe it," Aziz denied. "Come on guys, cut Jay a break already. He's never done anything to any of us."

Madhi and Amir looked scandalized. "How can you say that?"

Mal practically growled as she stepped forward. Her eyes were definitely glowing now. "You better back off." Madhi and Amir did jerk back but didn't outright flee, which was surprisingly brave of them since Mal's glowy eyes were pretty damn scary.

Jay sighed. Things were getting very much out of hand and he really rather just go back to his room and have a drink. His headache hadn't gone away, and he felt stiff from sitting in the chair all day bent over a test, not to mention just a generally bad mood. "It's not worth it Mal," he said. "I'm not exactly broken up about two idiots like Amir and Madhi not believing me."

"Only idiots would be the one to believe you!" Madhi protested.

"Yeah, you're a no good thief!"

"So's your sultan," Carlos pointed out.

Chaos erupted from that statement. Madhi and Amir didn't like their sultan being lumped in with Jay, and Mal was ready to argue anything at that point. Dragons protected their treasures after all and Mal treasured her friends highly. Aziz was trying to calm his friends while the other Isle kids gave their own opinions about the two Arabians. Jay sighed again and turned to leave. He wasn't in the mood to deal with all this drama; besides, he knew what he would or wouldn't do. Not being believed sucked a little bit but Jay was used to that and by people whose opinion mattered to him a lot more than Madhi and Amir.

Jay almost got halfway across the yard when he heard someone shouting for him. Confused, Jay stopped and turned. Jordan was hurrying over, and Jay actually took a step back before managing to catch himself. Appearing scared of a girl would definitely tip everyone off that something was wrong. Jay was always approaching and flirting with girls. Jordan came to a stop a few feet in front of him. "Hi. I'm Jordan."

"Jay," he said awkwardly, even though he knew that she had to know his name after the argument in the hall. Over her shoulder, Jay saw his friends coming closer. Mal looked peeved still, and Evie was talking to her quickly. "What'dya want?"

Jordan frowned a little and flicked her bangs out of her eyes causing her long black ponytail to swing behind her. "I just wanted to apologize. Madhi and Amir can be pretty dense, but I believed you when you said you wouldn't try and steal my lamp."

"Yeah? Why?" Jay asked. She had no real reason to believe him over her friends. Jay knew he was telling the truth, but that didn't mean he'd made the promise expecting others outside of his group to realize that.
Jordan narrowed her honey golden eyes at him, and Jay resisted the urge to fidget with the ease of long practice. "I'm not sure," she admitted. "But there's something about you, and I can't help but think you're telling the truth. I mean, you are, aren't you?"

"... yeah, I was," he agreed. Mal and the others finally caught up with him and clustered close.

"You shouldn't have left," Mal hissed to him before turning to face Jordan. "Do you need something?"

Jordan held up her hands defensively. "I was just apologizing for Madhi and Amir. They can be a little overprotective," she said. Jay could almost hear the 'like you' that wasn't being voiced. Jordan was smart for not saying it out loud because Mal wouldn't have appreciated the comparison at all. "Being a Djinn means you're really powerful but really vulnerable at the same time. They just don't want me to be taken advantage of. But if Aziz trusts you then that's enough for me," Jordan told them.

Mal eyed the other girl as if she was about to bite her head off. "Hey, Mal, it's fine. Big boys and girls, remember?" Jay said. Mal turned to look at Jay over her shoulder. Jay could tell that she wasn't entirely happy to let the subject drop. She hadn't run the most extensive territory on the Isle because she let things be bygones. Even after months in Auradon she still instinctively fought for every last scrap that she possibly could.

Finally, Mal sighed. "Fine. Keep your guard dogs muzzled, though," she said to Jordan before jerking her head to the side. The Isle kids instantly took the signal and headed the rest of the way across the yard to the dorms, leaving Jordan standing there with a slight frown and narrowed eyes. "And you, don't ever do that disappearing act again," Mal hissed at Jay when they'd gotten far enough away.

"No promises," Jay responded instantly. It was hardly the first time she'd told him that and it wasn't even close to the first time that Jay had ignored said order. For as much as he could be for as long as he could be, Jay would be his own master and do what he wanted.
Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

Didn't know if I should go more into detail with that dream or not so decided to play it safe and not let it get too porn-y. Too safe? Just fine? Not safe enough? Lemme know your thoughts!

Jay waited until he heard loud snoring before moving. He had to be careful, but he had sadly gotten very good at this part. The thick hairy arm that was sporting a colossal snarling shark tattoo was wrapped around his waist, but he managed to unwind it and then get out of bed. A glance out of the nearby porthole told him it was getting late, so he quickly grabbed his pants off the floor and shoved his legs into them. His vest had ended up across the room, and he silently padded over to pick it up. His boots took longer to track down because one had found its way under the bed. Jay did manage to retrieve it though and quickly finished dressing.

On the side table was a pouch of money that Jay pocketed and a bottle of murky liquid. Jay grabbed it up and took an experimental sniff. He made a face but took a swig of the Vile Vodka and then headed for the door. He was as quiet as possible as he made his way through the beached ship that served as a hangout for most of Hook’s pirates and as a makeshift mansion for the Captain and his kids. The Jolly Roger had been tossed onto the Isle by King Triton when they were first sending all the villains over and had landed hard. Tilted to one side since it couldn’t float, it had more than a few makeshift repairs that would never have stood up to water. There were even several holes that were still visible from outside.

Jay made his way down the slanted hall towards the exit when he was suddenly grabbed by a hand from a room he was passing. Jay instantly dropped the bottle he was holding where it clanked loudly but thankfully didn’t shatter. He was ready to start fighting, but then he felt cold metal against his neck and paused long enough to see he was face to face with someone right about at his own age. The boy had a frown and was holding a silver hook to Jay's jugular. Jay didn’t think it was sharp enough to cut through his skin without some force behind it, but he didn’t want to test that either. "Who're you?" the boy asked with a distinctly European accent.

"Jay. You're Harry right?" Jay guessed. Harry Hook attended school about as much as Jay himself did so they didn't exactly run into each other much.

Harry narrowed his blue eyes and then nodded. "What're you doing in my house?" Jay bit the inside of his cheek. He didn't like saying what he was doing. Harry looked over Jay again and then turned his eyes to Jay's face in surprise. "You're the whore they talk about!"

Jay flinched. Great, now he was getting a reputation. He only did things like tonight every once and a while when he needed money bad enough. Jay made sure to go far away from his own place so that random people on the street wouldn't know what he sometimes did. But apparently the Pirates were gossips, at least among themselves. "I figured you were about my age," Harry said. "I didn't think you'd be pretty, though."

Jay looked up in confusion. "I'm not pretty," he said automatically.

Harry gave a smirk. "Sure ya are," he said lightly. "That's why they fuck ya in the first place. Well,
than an' you're right about the age good ol' Petie was... fucking little boys makes 'em feel better about themselves."

"I figured," Jay grumbled. More than one of the pirates had said some very telling things while they were in bed together. Mostly taunts that Jay could tell weren't aimed at him in the least. "Can I go now? My Dad'll be looking for his money," he said in annoyance.

Harry's smirk fell. "Ah." Jay didn't fidget, but he didn't like the expression that crossed Harry's face in the least. He had only said what he had to make it clear he didn't want to be doing this. That it was a necessity. He didn't want Harry, or anyone, to think that he was a whore by choice. Harry lifted the hook he had and ran the curve of the metal lightly against Jay's cheek. "How much do they pay ya, Jay?"

"What does it matter?" Jay asked.

"Because maybe I'd like to thank ya," Harry said grinning now, although it was a different sort of grin than he'd been giving earlier. This one was more strained than the first easy one.

"Thank me for what?"

Harry's smile was visibly being forced out now. "For distractin' 'em," Harry said.

Jay studied the other boy carefully for a moment before it all clicked into place. Harry was about the same age as Jay, and the pirates liked boys their age because it reminded them of a certain Lost Boy. "Does your father know or care about that?" Jay asked.

Harry's smile dropped entirely. "Can't tell."

Jay nodded in understanding. Trying to figure out if your villain parent cared about you was one of the never solved puzzles of all their lives. Sometimes Jay could swear that Jafar did care but then he'd do things like lock Jay in the crawl space or slap him around and it would be impossible to think he did. Jay looked up at Harry again. He didn't want to sell himself, but he would always need more money to appease his father and Jay was already very tired of dirty old pirates with complexes hunched over him and breathing rancid fumes in his face. Harry was at least his age and not at all bad looking himself. "I charge them twenty for the basics... more when they want to get all... angry."

Some of the pirates had serious issues, and Jay had learned quickly to demand as much money as they had to make it worth his while to put up with it. After all, he was the one that had to deal with the aftermath of those sessions. Harry nodded and reached for his belt. He pulled out a few coins and held them up. "I won't get all angry. Promise."

Jay might be stupid for doing so but he believed the other teen and reached up to take the money. If he got enough tonight, he could take tomorrow off. "Could we lose the hook?" Jay asked.

"I like the hook," Harry replied.

Jay eyed the dangerous bit of metal before nodding and putting the coins in his pocket along with the money he'd take from the other pirate. Chances were Harry would feel safer and more confident with the weapon at hand. Jay wouldn't mind having one himself if he hadn't found that being armed lost him customers. "Fine. Just don't use it on me or anything perverted."

"Not on the first date," Harry said with a cocky grin.

"Oh, a date is this?" Jay asked.
"If ya want it to be," Harry replied even as Jay started to undo his belt. "Sounds a lot nicer than 'turning a trick' don't ya think?"

Jay paused what he was doing for a moment. "Yeah, I guess it does," he muttered in agreement before pushing at Harry's pants until they fell off his slender hips. Harry turned his hook to catch Jay around the back of the neck and pulled him close. Jay was caught off guard, even more so when Harry kissed him. Jay's first instinct was to push back. He didn't kiss his 'customers,' but for some reason, he decided to allow it this time. Maybe because he could tell that Harry was trying to make things different on purpose. Or maybe because he felt an understanding with the son of Hook what with them both having to deal with these bastard pirates that were his father's lackeys.

No matter what the reason, Jay opened his mouth to the probing tongue even as he was pushed back against the wall. Harry's hand not holding onto his hook reached behind Jay to tunnel under his leather pants and grab a handful of Jay's bare ass.

Iago screeched 'wake up' in his ear and Jay jerked part of the way off his bed, causing the parrot to take flight. He groaned after a few minutes when he realized what had happened and dropped his head back to his pillow. "What the hell? Why did you do that?" he asked into the soft cushion his face was enveloped in.

"If you don't get up now, you'll miss practice," Iago told him as he fluttered back over to land on Jay's shoulder.

Jay groaned again. He was so tired and sore he really didn't want to go to practice. He had come to his dorm after classes and downed most of a bottle of stolen rum before passing out, completely forgetting that he would have training later on in the afternoon. "I was having a nice dream for once," Jay said.

"Were you?" Iago asked, sounding surprised. "What about?"

Jay paused and considered for a moment. "Well... better than usual. Maybe not so good in retrospect," he grumbled as he rolled over. He and Harry had begun getting along splendidly. Thick as the thieves they were. But then, as was inevitable on the Isle, things had turned sour and now Jay and Harry could barely be on the same street as each other without something happening. Not that that had really stopped Harry from buying Jay's time up until Jay had left the Isle, it had just made those occasions a lot less pleasant.

The souring had begun with -what else- Mal and Uma. Jay and Mal fell in together while Harry jumped to Uma's side. The animosity between the two girls spread to their seconds, but Jay and Harry still tried to keep somewhat friendly when the girls weren't there. But then, Jay had made the apparent mistake of sleeping with Uma. She had paid him, and he'd needed the money, so he'd done it. When Harry found out he was livid. Jay wasn't sure if it was because of Uma or himself but either way, Harry, as it turned out, was a jealous guy. Jay was betting on Harry being jealous for Uma since Jay had made no secret that he still ended up in various people's beds when he needed money. Jay tried to tell Harry he wasn't interested in taking Uma from him but that didn't seem to matter to Harry. They got into a nasty brawl about it and from then on Harry had hated Jay and Jay resented Harry. So much for understanding each other.

Jay took a long drink of the rum he'd fallen asleep holding and then pushed himself up to sit on his bed. He really should cut back on the drinking he realized, but he couldn't seem to. Jay had managed to get fourteen bottles of the stuff during his nighttime excursion. He'd counted on that lasting him about a month or so, but he was already working pretty hard on finishing off the sixth bottle. He was drinking too much, even for him, but the pain really was so intense he wasn't able to even function without something to dull it down.
Jay really didn't like that he couldn't seem to make it through the day anymore without a bit of alcohol to keep him going. But, after glancing at the clock, Jay realized that Iago was right. If he didn't get moving, he would either be late for practice or might as well just skip it. He didn't want to let the Coach or the team down, so Jay screwed the top back on the bottle and tucked it down beside his bed before getting up and going to take a quick shower. Hopefully, that would cut back on any smell of booze and make it not so obvious he had been passed out in bed so recently.

After a quick shower that thankfully woke him up some, Jay started to hurriedly get dressed. His attention was grabbed, however, when he went to put on his leather cuffs over his golden ones. Jay frowned when he saw little black dots appearing on the gold. Jay rubbed at the flecks with his thumb, but he couldn't feel them there, and they weren't coming off. The Djinn bracers were enchanted gold so they shouldn't be able to be tarnished in any way and yet his were looking like they were somehow. Jay did sort of wish he had a better grasp of the rule of being a Djinn if only to make hiding it easier for himself.

Jay brushed that off and covered the bracers. It was probably just his imagination or something anyway. Besides, he was fairly certain that even if little black dots were showing up on his bracers, it wasn't anything to worry about. It wasn't as if he were going to start changing anything and go back home or something crazy.

Jay grabbed his bag and rushed out of the dorms with Iago flying along behind him. He ended up being late again and had to do sprints for it. Coach Bubbles was frowning and even asked Jay to the side to ask if anything was wrong. It wasn't like Jay to be late to practice, and now he'd been late twice. Jay gave some bullshit excuse about getting caught up talking to some girls and then rambled about how 'totally into him' they were. Coach still didn't look entirely convinced but let the topic go. Although he did make mention that Jay looked tired so he should try and get some more sleep that night. Jay agreed instantly and continued on with practice. Now if only sleep were that easy to achieve. Downing over half a bottle of booze until one passed out was not the best substitute for actual rest. Jay just hoped he could keep up with his current pace for a little longer. Then, once the season ended, he could catch up on all the rest he needed because he wouldn't have anything to do after classes.

Practice had not helped Jay feel any better although he was glad he'd made himself go anyway. He did want to be a part of the team, he would just really like it a whole lot more if he wasn't in pain while trying to do that. Jay had barely tossed off his shoes and sat back down on his bed before grabbing his bottle again. He was ten times as sore as he'd started with and really wanted to dull it just a bit.

Just as Jay was taking a particularly long drink, the door to the room opened. "Jay, I've never seen you take off so-" Carlos stopped and then quickly closed the door behind him as Dude ran over to hop onto the white-haired teen's bed. "Are you seriously drinking right now?"

"No, I'm sarcastically drinking," Jay replied. "What does it look like I'm doing, Carlos?"

"We agreed to not do illegal things anymore, and that is illegal, or have you forgotten?" Carlos demanded.

"I didn't forget," Jay said. "I just had some leftover from being bad and what was I supposed to do? Toss it out?"

Carlos nodded. "That's probably the correct answer Fairy Godmother would be looking for, yeah."

"That's a waste, and we don't waste shit," Jay replied. "Calm down, Carlos. We both know that drinking age thing is bullshit. I'm just finishing it off. Promise," he said, feeling only a little bad
about the lie. "You want a swig?" Jay asked as he held the bottle out.

Carlos frowned. He could have sworn Jay had already finished off that alcohol but then figured he must have been mistaken and took the bottle. "Fine, but just this once," he said before taking a quick swing. He made a face and handed the bottle back. "Gah, still prefer gin."

Jay rolled his eyes and lifted the bottle again. "Like we have a full bar here to make you martinis or something?"

"Seeing as this is a school, no," Carlos said. "You hit the shower yet?"

"Before practice, so you can have one first now," Jay answered.

Carlos nodded and disappeared into the bathroom. Jay took the time to quickly polish off the bottle he was holding and then hiding the empty in his secret compartment under his bed with the other bottles both full and empty. He was running out of space in the little box and would have to get rid of the bottles soon. Especially if he had to go get more before the season ended.

Jay knew that things were getting serious, but he would deal with it. He just had to be more careful was all. Maybe he could find some bottle to keep the alcohol in that would disguise it. That was when Carlos came in he wouldn't run the risk of being caught drinking. Jay was sure he could find something if he looked hard enough.
Carlos was not, by any stretch of the imagination, stupid. He could tell when something was wrong. And standing in the doorway of the room he shared with Jay seeing the thief in bed, again, almost as soon as practice was over, was wrong. Jay didn't even look asleep so much as passed out. At first, Carlos had waved everything going on as Jay being stressed by the academic probation thing, but Carlos doubted that now. He had been late for tourney again that day and hadn't even helped put the equipment away despite how he used to always help with that. No, he'd disappeared instantly and didn't even look like he'd taken a shower before collapsing in bed.

Carlos frowned and went over to see if he could give Jay a nudge or something. Maybe ask him what the hell was going on. Right as Carlos was reaching out to Jay's shoulder, he noticed a bottle tucked under Jay's arm. Carlos grabbed the neck of the bottle and carefully pulled it out. The whole thing was entirely empty. Carlos was now very worried. Either this was the bottle from last time he caught Jay drinking, or it wasn't, and Carlos thought it was more likely not.

Looking over at the coat rack where Iago perched, Carlos held up the bottle. "Are you going to tell me what's going on here or no?" he asked.

"He told me not to," Iago replied.

Carlos sighed, "Of course he did." Jay was never one for accepting help. Carlos kept the bottle and called Dude to follow him. Carlos hurried off to Mal and Evie's room where he knocked on the door.

Evie opened the door and looked a little surprised. "Carlos." The white-haired teen didn't wait before entering the room. Mal looked up from her sketchbook. "Is something wrong?" Evie asked as she closed the door behind Dude.

"Yeah," Carlos said before holding up the bottle. "I'd say something's wrong. I just found this in Jay's bed."

Mal frowned and pushed herself up. "Is that from when we first got here?" she asked.

"That's what he said last time I caught him drinking, but I don't think it is," Carlos answered. Mal held her hand out, and Carlos gave her the bottle immediately. "I'm pretty sure he's been drinking a lot, Mal. Way more than I have ever seen him drinking before."

Mal's frown deepened as she took a whiff of the top of the bottle. She thought Carlos was probably right. Though it had been a while, she didn't think that this was the same booze they'd pilfered when they first got to Auradon. "What does he say when you ask him what's wrong?" she asked.
"Blows me off. And he told Iago not to tell me either," Carlos said. "He's been late to tourney three times now, Mal."

"Three?" Evie echoed.

Carlos nodded. "Says he gets caught up talking to girls and, I don't know about you guys, but I haven't seen him flirting as much this past week. He's always running off somewhere. Back to the room, I think."

"Where is he now?" Mal asked.

"Passed out in bed," Carlos answered. "Again."

"Again?" Evie sounded very alarmed. "What do you mean again?"

Carlos sighed. "There's a difference between when Jay's asleep and when he's passed out. I don't think I've seen him actually asleep since our game against Wonderland," he explained. Mal asked what the difference was. "He doesn't move around when he's passed out. He does when he's asleep. And lately, when he's trying to sleep, Jay moves around so much I'd think he was trying to dance or something."

Mal was quiet for several minutes before huffing and leaving with the bottle in her hand. Carlos and Evie exchanged a quick glance before rushing after her. The pair of them got to the room just as Mal was pulling hard at the covers on Jay's bed. Because the thief was tangled up in the fabric, he came off too and hit the ground hard.

"The fuck!?" he quickly but somewhat unsteadily jumped to his feet. "Mal? What the hell?"

"What's this?" Mal demanded while holding the bottle up.

Jay's expression went from angry to carefully blank. "An empty bottle."

Mal tossed the bottle onto Jay's now half stripped bed. "Tell me what's going on," Mal ordered. "No bullshit. Just tell me, Jay."

"What makes you think anything's going on?" Jay asked as he folded his arms across his chest.

"Come on, Jay," Mal said, sounding exasperated. "How long have we known each other? I know when something's up. We all do. And something is. So just stop being all... stubborn and just tell us."

Jay stared down Mal for several moments. "It's nothing to get all worried about, Mal," he finally said.

"Tell me another one, maybe I'll believe it," Mal shot back.

"Mal, really, everything is-"

"You've obviously been drinking, Jay," Evie chimed in. "Your eyes are all bloodshot."


Carlos couldn't help but scoff. "That wasn't sleeping, Jay. That was passed out drunk. I'm surprised you're even standing up right now."

"Everything is fine!" Jay shouted. Carlos and Evie recoiled at how loud and angry he sounded but
even more the fact that, very much unlike a normal person, his eyes had flashed gold.

Mal had caught the flash as well and narrowed her own eyes. "Jay. You are not the one in this group that is supposed to have eyes that glow," she said.

Jay looked caught off guard and alarmed. "What?"

"Your eyes, Jay. They glowed," Mal said, trying her best to not show worry by burying it under anger that something might be really wrong with her friend. "Now tell me why. What the hell is going on with you!?"

"It's nothing," Jay said quickly. "Probably just a trick of the light or something," he added with a vague wave towards the ceiling and an awkward attempt at a smile.

"Bullshit," Mal said instantly. "You really think that'll work on me? I know glowing eyes when I see them."

Evie stepped forward. "Jay, please, we're worried."

Jay looked down at her and then at the rest of them and for a moment, Carlos thought he was actually going to come clean. Carlos should have known better though. Getting information from Jay was like pulling teeth. "... there's a game this weekend. I'll tell you after that," Jay said.

"Tell us now," Mal pressed.

"Mal, please! Just let me finish this game, and I'll tell you. I swear!" Jay said with his hand up.

Mal scowled. "If you want to wait until after the game... I'm guessing this is something that I would not let you play the game while it was going on?" she said in annoyance. "You want me to take it on faith that you're taking care of yourself?"

"It's not that bad, but you know how you get!" Jay argued. "Just let me do this, Mal."

The leader of their group stood there for several minutes before sighing heavily. "You will be telling me the second that game is over. Clear?" she demanded. Jay nodded. "Good. Now, how many of these bottles do you actually have?" Mal asked with a nod towards the empty she had brought back into the room.

"That's something I'll tell you after the game," Jay muttered.

Mal shook her head. "Not part of the deal. How many, Jay?"

"Only a few," Jay said.

Carlos snorted at the unbelievable lie. Jay wouldn't have not wanted to say if it was 'only a few' like he claimed. "I'll find out," he told Mal before walking over to Jay's bed.

"Hey!"

Jay went to grab Carlos, but Mal grabbed his arm to keep him from doing so. "We could have done this the easy way," she pointed out. Jay jerked his arm back and folded them over his chest again.

He very deliberately didn't look as Carlos found the latch on the hidden compartment and the secret drawer dropped enough to be pulled out.

"Jay!" Evie gasped at the multitude of bottles stuffed into the box. Quite a few were already empty.
"It's nothing," Jay replied uneasily.

"How did you even get all this?" Mal demanded.

"I bought them."

"Don't lie," Mal snapped. "They don't sell alcohol to people our age here. Now, where did you get them from, Jay?"

Jay scoffed. "I did buy them. It was just... after hours," he grumbled.

"Damn it, Jay..."

"It's not a big deal!" Jay argued. "It isn't like I got caught. And like I said, I paid for them. If it weren't for their stupid rules, it wouldn't have even been an issue. They haven't even noticed it yet."

Mal glared at Jay for several minutes. She had no idea what was going on with him, but usually, he would have been smarter about things. Sure, he often stole things without her permission (Carlos wasn't exaggerating when he said Jay had Kleptomania) but this had been a planned job. It had to have been. And that wasn't in the least acceptable. "Carlos. Help E get those bottles into our room," Mal ordered.

"Oh, Mal, come on!"


Carlos and Evie quickly gathered up the bottles that still had alcohol in them and hurried out of the room. Jay was glaring daggers, but Mal wasn't backing down. "I have no idea what's going on, Jay, but it's going to stop." Mal wasn't sure she'd ever seen Jay looking so pissed, but this was for his own good. There had been way too many empty bottles in that drawer.

Jay grabbed his boots from where they had been dropped. "Yeah, fine, Mal. Whatever you say," he said rather nastily. Mal realized what he was going to do just before he actually did it. She called out to him, but he had already taken the window out of the room. She huffed and went to look, but Jay was quick at disappearing.

Mal turned away from the window to glare at nothing. Hopefully, he would cool off and come back soon. And even more hopefully, when he came back, Jay would actually tell her what was going on. Mal looked over at Iago sitting on the coat rack. "I take it you don't have anything to say?" she asked.

"He'll come back," Iago said.

"Helpful," Mal drawled sarcastically.

Iago sighed. "I would tell you if Jabir hadn't told me not to," Iago told her. "But he'd never trust me again if I said something."

"And you care if he trusts you or not?" Mal shot at him angrily.

"Don't you?" Iago shot back.

Mal pursed her lips together and looked away. She wasn't going to get caught in that trap. "Do you know where he went?" she asked. Iago had been hanging out around Jay for several weeks now.

"I have some ideas, but I don't know for sure," Iago answered. "I could go look for him, but I can't
say I'll be able to get him back."

Mal thought about that for a minute before sighing. "Just... go and make sure he doesn't do
anything stupid," she said. "He does reckless things when he gets pissed off. Not that there's any
gangs to pick fights with here but still... I'd rather someone keep an eye on him."

Iago bobbed his head in a nod before taking off through the still open window. Mal wasn't happy
with how the situation had gone, but then, she supposed hoping that Jay would just open right up
and pour his heart out was painfully unrealistic. Auradon's expectation of everything going so well
was rubbing off on her if she really had thought that close-lipped Jay was going to give up anything
without a fight.

Carlos came back in with Evie and looked around. "Where's Jay?"

"He took off," Mal answered. "I sent Iago to keep an eye on him until he wanders back."

"It really is serious then," Evie surmised. "I was hoping we were just blowing things out of
proportion..." Jay wouldn't have taken off if it really wasn't anything serious. He would have
moaned and groaned but then told them if it wasn't something to worry about. Then they would
have felt silly, and Jay would have laughed at them. He only avoided a situation if it really was
something big and terrible.

"Looks like it," Carlos said as he sat down and let Dude jump into his lap.

Mal took a deep breath to calm down and looked back at Carlos and Evie. "We'll figure it out. Jay
is being difficult but what else is new? We helped him out of tough jams before and we can do it
again. As long as we stick together." Carlos and Evie nodded, and Mal tried to give a confident
smile. She just wished she knew what it was she would be helping Jay with before she had made
that sort of sweeping statement. Mal meant it, but knowing would definitely help her figure out
what she was supposed to do.
Aziz paused at the doorway and took several steps back into the hall to look at the number beside the door frame. No, it was the number he thought it should be. Aziz frowned and stepped back inside and put his gym bag down on the floor. "I told him he was in the wrong room. I don't think he cared," the annoying parrot sitting on Aziz's desk chair.

Aziz blinked and then looked at Jay, who was sprawled out on his bed. "I'm not anywhere near his room," Aziz said as he went to his side of the room. Thankfully, his roommate, Prince Yazhu, wasn't around because this would have been hard to explain. Even for Aziz. And Yazhu, even on a good day, only ever listened to Lonnie so Aziz would really rather not mess with the crabby boy more than he had to. Aziz could just imagine the weird rumors that would be started from this.

"He wasn't trying to get to his room," Iago said as if it were obvious.

"Then where was he trying to go?" Aziz asked as he poked Jay in the shoulder. He didn't seem dead, but he was apparently out like a light.

"Ben's room."

Aziz frowned. "He's on the wrong side of the building, first off," he grumbled. He had no idea why he would want to go to Ben's room in the first place, especially if he was just going to steal a bed, but then Aziz made no claim as to understanding Jay -or any of the Isle kids, for that matter. "Secondly, why was he looking for Ben's room?"

"Because he got mad at the others," Iago supplied as he flew over to land on the post at Aziz's footboard. "Ben gave an open invitation to all of them to use his room if they wanted. Jay says he has a nice couch to crash on."

Aziz stared for a moment at the bird and then looked at his own, entirely unoccupied, couch against the wall. "So... he's on my bed, why?"

"Because it's comfy," Jay murmured half into the pillow.

"You mind getting out of my bed, Jay?" Aziz asked. "It is... kind of weird."

Jay just pulled Aziz's pillow closer. "Most people want me in their bed."

"I'm not most people, then," Aziz said as he tugged on his stolen pillow. Jay held on tighter, and Aziz sighed in exasperation. "Come on, get up."

"Your bed's nice and warm," he murmured.

"I have a heating pad under it because of how cold it gets here compared to home," he explained. True, the desert got cold at night, but Aziz wasn't going to get into how they kept the palace nice and comfortable even at night. "But it's still mine, so get up, Jay."
Aziz sighed and kicked the mattress lightly. Jay didn't even seem to notice. "I'm about to jump on you," he threatened.

"Do that and find out why nobody does it twice," Jay muttered back.

Aziz almost jumped anyway but then thought about it long enough to decide that wasn't a game he was likely to win. Dissuading Isle kids from doing things like that probably required something particularly unpleasant and Aziz would rather not find out what it was first hand. "Jay, seriously, this is ridiculous. Just go back to your own room."

Jay flopped over so that his back was facing Aziz and the Arabian prince tried his best to not smack the other teen with his dueling swords. Aziz jumped over Jay to land kneeling on the bed beside his unwelcomed guest. "Hey," he said while giving the boy's shoulder a hard shake. "People will start to talk if Yazhu comes in and you're in my bed."

"... you could make a killing on the betting pool then," Jay said, not seemingly bothered at all by the implications.

"Except I'm not gay," Aziz said. "So that would be a problem."

"Just call yourself Jay-sexual... it's a legit thing on the Isle," Jay said with a vague handwave that Aziz figured was meant to be in the direction of the Isle but seemed to indicate the bathroom instead. "Everyone wants some of this."

"You aren't as hot as you think you are," Aziz drawled.

Jay finally opened his eyes to glare up at his teammate. "Rude."

"You're the one in someone else's bed just... freeloading," Aziz replied.

"... still rude." Jay rolled back over so that Aziz was again facing his back. The Prince gave a sigh of exasperation and rounded the bed. "Go away. I'm trying to sleep."

"Again. In my bed," Aziz sighed. This was getting exasperating. "Maybe I should go get Mal or Evie or someone to drag you out."

Jay sat up quickly. "Don't you dare!"

Aziz took a half step back. "Woah. You are mad at them," he murmured. He hadn't really believed Iago when he'd said that. Though he had heard of the four kids having arguments before they had never really seemed that severe. They all seemed as close as siblings rather than just friends. No friction ever seemed to last that long.

Jay opened his mouth to say something but then quickly shut it again. Aziz was confused for a moment even as Jay ducked his head and brought a hand up to press against his lips. He was looking very strained, and finally, it clicked, and Aziz just managed to get the trashcan over in time for Jay to be sick. He cringed despite himself even as Jay clung to the metal can and threw up violently.

"You could have just said 'if I get up, I'll throw up,' you know," Aziz said as Jay took several deep breaths and then laid back down. "You're not contagious are you?"

Jay shook his head. "Just a stomach thing... It should go away soon."
Aziz put the can beside the bed in case it was needed again and was just glad that, for once, he'd bothered to put a bag in it rather than just going with the bare metal. He wouldn't have wanted to clean that up. "You need anything?"

"Water would be great... mouth tastes terrible now," Jay murmured as he brought a somewhat shaky hand up to tug his beanie a little further down over his forehead.

"I'll bet," Aziz murmured as he got up and went to the bathroom. He got a half glass of water and then brought it back out to Jay. While he had been in the bathroom, Iago had flown across the room to perch on Jay's shoulder. Aziz was caught slightly off guard by the sight of the parrot there and Jay scratching him behind his feathered cheek. It was almost like a normal sick kid being comforted by a normal pet. Neither seemed to have noticed he'd returned so Aziz didn't mention the surprising scene and just put the water down on the side table.

"Thanks," Jay said as he reached over for the water. "You wouldn't happen to have any nuts or crackers or bread or anything would you?"

"I'm not your maid," Aziz said. Jay grumbled something into his glass before taking a drink of water. Aziz rolled his eyes. "So, how long are you going to be mad at the others and hiding out in my room? Because I was kind of looking forward to a nap..."

"So take one," Jay replied as he set the glass back down.


Jay snorted at that. "I thought 'sharing was caring' or some shit like that."

"Well, I've never claimed to be a perfect Auradon Prince," Aziz shot back.

"Mm, probably why you don't seem so stuck up and horrible compared to others," Jay said. "I like you a hell of a lot more than Chad."

Aziz couldn't help but smile at the expression on Jay's face. "I don't think that's a very high bar to clear," he said with amusement. "Are you always this... this while you're sick?" He didn't want to tell Jay he was acting like a little kid but that was definitely the image that came to mind. A pouty little kid that demanded attention.

"I'm not usually sick," Jay said. "And I was honestly fine being alone, but then you came in and ruined it. I might as well make good on it."

"Oh yeah, I ruined it," Aziz said sarcastically.

Jay looked like he wanted to say something in reply to that but was suddenly reaching for the waste bin. Aziz looked off to the side as the other teen was again physically ill. This was awkward on so many levels. He really should call someone about this, but he wasn't sure who he should call. And even if he did get help, how did he open that conversation? Hey, help me out with this big tough gang member who randomly broke into my room to be sick and steal my bed? Aziz didn't think he could even say that sentence out loud, much less imagine a response.

When Jay was finally done being sick, Aziz glanced over uneasily. That unease only grew when he noticed that Jay was wiping at his eyes almost as much as his mouth. Aziz used to get sick somewhat regularly as a kid, mostly because he was an idiot kid who wouldn't do as his mother told him like wearing a coat when they were on vacation in Arendelle, but he couldn't ever remember being so sick he actually cried. Aziz supposed it shouldn't be surprising. Jay didn't seem like the type to let a little bug get him down. Aziz hadn't really thought about it though since Jay
was acting so blase about the whole thing.

Jay reached for his water again, and Aziz got up to go to his desk. He felt like a complete sap, but he couldn't just stand there and watch someone be absolutely miserable. Aziz could hear Jay gagging behind him and didn't bother to hide the wince of sympathy since he wasn't facing that direction. He was getting a little nauseous just listening to the other boy.

Color moving out of the corner of his eye caught Aziz's attention, but he didn't turn to see what was going on. He didn't really need to turn. Aziz could see a distorted reflection in the metal of one of the trophies sitting beside him. He was glad he didn't turn because Aziz was sure neither Jay nor Iago would have been happy to know that he saw the bird rubbing his head against Jay's cheek or Jay petting Iago's bright feathers. Both gestures were far too sweet and private for Aziz to have been comfortable seeing.

Aziz kept quiet as he worked at his desk. "What are you doing?" Iago asked, and Aziz almost burned himself. He hadn't expected the parrot to talk to him.

"I'm making something to drink," he answered.

Iago flew over, and Aziz was beyond shocked when the parrot perched on his shoulder. Iago leaned further over to see what Aziz was doing and in the process dug his sharp claws deep into the flesh of the Prince's shoulder. "Oow! What are your claws? Meat hooks?" Aziz complained as he automatically moved forward to try and get the bird to loosen his grip. He just knew he'd have some bloody holes when Iago let go.

"Don't be a baby," Iago said. "Jay never complains."

"Jay has on leather!" Aziz snapped. "I have on cotton!"

"Don't be a baby," Iago repeated before flapping his wings several times and slapping Aziz upside the head with one.

Aziz made a move to swat at the bird, but Iago had taken off. Roughly. Aziz hissed. He was sure those holes were now turned into scratches. "Ass!" Again, Iago just told him to not be a baby. Jay looked mildly amused even though Aziz noticed he had turned paler than usual. "Don't give me that look," Aziz grumbled in annoyance. Jay wanted to smack the other teen, but he was sure there was a policy around somewhere about abusing sick people, even if they were jerks.

Jay sipped at his water for a minute before laying back down. Aziz went back to what he was doing and, about ten minutes later, walked back to the bed. "Hey. Try this," he said holding out the cup.

"It's just tea," Aziz said with a sigh. "It might help the... vomiting thing," he said awkwardly as he continued to hold out the steaming cup. Jay still looked suspicious, and Aziz rolled his eyes. "My father gets really seasick. Mom makes this tea for him to help with it," he explained.

"Aladdin gets seasick?" Jay asked with a grin starting to form.

"Oh, shut up, before I pour this on you. We're from a desert. Not exactly a lot of oceans to worry about," Aziz pointed out with annoyance. "And if you tell my dad that I told you that, I will kick your ass."

Jay snorted at the threat but took the intricate teacup from Aziz. "Alright, alright, I won't tell Alley-
boy." Aziz gave a glare that Jay ignored as he took a sip of the tea. He made a face at how bitter it
was but didn't complain. He had a lot worse in the past. And, after a few sips to get used to it, it
wasn't even that bad. "Thanks," Jay murmured after a moment. Despite picking on Aziz and his
father, Jay did realize that the Arabian Prince didn't need to be doing anything remotely like
helping him feel better.

Aziz's glare softened. "You're welcome. You're still not going to stay here much longer though. At
least not in my bed."

"I'll move when I'm done," Jay said.

"Good. Because I really don't want to listen to Yazhu..." Aziz muttered.

Jay frowned and thought through all the kids at school. "Mustache man?" he tentatively guessed.

Aziz snorted. "He's so damn proud of that thing," he said. Aziz personally thought it looked like
someone used a pencil to scribble something across Yazhu's upper lip, but he was dead set on it
being a 'real mustache' somehow. "He's determined to have as big a mustache as he dad or
something."

"Yeah... I think I'll pass on that. With my luck I'd only look ten times as evil that way," Jay said as
he closed his eyes. "How'd you end up with him as a roommate anyway?"

"Princes tend to be roomed with other Princes. Same with Princesses. I guess I just got... lucky in
the roommate department," Aziz said although he didn't feel all that lucky.

Jay frowned. "What's he the Prince of?"

"Him and his cousins are grandsons of the Emperor of China," Aziz said.

"Oh." Jay quickly drank the rest of the tea even though it was still pretty hot and put the cup to the
side. "Just blame me when he gets here," Jay said as he rolled over and half buried himself in
Aziz's bed again.

Aziz sighed. "Oh, I will. Don't you worry about that," he muttered although he couldn't quite bring
himself to drag the other teen bodily from the bed. He wasn't sure why but he didn't actually
mind Jay being there. Except for the fact that he was sick and acting like an ass. Besides, he'd rather Jay
be sick in an actual room where someone knew about it rather than off somewhere pouting about
whatever fight he'd gotten into with his friends.

Jay seemingly passed out again almost instantly, and Aziz rolled his eyes but went to do something
productive. Like homework. He'd only just opened his binder and started writing when Iago landed
on the desk beside his hand. "You going to peck me or something?" he asked warily.

Iago seemed to consider it for a moment before shaking his head. "No."

"Then what?"

There was a long awkward silence. "... thank you," Iago said grudgingly.

Aziz almost let his jaw drop. "What was that?"

Iago shot him a glare and clawed his desktop slightly. "Thank you," he repeated, although with a
bit of a temper this time. "For helping him out. And... stuff."
That had hardly been the most heartfelt thankings he'd ever had but considering who it was from, Aziz thought it might have actually meant more. "Well... he might be from the Isle... but he's still one of my people right?"

Iago glanced up for a moment before huffing, "Auradon sentimental crap."

Aziz couldn't quite fight the smile. That hadn't sounded as annoyed as maybe the parrot had wanted it to sound. "Yeah, well, you'll have to get used to it living here with Jay."

"I don't have to get used to anything I don't want to," Iago declared instantly. There was another long silence. "... but maybe it's not so bad for Jabir..." he admitted, sounding even more annoyed than before to be doing so in the first place.

"Jabir. So that's his real name," Aziz murmured. He had wondered, but with how Jay was he hadn't dared ask. Any seemingly harmless comment could be a trigger for the Isle Kids and Jay was very much attack immediately and maybe ask a question later on once you beat everyone's face in.

Iago ruffled his feathers back into proper order. "He doesn't like anyone using it," he said. "So don't tell him I told you, but, yes, that's his name." Aziz wanted to make an observation about how much Iago clearly cared for the other teen but held back. The bird was within easy striking distance of his hand and Aziz didn't really want another injury. Still, it was nice to see that maybe the bird wasn't as entirely evil and greedy like Jafar as Aziz had been led to believe.
"Are you done hiding from us then?" Mal asked as Jay sat down at breakfast. He had spent most of the night in Aziz's room, but at least he felt better than he had. A part of him was still annoyed with himself for feeling too physically ill to move to Ben's room when Iago had pointed out he'd climbed through the wrong window, but it had ended up not being too bad. Aziz's room had a vaguely familiar sort of feel. Well, half of it did. Jay thought it might have been the faint smell of incense in the air. Aziz didn't seem to use it often, and it was a very different sort of scent than Jafar had used but it had been nice. That and Aziz's bed, which Jay might be stealing in the near future. The heat thing had been absolute heaven against his aching body. Between the bed and the tea that Aziz had given him, Jay had actually managed a little sleep.

"I wasn't hiding," Jay denied. "I just wasn't going to sit there and let you rag on me over nothing."

Mal frowned. "It wasn't nothing. And E was really worried about you!"

Jay took that to mean Mal was really worried but wasn't about to say it because she was Mal and couldn't ever just admit she cared without some sort of life-altering catastrophe happening in the background. Jay very deliberately turned to look at Evie. "I'm fine, E. You know I can take care of myself."

"I know," Evie said although she cast a slightly nervous glance at Mal, who was less than amused.

"Jay this is serious!" their leader hissed.

Freddie, who had begun joining them for breakfast, glanced between them warily. "What happened?" she asked as she doused her eggs in hot sauce. She had quickly fallen in love with the spicy sauce and used it in every food she could come up with.

"Jay's been drinking, and we're not actually allowed to do that here," Carlos whispered to her. "He won't tell us why."


"Sounds pretty important to me," Carlos muttered back while offering Dude a piece of bacon.

Jay sent Carlos another glare, but Mal leaned over and drew the attention of both boys. "Alright, let's not get into another argument about it right away," she ordered. Mal didn't want to drive her second-in-command to disappear again, which would lead to her worrying all day long. She had already been up all night trying to remind herself that Jay was most likely fine and wouldn't run into trouble in Auradon of all places.

"Hey, guys!" Ben greeted cheerfully as he came over with his own tray of food. He bent down and gave Mal a kiss on the cheek automatically before he even noticed the tension at the table. "Uh, what happened?"

"Nothing," the Villain Kids said as one unit.

Ben glanced around. "Uh huh," he said although he didn't remotely believe that. He sat down at the table after Evie had slid down to make room for him. Ben thought about pressing about what was
clearly bothering them but then decided not to do so. With how much they had been through already in their lives, Ben didn't feel comfortable pushing them to reveal things before they were ready. They deserved at least that much. "So, how's the castle coming planning going, Evie?"

The blue-haired Princess cheered up instantly. "Wonderfully! Well, except Audrey wants to make the colors of the dance powder blue and pink," she said with a slight frown. "It's not very royal..."

Ben couldn't quite help but chuckle a little at that. "That sounds like Audrey alright," he agreed.

"Gold's more royal than either of those colors," Jay commented.

"And red," Carlos pipped up while Jay nodded in agreement.

Mal rolled her eyes. "If you want to get technical... purple is the most royal color there is. There's even a shade of purple called royal."

"Well, none of those are very Auradon," Evie said sounding mildly exasperated.

"I'm sure whatever the committee comes up with will be wonderful, Evie," Ben said before the color argument could gain a second wind.

Evie smiled widely at that. "Thank you, Ben. You're very sweet."

They started chatting about nothing really for a few minutes when suddenly Aziz sat down across from Ben. Everyone stared since Aziz had never sat with them before. "What?" he asked as if it were entirely normal for him to be at their table.

"Our table is getting strangely crowded," Carlos murmured as he fed Dude another bit of bacon.

"Not as bad as the table back in Dragon Hall," Freddie pointed out as she dipped a sausage in a small pool of hot sauce.

"Dragon Hall?" Aziz echoed.

"Our old school," Jay supplied as he reached across the table and swiped Carlos' muffin while he was too busy feeding Dude table scraps to notice. "It's in a graveyard," he added while ripping a small chunk off to hand to Iago, who was again sitting on his shoulder.

"A graveyard?" Ben echoed with wide eyes. "Are you serious."

"Daddy has a particular affinity for them," Freddie said. "And since he built the school he used a graveyard."

"Anyway, the cafeteria was this really long hall with a... moat? In it..." Carlos said with uncertainty. "Would you call that a moat?"

Jay ripped another piece of muffin apart. "I think it was supposed to be a fountain and just never worked. That's what that thingy in the middle was supposed to be..."

Carlos looked at Jay then down to his plate and then quickly up again. "Is that my muffin?"

"Anyhow, nobody used the fountain or whatever so it was basically a pit of swamp water that we used to raise frogs for... various purposes," Jay answered, entirely ignoring Carlos' question.

"We set up our tables like a bridge across the pool," Evie commented. "One long one stretched across with some smaller ones on each side. Like our own little fort. Made it easier to get from one
side of the room to the other to just walk across the table than going all the way around."
"Unless Jay pushed you," Carlos said sourly.

Jay grinned. "You still mad about that? It's not like the trench is that deep and even if it were
deep... you can swim," he pointed out.

"Can't you?" Aziz asked.

Jay's grin fell. "Not... actually. Swimming's not a huge thing to do on the Isle," he said.

"There is a barrier around the Isle," Ben said.

Mal looked over at Ben entirely unimpressed. "You don't say..."

"It's not just the barrier," Freddie said. "You could get eaten if you jump into the water."

"Uh... eaten?" Aziz echoed.

"You know Tick-Tock?" Carlos asked.

"Yeah, of course," Ben answered. The legendary crocodile that chased Captain Hook all around
Neverland had terrorized more than just the pirate, so had been booted off to the Isle of the Lost
just like his prey had been. Evil animals were, in some cases, even more, dangerous than evil
people.

"Well, apparently, Tick-Tock, was actually a girl," Jay said. "And got along really well with
Madame Medusa's two crocodiles Brutus and Nero... I suppose you can guess how that went
down."

"All the waters around the island are infested with very ill-tempered, man-eating crocodiles," Mal
said as she poked what remained of her breakfast. "It's almost as effective as the barrier is for
keeping people in."

"Very large, ill-tempered, man-eating crocodiles," Carlos added. "Medusa and my Mom actually
got along frighteningly well... the worst cocktail parties ever. Medusa brought Brutus and Nero
over to Hell Hall once. They chased me up to my tree house. Mom and Medusa thought it was just
hilarious..."

"They would..." Freddie muttered. "Brutus and Nero used to chase me all the time coming home
from school..." Madame Medusa's broken down riverboat was just down the soggy street from the
Facilier house, and so Freddie had the misfortune of having to deal with the two child-hating crocs
all while growing up.

Both Auradon Princes could only shake their head at how utterly crazy the Isle sounded. Being
chased by crocodiles really shouldn't be something that anyone found to be a daily activity. The
conversation turned to less dark topics for the rest of breakfast.

Just as Jay was starting to head up to his first class, Mal grabbed his arm. "Hey, hold on a sec, Jay,"
she said before pulling him into a small alcove in the hall where a small sitting area had been set
up beneath a huge window.

Jay raised an eyebrow at having been pulled off to the side but just shifted his bag to his other
shoulder and waited. Mal frowned but when Jay still didn't ask she realized she would actually
have to do all the talking. "I'm sorry, okay? I'm just worried. I've never seen you act like this."
"I'm not 'acting' like anything, Mal," Jay said. "I'm taking care of myself. I promise."

Mal's frown deepened. "Jay... you haven't been drinking this much since whatever the hell happened between you and Harry," she pointed out softly.

Jay managed to not flinch although he wasn't entirely sure how he'd avoided doing so. "This isn't like that," he told her truthfully. The reason he'd been drinking so much after the fall out with Harry was very, very different from why he was doing it now.

"Then what is it like?" Mal asked, sounding frustrated and more than a little worried. "Come on, Jay. I know you better than this."

"I said I'd tell you after the game tomorrow. And I will," Jay promised. "I've got this."

Mal's shoulders slumped a little, and she glanced at Iago who was perched still perched on Jay. She pointed sternly at the bird. "Keep an eye on him," she ordered.

"I'll keep him from doing anything stupid," Iago agreed while puffing his chest feathers out.

"Gee, thanks," Jay grumbled.

"You sometimes don't think things through, Jay," Iago said. "Everyone knows it."

Mal nodded. "You did try to kick the museum's door open when you could have just picked the lock," she pointed out. "And reached for a floating wand in a shaft of magical light, setting off an alarm."

Jay rolled his eyes. "How long are you going to hold that over my head?"

"Forever," Mal replied instantly. "Because it was stupid."

"Like you've never done anything stupid Ms. Your-love-spell-washed-off-in-a-lake."

"That was hardly my fault!" Mal scoffed although she was glad that Jay was teasing her back. It meant that he wasn't upset with her anymore. Or, at least not to the point that he wouldn't talk to her. She had been very worried that morning when Carlos told her that Jay hadn't returned to their room after storming off. "How was I supposed to know the lake was enchanted?"

Jay sighed but didn't offer any way she should have known. He didn't really have an answer to give. "We should get to class already. We don't get bonus points here for being late," he reminded.

"That is kind of a drag," Mal muttered as they started to walk down the hall again. A whole bunch of kids was rushing to try and get to class, but they still had a few minutes before the tardy bell rang. "It was such an easy way to get points..."

"It's easier being bad," Jay said as a sort of agreement.

Mal was quiet for a moment before looking over at Jay. "Do you ever miss it?" she asked softly.

"Being bad?" Mal nodded. Jay thought for a moment before shrugging. "Yeah... sometimes. But not enough to not make it worth being here... right?" He wished he hadn't made that sound so much like a question but he couldn't help it either. He wasn't actually sure of the answer and judging by how Mal looked away, she wasn't either. Jay nudged her shoulder. "Hey. You've been worrying about us so much, I haven't asked you... are you alright?"

Mal pursed her lips together. "I just... feel so out of my depth when Ben and I go to dinners and
things. Like everyone really is just waiting for Ben to get over his 'bad girl infatuation' after all," she muttered. Jay made a face at the reminder of what Audrey had called her. "But I'll figure it out."

"We'll stick together, and they'll realize how much better you are than one of their cotton candy princesses," Jay promised.

"This was supposed to be about making you feel better," Mal scolded. "Stop worrying about me."

Jay flashed a quick grin. "Sorry, Mal, can't do that. It's my job to watch your back."

"You're so stubborn," she said with a sigh before separating to go to her class. Jay only laughed and kept walking down the hall towards his first class of the day.

Iago turned his head to look back at Mal. She narrowed her eyes and pointed firmly at Jay's back. Iago didn't bother to show he'd noticed but shifted along Jay's shoulder to be closer to his head. "She's just worried about you," he murmured.

"... I know," Jay replied quietly. "But I can't help that. Especially since her worrying about it won't be changing anything."

"Maleficent's daughter is nothing if not resourceful," Iago said.

"I'm not so far gone in Auradon ways that I believe in blind optimism," Jay muttered. "I know what is and is not likely to happen. And this is not likely to be changing."

Iago didn't say anything in response Jay took that as a victory before going to class. The day passed with excruciating slowness, however, that Jay was not prepared to deal with. Excruciating in the fact that every time he moved it felt like red hot coals were being ground into his joints or his muscles were being shredded and also because he was so tired of trying to figure out his class work each hour seemed to take at least twice as long.

After he was done classes after an eternity of physical and mental torture, Jay went to dinner only because he really knew he should and then straight to bed. Not that straight to bed actually meant sleep.

School might have been impossible for him to wrap his mind around, but trying to fall asleep while in so much pain his hands were actually shaking again, was even harder. Jay tried to stay still to not make things worse, but he just couldn't manage it. The bed wasn't comfortable enough, and if he stayed in one position, it would eventually feel as if the aches were going to just burst his body apart.

Jay heard Carlos and Dude come in but kept his face turned away so that his friend wouldn't see the expression on his face. Iago, perched on the coat rack against the wall like he was, did see and would have frowned had he the facial muscles to allow it.

Carlos stayed up for a while as Jay stubbornly bit his tongue and inner cheeks to keep from making any noises. Why was it so hard to sleep anyway? Shouldn't his mind want to do that and escape from the constant pain? He needed one of those heat things that Aziz had. That was the only thing aside from the booze that had so far helped in any significant way. Too bad Jay was fairly sure Aziz would never let him just take it.

Carlos finally went to bed around eleven and Jay tried fruitlessly for another hour before pushing himself into a sitting position. Jay glanced over at Carlos' bed and then buried his damp face in his hands. The pain was so bad now that he was sweating from it and his muscles were trembling
without his control. Jay couldn't even keep his hands steady. Iago flew over but very deliberately
didn't land on Jay but rather the bed. "You okay, kid?" he asked quietly.

Jay shook his head. "... no," he admitted as he lifted his head. Iago really hated the sight of tears in
his eyes. Eyes that were again glowing gold where they had been brown before.

"Your eyes, Jabir," Iago said. "They're off again." Jay roughly rubbed at his eyes, and when he
lowered his fist, they had stopped glowing. Iago nodded and then went silent. This was not going
very well at all. A Djinn was clearly not supposed to be made or live or whatever it was the way
Jay was. Iago was a little fuzzy on what exactly was going on with Jay other than it was because of
how Jafar had gotten the bracers off himself and onto Jay. "Let me see them."

Jay looked up sharply. "What?"

"Let me see them," Iago said with a wing extended towards Jay's wrist. "Maybe there's something
we missed about how to get them off. There had to be some way Jafar did it."

Jay frowned. He had stared at the gold wrapped around his wrists enough to know that they hadn't
missed anything. They were magically in place, and he was royally screwed. "We didn't miss
anything, Iago," he muttered as he stared down at the leather that was covering up the gold.

Iago huffed. "It's been years. Maybe something's changed!" he argued.

Jay remembered the black specks that had been on the gold last time. He wasn't sure why but he
really didn't want Iago to see that. He could imagine the bird would freak out. "If you don't show
me, I'm going to start screaming like Cruella and wake Carlos," Iago threatened.

"You'll send him into a panic attack or a Flashback or something!" Jay hissed.

"Then show me," Iago ordered.

Jay still hesitated. Until Iago opened his beak, that is. "Alright! Just shut up!" Jay quickly unlaced
the leather cuffs and pulled them off. He almost cringed as he saw the gold revealed. Even more so
when he saw that the tarnish had spread into larger areas that were now very noticeable.

Iago hopped forward and examined the metal. "What are these... stains?" he asked.

"They just sort of... showed up?" Iago echoed angrily. "Showed up? Jabir! Nothing magically showing up could be
good!"

"Well, what was I supposed to do? Shine my manacles?" Jay asked angrily and sarcastically. "No
thanks!"

Iago jumped up onto Jay's knee, and the boy winced in pain. "They aren't just manacles, Jabir,"
Iago hissed. "There as much a part of you as the lamp is. Just look at them! If they look like they're
getting damaged just what do you think is going on inside of you?"

"It's not like I can stop it," Jay murmured.

"You will tell them everything tomorrow," Iago said firmly. "Not whatever half story you came up
with when you bought yourself more time. Everything. Am I clear?"

"Or you'll what?" Jay asked.
Iago leaned closer and dug his claws in slightly. "Or I'll do it myself. I don't know fully what's happening to you, Jabir, but I won't let it just happen."

Jay studied the bird in front of him for several minutes. He didn't think that Iago was bluffing on this one. He really would say everything if Jay didn't. That left him in quite a bind since Jay had indeed been intending on not telling the whole story. "... on one condition," Jay murmured. Iago narrowed his eyes. "Get me something to drink so I can at least play some part of a game tomorrow?"

Iago straightened and looked affronted. "Are you serious?"

"Please, Iago... I won't ever ask you to do something like this again. And I just want it to sleep. I promise," Jay said as he reached for the leather cuffs again. "I don't even need much. Just enough to take the edge off?"

There was a long silence. Finally, Iago sighed and took off through the window that was open just a little. Jay sighed and finished fastening his leather bracers on. At the very least he'd be able to get some rest tonight. He could worry about Iago's threat tomorrow after the game. Sure Iago wouldn't be able to carry back a whole bottle of rum or anything crazy, but even a few shots of something would be a blessing at this point. Jay just hoped he didn't have to wait too long.

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact, in the Rescuers originally Cruella de Vil was supposed to return as the villain but the changed it to an entirely new character of Madame Medusa, which is why the two nasty ladies have some similarities. She also has quite a bit in common with Ursula, such as having two nasty sidekicks.

Also, I really want a fic where its an actual transfer student story where princes have to go to Dragon Hall while tge VK go to Auradon... it would be so hilarious, I think, but won't be happening in this story so... I'll satisfy myself with the VKs telling stories.
Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

Things do not go quite according to plan...

Jay was lagging. Though he had expected the game to be difficult due to how much pain he was in and how little sleep he'd gotten the night before (Iago hadn't been able to find him anything to drink in anything resembling speed, so Jay had gotten somewhere around an hour of actual rest), he hadn't expected it to be quite as bad as it was. They weren't even halfway through the game and Jay was struggling to see the light at the end of the tunnel, as it were. Sweat was pouring down his face and making his hair stick uncomfortably under his helmet. His legs felt as stable as jelly, and his fingers were tingling and numb.

A large part of the problem was because Aries' son, Anders, was keeping on Jay like a tick. Every time Jay turned around he had to fight for the puck or to get anywhere down the field because Anders was right there. Obviously, his father, their coach, had made it Anders' job to make sure Jay couldn't do anything and Anders seemed to be one of the few people that could actually keep pace with Jay on the field. Seeing how Jay was not at his best, that meant he was getting run down even faster than he'd expected to be.

Jay wasn't giving up by any stretch of the imagination, but it was becoming very hard to keep hold of his stick during battles. "You alright out there, Jay?" Ben asked as they huddled up to plan the next play. He'd seen Jay very nearly lose control of the puck just five minutes ago and was a little worried. Ben knew that Anders could be a beast on the field, but he'd figured their own best player wouldn't have quite so many problems with him.

"Yeah, he's just really fighting me out there," he said as lightly as he was able. "It's like they don't like me or something."

"More likely they don't like how you run ram-shod all over them," Herkie supplied. "Kind of figures that Uncle would put Anders on your case with how we creamed them last game we played." Last time, Jay hadn't been covered nearly as closely and managed two goals on his own and helped Ben make another two. The Olympians had been pissed after that game.

A few of the others nodded. "Well, so long as Jay's tied up over there, we'll have to play the other side of the field and make openings where we can," Ben said. "Lots of passes to make them change directions and run all over the pitch. Jay, if you can get loose of Anders, great, if not, don't sweat it."

"Kinda sweating anyway," Jay said. That drew a few laughs and then they all broke the huddle to return to their positions.

The team had been working on passes lately so Ben's directions to pass it every which way, was fairly simple to achieve. The puck bounced back and forth across the field so much it was more like a game of pinball instead of tourney.

Jay could barely even get open for a pass, but he did manage to do so a few times even if he did have to get rid of the puck almost instantly. Anders was getting more and more aggressive as Jay
began to struggle to keep up. They kept colliding hard, and Jay had to plant himself firmly to not be
deluded over. Anders had a few inches on him in width and was heavier, but that added weight was
all muscle mass.

"This is getting old," Anders grumbled as Jay managed to send the puck across the field to Chad
even though the Olympian had been fighting for it hard.

"Yeah, well, go chase it if you wanna," Jay replied as he jogged off a few paces to try and get open
again. Anders stuck by him stubbornly.

"Not happening," Anders said firmly. "Your ass is mine."

Jay scoffed at that even as he fought against how badly that echoed in his memories. "My ass is
nobodies but my own," he replied. "Good to know you find it so nice, though."

Anders scowled, but before he could do more than open his mouth in reply, both of them noticed
the tourney puck fly up into the air after a brutal stick check. The puck landed a few feet in front of
them, and both took off, instantly forgetting the smack talk to try and get there first. Jay was
substantially faster and so got to the ball first and tossed it up with his stick.

Anders was already barreling towards him, so Jay glanced around for someone to toss it to. There
was nobody ahead, but Aziz called out from a little back on the field. Jay barely had time to turn
and pass into the general direction Aziz's voice had come from before Anders slammed into him.

Jay was taken straight off his feet and hit the ground hard with a grunt of pain. "Damn," he groaned
as he tried to shake off the way his whole skeleton had shaken from the two impacts. Jay rolled to
his knees and got up as fluidly as he could manage; trying to hide how much that had really, really
hurt. "You are built like a truck," Jay grumbled.

"That's what you get when you're the son of a God," Anders said smugly.

Jay was unimpressed and moved again to try and be in a better spot if his team needed him to step
in for some reason. "I'm thinking more like the son of a bull," Jay grumbled.

"That's a Minotaur, and I'm not one of those," Anders replied grumpily.

"Right. Sure you're not," Jay said. "You just run like one."

Anders cast a glare at Jay and missed seeing a tackle near the middle of the field that caused Chad
to fall hard and the puck to escape his possession. Jay ran for it and heard Anders curse behind
him. Another two of the Olympians were already almost there as Chad struggled to his feet.

Jay clashed with the other team while trying to avoid slamming into Chad. Sticks pushed at each
other and bodies shoved to try and get the better angle. Jay managed to push hard enough to slip his
stick under someone else's and flick the puck out of the tangle. He was right in the middle and had
no way to move because of the press of sticks and bodies. Jay saw Anders coming and knew the
boy had way too much momentum to stop. Jay gritted his teeth and knew it would hurt.

The slam of Anders' shoulder into his chest knocked the wind from him, and Jay was thrown again.
Jay felt the pressure of a stick against his leg and realized his foot hadn't actually left the ground
because of how he'd planted himself. He only felt the hard stick digging into his leg for long
enough to realize what would happen before he heard the SNAP. If he'd had air in his lungs, he
would have screamed from the pain that turned all of his vision white.

Jay barely even realized he slammed into the ground and landed on someone else's arm. All he was
aware of was the unholy amount of pain that was exploding from his leg. There was so much pain, Jay felt like he might throw up from it. He certainly couldn't muster any strength to even roll off of whoever he had half landed on.

Jay wanted to scream so badly, but he bit it back from long habit of never showing how much it hurt. There were definite tears in his eyes, and he didn't dare look down at his leg to see how badly he had been injured from the fall. The arm under him was pulled out, and Jay couldn't quite help the strangled noise of pain from his body shifting. He thought he heard someone calling for him but responding to it was so far out of his concerns right then, he didn't even look up.

Jay rolled to prop himself up onto his side just in case he really did vomit. His vision was slowly clearing although every color was more grey than it should be and he felt dizzy. Jay reached up with a shaking hand to pull his helmet off so that he could hopefully breathe a little more freely and dropped it off carelessly to the side. Jay was vaguely aware of people crowded around him. He was way too concerned with not completely losing his composure to worry about who was trying to talk to him.

And then, Mal was crouched down beside him. Jay blinked to try and focus. He felt like he'd missed some time between hitting the ground and realizing Mal was there, though he had no idea if that was true or not. She could have just run over when he hadn't jumped back up like he usually did. "Jay," Mal said, putting a hand on his shoulder. "Don't try and move. Your leg is broken."

Jay almost laughed. "You don't say," he managed to get out. He still felt dangerously nauseous, and he was shaking despite the amount of control he usually had over himself.

Coach suddenly appeared in Jay's vision crouching down just beside Mal. "We need to get you off the field, Jay. Can you get up at all?" he asked, eyeing Jay critically.

Jay thought about it for a minute and then shook his head. "No," he admitted although it burned him to do so. Usually, he'd go ahead and struggle to the sidelines with only someone supporting his hurt side, but just imagining trying to stand on one leg right then made that nausea build again.

"How are you not screaming?" someone that sounded like Chad asked.

"I'm trying to not think about," Jay bit out, although that question boded really badly. He hadn't looked down at his leg yet, but he knew he would have to do that soon. Jay realized that there were a lot fewer people around him now that Mal was there. She probably had them back off. Jay was glad he was trying hard enough to not pass out without the crowd.

Carlos was there without his helmet on and several pieces of wood in his hand. Evie was right behind him and had a few towels from somewhere. "Alright, Jay, you win already," Carlos said as he knelt down.

Jay groaned. "I really didn't want to win..." he muttered. If Carlos was admitting that Jay had the worst injury, it really had to be bad. Jay took a breath he hoped would steady his nerves before looking down at his right leg. He let out the air as a shaky noise somewhere between a whine and a groan. "No wonder I wanted to throw up," he managed to say.

Jay's leg was very obviously broken. Mostly due to the fact that part of his bone had ripped through his flesh and tanned skin. Bright red blood was now dripping unpleasantly onto the grass, and the jagged end of bone was way too bright when exposed to the sun. Some weird morbid part of his brain that still was somehow working despite the pain noticed distantly that his bone, despite being way too high a contrast to the rest of the colors around it, didn't seem as pure white as he'd always assumed bones to be. But maybe that was because his vision was turning a little grey again. Jay
pushed the irrelevant thoughts to the side as Evie very carefully wrapped the bloody break in the towels she had brought.

Carlos moved to help her, and together they tied his broken and wrapped leg to the sticks that Carlos had brought. Jay wondered why nobody else was helping and then realized that Mal was glowy-eye-ing them away. "Mal," he murmured to get her attention. She looked over instantly and leaned closer so that their heads were only about eight inches apart. "You're going to need them to help. I'm too heavy for you to carry..."

Mal scowled. "We've done it before," she muttered back.

"When I was awake to help," Jay pointed out in the lowest tone he could manage. He really didn't want anyone to overhear this. "I don't think that'll be a possibility this time. I'm already about to pass out."

Mal was quiet for a moment before inclining her head just slightly. "Who then?"

Jay was a little taken aback by the idea that she was asking him to decide and then he realized it was because she wanted him to pick people he trusted. He almost smiled despite the pain. Jay glanced at the people that had come close but had hung back with Mal's glare. "... Ben and Aziz," he told her.

If Mal had a protest with his choice, she didn't show it. Instead, she just looked over at the boys in question. "Ben! Aziz! Come over here!" The teens looked a little surprised but did as she said immediately. Jay was a little surprised and amused to see Iago had landed on Aziz's shoulder pad and was shuffling around uneasily. "When E and Carlos finish, help us get Jay over to the benches," Mal ordered.

Ben and Aziz agreed instantly. Jay did his best to not wince as Evie tied his leg down securely. He knew it had to be tight to keep the damage from getting worse but, Evil, it hurt so bad to even have the towel wrapped around the wound, much less have it tied in place.

"Okay," Evie said as she got to her feet. "It won't move now."

"This is gonna suck," Jay muttered.

Iago flew off of Aziz's shoulder to land on Evie's as his previous perch and Ben crouched down beside Jay. Jay let them loop one of his arms around each of their necks. "Ready?" Ben asked.

"Sure... why not?" Jay asked back. It wasn't as if waiting a few minutes was going to make things hurt any less.

Carlos suddenly dipped down and gently grabbed Jay's injured leg. "If we go at the same time it'll hurt less," he pointed out. "Less movement."

Ben nodded in understanding and counted down. Jay still couldn't quite bite back the hiss of pain as they lifted him up. His vision even went white again for a second as his leg was jostled. His throat hurt from resisting the urge to just scream, but he was glad that he hadn't. Jay was sure he blacked out for a minute because he couldn't remember really moving anywhere.

Jay only realized they'd carried him when he was put down on something solid. He cringed in pain again as his leg settled on the hard surface. The grass had felt marginally better. "Shit, that hurt..." he groaned as he laid back across the bench after being let down.

"You should really lay off the victory pizza, Jay," Aziz said. "You're heavy."
"Fuck off, Aziz," Jay replied without any venom. He was too tired to even make an effort.

Coach came over and put a hand on Jay's shoulder. "I've got an ambulance called. They'll be here soon. You'll be fine," he said with a smile that seemed pretty strained to Jay.

"I know I will," Jay replied. "Not like it's my first broken bone." Admittedly, the first to also be... visible (which still made him a little queasy just thinking about), but definitely not his first.

"I was impressed with your first aid skills," Coach said to Evie and Carlos who were standing just behind him. "Though I hesitate to ask why they are so good."

Mal brushed past him to stand beside Jay. "No hospitals where we're from," she answered bluntly. "You gonna live?" she asked Jay without waiting for a reaction from the coach.

"Yes, otherwise you'd take my stuff," Jay answered with a half smile.

"Damn right," Mal replied instantly.

The referee came over from where he had been doing something that Jay had not even remotely noticed. "Do you want to continue the game now, or wait until after the ambulance leaves?" he asked Coach Bubbles.

"After. It should be here any minute," Coach said.

Jay noticed then that both teams were at their side of the pitch in little clusters with more than a few glances at him from both sides. He really hated the attention. Jay had been hurt plenty and never attracted this much notice. Heck, he had walked right down the street with blood all over his face and limping, and nobody had even looked twice. Coach turned to his three team members still standing there. "You boys should get back over there. Jay'll be fine."

Carlos just folded his arms across his chest and didn't move an inch from where he was standing beside Evie. Ben looked around a little but then gave Jay an attempt at a smile. "We'll come visit after the game, okay?"

Jay frowned. He really didn't want to leave and not see the game through to the end, but he could already hear sirens coming closer. Jay had to bend some to manage it, but he reached out and snagged Ben's shirt. "Hey. You guys lose after this and I'll kick all your asses," he promised.

Ben's smile turned more genuine. "I'll make sure the team knows," he promised before looking at Aziz.

Aziz rolled his eyes but then gave a smirk. "Yeah, we'll make sure they keep playing as if they have to show you up," he told Jay.

Jay snorted. "Like they could."

The sirens were so loud by this point. They turned off a moment later, and Jay turned as best he could to see what was going on. He couldn't see anything at first but then two men in uniforms with some sort of table-y bed... thing came down from somewhere up on the hill. "... Mal?"

"Yeah, I know," she replied. She wasn't about to go anywhere. Everyone on the Isle was familiar with the concept of an ambulance, but none of them had ever seen one. Jay had no idea what to expect and wasn't going to be in the least able to cooperate if he was alone in the unknown. Mal was not about to leave her second-in-command vulnerable. Not even in Auradon.
The two men arrived, and though Jay was probably being difficult -because he was kind of always difficult (especially when he was hurting), they managed to get him lying down on the whatever the hell it was they brought with them. Jay didn't like it in the least. He'd rather be sitting up so he could see more of what was around him. Jay was able to see Iago leave Evie's shoulder to land on Mal's when they had been told only one person could fit into the ambulance with him. Carlos, Evie, and Mal were unhappy, but there was no question who the one would end up being.

Jay didn't really pay much attention to what was going on anymore even though he wanted to stay aware. Unconsciousness, which had been hanging around him pretty much from the beginning, was now starting to take over and Jay was having a hard time not letting it. He felt a sharp poke on the inside of his elbow and looked down to see one of the men had put a needle in his arm attached to some weird tube and a plastic bag filled with... water? Auradon was so weird. He broke his leg, which had nothing to do with water at all.

The other man was assuring Evie about something, but Jay decided he didn't actually care enough to listen and just closed his eyes again. A little while later, he realized he was being moved and jostled but was too tired to look around at where they were going. Then a familiar hand with a particular callous from where she held down a paint can trigger slipped into one of his.

Jay smiled and opened his eyes to look over. The medical people had gotten him into some sort of small... room? It felt like they were moving and he thought he heard an engine, but again, he was in no mood to really think hard about it. Iago was sitting on Mal's shoulder still and looked to be fidgeting. "You better not have done this to get out of telling me what your deal is," Mal said.

"Brilliant plan, but no," Jay murmured. "Just my normal incredible luck striking again." Mal tried a smile and Jay appreciated the effort. "Actually... I'll probably have to tell you now anyway," Jay mused.

"What do you mean?" Mal asked.

"Take off my cuff there," Jay said with a vague sort of gesture to the wrist of the hand she was holding.

Mal's eyes widened in surprise. "But, you... alright..." she said in confusion before starting to undo the laces. Jay had never taken off the leather bands around anyone to Mal's knowledge, not even when he was previously beaten up or any other reason. Jay laid back and closed his eyes again but knew the second that Mal had gotten the leather off. One, he could feel the cuff sliding against his skin for once. And two, Mal breathed out his name. "Jay, what is... there's no way to take this off..."

Jay didn't say anything and just let Mal piece things together on her own for a minute. He opened his eyes just a crack to see Mal run her fingers along the now discolored golden band. He knew what she was looking for and also knew that she wouldn't find it. There wasn't even a hint as a seam anywhere on the golden bracelet. "Jay, explain this," Mal ordered, looking up at him instead of the metal she still had her hand over.

When Jay hesitated, Mal leaned closer. "Jabir. Tell me this isn't what I think it is!" she hissed.

"I try not to lie to you, Mal," Jay muttered back. "Dad... he put them on me somehow a while back. Doesn't do anything on the Isle, of course... but it's been a pain here. And now I'm going to a damn hospital of all places..." He fully closed his eyes again. As if things hadn't been going terribly already, everyone was bound to find out now.

Mal was quiet, and then Jay felt her put the leather back on over the gold cuff. "We'll handle it,"
she said as she tied it closed so that no metal was visible. "I won't let anything happen to you, Jay. Even if I am pissed, you thought you could hide this."

Jay opened his eyes fully to look at Mal with slightly wide eyes. He had no idea why but he didn't expect that reaction. He was thinking more along the lines of yelling and shouting. Mal snorted at his expression. "Don't look at me like that. You're ours, Jay, no matter what species you are. But once you're patched up we're going to have a long, long talk," she said in a very stern voice that almost had Jay cringing out of reflex.

"There really isn't much you can do, though, Mal..." Jay tried.

"We'll see about that," Mal replied even as she pulled her phone from her pocket.

Jay eyed it uneasily. "What are you doing?"

"What do you think? I'm telling Carlos and Evie," Mal said. "We'll need to figure out how to help you, and we can't do that if we don't know anything." Jay tried to argue but only got out one word of his protest before Mal's glowing glare shut him up entirely. "You just rest, idiot. Your leg is busted."

"Yeah, but-"

"I swear to Evil, I will knock you out, Jay," Mal threatened in exasperation. "For once just listen the first time I tell you something, huh?"

Jay gave a little half smile. "But then you really would think something was wrong with me," he said sweetly.

"There is a lot wrong with you, Jay," Mal muttered, but Jay knew it was done with affection.
Mal was not having the best day. Although, she had to admit, Jay was having a substantially worse one. She glanced up from the text that she had been writing to Evie to look at her friend. Jay had been cleaned up and his leg fixed and was currently unconscious. Now that she could really look at him, Mal realized just how little sleep Jay must have been getting. The lights in the hospital were bright enough that they made bags under his eyes show up very well and Mal was now kicking herself for having missed seeing them earlier.

Jay had passed out before they even got to the hospital and that was a few hours ago now, but Mal was content to let him rest for now. She hadn't particularly liked how the doctors wouldn't let her or Iago into the room that they took Jay to fix his leg but they hadn't budged about it. Something about visitors not being allowed in surgeries, which Mal thought was kind of BS. She wasn't squeamish and Jay was seriously hurt so she wanted to make sure he was taken care of. There was no reason to not let her in. They'd almost called security on her before Mal had finally relented and sat down to wait. Jay had only just been moved to this room about twenty minutes ago and Iago had already settled on the railing around Jay's bed while Mal got comfortable. Evie and Carlos were on their way now that the game was over.

Mal took a picture of Jay sleeping and sent it to Evie so that they could at least see that he was alive if not yet entirely well. Mal knew that Jay was going to be a pain when he woke up because the doctors had put some sort of hard shell on his leg and it was now lifted slightly off the bed. He was not supposed to move and Mal knew that would be hard for the thief.

Mal wasn't sure what the point of not moving was since the damage had already been done and corrected. The doctor had tried to explain something about pins and swelling but Mal had only really focused on when he'd mentioned that Jay's bones had been more brittle than they'd expected and had caused some problems in fixing the break. Iago had been quick to come up with the excuse of poor nutrition growing up as the likely cause. Mal was sure that he was lying but wasn't about to point it out since the doctor seemed to have bought it.

Mal leaned over the side of Jay's bed and took one of his hands in hers. She gave his fingers a gentle squeeze even as she stared at the golden metal wrapped tightly around his wrists. The doctors and nurses had taken off all of Jay's clothes including the leather bracers he used to cover the gold ones. Mal hadn't really expected them to do that since all the damage had been to his leg but she hadn't been consulted about it either. It had happened in that 'surgery' they had banned her from being in. She was still expecting a doctor to come in and ask about why she hadn't warned them that Jay was a genie but they hadn't so much as mentioned it.

Jay being a genie was a nasty shock but it did explain more than a few things about her friend. Mal had taken a minute to piece together what the gold cuffs had meant as she wasn't as well versed with genie as she now wished she were. Luckily, Jay had rambled about genie a lot when they were younger and he was all but desperate to find one and, though Mal had ignored most of it, she had absorbed enough to make the necessary connections. Mal supposed that obsession with finding a genie made a bit more sense now that she knew what she did. Nothing but a wish was supposed to be able to open the metal cuffs. Jay had gradually stopped talking about genie as they'd gotten older and he began to realize he wouldn't be finding one on the Isle. He still got hopeful every time he saw a likely looking lamp, but Mal had never believed that he'd find one. She would have kept a
better eye out if she'd known that Jay wasn't just looking for one to appease his crazy father.

Mal laid her phone on the bed beside Jay's thigh and used her free hand to rub across one of the mottled black areas of the gold. She didn't like the spots in the least. From what she remembered about Jay's ramblings, Genie manacles that enslaved them and bound their powers to fulfill wishes weren't supposed to be able to be damaged. They couldn't be ripped off or melted or cut, so why were Jay's so tarnished looking? "Iago, what's going on here?" she asked as she examined her fingers and frowned that none of the black came off. Mal hadn't really expected it to, but she was still a little disappointed.

"Those just started showing up a little while ago," Iago said from the other side of the bed. "I don't know why. His cuffs used to be as bright a gold as you'd expect a Djinn to have."

"How did they even get on him?" Mal asked. She remembered when she had first met Jay. He hadn't been wearing anything around his wrists then. Not metal and not leather.

"Jafar," Iago said unhappily. "He made Jabir make a wish to become the Djinn. The wish shouldn't have worked on the Isle like every other magic doesn't work, but Jafar had done something to gather up remnants of magical energy. There wasn't enough to actually fulfill the wish but he could start it. The bracers started to open and Jafar managed to slide his hands out of them as soon as he had enough extra space. Before the magic he'd stolen was used up, he put them on Jabir."

Mal gave a single unamused huff. "So it's like he lifted a rock off himself just enough to push Jay under it instead. Asshole. Why didn't he just have Jay wish him free then?"

"Wishing Jafar free would have taken even more magic that would have taken lifetimes to collect. You can't just begin that wish and leave it half done like you can if you're just transferring being a Djinn to someone else," Iago explained. "If you wanna use your rock analogy again... it take as a lot more strength to get rid of the rock entirely than it does to just pry it off you enough to replace yourself with someone else. Plus... Jafar has some sort of revenge scheme concocted against Aladdin, I'm sure, and it would go a lot easier if he could just make some wishes."

Mal frowned but supposed it made sense in a way. She looked up at Jay's tired face again. "He wasn't going to tell me about this was he?" she asked.

"He was going to try and avoid it," Iago said in agreement. "I told him I would tell you myself if he didn't tell you today, though. I only saw those black marks last night."

"Idiot," Mal muttered although she wasn't all that surprised. Jay had been raised with Jafar after all, and the ex-vizier didn't believe in teamwork or trusting others. Even Mal had understood the concept better than Jay had before they came to Auradon and clearly he was still trying to figure out the finer points.

Mal heard the click of heels in the hall moving quickly and turned enough to see when the door opened. Evie rushed in with Carlos just behind. "Mal, is he okay?" Evie asked even as she practically flew across the room.

"I told you he was," Mal said in amusement even as Carlos rolled his eyes. "But he's resting so try not to wake him, E."

Evie nodded and pulled a chair over beside Mal's to sit down. Carlos went to the other side where there was more room. Evie put a gentle hand on Jay's bicep and glanced down at Jay's wrist. "He really does have them," she murmured.
"You didn't believe me?" Mal asked.

"It wasn't that," Evie said. "I just didn't want to..." The idea that Jay had been hiding something so big from them and -from what Mal said- suffering for it for no reason, deeply upset the Princess. She didn't like when her friends were hurting and even less when they were hurting and she couldn't try to do anything to make it better.

"I can't believe I never saw those," Carlos commented. "But it's weird these... spots."

Mal nodded. "We're not sure what those are but Iago says they weren't there originally."

"Maybe Jordan will know what it means," Evie said as she lifted a hand to brush Jay's hair back from his face. Their lovable thief didn't even seem to notice. "We'll have to ask her when we get back to school."

"You guys remember what Jordan said, though?" Carlos asked. "That a Genie not having their lamp is like torture. If Jay's a Genie... where's his lamp? He has to have one somewhere, right? I've never seen it, though, so it's not in our room."

Mal looked over at Iago. "It's Jafar's old lamp isn't it? And that's why Jay didn't want us to go after it? Because he didn't want us to know he was a Genie?" Mal had almost talked herself out of the idea of going after the lamp before this had happened but now she was more determined than ever that she needed to get it away from Jafar. Jay's inability to stand up to his father made so much more sense now that she knew Jafar had Jay's lamp rather than his own.

Iago nodded. "Yes. Jafar keeps it locked in his safe where nobody can get it," Iago answered.

Mal frowned. "His safe isn't impenetrable," she argued. In her experience nothing really was. It might be hard to get into Jafar's safe but there was no way that it was impossible.

"Even Jabir hasn't managed to break in," Iago said. "And he's been trying for years."

"Maybe he just needed help," a new voice said.

Mal and Evie whipped around and Carlos nearly jumped out of his skin. "Ben! Aziz! What are you two doing here?" Mal demanded before turning back to Evie and Carlos. "Guys! You forgot to close the door!?"

Evie cringed. "I'm sorry, I was just so worried!"

"We drove them," Ben said as he came into the room. "The rest of the team is waiting for news back at campus. We thought it might be a bit much to try and cram us all in one hospital room."

Aziz firmly closed the door behind him so that nobody else could overhear. To say he was surprised to find out that Jay was a Djinn was an understatement. In a way, he was surprised the thought hadn't occurred to him sooner. Being a Djinn could definitely be passed on genetically as was proven by Jordan, and Jafar was a Djinn so the possibility was there.

"You can't tell anyone about this," Mal said firmly. "He's already going to be upset enough that you found out because we forgot to close a damn door."

Ben held up his hands. "We promise, Mal. Although there's no reason to worry. Nobody's going to use it against him," he reasoned.

"No, but it makes sense they'd worry," Aziz said. "I still worry about someone hurting Jordan and
grew up without the kinds of things these guys grew up with. It's just normal to worry about a Djinn being taken advantage of," he told Ben. "I'd be more worried if they weren't super overprotective."

"You said maybe he needed help," Carlos prompted with a narrow eyed glare towards Aziz, who had been the one to say it. "What makes you think you can? Jay's the best thief in the Isle, and if he can't crack Jafar's safe that means it's really tough."

"Well, sure, but he's not the only one that knows their way around a lock," Aziz said casually. That got several stares from the Isle kids and Aziz felt they didn't much believe him. He sighed. "Okay, see, the thing is... I am terrible at keeping track of my keys. Like, even now, I have no idea where my door key for my room is. Haven't known for about a month. So, instead of getting my dad annoyed by asking constantly for new keys... I just, taught myself how to... pick the locks..."

Ben turned to look at him with an exasperated expression. "You lost your dorm key again?"

Aziz very deliberately didn't look at his friend. "... maybe."

"Okay, fine, you can pick locks. Whatever," Mal said. "But that doesn't matter because you're not coming to the Isle with us. You'll stand out like a sore thumb. When Jay's leg gets better we'll help him get the lamp back and come back and everything will be fine."

"Uh... I don't think waiting that long would be a good idea," Aziz said as he eyed the black marks on Jay's cuffs.

"Why not?" Evie asked worriedly.

Aziz pointed to Jay's wrist. "Because of that. How long have the cuffs been turning black like that?"

"About a week," Iago supplied.

"Well, they already look like they cover about half of the metal, right?" Aziz estimated. It was a rough guess but the blotches were really very large and noticeable at that point. "I may not know all the ins and outs of Djinn like Jordan would, but... I do know that those are the magical link between a Djinn and its lamp and discoloring like that is probably really bad. Just what do you think will happen if that spreads to cover all of the gold?"

There was an uncomfortable silence following that question. The implications were somewhat inescapable. None of them knew for sure what would happen if it got that bad but they certainly didn't want to find out. "You would still stick out on the Isle," Mal pointed out although she sounded much less firm.

"I can fix that," Evie volunteered. Aziz was close to Jay's size so she would only have to change a few things to make him fit in on the Isle. Heck, some might even mistake him for Jay with short hair. They certainly looked enough alike with their nice muscles and dreamy dark eyes.

Mal turned to Ben. "You can get us back over to the Isle, right?" she asked.

Ben hesitated just a moment. He wasn't sure he wanted to send his girlfriend and company back over there. Mal, Evie, Carlos, and Jay had to have definitely made some enemies. But Aziz was probably right that they shouldn't wait any longer than they absolutely had to. "Yeah," he said with a smile. "I'll get you a ride over there."

"Actually, it would be probably better if we had a... less flashy ride," Carlos piped up. "The limo
sort of attracted a lot of attention when you picked us up last time."

Aziz perked up some. "We could take my ride," he said. "I would just need the control to the barrier and we'd be set."

"What's your ride?" Mal asked.

"Magic carpet," Aziz said as if it were obvious. "Like I said... I lose keys so I'd just have to hotwire my car every time I wanted to go anywhere."

Mal shook her head. "A magic carpet might get us there... but magic doesn't work on the Isle... so how would we get back?" she asked him. Once they were on the Isle of the Lost the magic carpet would turn into just a normal carpet that would be precisely no help in getting back out.

"Ah.... right," Aziz said. "Well, scrap that idea then."

Ben thought for a minute. "There's a barge due to come pick up supplies for the Isle in two days," he said.

"You mean trash," Carlos muttered.

Ben turned pink but pretended like Carlos hadn't said anything. "It comes here to Auradon empty from the Isle and then heads back. All the barges that come back and forth from the Isle have a code that lets the barrier down in one spot for just long enough for them to get through. It's way out to sea, though, which is why there's almost no risk of one of the villains getting to it. If you can get onto the barge before it leaves the Isle, it'll bring you out of the barrier and you can fly the carpet back here," he suggested. That secret of where the barges enter and leave through was very closely guarded, but that was the only way Ben could see them getting back if they didn't take a car.

"But it's in two days," Mal said. Ben nodded. She glanced at Aziz. "It's not easy living on the Isle for one day much less two," she warned him. Mal wasn't worried about Evie, Carlos, or herself dealing with the Isle again. It wouldn't be pleasant but two days should be easily doable as long as they kept their heads down. Aziz, however, had never dealt with anything remotely resembling Isle conditions and, as a hero, he might do something stupid and blow what she was hoping to keep a secret right out of the water.


"Cake... right," Carlos said. "We don't even have cake on the Isle."

Evie turned to Iago. "Do you know where Jafar's safe is, Iago?"

The bird shifted a little. "It'll be in the house. He's got three hiding places for it... behind the tiger painting, in the floor under the divan, or in the false side of his desk," Iago told him. "He moves it randomly from place to place so it's harder to find."

"So, it's a small safe then?" Ben asked.

Iago bobbed his head. "Yes, it only holds the most valuable treasures that he has. The lamp is the biggest thing in there. He keeps a chain wrapped around the safe with a padlock so that the door won't open without getting the chains off first. Jabir has a spare key to that, but I don't know where he keeps it hidden."

Mal frowned and moved to Jay's head. She took hold of his shoulder and gave a small but firm shake. "Jay. Jay! I need you to wake up for just a second." Jay groaned a little and Mal gave him
another small shake. "I promise you just need to answer one question, Jay."

"Wha?" he murmured, half opening his eyes. They weren't even focused and Mal felt a little bad because he was clearly drugged up on whatever the doctor had given him to get rid of the pain and also mostly still asleep. It wasn't very fair of her to ask probing questions while he was so obviously not in a condition for them, but she also needed to know things that Jay had kept secret. She would apologize to him later if he was upset about it.

"You know the spare key that you made to get into Jafar's safe? I need to know where you keep it," Mal said firmly. "Where did you hide the key, Jay?"

Jay frowned. "... the key?"

"Yes," Mal confirmed. "The key for the chains around Jafar's safe. You made a spare, where it is?" she asked again.

"'sa secret," Jay slurred before closing his eyes again.

Mal gave him another shake to make sure he stayed at least awake enough to answer questions. "I need to know, Jay. You can trust me."

Jay blinked a few times. "Why?"

"I just need to know where it is, Jay," Mal pressed.

Jay's frown deepened. "Derelict's got it," he answered. "Now lemme sleep, Mal..."

Mal froze for a moment before nodding. "Alright, go back to sleep," she agreed and let go of his shoulders. In just a minute, Jay was out like a light again. "Oh boy..." Mal breathed as she turned to face the others again.

"That's going to be a problem," Carlos said with wide eyes.

"I don't understand. What did that even mean?" Aziz asked.

"It means Jay hid it in his fish tank," Evie supplied, looking just as worried as her other friends.

Aziz frowned and shook his head a little as if he hadn't heard that right. "Jay has a fish tank?" he asked. That just did not seem all that likely to the Prince. The villain kids nodded.

"And... why is that making you all look so nervous?" Ben asked.

"Because of what's in the fish tank," Carlos answered.

Ben and Aziz exchanged a look. "This makes sense," Iago mused. "Jafar keeps some of his smaller jewels and things in the tank too. Anything that he didn't think was important enough to keep from Jabir. He would keep taking care of it for that reason without realizing the key was even in there."

"Okay," Aziz said, holding his hands up. "What is in this super scary fish tank?"

The teens from the Isle exchanged few looks. "Two massive moray eels," Evie answered. "They're names are Lagan and Derelict and they're descended from Flotsam and Jetsam. They rip into anyone but Jay who tries to stick their hand in the tank. I think a few goblins lost hands that way..."

"You wouldn't think eels were loyal but it turns out they really can be," Carlos added.
Mal looked at Iago. "Where's the original key?" she asked.

"Jafar keeps that," Iago answered.

"Great so... that's going to be a problem," Mal sighed. "We'll figure it out. Not getting that lamp is not an option. We'll bring the whole damn safe back if we have to. You said it's not big."

"It is heavy though," Iago pointed out. "It is a safe."

Mal ignored that. She didn't care what she had to do. She was going to make damn sure that Jay was safe from his father and healthy, which meant getting that lamp. "Alright. Aziz, how soon can you be ready to go?" she asked.

"As... soon as Evie gives me whatever it is she wants to give me?" he said uncertainly.

Mal nodded. "Great. Evie, get on that. Ben. I need you to cover for us. Being gone two days is going to be... noticed. Maybe ask Jordan what's going on with Jay but don't let anyone else know what's going on. I mean it. Nobody else can know about this," she said firmly.

Ben reached out and gently took hold of Mal's arms. "I promise, Mal. I'll make sure nobody finds out. You just go and get the lamp," he told her. Ben still had reservations about the whole thing but he could see that Mal would do this either with or without his help and he'd much rather be helping her. She would have a higher chance of coming back to him if he was helping from the other side. "I'll take care of everything here. Including Jay... for however much that's worth when I know he's probably going to be pissed off."

Mal smirked at that. "Yeah, he will. Good luck," she said, entirely unrepentant. If she could wait for Jay's leg to heal and him to go with them, she would, but she didn't want to risk waiting that long. Mal turned halfway. "Iago-"

"I'm going with you," the parrot said instantly.

"Uh, what? No, you're not," Mal answered.

"Yes, I am," Iago repeated. "You don't know Jafar's house like I do and you can't go blindly in there. Plus, if you think I'm letting you kids wander on back into that tiger den without any help, you're dead wrong."

Mal frowned. "I'd rather you stay here with Jay."

"Jabir's going to be stuck here in the hospital for a few days at least and he's not going to be very pleasant. I'll be more useful with you," Iago said. "Besides, you can't stop me from going with you."

"You can't even talk right on the Isle," Mal pointed out.

"I can talk well enough," Iago replied. "I'm going with you. You can't stop me."

"But-"

"You can't stop me!"
I was tempted to ignore the minions gotten from Evie’s party but I like the idea of them too much to ignore. I wish they were more than a brief mention in the book (and one tiny kitty appearance)
"Okay, so, what exactly can we expect from Jay's house?" Aziz asked through the door to the girl's bathroom where he was changing into the clothes Evie had modified for him.

"First off," Mal said. "It's Jafar's house. Not Jay's. Details like that are important on the Isle. Second, I don't think any of us have actually been in the house part of the shop." She looked around at the others questioningly. Mal herself hadn't even gone into the junk shop part of the building much since she had no interest in being ripped off and Jay would find her easily enough.

Carlos raised his hand. "I was in there once a long time ago," Carlos offered. "When Jay built Lagan and Derelict a bigger fish tank he needed help with the pump part, so I put it in for him. That's the only time though, and he rushed me through the house so fast I don't remember much."

"Because you weren't supposed to be back there," Iago commented from where he was sitting on Evie's shoulder. "But when we get to the house you all need to be careful where you step and what you touch."

"Why's that?" Evie asked.

"Jafar's a dab hand at mechanical contraptions himself," Iago said. "And paranoid. He raised Jabir to be the best thief on the Isle, but he never trusted him to not steal Jafar's things too. So he set up traps around anything he thought was too important to risk. And since Jabir wasn't allowed in the house, if a trap was triggered Jafar knew that Jabir had been in there."

"Jay wasn't allowed in the house?" Aziz asked as he came out of the bathroom.

"No," Mal answered before looking over. She was a little shocked at how Aziz looked in Jay's slightly altered clothes. "Wow... you look scarily like Jay right now," she said.

The snake motif was missing from this particular vest of Jay's, but it was the same red, dark blue, and a little bit of yellow that most of Jay's clothes were in. Aziz had been given a pair of jeans that had been almost completely washed out color wise, but still had a bit of blue visible and had been patched with bits of leather (especially on the knees). He hadn't been given one of Jay's beanies, but Mal thought that was a good thing. She didn't think she could handle how much like Jay Aziz would look with one of those on. "Yeah, Z... like freakishly like Jay," Carlos said with wide eyes.

Aziz looked over at Carlos. "Z?"

Carlos shrugged. "A didn't seem to fit right," he said by way of explanation.

Aziz thought about questioning why they'd give him a nickname at all but then paused long enough to really consider it. The Isle kids didn't give many people outside of their circle nicknames. He decided he should feel flattered about it and didn't protest.

"If I didn't know better," Evie said as she came over to adjust the shoulders of the vest Aziz was wearing, "I'd say you were Jay's brother or something."

"We should play that up," Mal said. "It'll help him go unnoticed if we just say he's Jay's brother."

Carlos frowned. "But everyone knows Jay's an only child... like all of us."

"Do we know that?" Mal asked back. "Do we really? I mean, who knows where his mom is."
Maybe she lives on the other side of the Isle with a second son. If we don't know they don't know.”

Carlos and Evie exchanged a look. While it was always possible since Jafar would not even mention Jay's mother (like most of their parents wouldn't willingly talk about how their kids came to be), it also wasn't very likely. Still, the story would work for a short trip so they would go along with it. "Right, so, where's this carpet?" Carlos asked.

"My room," Aziz said with a slight jerk of his head. "Come on."

The teens quickly made their way through the halls of the dorm to Aziz's room. "I haven't had to use Carpet in a while so it might take him a minute to wake up," Aziz warned as he went to where a jewel-toned oriental rug was wrapped up in the corner. "Carpet," Aziz called while giving the thickly woven piece of fabric a poke.

At first, the Carpet didn't do anything that would indicate it was magical in the least. Aziz poked it a few more times, and then finally it uncurled and seemed to stretch in midair. The Isle kids watched in awe as the tapestry fluttered around by itself and then wrapped around Aziz in a weird hug-like gesture before noticing them at all.

It suddenly dropped out of the air and fell to the ground where it stayed utterly still. Aziz sighed. "It's alright, Carpet. You can stop pretending. We all need your help," he said as he knelt down beside the rug.

Carpet fluttered around the edges and then lifted one end, curling the corners together almost so that one hump was acting as a head. Aziz smiled and patted that hump of fabric gently. "That's right. You remember Jafar, right?" Carpet sprung upwards instantly and spun around before holding up its tassels in a mock fight pose. "Yeah, him," Aziz agreed. "Well, he's up to something, and we have to go to the Isle to fix it."

"If I knew it was this carpet I might have reconsidered this idea," Iago muttered. Though Iago hadn't been loud, it was enough to attract Carpet's attention. The animated floor covering rose up to poke at the parrot with part of one tassel. "Don't you give me that look!" Iago snapped. "Yes, it's me you misplaced curtain!"

Carpet recoiled back and jumped behind Aziz to peek out hesitantly. "It's alright, Carpet," Aziz said. "Iago's helping us."

Carpet looked less than convinced although the Isle kids were really confused how a piece of cloth was able to look any particular way in the first place. "Alright let's go. The sooner we get to the Isle the sooner we can get the lamp and then find a way onto that barge," Mal said.

"Hold on one sec," Aziz said as he went to his closet and pulled out a strange contraption of straps. "Carpet, there's no magic on the Isle, so when you get there, you won't be able to follow us around. I'll carry you in this," he said holding up the harness.

Carpet fluttered over and poked at the straps before forming the odd head lump and nodding. Then Carpet opened the window nearby and left through it. "Let's go," Aziz said with a grin before jumping out of the window. The villain kids, despite knowing there was a magical flying carpet out of that window couldn't quite help but rush forward to look.

Aziz landed just a few feet below the window and was sitting on the fluttering carpet with a smile. "Come on," he encouraged with a wave of his hand. "It's perfectly safe. I promise."

Mal, Evie, and Carlos exchanged a few uneasy looks. It was one thing to say they would take a
flying carpet but it was altogether different to actually jump from a third story window and trust that said carpet would catch you. "It doesn't look very big," Carlos muttered.

"It's big enough," Mal replied as she pushed her nerves down and climbed through the window. She forced herself to jump, and Aziz helped catch and stabilize her when she landed on the not-at-all-stable-enough feeling carpet. The carpet fluttered constantly, and Mal thought it was going to give way every other second, but it somehow didn't. "Come on," Mal called up to Evie and Carlos.

"You know, maybe one of us should stay behind with Jay," Carlos said uneasily. "I mean, he gets so cranky when he's hurt and-"

"Carlos!" Mal shouted. "Get down here. I'll need all of you."

Carlos sighed and then, with a nudge from Evie, climbed through the window like Mal had. He let out a squeak of fright even as Mal and Aziz caught him and helped him find a large enough place to stay crouched on the carpet. Evie followed with fewer protests.

Four teens on the carpet was a tight fit but then managed it by keeping pressed close and holding onto each other. "Alright, let's go," Aziz said and gave Carpet a pat. The kids from the Isle screamed a little as Carpet backed up and rippled before zooming forward. "Just don't squirm too much and let Carpet do the rest," Aziz told them.

"Easy for you to say," Carlos said as he clung to Evie.

"I've been thinking," Mal shouted so that she could be heard over the air moving past them. "Maybe if we distracted Lagan and Derelict with food we could trap them in the corner of the tank and then get the key out."

"They love squid," Iago said from where he had found refuge from the wind in Evie's lap and tucked into Mal's side. "Try that."

Mal nodded. "Thanks," she said. They would have to find squid but Mal knew that if anywhere on the Isle would have it, they'd find it by the docks. That would cause minor problems with a different type of spineless sea creature, but Mal could handle Uma and her gang. Always could.

"Hey, Iago," Carlos called. "Why couldn't Jay get into the safe? I mean, I don't think I've ever seen a lock that Jay couldn't pick."

"The last lock is a word combination," Iago answered.

Mal scowled. "That ass, do you know the word?"

"No, Jafar wouldn't tell me. I think he knew I would help Jay unlock it if I knew the word," Iago explained.

"Why is a word lock such a big deal?" Aziz asked.

"Jay has absolutely atrocious spelling," Evie answered. "Jafar had to have picked a word lock just trip up Jay." Evie could remember once trying to help Jay during a project at school that Jay actually decided to do for once. No matter how hard she tried, Jay just could not grasp how to spell certain words. Eventually, he got angry and stormed off, and the project (like most other projects Jay attempted for school) never got finished.

Carpet zoomed across the bay towards the Isle of the Lost and Mal leaned forward to point. "There's a place there by the bridge we should be able to land in without anyone seeing us," she
directed.

Aziz nodded and guided Carpet with a few little tugs. Carpet glided elegantly down to that spot. The magic in the magic carpet didn't last long once they were through the barrier and the four teens ended up falling to the ground rather than gliding nicely. They screamed as the controlled entry went wild and ended up in a messy pile but, other than a few bumps and bruises, they were unhurt. They quickly untangled and Iago, who had flown off to land on a nearby dead tree branch rather than crash, watched them with interest. "Not the best landing," Carlos groaned as he pushed himself up.

"I should have come in closer to the ground," Aziz said as he rolled onto his front and then pushed himself up.

"Well, we're here," Mal said as she brushed herself off. "That's the important thing."

Evie accepted Aziz's hand to get up and looked around uneasily. "The whole place feels so much different after being in Auradon..." she murmured as she walked a few paces to stand beside Mal.

"Yeah, but don't worry. We know the Isle. Two days and we'll be gone, and you can drown yourself in a bubble bath or whatever it is you want to do," Mal said with an attempt at a comforting smile. Evie gave her own smile back. Bubble bath wasn't what Evie had in mind, but she appreciated the sentiment.

Aziz carefully rolled Carpet up and then fastened a canvas cover over it and slung the no longer animated rug onto his back. "Alright. We're all set," he said as he adjusted the straps that he was carrying Carpet by. Iago flew down to land on Evie's shoulder.

"Alright, guys. Let's go get us a lamp. And remember... we want to be fast and slick," Mal said. "The fewer people know we're here, the better everything will go." She would prefer it if nobody knew they were there, but she realized that was probably unrealistic. "And Jafar absolutely cannot know why we're here." If Jafar found out that they were after the lamp, well, Mal didn't know what the ex-vizier would do, but it wouldn't be good for Jay.
Chapter 19

Jay knew he wasn't fully awake, but he was half aware of talking going on around him. He couldn't
seem to place the voices in his hazy brain or even process all of what they were saying, and it
seemed like far too much effort to focus on it when he felt so much better (if a little more
unfocused and... floaty) than normal.

"He doesn't look very good at all."

"We only just found out, and they want to keep this quiet."

"I've never actually seen this happen. I only heard that it could."

Jay swore he felt someone's hand on his arm, but then he slipped back off into full
unconsciousness. Someone else's voice reached his brain through the fog, but there weren't even
any words this time. Time was oddly nonexistent, and Jay couldn't bring himself to care. A hand
brushed across his forehead. Most likely Mal. Maybe E.

"What'll happen if the black takes over?"

"The tarnish is from the bond decaying... its to make sure we don't try and abandon our duties. If it
decays entirely it would be the same as..." Jay slipped off again into the peaceful dark where he
wasn't in pain anymore.

Jay wasn't sure how much time had passed, and he honestly didn't really care at that point. The
pain was starting to come back, specifically in his right leg and that was forcing him away from the
lovely rest he'd finally been getting. "... Mal?" she was always close by when he was badly injured.

"Jay, you're awake," someone who was definitely not Mal said.

Jay frowned and opened his eyes even though that seemed a lot harder to do than it should. "... Ben?" Jay was confused now. Why in the hell would Ben be there? Maybe Mal ran off to get
something to eat? "Where's Mal?" In fact, now that Jay thought about it, where were any of the
others?

"They'll be back soon," Ben said with a half smile that Jay didn't fully buy. "They just had to go
and do something."

"Go and do what?" Jay asked. It seemed very odd that all three of them would have gone. Mal's
rules said nobody injured or sick should be left alone if it was at all avoidable. More than once Jay
had stayed with a banged up Carlos at the loft after one of Cruella's rants. Since Jay wasn't exactly
missed at home, he hardly minded.

Ben smiled again and patted Jay on the arm. "They went to get your lamp, Jay."

That took a minute to actually process. "They what!?!" Jay pushed himself up but then realized his
leg was wrapped up in something hard that wouldn't make walking easy in the least. Then
something else clicked in Jay's head, and he whipped around to look at Ben. "How do you know
about that?"

"They didn't tell me, Jay. I overheard them talking about it," Ben said as he tried and failed to push
Jay back down onto the bed. "So, since I accidentally found out, I said I'd stay here with you while
they went and got it for you."
Jay was hardly mollified by that. "They... they went to the Isle to steal from my Dad, Ben," he hissed. "You don't do that! They'll be killed if he catches them! You have to get them back!"

"Jay, they've been gone hours already. There's no way to get them back until they're done over there," Ben said as calmly and reasonably as he could. "But they know what they're doing," he added in an attempt to be comforting. Ben didn't actually know if Mal knew what she was doing in this case, but pessimism wasn't going to help the situation at all.

"Don't lie, Ben. You suck at it," Jay said harshly. "Where are my clothes? I'm going to have to go get them."

Ben grabbed Jay's shoulder and forced the other teen down again. "You're not going anywhere," Ben said firmly. "Not until the doctors clear you and that is certainly not happening tonight."

"Ben! They'll never be able to bust open my dad's safe!" Jay argued. "They're only going to get into trouble." Why on Earth would Mal even risk something so insane as going back to the Isle? Well, Jay knew why, but still, why!? And, without Jay, they were sure to get into trouble.

Mal and Carlos could handle basic locks, but neither of them had the speed or skill that Jay had at all things breaking and entering. Jay was not about to let them wander into his dad's house where any wrong move could get swords falling from the ceiling. "Hey, hey, calm down, Jay," Ben said. "They wouldn't have listened to anyone about going. And they took Iago to help and Aziz to handle the locks."

Jay froze and then stared. "Aziz? What the hell does Aziz have to do with anything? How does he even know about this!?"

"Ah," Ben looked awkward. "He was sort of with me when I overheard the others so... he heard it too..."

Jay wouldn't admit it out loud, but he definitely let out a panicked noise and reached up to bury his face in his hands. Everything was spiraling so far out of his control so fast he was pretty sure everything was just ruined. Jay screamed and pulled his hands back when he noticed the shine in front of his eyes. "Where are my bracers?!"

"The doctors took them off during your surgery," Ben explained.

"I need them! Where are they!?"

Ben put a hand on Jay's chest to keep the thief from trying to get up again. "Jay, calm down-"

"Don't tell me to calm down! Anyone can see them!" Jay didn't like to admit when he was freaking out, but he was definitely freaking out then. He looked around for any sign of his leather cuffs but didn't spot them.

"Jay! Really, it's not a big deal!" Ben said as Jay pulled the sheet up enough to stick his arms firmly under it. "Nobody here cares, and all your nurses and doctors have already seen them!"

Jay's strangled gasp at that information told Ben it was the very much wrong thing to say. Jay was trying to calm down so that he wouldn't begin hyperventilating or something but he just couldn't. He'd been hiding the metal bracers for years, and they caused him never-ending anxiety. They couldn't just be... exposed like that! "Alright, alright! I'll get them for you!" Ben said quickly as he saw the monitor beside the bed starting to go crazy from Jay's panic.

Ben hurried out of the room and found a nurse in only a few minutes. The nurse was able to
retrieve the pieces of leather in just five minutes, and Ben rushed back to the room. Jay had curled
over onto himself and was shaking. Ben put a hand on Jay's back which was jerking from tiny
gasps. "Jay, here," Ben said as he held out the cuffs. Jay didn't immediately grab them, and Ben
realized his friend and teammate hadn't even heard what had Ben said.

Ben grabbed one of Jay's hands and pulled it off of his arm, where he was clutching with a white-
knuckled grip, and pushed the leather into his palm. "There, Jay. They're right here, and you can
put them back on now. We won't take them off again. I promise," Ben said in his most calming
voice.

Jay was still shaking even as he slowly realized what he felt in his hand. His vision had gone black
from not getting enough oxygen, and that was slowly clearing. As soon as he had enough handle on
himself, Jay pulled the bracers on and tightened the laces with trembling fingers. Even once the
metal was hidden, Jay didn't look up from his lap and just tried to slowly take deep breaths to fight
off what remained of the panic. Ben felt uncomfortable and took a seat beside the bed. The king
really hadn't thought having the bracers exposed when everyone that could possibly see them
already had would be a big deal, but he was quite clearly dead wrong. "I'm sorry. I would have had
them put back on if I knew how badly it would upset you," Ben said.

"They... aren't just pieces of non-removable jewelry, Ben," Jay murmured without looking up.
"They might just be the worst thing that ever happened to me."

Ben didn't know what to say to that and just reached over to put a hand on Jay's shoulder. "I'm
sorry," he said, although that felt entirely inadequate. "Come on, lay back down and relax. You
haven't been getting enough rest according to Iago and Carlos."

Jay scoffed but laid back down anyway. Ben noticed that Jay kept his hands right against his chest
as if he were worried letting them down by his sides would mean he'd lose the leather bracers
again. "I should have known Iago would rat me out..." he muttered.

"He's worried about you," Ben said. "And it seems like he had good reason to. I've been looking
into what's been going on with those marks while you were asleep. It's not good, Jay."

Jay glanced over without moving his head and continued to rub his wrists as if the leather would
suddenly disappear without constant contact. "... I sort of figured," he admitted. Jay hadn't wanted
to acknowledge that the tarnishing worried him, but he knew it wasn't normal. And 'not normal,'
was just another way to say 'bad' in his experience.

Ben thought about telling Jay that he'd brought Jordan in earlier to help but then thought better of
it. There was no telling how Jay would react to yet another person having seen the genie manacles.
"Jay... from what I've found out, this could kill you." Ben had not liked it when Jordan explained it
was like a vital organ rotting away inside a living person and equally fatal but he wasn't going to
dance around the subject.

Ben expected more of a reaction from Jay, who only nodded. "I... thought it might be," Jay
muttered.

"Then why didn't you say something earlier!?" Ben demanded.

"Because..." Jay sighed and lifted a hand to rub his face. "Because if I didn't find out for sure, it
wasn't really happening," he muttered. "If I just... didn't say anything then I wouldn't have to face
it."

Ben sighed and tried to not be too harsh on Jay. He couldn't even imagine what living through
some of the things his friends from the Isle had lived through had done to them. Nor how it had
affected their thought processes. "Well, now we know, and we'll fix it," Ben told him. "Once Mal
and the others get back with your lamp you should be out of danger."

Jay scoffed. "Out of danger of dying maybe," Jay said. "But all it takes is one person getting that
lamp that shouldn't, and I'm screwed..."

"That won't happen," Ben said in an effort to be reassuring. "There aren't many genies in Auradon
but with our rules on magic trying to steal one's lamp wouldn't get anyone anywhere."

"You're naive," Jay shot back. "Almost unlimited power at someone's fingertips and you think a
few rules and some finger shaking is going to stop them from getting what they want?" Jay scoffed
and laid his head back on the pillows. "Just because you all were raised to be good doesn't mean
you all are or that you can't make stupid decisions."

Ben frowned at that. He would like to tell Jay that he was wrong but he knew that there was at least
a little truth in his friend's words. Even being perfectly happy in his life and not needing or wanting
anything, the idea of three wishes that could grant nearly anything was tempting. Ben could, in
theory, do so much good for his people with something like wishes, but he also knew how slippery
that slope was. "I'm going to try and keep this as quiet as I can for you, Jay," Ben promised. "I've
already talked to your doctors and nurses about keeping this confidential. That shouldn't be a
problem since they aren't supposed to reveal patient information anyway."

Jay looked over at Ben and nodded. "Thanks, bro..."

Ben smiled and reached out to put a hand on Jay's shoulder. "Of course. I want you to feel safe here
in Auradon. All of you. Everything will work out. You'll see." Ben gave Jay a brief squeeze of
comfort and another smile. Jay attempted to return it, but Ben could tell he didn't mean it. "Get
some rest, Jay. I'm not going anywhere."

Jay sighed but closed his eyes. Ben took out his phone and started texting instructions to various
people that were handling some of his affairs while he was busy. Being a King involved so much
work that he was honestly wondering why they hadn't at least let him finish school first. That
would have lightened his load substantially and was only a few years away.

"Hey, Ben?" Jay said after several minutes.

"Mm?" Ben looked up and saw that Jay still had his eyes closed but was frowning some.

"You did win the game right?"

Ben snorted a little at the question. He should have known that Jay would worry about that. "Yes,
Jay. We won," he informed. "And the team says to get better soon because it feels weird not being
able to yell at you for being too rough at least three times a practice."

Jay laughed, and Ben was glad to hear it. "Pansies," Jay murmured with affection.

"I'll let them know you said that," Ben said with a grin.

"You do that."
Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

Both the movie and books seem to think Mal, Jay, Evie, and Carlos were the extent of the gang and yet didn't get overrun by Uma's or anyone else's. I find that really hard to believe so I gave Mal a few more gang members. All of them are in the books and members of the Anti-Heros club, so I thought they were most fitting to be in the gang. Along with Dizzy.

"Okay, first things first," Mal said as she led the way through the streets she knew so well. "We get to the loft and figure out how much things have changed here and then we can plan accordingly." Mal wasn't stupid. She knew that without her and her lieutenants around her gang would not have been able to hold onto all of her territory and that would make things tricky. She also needed to know where Jafar was at all times so Mal would need probably two or three people on the streets.

"The loft?" Aziz asked.

"Don't ask questions," Evie whispered. "And it's... like our club house, I guess," she added, although she struggled some with a term that the Auradon boy would recognize. Evil Lair would probably put out the wrong sort of impression and Mal probably wouldn't want the term 'hideout' used for fear of it sounding like she ever hid from anything.

Aziz nodded and didn't ask any further questions even though they were itching to be asked. He just kept up with them and tried his best to not stare. Evie thought he wasn't doing too badly, but that might also be due to the pace that Mal was setting. Their leader was definitely on a mission. Several people scattered as they passed by and murmured about their return uneasily. Some even shifted valuables out of sight. The teens reached the old warehouse just a few blocks away from the Bargain Castle and Jafar's Junk Shop in record time.

Carlos grabbed up a rock and flung it at the road sign hard enough to make it move and the metal gate noisily lifted. Mal was climbing the stairs almost before the gate had fully risen with only a few backwards glances to ensure they weren't being followed. Carlos pulled the grate back down behind them automatically and then rushed to follow.

Aziz tried to not stare at the large open space with graffiti covered walls and mismatched furniture scattered sporadically around. There was trash scattered about and a long sink on one wall that had large rust stains on the porcelain and was overflowing with broken and dirty dishes and, oddly enough, some clothes. "You can leave carpet here if you want," Mal said as she went to a box in the corner and pried off the lid to start rummaging. "Nobody would dare take it from in here."

"I think I'll just carry it," Aziz said. "No offense."

Mal shrugged as if it didn't matter to her. Aziz thought it probably didn't since he was the one carrying carpet, which was honestly pretty heavy. "Alright. Jay-" Everyone stopped and an awkward silence fell. Evie shifted and Carlos looked at the ground as they all very keenly felt the absences of one of their number. Mal closed her mouth tightly and then shook her bangs out of her eyes. "Carlos! Go light it."
Carlos nodded and hurried to a window. "What's he lighting?" Aziz asked as the smaller boy disappeared.

"Just a trashcan fire to let the gang know to meet here," Evie supplied with an attempt at a smile. "It's harmless but it'll be a big enough light that everyone should be able to see it from their windows or... wherever they are at the moment."

Aziz nodded a little uncomprehendingly and then very suddenly remembered there weren't any cellphones or internet here. There wasn't any easy way to get quick messages out. He supposed a huge fire on top of a building did make sense when the only other option was running people down in the street to tell them anything. "Jay usually lights it..." Evie murmured so softly that Aziz almost didn't hear her.

Mal suddenly turned to face him with a finger up. "Alright, ground rules," she said firmly. "When the gang gets here you play the strong silent type, got it? If anyone asks you something try and deflect it to one of us. You know nothing about the Isle or how it works and you need to pass it off as if you do. No answer can't be a wrong answer. We don't want anyone to know who you really are."

"Don't you trust your crew?" Aziz asked.

Mal sighed. "To a point, yes. They wouldn't be in my gang if I didn't trust them more than the average street kid. But not all of them are... the brightest bulbs, and they can't give away a secret if they don't know it," Mal explained. "Heck, to some point I didn't even fully trust Jay, Evie, or Carlos until we got to Auradon. Trust is dangerous here."

Evie nodded. "We trusted each other the most, we'd been together the longest, but even we knew there were limits that we could be pushed to cross if things got bad enough. It's just the way it is," she said while looking back towards Auradon. "That's why we have to get everyone of ours off this rock. Not being able to trust anyone is no way to live."

"We will," Mal said firmly. "We already got Freddie over. Next time we'll try for two." Evie smiled again at the thought. Starting to bring the other kids over from the Isle had been difficult to get started. Nobody in the court was any more keen to do it than they had been before Mal and the others had come to Auradon. Nobody but Ben, anyway. There was an insane amount of red tape and hoop jumping just to approve bringing one kid over, but hopefully with nothing going wrong at Freddie's move, it would make the others easier to bring over too. The fewer incidents the better for them all.

Carlos climbed back into the loft announcing that the fire was burning. "Good job, Carlos," Mal said. "Now the hard part of waiting for everyone to see and come filtering in." The four teens found comfortable spots to wait and keep busy. Aziz tried to not look out of place but he felt awkward. He felt like he shouldn't touch anything or risk looking into anything, which left him with standing there against one wall and thinking.

After perhaps half an hour, they heard the gate down below open. The first two people to arrive were boys that instantly lit up bright and ran straight to Carlos. "Carlos!"

"Harry! Jace!"

Harry and Jace were two of those not very bright members of the gang but when Carlos became part of it Harry and Jace had inevitably followed. The sons of Horace and Jasper had grown up right beside Carlos and easily fell into their henchmen legacy considering how much smarter than them Carlos was. "We weren't expecting to see ye guys again," Jace admitted, looking a little teary
eyed. Jace and Harry clustered closest to Carlos where he had been fiddling with something electronic.

"Hey guys," Mal said from where she was perched on a nearby crate. "You hanging in there?"

Harry nodded and wiped at his eyes. "Yeah. It's been a real drag since ye've been gone, though."

"What are ye guys doing back?" Jace asked, looking around. "Ye didn't get sent back did ye?" Both boys seemed panicked by the idea but then all of the gang was counting on their lieutenants and leader to get them out of the hell hole that was the Isle.

"No, we didn't get sent back," Evie assured them. "But we'll explain when everyone gets here, alright?"

Harry and Jace nodded and went to find their own place to wait. Not that they had to wait all that long. In pairs and alone, various kids started filtering into the Loft. Some came in through windows others up the stairs and one even almost made Aziz jump when she came rushing past him from seemingly nowhere. The girl squealed so loud it made Aziz's ears ring and she smashed into Evie with no sign of having even tried to slow down.

"Oh! Dizzy!" Evie looked and sounded almost in tears as she hugged the smaller girl tight.

"Evie! I missed you so much!"

"I missed you too," Evie said to the youngest of their number.

Dizzy pulled back enough to look up at Evie with absolutely adoring eyes. "I knew you wouldn't forget about us!"

Evie looked even more like she was about to cry. Mal's lips curled just enough that it might be mistaken as a smile before she cleared her throat. "Alright alright, now that everyone is here-"

A boy with hair in an electric blue shade almost fell into the room through a window and gave a sheepish smile when they all stopped to look. "Sorry. It's hell to get outta the house these days."

There were a few snorts of laughter at that and more than a few eye rolls.

"Now that we're all here," Mal repeated with an eye roll of her own. "I hope you're all holding up but we're here on important business."

"Hold on," one girl, who looked so thin that she would break apart in anything above a breeze, interrupted with her hand raised. "Who is this? And where's Jay?" she asked pointing at Aziz. A few of the kids did a double take and jerked in surprise that he wasn't Jay.

Mal frowned at the interruption. "That, Yzla, is what I was getting to." The thin girl put her hand down and gave a slightly sheepish laugh. Mal shook her head. "Jay is in trouble. He's super sick and the only cure is in his dad's safe. This is his brother, Z. We tapped him from the other side of the Isle to help break into the junk shop."

This announcement caused quite a few murmurs, most of which sounded worried. "Has he been poisoned?" Yzla asked. She knew her poisons (since all of her mother's poisons looked alike and she still refused to properly label them) and if there was a specific cure that sounded very... poison-y to Yzla.

Mal thought quickly and decided that was as good a cover as any. "Yes, we're not sure how but Jay told us that the antidote would be in his father's safe. So we came to get it. But we're going to need
your help. Cracking Jafar's security is not going to be easy even with knowing how to get around some of it already," Mal said. There was again a few murmurs but then nods of understanding. Mal nodded in satisfaction. "Good. Now, tell us how things have shifted around here while we've been gone."

The bright blue haired son of Hades, Hadie, pulled a large map out of somewhere and unrolled it on the floor. Several of the kids put bits and bobs on the corners to keep it flat. Aziz saw that after a certain point the map was just empty space but the city, at least, had been carefully mapped out with every alleyway and short cut drawn in.

The gang all crowded around and Mal knelt down beside the map to get the best look. There were little scribbles and symbols on the map that Aziz had no hope of identifying but it seemed to make some sort of sense to Mal. She frowned at the paper. "About what I expected..."

"Uma's been pushing us hard," Diego de Vil said as a sort of agreement.

"We've lost all the alleys and shop fronts on the dock side," Hadie said with a wave towards the correct side of the map. "And most of the southern blocks too. She's trying to push us back far enough to get onto the main streets and she's starting to make some serious headway."

Mal nodded even as she scowled at the map. "I figured we wouldn't hold dockside. That was always the hardest to keep control of," she muttered. Uma fought hard for that area since it was so close to the chip shop. Those streets had switched ownership regularly when Mal was still around.

"The biggest problem," Yzla said. "Is that Harry Hook is getting to be a real pain."

"He comes into the shop all the time," Dizzy agreed with a moan. "We can't keep him out."

"Harry never has respected our boundary line," Carlos muttered. "I'm not surprised he's still ignoring them." Uma certainly wasn't going to rein in her first mate from bothering Mal's people. She was probably actively encouraging it.

"Without Jay around he's only getting more bold," Hadie said. "I've tried to take him but... well, I'm not that good with a sword." In the past, every time Harry Hook tried working their area Jay would handle it as the only one Harry never managed to win a fight against. Harry even actively sought Jay out if he was feeling particularly nasty and up for a brawl.

"I still say we should turn him into a bug and send him to Uma and watch her squash him," Yzla said with a flick of her long ramrod straight ponytail. "It would be so cathartic. And I have the poisons to do it..."

Mal snorted with laughter. "No need to squash Hook," she said. "Although, you're right that it would certainly be cathartic. But back to business. We still have all the main streets. That's the important thing. You guys have done great keeping hold of them while we're making way for you to follow us over. Good job," she said as she straightened and brushed the dirt off her knees. "Does anyone know where Jafar is?"

"When Jay didn't come back he had to find new ways to stock his shelves," Jace said. "He closes shop once a week and disappears."

"He doesn't disappear," Eddie, son of Edgar the butler, denied. "He goes down to the spa. He pays the goblins to swipe trinkets off their customers and he goes there to pick them up."

"When does he do that?" Mal asked.
"It's Sunday so he was off today to do it," Hadie said with a jerk of his head. "He should be back sometime early in the morning. He's usually open around seven tomorrow." Since his father, Hades, ran an equally shady type of shop full of useless trinkets, Hadie had been forced to pay attention to when the Junk Shop was and was not open and competing for the scant business of the Isle.

"Shit," Mal grumbled. "I was hoping to have a little more time than just tonight to make this work." It was already getting late to be trying to pull off this heist. Although it was good that Jafar wasn't at the shop she didn't like the idea that he could come back home at any time. But she also couldn't pass up the opportunity when it presented itself.

Mal thought for a moment before turning to Harry and Jace. "You two, go and stall Jafar from coming back as long as you can. Don't let him catch you but... sabotage his ride or something. The last thing we need is to be caught going through his house."

Harry and Jace nodded. "Easy as frog eggs," Jace said confidently. Mal wasn't quite as confident, but she appreciated their enthusiasm, if nothing else.

"Yzla, Dizzy, and E, you three are best with chemicals... can you make me something to help deal with Uma and her wharf rats?" Mal asked. They still needed that squid for the eels, after all, and that meant most likely a fight.

"Yeah, of course," Evie agreed.

"Great. Hadie and Diego, when we go into Uma's territory we're going to need you two with us. So, be ready for that," Mal ordered. The two boys nodded in agreement even though they didn't know the reason they'd be going into Uma's turf. Neither Hadie nor Diego were the brawlers that Jay was, but Diego was older and more experienced than some of the others and Hadie was a spitfire, especially when cornered.

Jace hesitantly held up his hand. "Um, Mal?"

Mal sighed but looked over. "What Jace?"

"Well... if something should happen..." Jace began uncertainly. "How should we give ye warning?" Harry finished. Normally they had a system in place for such plans but they had never gone so far before so their usual system of whistles and visible signals wouldn't work.

Mal frowned at the question. Before she could come up with an answer though, Iago let out a loud squawk from where he had found a perch on top of an old gutted television. Everyone looked over at the bird immediately. "No, Iago, I need you with us for when we break into the shop."

Iago squawked again and flapped his wings. "Warning, warning!" he repeated in a perfect mimicry of Harry's voice.

"No," Mal repeated. "You're the only one here who knows anything about Jafar's place."

Evie gasped suddenly. "Othello!" Everyone turned to look at her. She blinked several times at the suddenly attention before smiling. "Othello! We can send him with Harry and Jace and if something happens he can fly back and warn us. That way Iago can stay with us and we still have a fast way of being warned about Jafar."

"Isn't he still with your mom though?" Mal asked. Evie had long ago trained Othello to repeat the words 'you are the fairest of them all' just for the sole purpose of making the parrot valuable enough that the Evil Queen would actually want to keep it alive. But that also had the slightly
unfortunate side effect of making the Evil Queen not want to give the bird up.

"I can get him out," Eddie said simply. "Stealing animals from mansions is sort of in my blood," he added with a rueful smile.

Mal frowned but then glanced over at Carlos. "You go with him. And remember to stay out of the Evil Queen's sight. If she sees you she'll know that Evie's around too," Mal ordered. She would just send Evie but she didn't think that possibly opening up her friends to their parents was the best of ideas. At least this way, Evie wouldn't run the risk of being right there for her mother to lay a hand on. It helped that Carlos and Eddie were both pretty fast on their feet so it would be hard to catch them.

Eddie and Carlos nodded in agreement with the order. "Harry and Jace, don't wait for Othello. Just go and the bird will catch up," Mal said. If they didn't manage to get Othello, well something had gone wrong and they were probably pretty screwed at that point anyway. "The rest of you that don't have an actual job... be on standby in case things get messy and keep your eyes peeled." There were murmured agreements and then the teens scattered to go do as they had been told.

Aziz waited until they were all gone and let out a long breath. "They're quite the bunch..." A very colorful and rough around the edges bunch, but Aziz supposed that was only too predictable. They were Isle kids and there wasn't really any other way to describe a kid from the Isle than 'colorful' and 'rough around the edges' except maybe 'scary' or 'unstable,' which Aziz was trying hard not to use.

"All of them have their strengths," Mal said. "Even the... dimmer bulbs. And I've promised them all to get them off this Isle." True, when she made that promise she'd meant more in the way of tearing the barrier down, but just because the how had changed didn't mean her intentions had.

Aziz studied Mal for a moment before nodding. "They're your people. I understand." There was silence for a moment as Aziz thought back to everything he'd heard at the meeting. "So, who's this Uma they were talking about?"

"Uma, daughter of Ursula," Mal supplied. "She runs the gang that owns the docks. Has a ship although it, of course, can't go anywhere. We've been fighting for turf for as long as anyone can remember. The Isle's big enough to support several gangs but Uma and her wharf rats are a particular pain in the ass to us since they made their territory so close."

"So you're expecting a fight when we go there," Aziz surmised.

Mal snorted a little. "When Uma's involved I always expect a fight. We haven't gotten along since we were little kids."

"Any reason?" Aziz asked.

"Other than neither of us can let go of a grudge?" Mal asked before shrugging. "Have you ever met a kid you just instantly didn't like?"

Aziz thought for a minute then shrugged. "Other than Jay for... obvious reasons, not really." Like most at Auradon Prep, Aziz had automatically taken a dislike to the Isle kids on general principle. But the four teens had a sort of strange charisma about them that eventually had broken down some of the more outgoing members of school. Aziz actually found, after enough time, he rather enjoyed Jay's company (other than when he was being sick in Aziz's bed, of course).

Mal hummed. "Well, I never really liked Uma. I think because she wanted to buddy up to me and,
at that point, I really didn't do people. Mom didn't want me to make friends and I always tried to make her happy," Mal explained. "So, Uma got bit. Then we started making gangs and well... the distaste lingered. I wasn't going to let her into my gang just because she wanted to be." And Mal might have felt a little guilty around Uma at the time, which she hated feeling and so hated Uma for causing it, but she wasn't about to admit to that.

"I see..."

Mal snorted, "No, you don't. You're too Auradon to get it, but that's alright. Don't worry about Uma. She's a scavenger more than anything. She moves in while I'm gone or distracted, but can't do much harm if I'm actually around."

Aziz supposed that Mal knew what she was talking about and leaned his shoulder against the wall. "They really thought I was Jay didn't they..." he mused, remembering how many of them had jerked upon looking twice at him. "I didn't think I looked that much like him. Nobody's really mentioned it before."

"You dress so different normally it's sort of obvious who you're talking to so it's easier to not notice," Mal said thoughtfully. She tilted her head and examined Aziz closer. The two Arabian's eyes were very similar (although Mal doubted that Aziz's would glow like Jay's had been doing lately) and their noses were pretty close too. Their jaw line and cheek bones were really where the difference was noticeable. Aziz's jaw was a little narrower and his cheekbones less pronounced. Still, they were similar enough to mistake, especially at a quick glance. "When you're dressed like Jay usually is, like now, it really is uncanny. The hair should have been their give away, though. I don't think Jay has had hair as short as yours since he was twelve. And he refuses to get it cut so..."

"Yeah, I think Coach asked him if he'd cut it once for safety reasons and Jay wouldn't do it," Aziz said thoughtfully. That had been back when they had first come to Auradon though so Aziz had just assumed that Jay was being difficult just to be difficult.

"Yeah, that's not surprising," Mal said. "Jay won't cut his hair for anything." Seeing the questioning look on Aziz's face, she sighed. "Jafar hates it long so Jay keeps it that way to annoy him. Jay's always been good at finding the ways to be rebellious that his father wouldn't bother doing anything about. I guess it makes sense now, knowing what we do, that he'd find other ways than getting physical to get back at Jafar."

Aziz nodded thoughtfully. "It also explains how he plays Tourney," he mused. "We've always suspected that he's got misplaced aggression or something going on. Not being able to fight back against someone that's been horrible to you would probably cause that easy."

Mal chuckled some although it sounded a little dark to Aziz. "You should have seen him back before we went to Auradon. He was absolutely vicious in a fight. There was a reason he's my second-in-command," Mal said with a smile that was somewhat unsettling for the Prince.

"How did you two meet anyway?" Aziz asked after a very awkward pause. "Not killing any small animals or anything psycho, right?"

"Do I look like Cruella to you?" Mal asked with some amusement. "No, we didn't meet doing anything too crazy. He stole my breakfast one day and I ran after and tackled him. We ended up getting into a fight right there in the street. When we finally stopped rolling around we realized someone else had come by and snatched the damn thing while we were busy. I made him get me another... pretty sure he stole that one too."

"He stole your breakfast so you made him your second?" Aziz echoed incredulously. "But the
person that wanted to be your friend you shunned... the Isle makes no sense."

Mal rolled her eyes. "I liked that he wasn't so scared of me he'd just roll over like some minion. It meant he wouldn't let anyone else push him around either. And I didn't set out to make him my second. He just... was," Mal explained, although she wasn't sure that she was making any sort of sense. Jay had just... fit with her. When she'd met Jay for the first time she hadn't even been thinking of starting a gang. "Besides, him stealing your breakfast was like a 'good morning.' It got to the point where if he didn't steal my breakfast I knew something was up. He still steals our breakfasts half the time..."

"You guys have a weird relationship," Aziz said with a head shake.

"No weirder than anyone else's," Mal answered. "At least not anyone else here."

"Well, so long as it works, I guess," Aziz muttered. "I'm just going to continue to be glad that I got friends without having to tackle them in the street and fight over a muffin or whatever."

Mal scoffed. "It was a bagel, thank you very much."

"Right, bagel, whatever," Aziz said with an eye roll. "Point is still kind of the same."

"Is not. I would have bit his head off if he lost me a muffin. Those things are hard to come by here," Mal said with a very dignified voice.

"Oh, I see. So it was only being a bagel that saved Jay's life," Aziz said with amusement.

"Damn straight," Mal responded instantly. "We don't mess around when it comes to food."
Chapter Notes

I realized after last chapter was posted, that Big Murph is part of Harriet Hook's gang, so I've gone back and switched him with Diego de Vil. Doesn't change much, just thought I'd mention it.

Even though it was late enough that Lady Tremaine's Curl Up and Dye hair dresser should have been open, the Evil Stepmother turned Evil Grandmother had decided to not work that night for no particular reason other than she didn't feel like doing so. Not that that changed Dizzy's chore list in the least, but the young girl had already done most of them during the day when they were usually closed.

"What is the story with that brother of Jay's?" Yzla asked as Dizzy let them into Lady Tremaine's.

Evie was a little startled by the question. She had expected Aziz's presence to be questioned when everyone was around not after they had all split up. "Well, he lives on the other side of the Isle with their mom, I think..." Evie said vaguely. "Why so interested?"

Yzla put her hands on her sharp hips. "Because he's just as dreamy as Jay is... and they look like they're the same age so that makes them twins or something, right?"

"Or something..." Evie answered vaguely as she went to grab the needed chemicals to make smoke bombs.

"And are you honestly telling me you wouldn't be interested in twin Arabian hotties like that?" Yzla asked, her eyes gleaming in a way that made Evie slightly uncomfortable. Evie could appreciate that Jay and Aziz both were incredibly attractive but she couldn't say she looked at them that way. She saw Jay too much like a brother to think of him like that. And Aziz, well, maybe if he weren't currently dressed like Jay, but he was so that killed her interest pretty quickly. "You would be dead inside to not take notice of the possibilities."

Evie almost sighed in relief that the interest was purely Yzla being perverted and not questioning the possibility of Jay having a brother. "I don't think you're going to get very far with that, Yzla," she said.

"A girl can dream... and fantasize," Yzla replied, nearly purring with barely contained interest.

Evie tried her utmost best to not cringe. "I... suppose."

"Oh, come on, Evie!" Yzla said in exasperation. "Jay is sex on a stick and that brother is just as hot... One for each side... maybe with some feather fans and little loincloths. Feeding me grapes..."

Dizzy stared at Yzla as she drifted off into her own little fantasy world. "Is she okay?" Dizzy whispered to Evie.

"Yeah, but let's just leave her to it..." Evie answered. She didn't want to hear anymore details and she had a feeling if she jerked Yzla out of whatever little world she was in, they'd be hearing all sorts of things that they'd really rather not be hearing. "Can you grab me some of those gloves,
"Dizzy?"

The bespectacled girl nodded and hurried to grab a box of rubber gloves from the paint spattered supply cabinet. Even though they were disposable gloves, the Tremaines always got at least two or three uses out of them before they just tore apart so each of the gloves in the box were stained various different colors. Evie recognized several of the hair colors left behind on the gloves instantly such as Yzla's so-dark-it-was-nearly-black-purple that streaked through her ponytail.

Yzla suddenly jerked a little. "-It would be utterly fantastic!" she announced before blinking. "Oh, sorry... where were we?"

"Making smoke bombs," Evie said as she started looking through the bottles she had grabbed. Yzla had a habit of going off in her own little mental tangents and it was always best to not ask when she finally snapped out of it -usually shouting half a thought when she did so.

"Right. Smoke bombs... oh! And I figured out how to make a sort of pepper spray. That should come in handy, right?" Yzla asked as she picked up a small spray bottle that was sitting beside a chair.

Evie nodded. "Definitely. Go for it, Yzla."

Yzla grinned and hurried to pick through the chemicals that had been already gathered by Evie. She started mixing even as Evie and Dizzy carefully poured the smoke bomb ingredients into the latex gloves. "I'm thinking six should be good enough," Evie said as Dizzy carefully held the wrist of the glove open.

"Definitely," Dizzy agreed. "These things leave a huge cloud."

"Those pirates won't know what hit them," Yzla said as she poured water into the mix in her spray bottle to dilute it down to something that could be used more than just a few squirts. She cackled a little and Dizzy stared at the older girl with wide eyes.

Evie sighed and shook her head while tying off one of the gloves. "Sometimes I think you and Harry Hook should get together," she said as Yzla put something else into the bottle. "You're both a little too eager to do nasty things."

"Mm, Harry's not bad," Yzla mused. "I think I still would prefer my Arabian twins in loin cloths though... I would eat off those bodies..."

"Ew," Dizzy said.

Yzla barely even looked at Dizzy. "You don't know what you're missing, kid... so spicy... and salty..."

"Okay, Yzla... way too much insight into your head there," Evie said as she tried her utmost best to not think about what the other girl had just said. Evie definitely didn't want to imagine anything even remotely like what Yzla was describing. Yzla went quiet but, judging by the gleam in her eyes, she hadn't stopped her disturbing mental tangent.

Evie and Dizzy turned back to making the smoke bombs and did their best to not trigger Yzla into another fantasy that really didn't need to be shared. Sometimes the daughter of Yzma was just a bit too disturbing.

"So, what'll happen if the Evil Queen catches us?" Eddie asked as he and Carlos quietly slipped
through the bushes to a side door in the Castle-Across-The-Way. Carlos crouched down and started to carefully pick the lock just like Jay had taught him. When Eddie'd volunteered to do this it hadn't seemed like such a big deal but faced with the actual reality of breaking into the house of the Evil Queen it seemed a lot less simple.

Carlos glanced up at the snaggle-toothed teen. "Let's not let that happen," he said before he looked back at what he was doing.

The lock in the door clicked open after only a few minutes work and the two boys very carefully pushed it open. Carlos winced at the squeak of the hinges but, after waiting a few beats, realized that the noise hadn't been heard by anyone. Neither boy moved and just stared into the dark of what seemed to be a kitchen. The cracked black and white tiles on the floor definitely seemed to lean that way, anyhow.

A strange noise above them caused the teens to look up. Above them, sitting in a long dead tree that had once been hanging branches across the overgrown walkway, were several evil looking vultures. Eddie whimpered and grabbed at Carlos' arm. "We are so going to die..."

"We aren't going to die," Carlos snapped although the sight of those sharp beaks and beady eyes did get his heart-rate up uncomfortably high. With some effort, both boys looked away from the birds and into the dim house again.

Neither moved.

The fact that they couldn't see anything beyond a few feet made entering a very daunting prospect. Anything could be just outside of the small circle of light. "We should go..." Carlos said uneasily.

"Yeah..."

Several minutes ticked by without either boy taking a step closer to the door. Carlos scolded himself for not wanting to go into the house. It wasn't as if he hadn't done dangerous, stupid things before. And this really was important. Mal was counting on him and Jay was sick in the hospital due to this mess so he really couldn't screw up.

"MRWAAAR!"

Both boys jumped and screamed even as they whipped around. Luckily, it only took a second for them to spot the black cat sitting on the top of the garden wall. The teens stared as the cat jumped down and sauntered across the side yard to brush past them. "Beelzebub!" Carlos scolded. The black cat didn't even look back before it disappeared into the murky interior of the Castle-Across-The-Way.

"Your cat is evil, de Vil," Eddie breathed. "Pure evil."

"He is the son of Lucifer," Carlos muttered. "And has to dodge my mother... so, you know..."

There were a few moments of silence. "Probably shouldn't let him go in there," Carlos said before swallowing and following Beelzebub into the house. Eddie let out a long low breath but managed to get up the nerve to follow Carlos inside.

The house wasn't just dark in the kitchen. No light anywhere seemed to be on and that made sneaking through both easier and more difficult. The teens would be harder to see in the dark but they also couldn't see very far in front of them either. Heavy Gothic curtains were drawn over every window, cutting out what little light might have otherwise been able to struggle in from outside. Somewhere in the distance, Carlos could hear heels echoing on hard floors but the Queen
sounded to be far away. "Where's Evie's room?" Eddie whispered.

"Upstairs," Carlos murmured back. "There's a set of servant stairs this way," he added with a point into the darkness towards where he remembered the stairs being.

Together the boys made their way to the stairs that were hidden behind a plain looking door. Carlos almost cursed when he tried the door and found that it was locked. "Keep an eye out," Carlos whispered before crouching down to start picking this lock like he had the side door.

"Keep an eye out," Eddie grumbled. "Yeah, sure... I'll just watch the dark, shall I?"

"Quiet... you'll hear her before you see her," Carlos mumbled as he tried to coax the tumblers to move with his thinnest screwdriver.

Carlos spent several minutes struggling in the dark to pick the lock. Carlos usually thought he was pretty good at this sort of thing for not being a thief but he was suddenly finding it a lot harder than he thought. Then again, he'd never tried to work almost entirely without sight before. Carlos had a whole new respect for Jay as he fought to keep calm and in control. Breaking into a house was stressful as hell.

Finally, the lock clicked open and Carlos sighed. He opened the door and quietly started up the stairs. Eddie followed and closed the door behind them as silently as he could manage. The steps creaked under their feet so Carlos paused after each step to be sure that they hadn't been discovered.

The sound of heels on the floor had faded off by that point but Carlos didn't doubt that Evie's mother would wander back their way again. According to Evie, the Evil Queen would sometimes get into moods where she just wandered the house talking to herself. Carlos and Eddie reached the top of the stairs and then slid out into the hall. There was a thick runner down the center of the corridor that allowed them to walk without making too much sound.

The two boys sped up their pace just slightly as they went down the hall towards Evie's room. When they reached the cracked open door, Carlos frowned to see Beelzebub sitting there waiting. "How did... never mind," Carlos muttered as he pushed open the door.

"Let's get Othello and then out of here," Eddie said as he quickly zeroed in on a large form covered with a dark sapphire cloth. The obvious cage shape was in one corner of the room by a window while Evie's bed was against the other wall, still drenched in blue fabrics and red heart accent pillows. Eddie pulled the cover off the cage even as Carlos shut Evie's door.

Othello was sleeping on a perch in the center of the cage with little bits and bobs hanging from the top for him to entertain himself with. The biggest feature of the cage, however, was a large mirror shard against one side. Carlos almost snorted that even the parrot of the house had his own mirror to watch himself in. So typical.

Othello lifted his head and stared at them as Eddie carefully undid the latch of the cage. Unlike Iago, Othello had no red feathers at all. His head, throat, and wings were all a dark blue with a bright yellow body. He was also a bit smaller. "Hey there, Othello..." Eddie whispered as he carefully opened the door to the cage and reached in. "Evie sent us to get you... we need your help with something."

Othello tilted his head back and forth and shuffled down the perch he was on. "Really, Evie sent us," Eddie said.
Suddenly, Beelzebub let out a mewl and jumped up onto a chair that was at Evie's desk right beside the cage. Othello turned his blue head quickly to stare at the cat. Beelzebub meowed several times and Carlos glanced uneasily at the door to the room. Othello squawked loudly and both boys flinched. "Shh," Eddie hissed. "Please be quiet, Othello!"

Beelzebub meowed again and Carlos was getting more and more nervous that they would be discovered. Carlos was just about to reach for his cat to try and keep him quiet when suddenly, Othello stepped off his perch to grab Eddie's hand that had still been reaching for him.

Both Carlos and Eddie stared in amazement as the parrot calmly got onto Eddie's hand, a complete stranger, and let himself be pulled from his cage. "Okay... that's weird..." Eddie muttered as he held Othello up slightly. "I was kind of expecting to throw a bag over him or something..."

Carlos glanced at the very smug looking black cat sitting on the nearby chair and then to the parrot. He shoved the thoughts to the back of his mind and went to the window to open it. "Think you can find where Harry and Jace are?" he asked Othello. "They're off by the spa if you know where that is."

Othello bobbed his head and Carlos felt he shouldn't have been as surprised as he actually was. He asked a question but he hadn't honestly thought the bird would answer. Without waiting to be brought to the window, Othello took off from Eddie's hand and flew off.

Both boys stared. Beelzebub mewed at them before jumping up to the windowsill and then casually jumping off onto a nearby tree branch and wandering away. "I... I don't know why we of all people would have underestimated animals..." Eddie murmured. "We should know better..." Carlos nodded mutely in agreement. They really, really should.
Chapter 22

Chapter Notes

Playing a little loose with the rules of djinn but creative license!

Jay heard a knock at the door and fought to open his eyes. After a moment he did manage it though and looked over to see that Jordan was standing there. "Hi," she said with a smile. "Can I come in?"

Slightly confused but also curious, Jay gave a nod of permission.

Jordan's smile widened a little, and she came into the room fully. She made certain to close the door behind her before taking Ben's empty seat. The King had run off to get something to eat and to make a few phone calls so Jordan figured he wouldn't be back for at least twenty minutes or so. Although, Ben had texted Jordan to let her know that Jay had had an actual panic attack at finding out anyone had so much as seen his Djinn bracers. Jordan figured Ben had told her that to warn her, but Jordan only found the news sad and somewhat understandable. Absently, Jordan played with the more slender golden bracelets around her own wrists before forcing herself to turn fully to Jay, who was looking at her with a great deal of suspicion. Jordan was determined to do something even if Jay found it unsettling. There were so few Djinns in the world that it was important they all stuck together.

The silence between them stretched on for what Jay felt was much too long but he had no idea why Jordan would even be there. They weren't close friends or anything, and Ben hadn't said anything about telling Jordan what he was. Although now that she was sitting there Jay had a sinking feeling that maybe Ben hadn't actually told him everything. He tried hard to keep his breathing and heart-rate steady since the damned monitors hooked up to him would pick up when he began to stress out. Jay really wished they'd take the stupid things off, but the doctor gave some stupid reason about his Djinn constitution failing (which had promptly set Jay off into another panic). He was still not used to that word being applied to him so freely.

Jordan finally gathered her thoughts and put her bag down on the floor beside the chair. "I knew there was something about you," she said. "You could have told me, you know."

"There's nothing to tell. I broke my leg. It happens," Jay said quickly with a dismissive wave of his hand.

"Jay. You don't have to do that," Jordan murmured. "Really."

"No idea what you're talking about," Jay replied.

Jordan frowned and, though she had been hoping to avoid forcing the issue, decided that she had to not let him avoid the truth. "Sorry, Jay," she said before pointing at his wrist.

"Sorry for wha-" Jay choked on his gasp as the leather around his wrists disappeared in a swirl of lilac smoke, and the tarnished gold below was revealed. "Give those back!" He ordered as he reached for the leather that was now sitting in the palm of Jordan's other hand. Jay nearly jerked the IV from his arm as he lunged as far off of the bed as he could with his leg still aloft.

Jordan held the stolen cuffs way off to the side. "Say it and I will."
"Jordan!"

"Say it," she demanded, noticing but ignoring the way the heart monitor was jumping up already.

Jay lunged again and nearly toppled over. "Those are mine!" He was trying to keep his wits, but he knew he was panicking and he couldn't seem to get a full breath of air. His vision narrowed down to only the cuffs that he needed to get back as he tried to reach them.

Suddenly, he was slammed back down on the bed and Jay struggled but quickly realized that lilac ropes had sprung from nowhere and were now pinning him to the bed. "Let me go!" he shouted as he squirmed and fought.

"You are not anywhere near strong enough to fight me in your state," Jordan said as she leaned over him. Jay noted distantly that her eyes were glowing golden and had she always worn that light purple eyeshadow? He was pretty sure she didn't. "I want to hear you admit it, Jay. Then you can have them back. I promise."

Jay strained to get free of the ropes which somehow felt real and not real at the same time. Jordan just stood there and waited as Jay used every little bit of energy he'd managed to get from his earlier sleep. She felt bad but knew that she had to push the issue for his own good.

After almost ten minutes of useless struggles, Jay finally just laid there on the bed with his eyes tightly closed. "... let me go, Jordan," he gritted out. "Please."

Jordan glanced down at Jay's hands. They were shaking where they were clenched around some of his sheets, but she couldn't ignore the blackened bracers just above them on Jay's wrists. "Say it. Just once, Jay. Then I'll never make you say it again." Jay didn't open his eyes and took several quick breaths in a row. Jordan saw that his heartbeat wasn't slowing down in the least. "What are you, Jay?" she asked quietly.

Several painful expressions crossed his face and Jordan thought it looked like he was actively being hurt. She was even sure that the glimmer in his eyes was from tears and felt even worse than she already had. "... a Djinn," Jay murmured so softly that Jordan almost didn't hear it. But she did hear it.

A flick of her hand had the bracers back in place and the ropes disappearing in a puff of smoke. Jordan didn't pause to think and just leaned forward to wrap her arms around his neck. Jay was shaking, and she was sure it wasn't only from how hard he had fought. "Thank you," she said. Jordan hadn't wanted to do that, but she was glad he'd finally said it, partially because he had needed to and partially because it let her stop forcing the issue.

"... like you gave me a choice?" Jay muttered unhappily.

"It still wasn't easy, I know. So, thank you," Jordan said.

There was a familiar sort of static between them from two Djinn touching. Jordan was most used to the feeling from her father and found that it was subtly different there. Her father's energy was a little more... jumpy and restless while Jay was more constant but felt warmer. The sensation wasn't too distracting or uncomfortable, but it was definitely there. She was honestly surprised she hadn't noticed it before, but then she hadn't been looking for another Djinn.

After a moment, Jordan pulled back and pretended to not notice Jay's shaking hand wiping at his eyes. "You're kind of a bitch, you know that?" he muttered, trying and failing to inject lightness into his voice.
"Only because it had to be done," Jordan said as she stayed sitting on the edge of his bed. "You know you can't live here in Auradon without the lamp, right?"

Jay sighed and rubbed one of his leather bracers before looking off towards the window. He nodded to answer her question though so Jordan didn't press him to actually admit to it out loud or look at her. "How much do you actually know about everything?" Jordan asked.

Jay shrugged. "More than most not as much as you, I guess," he said without any enthusiasm at all.

Jordan frowned a little but supposed that it made sense he would not be enjoying this conversation. "Well, you're going to have to learn. Now that you're in Auradon the magic is going to start coming in waves where normally it should show up little by little. It might get hard to control," Jordan warned. "Not to mention all of the... other details."

"Look, I'm not really interested," Jay said, finally looking at her again. "Unlike my dad... magic was never really a big draw for me. Maybe because nobody had it to be all interested in. So, I just want to not die and live on in obscurity, thanks."

"That's not likely to happen," Jordan said. "And not because of what you are." Jay flinched slightly, but Jordan had deliberately avoided using the word he seemed to find a legitimate trigger. "You're one of the first four villain kids to come to Auradon, your father is one of the most notorious villains there are, you're a star athlete, and you don't look half bad -as you well know. There's no way you're going to be living in obscurity."

Jay huffed and folded his arms. "This part of me can."

"Well, you'll have to learn what you need to do to survive at the very least," Jordan pointed out. "Like... do you know how often you need to be in your lamp?" Jay shifted on the bed and didn't answer. Jordan sighed in exasperation. She had figured this would be hard, but she had underestimated how hard he could actually make it. "You can make do with as little as four hours, but really you should aim for at least eight. Your strength is directly correlated to how much time you spend in the lamp. My dad, for example, was insanely powerful after Aladdin woke him up because he'd been in his lamp for-"

"Ten thousand years," Jay said. "Yeah, I heard."

"He was also a bit stir crazy, but that's a separate issue entirely," Jordan said with a little smile.

"I thought all Djinn were insanely powerful anyway," Jay said.

Jordan took that as the closest he'd be getting to asking an actual question right then and jumped at the chance to explain. "Well, yes, we can grant nearly any wish right off the bat, but we have magic to be able to do other things, and that is easier to do with a full night's recharge."

"Like conjuring ropes to hold injured people down and force them to do things that they don't want to do?" Jay drawled, still unhappy at what had happened.

"I have no idea where you would get such an example," Jordan said lightly and without looking at him. "But, yes, I suppose that would count. Shapeshifting, duplication, and other sorts of things would count too. And, though it wouldn't really come into play considering no Djinn stays in their lamp for years and years anymore, you tend to be larger when you come out after a particularly large stint in the lamp."

Jay nodded a little. "You're right. That will most certainly not come into play," he said firmly. There was absolutely no way he would be doing anything like spending extra time in that accursed
piece of junk. He hated tiny enclosed spaces and had ever since his father had taken to locking him in the cellar.

Jordan reached to the side for her bag. "I have something that might help hold off some of the decay until the others can come back to Auradon," she said as she dug around inside the huge sling bag.

Jordan pulled out the rose gold lamp that Jay had seen earlier and then dropped her bag onto the chair. Jay couldn't quite help but stare in surprise. "Uh.."

"Don't worry. This is still definitely my lamp," Jordan said. "But we're both Djinn-" Jay flinched hard at that "-so my lamp might be able to... ease the strain you're under a little bit."

Jay still didn't look very sure of the situation. Jordan held her lamp in one hand and then grabbed one of Jay's. "Just hold it for a second with me," she said as she put his hand over the curved metal side. Jay stiffened as soon as his fingers touched the engraved sides but Jordan kept him from pulling back.

Slowly, Jay relaxed a little and Jordan gave him a smile. "See? Not so horrible is it?" she asked.

"It doesn't feel like anything is happening at all," he said.

"With how many painkillers they're pumping into you for your leg I'm not surprised," Jordan said. "But pull your bracer open a little, and you might see a change."

Jay narrowed his eyes, but Jordan made no move to do it herself. This time she was going to let him actually do it if he was actually comfortable enough. Jay eyed her distrustfully for several minutes before bringing his free hand up to his mouth and using his teeth to loosen the laces. Jordan still kept her hands far away from Jay's wrist since he was glancing at her every few seconds.

Jay finally managed to undo the laces enough to see the metal underneath. The black was almost the only color that could be seen on the thin strip that was exposed but as they watched little lines of gold were spreading back across like tendrils of smoke curling along. "That is so weird..." Jay knew plenty about how metal looked when it aged and how it looked when it was cleaned up after having aged and what he was watching now was not like anything he'd seen before.

Jordan smiled some. "It's magic," she pointed out. "It's sort of inherently weird."

"So... this'll make me better?" he asked as he watched the lines grow a little larger and spread further.

"It's a band-aid," Jordan said. "And no replacement for your own lamp."

Jay was quiet for a moment. "... I don't want to be this," he murmured.

"Well, you can't stop being what you are," Jordan pointed out as kindly as she was able.

"My dad did," Jay said instantly.

Jordan was surprised to hear that. She had assumed Jay had been born a Djinn, which was rare but entirely possible. Being made a Djinn was more common but she had no idea how that would have happened on the Isle. "What do you mean?" she asked.

Jay glared down at his wrist. "He... he made me take his place," he grit out.
Jordan still had no idea how that would have been possible on the Isle, but she wasn't going to argue. She didn't think Jay would be making something like that up. "Well, does that mean you're going to push this onto someone else the second you get a chance?" she asked.

Jay froze, and Jordan wasn't even sure he was breathing. Then she knew he was because he took several breaths that were nearly gasps before he blinked his eyes very quickly. "... no," he whispered. "No, I can't do that..."

Jordan squeezed his hand lightly and tried to smile even though he wasn't looking up at her. She knew a person being haunted by an evil memory when she saw one. Her father looked that way sometimes, as did quite a few people in Agrabah both due to Jafar and from a hard life even before him. "Then I'll help you learn to live with this," Jordan promised. "Because that is your only other option."

"Both options suck..." Jay muttered.

"Maybe, but probably not as much as you think," Jordan said in an attempt to be cheerful. "Oh, no, it's probably even more than I think," Jay responded. "That's my luck."
"Okay," Mal said as the people she'd sent out to do jobs finally returned successfully. None of them had actually taken that long but she was feeling antsy about what they were about to do. She had never liked taking her people into a fight at a disadvantage, although -just like now- it was often unavoidable. "Let's go to the docks."

Aziz followed the other teens at a relaxed pace out of the loft and onto the street. At the sight of Mal being followed by about half her gang, people cleared out of the way immediately. Aziz shifted Carpet on his back and kept his eyes peeled for anything that might be wrong. He felt rather stupid doing that, though, since nearly everything he was seeing seemed wrong to him and the others were just ignoring them.

Aziz could almost see where the line between the two territories were by how the others shifted their stances. He'd thought they had been on edge before but it was nothing like how it changed when they turned a corner and started down an entirely different street.

Aziz noticed some teen stare at them with his mouth open and then run off at full tilt down an alley. He thought about trying to stop the kid but seeing how Mal didn't even break stride he figured that it either wasn't a big deal or she didn't care. Aziz wasn't sure if he could be so casual about it but then again he didn't see how they could be casual about anything here on the Isle. Aziz was pretty sure he'd have died of a stress induced heart attack if he were to live here and constantly be on the look out for danger.

Grimy, salty smells and the distinct stench of fish started filling the air as they walked down the littered alley and Aziz had to try hard to not make a face. If they were going to the docks it would make sense that he would smell fish, he had just never really liked the scent. One didn't get a lot of fresh fish in a desert. Most of what they imported was preserved so it would last the long trip across the sands.

Movement out of the corner of his eye, had Aziz ducking down quick and dodging out of the way. Chaos was instantaneous as the gang was beset upon by another group of street kids. Aziz grabbed for the knife at his hip that Evie and Mal had insisted he keep on him at all times even as he jumped back to dodge another swipe. Thankfully, all of his team activities kept Aziz's reflexes quick so he was able to keep up with the fast attacks.

Aziz saw a flash of silver and brought his blade up just before the Carpet on his back hit a wall. When he had backed up that much!? He didn't have time to contemplate as the clash of metal rang in his ears and his arm fought against the strength of the blow he'd blocked.

He just barely saw the sword coming from his other side and spun off the wall. Aziz really wished he had a second weapon right about then. Or, at the very least, something larger than a little knife. He ignored the fact that he hadn't wanted to carry any weapon but had been forced to do so by the others. The slick asphalt wasn't something Aziz was used to and his foot slipped as he turned.
Aziz caught himself from face planting with his hands but before he could spring back up someone else's weight practically fell on him. He couldn't feel the person leaning against him because of Carpet but he could definitely feel the hand that reached down to the crotch of his pants faster than Aziz thought any hand could move. "Ya left me high an' dry, Jay," a breathy voice said into Aziz's ear.

"Dude!" Aziz flung his elbow back and scrambled away from the groper. He managed to get away without too much trouble and spun to face his overly touchy feely attacker.

The teen in front of him was a scrappy, wild looking guy with thick smudged eyeliner and a wide grin that quickly faded but didn't go away entirely. "You're not Jay."

"No shit," Aziz growled.

The teen lifted a silver hook along with his sword. "I shoulda known... ya don't have as nice an ass."

Aziz felt vaguely insulted although he wasn't sure why. It wasn't as if he wanted this psycho to be looking at his ass or anything. "I'm heartbroken you don't like it," he sneered as he lifted his own weapon in a defensive pose. "Who the hell are you supposed to be anyway?"

"The name's Harry," the teen said, his grin growing again. Aziz thought there was something very unhinged about the other boy. "Harry Hook." Right. This was the guy that the others had been talking about causing trouble in Mal's territory. "An' who might you be, ya substitute Jay?" Harry asked with a head tilt.

"I'm not a substitute Jay," Aziz growled in annoyance.

Harry's eyes flicked over Aziz quite obviously and then he let out a little giggle that didn't seem to fit his weapon wielding self. "Ya seem like one ta me. An' not even a good one... Jay wouldn't do somethin' silly like slipping. Really shoulda been my first clue." Harry tilted his head to the side almost thoughtfully. "That or the hair..."

Aziz couldn't help but roll his eyes. "They didn't tell me you were this crazy."

"Tha's not very nice, fake-Jay," Harry said.

"Yeah, well, neither is groping people you just met," he pointed out.

"Ya gave me an opening," Harry replied with a grin and a wide open gesture as if that explained everything.

Aziz stared for a minute. "You are seriously messed up."

"Oh, don't be such a princess about it," Harry said. "It's not like I grope just anyone."

"You thought I was Jay," Aziz pointed out.

"Exactly," Harry said lightly. "So don't get all bent outta shape."

Aziz felt like he was missing something because where he was from people didn't grope their rivals, but here Harry was implying it was the most logical thing in the world. Suddenly, a plume of bright green smoke exploded between the two boys. Aziz felt his eyes water and coughed even as a small hand slapped down on his chest and pushed him back.
Aziz had to blink frantically to clear his vision and saw Mal standing there with a scowl. "Stay close by," she hissed before whipping around.

They could hear Harry Hook cursing and hacking before he managed to stumble out of the cloud and he looked up with a scowl. "Mal. We were havin' a conversation..."

"Stuff it, Harry," Mal said as she crossed her arms. "Where's Uma?"

Harry paused for a moment before lighting up again with a smile. "She's at the chip shop, of course," he said almost happily. "She's missed you."

"I'm flattered," Mal drawled. "But I don't have time for games."

Harry didn't even seem to notice she had said something. Instead he lifted his hook and examined it with a forced casual air that made Aziz narrow his eyes. "So, where's Jay? Your little impostor wouldn't say. It's not like him to miss a fight..." He was slightly rocking from foot to foot as his eyes flicked over them and then back to his hook.

Mal was quiet for a long minute and Aziz again felt like he was missing something. He noticed that outside of the alley the fighting between the gangs was still going on. Nobody else seemed to have realized that they had stepped away. "Jay's sick," Mal finally said.

Harry's rocking paused. "Aww, poor thing. Got a cold does he?" he asked mockingly.

"He's dying, Harry," Mal replied bluntly.

Harry froze entirely and his smile fell quickly into a scowl. It was the first time Aziz had actually seen anything besides a smile on his face and the difference was a little frightening. "Don't lie now, Mal," Harry said in an unconvincing imitation of lightheartedness. "It's not nice."

"Do I look like I'm lying?" Mal asked harshly. Aziz knew that Mal was guessing to the worst possible outcome but just hearing those words even unsettled Aziz. Apparently, it unsettled Harry too because the sad attempt at a smile he'd put on when he was telling Mal not to lie fell down flat again.

Aziz glanced between the two of them uneasily. Harry's expression was flickering through various ones so quickly Aziz thought he might be trying to put up a false one again and wasn't able to do so. "So, what the hell are ya doin' here?" Aziz was surprised that the pirate actually looked angry now that he'd given up faking amusement.

"I need squid," Mal replied.

Harry blinked very quickly for a minute. "What?"

"Squid," Mal repeated. "I need some to get something to help Jay."

"Ya need squid ta help Jay," Harry echoed, sounding bewildered. "Wha' are ya on about?"

Mal sighed in exasperation. "He's got these eels-"

"Lags an' Derry, yeah, so?" Harry asked.

Mal stared for a minute and processed. Aziz was glad he wasn't the only one that was confused finally. "Wait. What?" Mal asked. "How do you know about them?"

"Where do ya think Jay got the stuff to feed 'em from?" Harry asked with an eyebrow raised.
"... okay, fine, whatever. Point is, we need some squid to bribe them because Jay hid something in their tank," Mal said, obviously giving up on trying to rationalize the fact that Harry apparently knew the eels enough to have nicknames for them.

Harry just scoffed. "Ya don't need ta bribe 'em," he said. "Just reach in and grab whatever it is."

"Yeah, I don't really want to lose a hand, Harry," Mal snapped. "Not all of us have a hook on reserve for when we lose a limb."

"Fine, fine. I'll get ya some of what ya need," Harry said before glancing back at the fight that was going on on the main street. "Just get the hell off our turf."

Mal nodded and jerked her head to the side. "Come on, Z. Meet us outside of the Junk shop when you have it, Harry," she said before walking past. Aziz hurried to follow, making sure to give the pirate plenty of room.

When they got to the end of the alley the fight was getting brutal. Several pirates were on the ground screaming and holding hands over their eyes and there were still traces of colored smoke in the air. Swords were clashing all over. Several people on both sides were hurt like Diego who was holding his arm to his side as if he couldn't extend it. Mal let out a sharp whistle and drew all of her gang's attention. She jerked her head and gave a simple hand sign and all of her crew started to retreat.

At first the pirates were following, but then Harry roared a command and they stopped. Mal didn't so much as glance back although Aziz couldn't help but do so. Harry was standing at the back of his crew staring at them without that insane smile in place.

"What is that Harry guy's deal, anyway?" Aziz asked Mal as they returned to Mal's territory.

"He's got a hardon for Jay," Carlos muttered as he fell into place beside Aziz. He had a cut above his eyebrow that was bleeding but otherwise looked mostly unhurt.

Mal cast Carlos a bit of a glare before glancing at Aziz. "Nobody knows the full deal between them. They used to get along and now they don't. Neither will talk about it or at least Jay certainly won't," Mal explained. "I asked when they had their huge blow up, but Jay wouldn't tell me what it was about. He can be pretty close lipped when he wants to be."

"He groped me when he thought I was Jay," Aziz said uncomfortably.

"I told you... massive hardon," Carlos said.

"He's only doing it to try and get under Jay's skin," Mal denied. "You know how Harry is. He'll do anything for a reaction."

"Why are we retreating, Mal?" Evie asked. "Did you get what we were after?"

Mal frowned. "Sort of."

"Sort of?" Carlos echoed. "What does that mean?"

"It means I'll explain later," Mal said firmly. She lifted a hand and waved a few hand signs and Aziz was somewhat amazed when the rest of the gang started peeling off.

Aziz wanted to ask but Evie must have seen the question. "They're going to go get patched up after the fight," she explained for him.
"Right, and you need to come with us and make it worth our while bringing you along," Mal said with a glance his direction. "Because we don't have time to fuck around. We have to break into the Junk shop and we need to do it now."

Aziz suddenly felt pressure that certainly hadn't been there before. Iago swooped down from somewhere to land on his shoulder while Aziz did his best to not show any nerves that were quickly forming. He followed Mal, Evie, and Carlos through the streets until they reached a single story building that was in slightly better shape than those around it and had a sign hanging across the front. Jafar's Junk Shop was written in gold letters that were peeling off the wood and the whole thing had been fastened slightly crooked with giant pegs that looked like they had been scavenged from some railroad or something.

The sign on the front door said 'Go Away' rather than 'Closed' but the group of them ignored the sign and went down a cramped side alley that was barely large enough to fit a few trash cans into. After a moment, they reached the back of the building that had one dim light hanging down above a battered door that looked like it had once been painted bright blue but was now mostly stripped of all color. Aziz stopped dead in his tracks at the sight of the door. There had to be at least twenty locks straight down the side and all of them were different from the others in the line. "Holy... shit... this cannot be for real right now," Aziz said.

"Oh yeah," Mal said with a nod to the door. "And this is just to get into the place."

"Nobody steals from Jafar's Junk Shop," Carlos added.

"The front door looks easier to get into," Aziz pointed out. He'd only spotted two locks on that door.

"Well, yeah, if you don't mind being seen by everyone on the street," Carlos said. "And then having Jafar told by one of his informants. And we're trying to not be noticed, remember."

Aziz nodded a little and took a deep breath before going up to the door and starting on the first of many locks. This was going to be a real test of his lock picking skills. When he volunteered to come, it never occurred to him that this sort of paranoia would be what he was up against. "Where did he even get all these locks?"

"He made some and scavenged others, I think," Mal supplied. "Jay says he adds a new one every once and a while."

"Jay can get past them all in under five minutes because he's had to pick them so many times," Evie added. "They stay locked even when Jafar is actually home."

"It might take me a little longer," Aziz muttered as he worked. There was no way he could pick four locks a minute or whatever it figured out to be. He was good and all, but that was just inhuman. It was no wonder that they called Jay the best thief on the Isle if he could really do what Evie was saying he could. Aziz felt distinctly inadequate now.
Chapter 24

Harry gripped the hook in his hand tightly as he glanced between the two fully grown men that had cornered him. He wasn't defenseless, but he knew he wouldn't be getting out of this particular situation unscathed. One of the men, Avery, chuckled and leaned a bit closer. "Wha's wit the look?" he asked. "It's like ya don' like us no more, Harvey."

"Harry," Harry grit out in annoyance.

"Wha'eva," Avery replied. His eyes dropped down Harry's body uncomfortably before coming back up to Harry's hook. "Tha's an awfully dangerous toy fer a lil boy, Harvey."

"Harry," he corrected again with even more anger. If they were going to assault him the least they could do was get his damn name right.

The other pirate laughed and stepped closer. Harry backed up automatically and hit the wall behind him. The second one of them reached for him he'd slice their hand and then maybe, if he got lucky, he could push past them. Then it was a straight shot back to the Jolly Roger and... well, not safety really, but a place with lots of hiding spots. Or maybe Harry could find his Dad somewhere. His old man might not do anything to these crew members if Harry spoke up, but he at the very least didn't let them assault Harry right in front of him.

Still, getting away was going to be hard since there were two of them and they were blocking the only exit of the alley with their not insignificant slovenly bodies. Harry's heart rate was going through the roof, but he held his only weapon tight. "Hey!"

The pirates turned and when they did they separated enough for Harry to see who had called from the other end of the alley. He was surprised to see Jay standing there with his bare arms folded across his chest. Jay was already sporting a split lip but was giving a smile that didn't reach his eyes. "Wouldn't you rather not have to fight to get off?" he asked.

Avery still frowned although he wasn't even attempting to hide his interest as he stared at Jay's young chest. Avery glanced back at Harry and then to Jay again. Finally, he turned fully to the young Arabian thief. "Alright, fine, but it better be worth it, whore."

Jay's flirty smile was still in place, but his eyes were like ice. "I'm worth every penny," he assured Avery as the pirate reached out to paw at him. Jay let his eyes flick over to Harry before giving the slightest jerk of his head. Harry was still bewildered but took his chance and darted past the second pirate who no longer had any interest in stopping him.

Harry ran hard almost all the way back to the Jolly Roger. Just before he reached the lopsided scaffolding that went up the side of the ship, Harry found himself stopping and looking behind him even though he was far off from that alley by that point. He felt oddly bad about running off like that even though Jay, by all accounts, knew what he was doing. Harry started climbing the ladders and ramps that meandered up the scaffold.
Harry hadn't thought too much about Jay after he had impulsively decided to 'thank' him by giving him some extra money and a hopefully not traumatic time in bed for once. Harry knew he had enjoyed Jay a lot, mostly because for the first time he had been the one in charge of everything. Being the one calling the shots had, perhaps not healed, but greatly soothed some of the pain that chewed at him. But still, Harry hadn't gone out looking for Jay after that. He hadn't wanted to get too used to actually enjoying himself in case things went sour.

And yet, Jay hadn't had to step in. He could have just let Harry deal with the perverts on his own and kept on walking. Harry thought for a minute before jumping off the scaffolding and into a second-floor window of a nearby house that belonged to some old witch that slept like the dead.

Harry hung out in the shadows in the witches' house and waited. Avery was one of the most unpleasant pirates in Hook's crew. He had a real sadistic streak that Harry was unfortunately plenty familiar with. Harry really shouldn't have let Jay deal with the bastard by himself.

After a while, Harry finally spotted a cheerful looking Avery and his friend heading up to the deck of the Jolly Roger. Avery was in the middle of a few very unnecessarily vulgar descriptions about 'the whore' that made Harry want to kill the man. He wasn't sure why but maybe it was because Harry really did owe Jay now for deliberately stepping in when he didn't have to. Harry glared at the two pirates as they disappeared up the scaffold. As soon as they were gone Harry clambered out of his hiding spot and then ran back towards the alley. The chances were Jay was long gone, but Harry still wanted to check. He wanted to make sure that Jay wasn't too badly hurt, at least.

Harry was a little surprised when he reached the alley to see Jay was indeed still there. His pants and vest weren't even fastened, and he was sitting with his back against the brick wall of one building. Harry thought he looked really rough but didn't say anything about it. Jay opened his eyes to look over as Harry got closer. "What're you doing here?" Jay asked, his voice scratchy like he'd been choked.

Harry paused at the question and puzzled out how to answer. He didn't want to make it seem like he cared but he really didn't know what to say that wouldn't sound like that. "They pay ya enough?" he finally settled on.

Jay studied Harry for a minute before snorting. "Tried to split it since 'they split me' but I got what they owed me when the were pulling up their pants," he answered. "Plus extra for being a couple of assholes." Jay groaned some as he finally pushed himself up off the ground.

Harry nodded a little in understanding. "Why'd ya do it?" he asked as Jay started fixing his pants. "I didn't do it for you," he said a little too quickly. "I needed the money, and if they were going for you, they had to be desperate enough to pay for it too. Made sense is all." Harry wasn't sure he fully believed that, but he wasn't going to call Jay on the shaky excuse.

Jay finished with his pants and zipped up his vest before giving a slight wave and heading for the end of the alley. Harry frowned at the uneven gait of the other teen and hurried to close the distance. "Ya know, I had ta put up wit Avery before, so I know he's... rough," Harry said awkwardly. What the hell was he even doing?

Jay glanced to the side with an eyebrow raised. "Not exactly a blushing virgin," he drawled. "I'm fine if you're worried."

"I'm not worried," Harry denied quickly. "Just... a drink might help, an' I got some stashed away."
Jay stopped and turned to face Harry fully. "You're offering me a drink?"

"Well, I didn' figure ya were up ta anythin' more," Harry replied. "An' I sorta owe ya. I don' like owin' people." Jay was quiet for a minute before he nodded a little. Harry couldn't quite help the grin that split his face, and he threw an arm around Jay's shoulders. "Great! It ain't the best stuff, but it is strong!"

Harry glanced around the back of the chip shop and was glad to not see Ursula or Uma around. He wasn't actually supposed to be in the kitchen, but he had something he needed to get. Harry went over to the fridge in the corner that was taped shut and making an absolutely horrific noise as it ran. Harry quickly pulled the tape back and opened the door to start rummaging around inside. There were all sorts of fish and sea creatures in the fridge, but all were of somewhat questionable freshness. One herring was staring at Harry with a slimy eye from where it had been tossed carelessly onto a bunch of browning lettuce.

Harry pulled various drawers open and looked in some containers until he finally found a small Styrofoam box that had old fish scraps in it. Harry dumped the fish guts onto the lettuce with the herring and then dropped the now empty container on the counter.

A little more rummaging and Harry found a package of squid. Harry made a face but used his hook to pick up one of the pale fleshy things. "Harry, what're you doin' back here?"

Harry glanced over at the door of the kitchen to see Uma standing there with her arms crossed. "Just getting some squid," Harry answered as he dropped the first squid into the box and poked it down with the tip of his hook.

"You hate squid," Uma said. "You said if you're going to eat something with tentacles you'd rather eat me," she added with a smirk from where she was leaning against the doorjamb. Her smirk faded surprisingly quickly and then she narrowed her eyes. "So, why are you getting that?"

"Jus' need it fer somethin' is all," Harry non-answered as he selected another of the slimy sea creatures.

"Harry," Uma said sternly. "What's the squid for?"

Harry sighed and dropped the second squid into the box before looking over at Uma. "I'm gonna feed some eels," he answered. "That's all." Uma would not be happy to find out that Harry was actually going to help Mal and Harry really rather avoid that argument if he could. He hated arguing with Uma.

Unfortunately, Uma was by no means stupid. "Harry, the only eels you've ever fed were the two in that whore's house," she said unhappily. "So, what the hell are you doing?"

Harry put the remaining squid back and taped the fridge door shut again. "Just wha' I said," Harry answered as he shoved the lid on the tiny box. Uma crossed the kitchen to put a hand on the box and pin it to the counter. Harry sighed again and looked up at the now distinctly unhappy Uma. "I jus' need ta take care of somethin' tha's all."

"This 'something' have anything to do with Mal coming onto our turf earlier?" Uma demanded. "What's going on, Harry?"

Harry wondered for a moment if he could get around telling her but then figured he couldn't. She knew enough to guess at parts anyway and not knowing the whole story would just lead her to fill in the blanks and get even angrier. So, Harry told her what he knew. "So, you're just going to help
them?" Uma asked as if he were crazy.

Harry frowned. "I'm not gonna let Jay die, Uma. I've still got ta hook him. Ya said I could."

Uma narrowed her eyes. It had been a long time since Harry had brought up the promise to hook Jay. He'd first said it after the explosive fight where they went from friendly to enemies and Uma had been all too happy to promise that he could do it. But over time, Harry had stopped making mention of it unless, Uma noticed, he was trying to assure her he wasn't feeling anything but contempt. Uma had caught onto that a while back but had never called him on it since he still fought Jay like a wildcat when they crossed paths. "I said you could and you can," Uma said. "If you still want to."

Harry almost recoiled. "O' course I do!"

"Do you?" Uma challenged. "Because you savin' him kinda makes me think you don't."

"If he dies there I won't even get ta see it!" Harry argued with a wave towards Auradon.

Uma grabbed the squid and walked past Harry to go to the fridge. "Too bad," Uma said. "Those little traitors deserve whatever they get," she told Harry as she ripped the tape off the fridge and opened the door.

"Uma," Harry said in a strange tone. Uma paused and looked back at her first mate. She had never heard him say her name like that before and it made her uneasy, though she didn't want to admit it. 
"... ya owe us."

Uma frowned and usually would have argued, but the oddly severe expression on Harry's face kept her from doing so. It had taken a while, and an unfortunate amount of booze but Uma had eventually admitted to Harry that she had maybe twisted the truth a little -or outright lied- in order to drive a wedge between the boys. She had been worried the next day -when she realized what she'd said- that Harry would go running back to the thief, but it seemed too much damage had already been done, and Jay wouldn't even talk to Harry by that point. Harry had threatened to leave the crew and join his sister's gang, but Uma had managed to convince him to stay, which hadn't been in the least bit easy and boiled down to playing on how long they had been together.

Harry was staring at Uma, and she didn't like it. "It's not like it'll make him come back to you, Harry," she pointed out a little more nastily than she had to.

Harry narrowed his eyes and stepped closer to her. "Ya still owe us, Uma," he said darkly. "Even if I never see him again doesn't change that."

"It was for your own good!" Uma snarled. "Both of your own goods!"

"I don' care wha' it was for," Harry said angrily. "It wasn' yer place! An' so yer gonna let me help them."

Uma still hesitated. Every habit she had was telling her not to help Mal in any way. That screwing her over was by far the better option. Maybe Harry would finally get over his piece of Arabian tail if said tail was gone for good. Harry leaned even closer. "Uma... If ya don' then I'm gonna go to Harriet... or C.J. Hell, maybe I'll even go join Mal."

Uma's head jerked up in surprise and outrage. "You wouldn't."

"...Ya really think that?" Harry asked.
"I won't let her take you from me too, Harry," Uma said firmly. Mal was always winning everything. Always taking something from Uma. Whether it was the playground when they were kids or turf when they were running gangs. There was always something Mal got that Uma should have. It pissed the daughter of Ursula off to no end.

"This isn't about you an' Mal," Harry said. "This is about wha' ya did ta me an' Jay. An' you finally startin' ta pay some of tha' back." Uma frowned and tried to come up with some flaw in what Harry said. She knew that she really had hurt Harry badly by deliberately breaking them apart, but she still was sure it was for the best. "Ya owe us," Harry repeated firmly.

Uma studied Harry for another minute before sighing and giving in. She held the small container out, and Harry took it from her quickly. Harry headed for the door, and Uma just couldn't stop herself, "It really was for the best, Harry."

Harry stopped and looked over his shoulder at her. "I hurt him because of wha' ya told me, Uma," he said.

"He would have just hurt you," Uma argued.

"Not like how I hurt him," Harry said quietly. "He never woulda done that ta me." And that ate at Harry though he hated to admit it.

"You don't know that," Uma said, trying her utmost to ignore the feeling in her gut that always rose up on the rare occasion that Harry spoke about what had happened.

Harry frowned but then nodded. "Yeah, I do, Uma," he murmured. Jay had always been better than Harry, and while that sometimes led Jay into trouble, it had also been an undeniable part of what drew the son of Hook in the first place. It was really hard to not be attracted to the boy that had saved you from horrible things multiple times. Uma didn't have a response, and so Harry took the needed sealife and left to go meet Mal.
Twenty-five. That was how many locks there were that Aziz had to pick to just get into the stupid building. "There," he said as he finally finished and got to his feet. "Don't even tell me how long that took," he added. He knew without a doubt it had taken him a significantly longer time than five minutes to get through. Aziz didn't need to know exactly how much longer.

Mal pushed the door open and hesitantly entered the building followed by Evie. Carlos paused beside Aziz long enough to give him a pat on the shoulder. "Good job, Z," he said before disappearing into the dark hallway.

Aziz sighed and followed cautiously. The hallway was dingy and poorly lit, but Aziz could see at the end of it a curtain of beads that was missing more than a few strands. Beyond the beads, Aziz could just make out shelves and counters crammed full of things. To the left was an archway that led to a small dirty kitchen that had a table full of small appliances that had been taken apart crammed in the corner. To the right was the only actual door that Aziz could see and it had another three locks on it. "I'm guessing that's the way we have to go?" Aziz drawled.

"Yeah, that's Jafar's room," Mal agreed. "We should probably find the safe first."

Aziz sighed and started to pick those locks next. Three was more manageable, and he was able to open that door much more quickly. This time, Aziz was the one to enter first. He was careful as he stepped into the room and looked around.

There was a thick oriental carpet on the floor that had a few scorch marks on it but otherwise looked to be in surprisingly good condition. A divan was at one end of the room beside a dented hooka, and a small table kept flat due to a book under one leg. A heavy looking desk was at the other end of the room with a picture of Aziz's father plastered on the front and several sharp objects jutting from his face.

"Iago said behind the tiger painting, in the desk, or under the couch thing," Mal said as she followed Aziz into the room. "Iago. Just squawk or something if we're about to step into a trap."

"Step on a trap!" Iago repeated from his perch on Aziz's shoulder. He flew off to land on an actual bird stand in the corner where he could more easily watch them. The four teens carefully made their way into the room with wide eyes. There were trinkets everywhere some of which in very good condition and some of which actually looked to be worth something. A chandelier hung in the middle of the room (making Aziz think the room had originally been a dining room or something) and was draped with many glittering necklaces and bracelets.

Carlos was passing close to the chandelier when Iago squawked loudly, causing them all to freeze. "Aziz, Carlos, Evie or Mal?" Mal asked as they all looked at Iago.

"Carlos!" Iago repeated.

"Okay, back up a step and come over here, Carlos," Aziz said with a slight wave of his hand.

Carlos nodded and did as he was told. When no trap was triggered, they all breathed a sigh of relief and continued. Iago squawked another three times for various reasons as they explored the room. Once, because Evie had been about to touch something she shouldn't, once because Aziz had almost stepped on something, and another time because Carlos again almost walked across a trap. Mal avoided being called out almost the whole time until she reached for the tiger painting on the
"Mal, wait," Aziz said. "There's no way this paranoid jerk would just let someone lift that off the wall," he pointed out.

"Well, how are we going to check behind it then?" she asked with a huff. She glared at the ugly tiger that was lopsided and had an incredible amount of water damage on it.

Aziz stepped forward. "Let me try something," he said. Mal looked unhappy but stepped back to let Aziz handle it. Aziz very gently ran his hands along the edges of the frame for any indication it wasn't safe to remove. He smiled when he felt the thin wire that was behind it and removed his hands. "Yeah, there's some trigger back there. It pulls something."

Carlos stepped forward and looked around. "Probably something to fall from that," he said pointing to the slender crack in the ceiling that was directly above them. "Let me see what I can do," he said as he gestured for Aziz to give him a boost.

The Arabian prince did as he was told and boosted Carlos up so that he was right beside the crack in the ceiling. Carlos carefully examined the gap and pulled his hand back with a curse. His finger had a slice in it and was already steadily bleeding. "Shit, that's sharp. E, hand me that rock thing," he said pointing to Jafar's desk.

Evie glanced over and spotted the paperweight that Carlos meant. She cautiously picked it up and then tossed it up to her friend. Carlos carefully wedged the paperweight into the gap so that the heavy and very sharp blade wouldn't be able to fall. "There. Should be safe now."

Mal pulled the tiger painting (which was entirely too ugly) off the wall like a door. There was a snap followed by a clang from above them, but Carlos' blockage worked. Mal frowned when there was a hole behind the painting but no safe. "Damn. Check the desk."

Evie nodded and crouched down beside the desk on the side that looked like it held drawers. She had already tried to open the drawers but found they were almost all fake. Evie was trying to figure out how to get to the secret compartment but couldn't manage it. She could knock and hear the open space, but that was it.

Aziz came over to help and found the small lip where the hidden door was. He had to use one of the sharp daggers that had been stuck in Aladdin's face to pry the door open, but he did manage it. The whole side of the desk came off with a splintering sound, and Aziz laid the thin piece of wood off to the side. "It's here!" he called to Mal who had been making her way back to the divan.

Mal and Carlos hurried over to see. The small safe was wrapped in several coils of chains and under those chains was a long bar with its own lock stretched across the front. Under both of those was a combination lock that was actually part of the door.

Aziz grabbed one of the coils of chains and with the help of the others pulled the safe out from where it had been wedged. The gap in the desk wasn't that large, so it took some effort to get the heavy metal box out into the open where they could really see it. The heavy chains around the safe were a huge tangle so that they wouldn't be able to just be slipped off and on a few links there were marks as if someone had tried to saw them apart.

Mal glared at the chains accusingly before turning. "Hopefully Harry gets here soon with the squid he promised," she said as she started for the door. Iago squawked at her, and she adjusted her path around a statue that had a crown perched lopsidedly on top of it.
"Are you sure he's going to come through?" Carlos asked as he got to his feet. "I mean... this is Harry we're talking about."

"Aww, now tha's not nice," a new voice said, and Harry Hook appeared in the doorway. At their bewildered expressions he pointed behind him with his hook. "Ya left the door open."

"You're here sooner than I thought," Mal said as Harry leaned on the door frame but didn't step into Jafar's room.

Harry shrugged. "I'm jus' tha' good, Mal," he said before holding up a Styrofoam container. "Plus, unlike you, I knew where ta go."

"Great," Mal said as she reached out to take the box. Harry quickly pulled it back out of her reach though. "Harry."

"Easy now. I'm gonna give it to ya," he assured her. "I just gotta question first."

Mal frowned. "And what question is that?" she asked.

Harry leaned forward and asked something so softly that only Mal could hear. She frowned but then shook her head. "I don't know. He doesn't talk about it," she answered. "Now the squid."

Harry frowned but handed the box over. "Come on," Mal said as she pushed past Harry to go across the hall to where Aziz had noticed the kitchen earlier. Aziz sidled past Harry uneasily, but the pirate didn't make any move to grope him this time. He did toss out a wink that made Aziz uncomfortable, but that was it.

Due to the angle when they had come in, Aziz hadn't spotted what was clearly the nicest feature of the kitchen. Along the wall that was shared by the hallway was a massive fish tank. It looked like it had been made by putting together several windows and a small child could probably take a bath in the thing. The water was a murky greenish color and had stringy grasses growing in little patches out of reddish dirt. At first, Aziz didn't see these supposed scary eels and only spotted the glinting of little jewels and gold coins laying across the bottom tempting anyone to reach in for them. There were even a few rings and broaches that looked fairly expensive and a necklace wrapped around the neck of a large pot that was dropped on its side and wouldn't have looked out of place in Aziz's own home in Agrabah.

There was no lid to the tank and, as Mal approached it, that was when Aziz spotted Jay's pets. The two eels came out of the pot at the same time, twisting around each other and fixing the group of them with beady blue eyes. They were both large and were a greenish gold color, and their long bodies were decorated with slightly darker rosettes that reminded Aziz of some of the tiles adorning the palace back home. Or maybe an actual land snake's markings. The two eels had their mouths open, showing of jaws full of teeth like shards of glass and they milled about the tank like they were just waiting for something to enter the water.

"He probably put it in the jar," Harry offered. Aziz almost jumped since he hadn't realized Harry had followed them into the kitchen.

"Great," Mal sighed. "Carlos, try and find something big enough to keep the eels on the other side of the tank, and I'll grab for the pot while they're stuck."

Harry sighed loudly. "Yer makin' it harder on yourselves," he muttered as he brushed past to go to the fish tank. The son of Hook pulled off his coat and dropped it across one chair to show he was only wearing a thin ratty tank top underneath. Harry lifted his hook and tapped lightly on the front...
glass of the tank. Both eels twisted to face that spot and Aziz could almost imagine them hissing. "Hey, boys. Ya got big. Ya remember me, right? I'ma reach in there."

"Harry, that's really not-" Evie snapped her mouth shut as Harry ignored her completely and stuck his hand right into the water. The eels came close and then twisted around the pirate's arm like two long slimy cats before swimming off as if it were entirely normal.

Harry just sent Mal a smirk, which she glared at. "Told ya, ya just needed ta reach in here," he said as he pushed his arm further into the water and grasped for the top of the pot.

Mal scowled. "And how exactly are they not eating you?" she demanded.

"I's a secret," Harry replied as he finally grasped the edge of the pot and hauled it up enough to reach inside. "Now what's Jay hid in here?" he asked.

"It's a key," Carlos told him.

Harry nodded and seemed to dig around for a moment before pulling his hand back out of the pot clasping a key in his fist. "There ya go," he said as he removed his arm from the water entirely and shook some of the water off. "Easy. Ya should still feed 'em though."

Mal dumped the squid into the tank, and instantly the eels were tearing into the food. The water thrashed and splashed over the edge as the two eels swung their prizes around and ripped chunks of pale flesh off and swallowed the pieces whole. The water of the tank turned cloudy as tiny bits of squid escaped and floated away. Aziz stared as the water settled and the two eels continued to swim in their tank. No wonder nobody wanted to ever stick their hand in that tank if that was how the eels normally were.

Aziz glanced at the unharmed Harry again. "You did know they wouldn't eat your hand, right?" he asked.

Harry shrugged and shook his wet arm some more. "Was pretty sure," he said casually. "Been a while since I seen 'em, but I figured they'd remember me."

Mal crossed her arms and studied Harry unhappily. "... fine. Thanks for the help, Harry. We got it from here," she said. Mal very much didn't like the implications of Lagan and Derelict knowing Harry Hook well enough that he could actually reach into the tank when not even Jafar could do that. Mal wouldn't dare stick her pinky into that water and Harry had been shoulder deep in it.

At first, Harry didn't look like he was going to leave, but then he shrugged and grabbed his coat from where he had dropped it and then slung it over his shoulder. "Alright then, tell Jay I said hi an' I'll hook him later," he said in a mocking tone.

"Ookay," Carlos said. "As much as I didn't want to see someone's arm get taken off I'm still really confused why it didn't happen."

"Apparently, Jay and Harry were closer than we thought," Evie murmured.

"Yeah, apparently," Mal agreed as she looked down at the key in her hand and then at the two eels still protecting the treasures at the bottom of their tank. After a minute, she shook her head. "It doesn't matter. Let's just get the lamp."

The four teens hurried back to the safe and unlocked the chains. The padlock opened without a problem, and Aziz quickly unwound the thick metal links so that they could get at the rest of it. "Alright, now this word lock thing," Mal said as she examined the bar locked across the front.
"How many letters?" Carlos asked as he peered over her shoulder.

"Five," Mal answered as she flicked the first dial around.

"Five letters and important to Jafar... his own name?" Evie suggested.

Mal tried 'Jafar,' but the lock didn't open. "Nope. Any other suggestions?"

They quickly started coming up with any five letter word that could even vaguely be associated with Jafar including genie, lamps, money, magic, and cobra. Iago had moved from his perch in the corner to land on Aziz's shoulder again as they tried to brute force the answer to the lock.

Aziz looked around the room for some source of inspiration. "Tiger?" he suggested as he spotted the painting on the wall again. Tiger didn't really strike him as something involving Jafar, but he had already run out of ideas around the time they tried 'thief.'

Mal put the latest attempt in and wasn't really surprised when it wouldn't open. She sighed and rubbed her temples. "There are just too many words with five letters," she complained.

"Wait... did we try Djinn?" Carlos asked. "That has five letters right?" he asked Aziz.


Evie suddenly brightened. "That makes sense! Jay and Jafar never say genie they only ever say Djinn! That must be what it is!"

Mal quickly put in Djinn and pulled at the bars. They wouldn't budge. "Damn it!" she cursed as she hit the top of the safe in frustration. "What the hell could he have used besides that!?!"

"Maybe he just used something random," Carlos said with a sigh. "We all know he only picked a word lock in the first place because Jay sucks at spelling. It might only be for him," he muttered.

Mal scowled at the lock. Something about what Carlos said tugged at her brain somehow. After a moment, she reached over and started scrolling through letters on the dials. She had a hunch, but she really didn't like it. After five letters, Mal pulled at the bars. The slid apart, and Mal lifted it out of the way.

"You did it!" Evie said, slightly surprised but happy. "How did you figure out..." Evie broke off as she looked at the word spelled out.

JABIR

"That ass," Carlos grumbled.

Mal tossed the bar off into the corner. It hit a trap, and a sword dropped from the ceiling to stick into the ground where it swayed slightly in place. "He used Jay's own name..." Aziz said somewhat uncomprehendingly.

"Nobody tell Jay what that code was," Mal ordered.

"I don't get it..." Aziz admitted.

"It's just another dig at Jay," Evie said unhappily. "He would never have thought to use his own name."

"Last is the combination," Mal said as she got up. "Can you do it, Aziz?"
Aziz shrugged a little. "Not as much practice with combination locks but I think I can do it," he agreed as he leaned over and started to carefully try and unlock the last barrier between them and the lamp. He listened very carefully as he slowly spun the dial digit by digit.

The others were hovering a little, but Aziz tried his best to not pay them any attention. The first click happened at twenty-one, and Aziz started turning the other way. The next happened all the way at one, and then he started spinning it again. The third number clicked at- Aziz recoiled sharply and stared down at the safe. That was just... weird. He pulled the lever hesitantly as a test, and the door swung open.

"Good job," Mal said with a grin starting to appear. Then she saw the frown on Aziz's face. "What?"

Aziz shook his head slightly. "Probably just a coincidence," he muttered.

"What's a coincidence?" Carlos asked.

"Oh, uh," Aziz motioned to the safe awkwardly. "The combination was... my birthday."

There was an awkward silence. "Huh... well, I doubt that Jafar set the combination," Mal said.

"Yeah, we scavenge most of our stuff," Evie added. "Its just one of those weird cosmic things."

Aziz nodded. "Yeah, no, how would Jafar even know my birthday?" he said dismissively. "Completely coincidental."

The others muttered their agreements and didn't notice the way Iago narrowed his eyes and studied Aziz carefully. "Let's grab the lamp and blow this Popsicle stand, huh?" Mal suggested. "Being in Jafar's house is creepy enough as it is," she added as she reached into the safe.

Mal pulled out the lamp carefully and couldn't quite help but stare at it. She'd never seen the lamp before, and it wasn't what she would have expected. The etched surface was a combination of matte black and shiny silver, but the black was definitely the dominant color. Tiny red jewel chips were embedded along the rim of the lamp and on the knob of the lid. There were a few dents on the sides but nothing that really damaged it too badly.

"That's Jay's lamp?" Evie breathed. "It's not what I expected..."

Carlos shook his head a little. "No... but then... I wasn't sure what to expect either," he murmured.

Mal cradled the lamp carefully before nodding to Evie. The blue princess opened her purse, and Mal gently put the lamp inside where it would be safe and nobody would spot it. "Let's get out of here before we get caught," Mal said as she got to her feet.
Chapter 26

The group looked around at the slightly trashed room they were in. "Should we try and make it look like nobody was in here?" Carlos asked. If they were trying to be stealthy, leaving without a trace would be preferable, he figured.

Before anyone could answer, there was a tapping somewhere nearby. The group of them looked around for the source and then Evie spotted a spot of bright blue through one grimy window. "Othello!" she hurried over to the window, but Iago squawked at her before she actually reached it. She only just managed to stop herself from grabbing hold of the frame. "Othello, did the boys send you?" she asked loudly to be heard through the glass.

The blue parrot bobbed, and Evie whipped around to look at the others. "Then Jafar is on his way back," Mal said as she got up. "No time to make it look like we weren't here. We'll just have to hope we can stay off his radar and slip back off the Isle without any fuss. Come on, guys. We can catch a nap in the Loft before going to look for a way onto that barge."

The others nodded in agreement, and they left Jafar's house. Evie couldn't help but keep a hand on the top of her purse to ensure that nobody would be able to get their grubby little hands in it. She knew that every street was filled with pickpockets and she wasn't going to risk losing Jay's lamp.

The sky was turning from pitch black to dreary grey as the sun slowly rose over the dome. The constant storm clouds blocked out most of the light, but it was still enough to tell that life on the Isle was shifting. The Isle never really slept but there were two distinct modes of life. Night and Day. In the night all the worst of the worst happened. Muggings, murders, and other such abuses all were carried out under cover of impenetrable night. During the day the most horrible people were often sleeping after a night of wickedness, so the crimes shifted to more petty ones. More kids were out causing as much chaos as possible and trying to eke out an existence while their parents slept.

That wasn't to say that absolutely horrid things never happened during the day but they were less common. The daytime wasn't really safe, but you were unlikely to be outright murdered when the sun was up.

When they got back to the loft a few of their gang was still around waiting. Yzla and Diego hopped up when they came in. "Did you get what you were after?" Diego asked.

Mal gave a fleeting smile. "We did. Now we just have to get off the Isle."

"And... how are you going to do that?" Yzla asked uncertainly.

"We've got... the basic outline of a plan," Carlos said. "Details are still a little fuzzy, though."

Aziz thought that those details were more than just 'fuzzy' but decided to not mention that. Instead, he went to sit down on a chair that was probably stuffed with more dust than actual foam by that point.

"So what is this antidote that Jafar had?" Yzla asked. "Maybe I should take a sample so that if we ever need it again, I can just make it up."
"Um, no thanks, Yzla. I'm pretty sure we'll never need it again," Mal said as Evie shifted her purse behind her body. "It seemed like a pretty one-time thing. I don't think we'll ever run across a need for the cure a second time." Mal wanted to trust the rest of her crew. She really did. But this was Jay they were talking about and his very existence. Mal couldn't afford to risk it in any way.

Yzla frowned some. "But-"

"Really, it's fine," Mal said firmly. "If you're okay you guys should probably head home or to school or something. We've been up all night, and I know I need a few hours of shut-eye before we do anything else."

Diego and Yzla exchanged a few glances and then with the other few members of the gang that had hung around. Though Mal had phrased it as a sort of optional thing to do none of them actually believed that. They were all well aware that Mal didn't make suggestions or give optional orders.

So, the rest of the gang slowly left the loft and, once they were all gone, Mal sighed. "This has been the longest night I can remember for a long time," she murmured before collapsing across one of the couches that had mismatched cushions.

"But we did it," Evie said cradling her purse in her lap. "And now Jay'll be safe."

"Safer," Mal said. "Carlos you think when we get back you can find some way to keep that lamp protected?"

Carlos nodded instantly. "Yeah, I've already been thinking about ways we can do it."

"Um, nobody's allowed to touch Jordan's lamp so they wouldn't be allowed to touch Jay's either," Aziz pointed out. He could understand them wanting to safeguard their friend's greatest vulnerability, but Auradon wasn't exactly known for rampant theft. There was a special shelf that Jordan kept her lamp on, and it wasn't disturbed unless someone was actually visiting her.

"You do it your way, we'll do it ours," Mal replied instantly. "Jay's lamp is going to stay a secret, and that's just the way it is."

Aziz held his hands up defensively. "Alright, alright," he agreed. "I do get it, guys. Really. And it's better to be overprotective than not protective enough."

"No such thing," the three Isle kids said in unison. Aziz started a little in surprise. "There's no such thing as being overprotective," Evie clarified for him. "When you protect someone, you either go all out, or you shouldn't even bother."

"Half measures might as well be no measures here," Mal added.

Aziz tried really hard to think up some sort of reply but not for the first time was left without one. "This has definitely been an... eye-opening experience," he muttered. "A very, very unpleasant eye-opening experience. Like someone holding your eyes open to spray lemon juice in them type of experience."

Carlos nodded a little. "Wow, that was something I would actually expect an Isle kid to come up with. Well done."

"Thanks..." Aziz muttered. He felt like he was definitely failing but he wasn't entirely sure why since they had done what they set out to do and successfully stolen the lamp from the most overly secure place Aziz had ever seen. Perhaps it was just the Isle, and it made even victory feel like a failure somehow.
"Let's get some rest," Mal said. "It might take some doing to arrange a way off this rock. We'll have to talk to the goblins and finding one that knows English... might get tricky."

Carlos sighed even as Evie curled up in another chair. "I wish Jay were here... he's better with Goblins than we are," Evie muttered. "I only know like... two words. Make-up and More."

"Better than me," Carlos said. "I don't even know a single word."

"We'll figure it out," Mal said with a confidence Aziz envied. She must be so used to making up plans as she went along to be able to say something like that without hesitation.

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Jafar was not in a good mood. His trip home from the spa had been delayed by the most ridiculous roadblocks he had ever seen. The goblins, being goblins, had been all but useless and Jafar had spent hours on a trip that should have taken a fraction of the time. As the ex-vizier rounded to the back of his shop, he instantly noticed there was something very much amiss. Jafar narrowed his eyes as he stepped into his home through the open door. The fact that his door was open very much angered him. Nobody should be able to get through so many locks. He was certain of that. They were all from different places and times while being at varying levels of finicky and broken to make it all but impossible to break into his shop.

Jafar closed the door behind him with a slam and locked it like it should have been. The first thing he noticed when his eyes adjusted to the dim light was that the door to his room was open as well. Jafar stepped into his room and silently surveyed the wreckage. Several of his traps seemed to have been tripped, and quite a few of his things had been moved around. He was very much aware of where everything belonged so even the slightest movements he could pick out without too much trouble.

And then Jafar saw his safe in the middle of the room with the chains piled off to the side like dead metal snakes. The door to the safe was open still, and Jafar made a beeline for it. He bent down and just as he thought there was nothing left inside. Jafar cursed vile words and slammed the safe door shut again. There should have been nobody who could have gotten into that safe. He had been sure of it. The only one who would have had any chance was his stupid son, and the word lock would have foiled him. The idiot already proved time and time again he couldn't even spell his own name.

Still, he knew that the boy had to be involved in this somehow. Nobody else would have even come after his safe much less known where to find it. "Traitor," he hissed as he kicked at the chains on the floor. How dare that ingrate steal from him!?

Jafar glared at nothing for a moment before leaving his room and storming to the front of the building where the shop was. He had something for this, and he'd put it in a place where the stupid boy would never think to look for anything at all.

Jafar kicked an oriental rug out of the way and pulled a key from his pocket. He bent down and unlocked the small hatch in the floor and pulled the door open. Jafar ignored the many gouges on the bottom of the trap door that had red stains ground into them and climbed down into the small hole.

A false stone in the bottom of the hole was pried up with some difficulty, but Jafar knew the trick of it. He reached into the small cavity that was hidden under the stone and pulled out a nondescript box. Jafar climbed out of the hole and sat on the edge of the crawlspace as he opened the lid of the box.
Laying inside was a black and silver lamp. Jafar smiled and carefully lifted it from the box to hold it up. The dim light in the store was barely enough to reflect off the surface, but then the lamp had never really been polished up either. "Still a lowly amateur, boy," Jafar said with a wicked smile.

Chapter End Notes

LE GASP
Chapter 27

Jay heard muttering around him and shushing noises. Jay didn't really want to wake up, but the persistent little sounds drew him back to consciousness anyway. He opened his eyes a little and saw quite a few people crowded around his leg. Jay was still drowsy but was able to recognize several of the people as members of the team and the Coach was standing by the wall looking entirely too amused. "What're you guys doing?" Jay asked.

They all whipped around to face him with a mixture of expressions from guilty to terrible attempts at innocence. "Um, nothing," Terrance said before waving at the others.

Coach Bubbles sighed. "I told you boys to keep quiet and not wake him," he said as he left the wall to go stand nearer to head of Jay's hospital bed. "How're you doing, Jay?"

Jay thought about his answer for a minute. "Well... that stuff in there is really strong so I'm doing pretty good, I guess," he answered with a vague gesture towards the place where the nurses had injected painkillers into the bag hanging near his bed.

"Well, your leg bone was outside of your leg so, yeah, they'd give you pretty strong stuff for that," Herkie said as he leaned over Nathan to be better seen. "Speaking of, I hear they put pins in you."

Jay shrugged a little. "If you say so. I haven't really been paying attention," he admitted. "Ben says you won."

"Well, yeah," Chad said with a slight scoff. "We weren't going to lose just because you weren't there."

"What he means is," Herkie began as he pushed Chad into the back of their group, "that we weren't going to let you down." Chad tried to protest from behind the rest of the team where he'd been blocked off but was quickly told to shut up.

They all knew that Chad didn't really mean anything, but was just incredibly dense and tone deaf to how what he was saying actually sounded outside of his head. The team also knew that those habits drove Jay up the wall and they weren't there to agitate their MVP but cheer him up. They weren't sure if Jay had realized that there was no way he'd be playing in the last few games of the season with his leg busted so badly, but they knew he wouldn't be happy when he did find that out. The team had very quickly found out that an unhappy Jay had an adverse effect on all of them. Either because he got even more aggressive on the field or because Jay unhappy seemed to drag the spirit of the whole team down in some way that none of them could quite explain. Nathan theorized that seeing someone that was usually so boundlessly excited to play the game not enjoying it had some sort of transference effect on them where they experienced the same thing.

The team then quickly devolved into giving Jay a full rundown of how the rest of the game had gone -often while talking over one another. Jay gave a comment or two but mostly listened to the team give a blow by blow. Though he hated pretty much everything about his life since he'd broken his leg, he couldn't quite help but start to smile.

After a little while, Ben came into the room. He looked surprised to see the majority of the tourney team crowded around the bed. "I wasn't expecting you guys until later on in the day. Don't you have classes?" Ben asked curiously.

"Coach is writing us a note," Nathan said.
"They wouldn't have been paying attention in class, anyway," Coach Bubbles explained, looking entirely too amused. A few of the team members nodded in agreement with that.

Ben laughed a little as he walked over and then stopped and tilted his head to the side. "Guys... sometimes I wonder about you," he said as he stared at the cast on Jay's leg. He was amused still but definitely hadn't expected the sight in front of him.

Jay frowned but still couldn't see due to how the team had crowded around him. "What did they do?" he asked as he craned his head to try and see.

"Nothing," the team said immediately.

Jay looked at all of them one by one. "Uh huh, see the problem with that is... you're Auradon boys and you Auradon boys are horrible liars," Jay told them. "Now back off and let me see."

"But we weren't done," Herkie complained softly even as they moved to the side.

Jay pushed himself up slightly so that he could see his cast that was no longer in the sling but resting on a foam pillow up off the mattress. Jay raised an eyebrow at the little doodles that had been drawn all over his cast. There were flames all over his foot and going up his ankle, but a sort of lumpy attempt at a cobra cut into them before they got very far. Two tourney sticks (one of which was larger than the other) were crossed over a shield right on top of his foot. Something that Jay thought have might be some mutated cousin of Iago was on the side of his leg, and several different names were sprinkled over the rest of his cast. Near the top of the thing was a doodle of something that Jay wasn't even sure what it was supposed to be. "Are... are you guys... decorating my cast?" Jay asked in utter confusion.

"Well, yeah," Terrance said as he held up a marker. "That's sort of what you do with casts."

"It's the whole point," Herkie agreed.

Jay blinked several times. "... the doctor said the point was to make sure my bones don't move until they're healed though..." Jay had definitely complained last night to the nurse about having his leg stuck in a heavy solid... thing and the nurse, though baffled at his confusion, had tried to explain it to him. Jay hadn't really understood it, so she'd sent for his doctor. It still didn't make a whole heap of sense to the Isle boy, but the doctor had been adamant that it wouldn't be removed until his leg was healed.

"Well, I mean, yeah. That's the practical reason," Terrance agreed.

"Wait," Nathan said leaning closer. "You've said you've had broken bones before..." Jay nodded in agreement. He'd slipped up enough times talking to Carlos that he'd mentioned it once or twice. "Then did nobody ever decorate your casts before?"

"Never had one before," Jay told them.

"I'm sorry, what?" Nathan asked with wide eyes. Several of the other boys recoiled slightly in shock as well. "How have you broken bones but never had a cast before?"

"How do you even treat a break without a cast?" Chad asked with a slight scoff of disbelief.

Jay felt like this was another one of those 'oops, I said too much' moments, but he didn't exactly have an easy escape this time like leaving the room. He tried to act casual and shrugged. "Simple. You straighten it out, slap a splint on it, and try to be careful with it until it stops hurting," Jay explained. "It's really not so bad. More of a hassle than anything."
"You scare me sometimes," Terrance muttered. "And I live in the jungle and stuff..."

Jay shrugged again. He really couldn't say anything else about it. That was just the way things were on the Isle. He looked down at his cast once more and figured that the mystery objects around the top were supposed to be little roaring lions. "You know Mal's gonna be pissed," he said.

"What? Why?" Chad asked with wide eyes.

"Because decorating all my shit is sort of her thing," Jay said.

"Language," Coach said automatically.

Jay glanced up. "... sorry," he said. He had forgotten that Coach was standing there since he was so quiet. "But, yeah, you saw what she did with my locker. Being able to decorate this thing? She'll be mad you got to it first and I kind of like to avoid mad Mal."

"She can get a little scary sometimes," Ben agreed. He watched in amusement as the team seemed to go pale at the very thought of Mal angry at them.

"... we should leave her a space then," Nathan decided quickly. The others nodded in agreement.

Jay tilted his head to the side and examined the white space left. "Try leaving about... all of this," he said gesturing to pretty much the entire area that was left unmarked.

The team looked down at the cast and frowned some. "So... sign our names and small things on the side then..." Herkie said. "I was gonna draw you in a chocolate bath..."

Jay snorted at that. "It would have just been a big brown blob," he replied. He had seen Herkie's doodles before, and they weren't so good. "Plus, I wouldn't bathe in chocolate."

"I don't know, you do eat a lot of it," Nathan pointed out.

"Speaking of, we put some on the side table for you," Terrance said with a gesture at said table. Jay looked over for the first time since waking up and spotted a small pyramid of various candy bars. Without hesitation, Jay reached over and snagged the first off the pile. More than a few of them laughed. "You prove our point," Terrance told him.

"Shut up," Jay shot back while opening the wrapper. "I broke a bone for you ingrates, so I'm allowed chocolate," he muttered as he sat back in the bed and bit the top of the candy bar off, slightly more savagely than he really had to. The team always thought his sweet tooth was amusing even though, Jay was sure, that if they'd never had anything like chocolate before they'd have just as big a sweet tooth for it as Jay did. And it wasn't like he was alone. Carlos loved the stuff almost as much as Jay did, Mal adored strawberries, and Evie was prone to putting blueberries flavored things on nearly everything that it wouldn't clash with (and some things it did clash with, in Jay's opinion).

"Alright, alright," Coach said. "As much fun as you're having teasing Jay, you boys do have classes still. So finish up and let's go," he ordered.

There were a few moans and groans, but the few that hadn't signed Jay's cast quickly did so, and then the team filed out. Coach Bubbles gave Jay's shoulder a quick squeeze. "You just focus on getting better, and you'll be out of here in no time, Jay," he said. "And don't you worry about the team. I'll give them extra drills in your honor."

Jay couldn't help but snort at that. "Yeah, that'll make me popular," he said sarcastically. Coach
laughed some and headed out of the room so that only Ben was left. Jay glanced down at his cast again and felt a strange sensation in his chest. It took him a moment to realize he was touched by the gesture. He hadn't realized that he'd made so much progress getting along with the team until just then. Sure, they joked around and teased each other, but Jay wouldn't have even considered they'd visit him. "... I was not expecting that," he murmured.

"You're the MVP for a reason, Jay," Ben said as he went over to sit down in the chair he'd been in for most of the time.

"Yeah, 'cause I'm the best player," Jay said as if it were obvious.

Ben sighed. "Well, that, yes. And because they like you, Jay," Ben told him. Jay stared for a minute and Ben only just fought the urge to sigh again. He really did find it sad that the kids from the Isle were so unused to simple concepts like people actually liking them. "Really, Jay," Ben said in answer to the question he knew that the Arabian was thinking.

Jay still stared for a minute. "... I don't think anyone's just... liked me before," he muttered.

"What about Mal and the others?" Ben asked in bewilderment.

Jay waved his candy bar wielding hand off to the side. "We didn't start out liking each other. We hung around each other and helped one another because we were all useful. Actual 'like' didn't happen for at least a year or so after we started running together," he explained. "And even then you couldn't let anyone know you liked one another. It would just make those people targets."

Ben frowned and thought that Jay might be wrong about that. He didn't think that Mal would have hung around people she didn't like, even if they were useful to have in her gang. But, Ben also had learned better than to challenge any of the Villain children on the world views they grew up with unless he was sure he had all the different parts of the argument worked out ahead of time. Ben had found that out the hard way after a fierce fight with Mal about healthy food choices. He'd thought there could have been lots of reasons why the kids always ate so much junk food, but he hadn't been prepared for the actual answer she gave. That it wasn't because they didn't know they needed to eat vegetables to stay healthy or even because they never had junk food before, but because if you ate things stuffed with preservatives the chances of that something being so old it was actually toxic was a lot smaller. Ben hadn't had even the slightest idea of a comeback for that and had learned not to be so quick to think he had all the reasoning figured out. So Ben decided to drop the current topic before he made an ass of himself.

"The doctor said you can probably leave tomorrow," Ben said rather than challenge Jay. "But the cast'll have to stay on."

"Joy," Jay said before taking another bite of his candy bar. "Ya know, this thing is going to make it hard to walk," he added while rapping his knuckle on the side of the cast.

"I would think the broken bone would be what was making it hard to walk," Ben replied.

Jay rolled his eyes. "I would have managed. But now, this thing makes my leg all heavy..." he complained before poking at the hardened plaster.

Ben sighed. "It's to make sure you don't get hurt worse," he said. "You don't want your bone to break through your skin again, do you? Or to twist out of place?"

"I thought that was what the pins were for," Jay said.

"Do you have to be so difficult?" Ben asked, slightly exasperated.
"I'm pretty good at it," Jay answered before taking another bite of his chocolate. "Just ask anyone."

"Well, Mr. Difficult, this cast is not up for debate," Ben said firmly. "It'll help your leg heal a lot faster than trying to walk around without it. And we'll give you crutches so that you can get around."

Jay made a face instantly. "Crutches? Like a cripple? No, thanks."

"Jay!"

"What?"

"You shouldn't call people cripple," Ben admonished.

"Why not?" Jay asked in confusion. "That's what they are..."

Ben sighed and rubbed his forehead. "It's not a nice thing to say. That word is very demeaning. And, besides that, plenty of people use crutches for temporary reasons... like a severely broken leg that is now in a heavy plaster cast until it heals up." He aimed the last part directly at Jay with a look he hoped would get the severity of his statement through to the thief. Jay didn't seem to have absorbed that (or possibly ignored it entirely) and just continued to eat his candy bar. "Just don't use that word anymore, okay?"

"... Alright," Jay said with a shrug. "I'll add it to my ever-increasing list of words that I shouldn't say."

"Thank you," Ben said sincerely. He knew that a lot of words that Auradonians found offensive were utterly unremarkable to the Isle Kids, but he appreciated that they at least tried to not use certain words. They failed on curses quite often, but Ben couldn't really find it in him to blame them for something like that (or really much of anything when you got right down to it).

"Oh," Ben reached for his bag that he'd dropped off in the room before going to go check in with Jay's doctors. "Jordan gave me something to give you this morning at breakfast." Ben had barely been at breakfast that morning at school. He'd only really gone back to the dorms to shower and change and had decided on a whim to grab something quick to eat while he was there. Pure luck had Jordan running into him at the cafeteria.

Jay lifted an eyebrow and tossed his candy wrapper into a nearby trashcan. "What's that?"

Ben pulled out the thick leather-bound book with a little difficulty and then put it onto the bed beside Jay. Jay frowned a little at the weighty looking tome. "Jordan said this is a great reference for all things genie. Said her dad gave it to her."

Jay's frown only grew deeper. "That's not going to be much help..." Jay muttered unhappily.

"What? Why not?"

"I'm not really a big reader," Jay said looking off to the side.

"But this could help you," Ben argued in confusion. "Even if you don't like reading surely you can make an exception here, right? I mean, this is your life we're talking about, Jay."

Jay shook his head slightly. "Ben... it's not that simple." Ben was only more confused by that. Jay glanced over and saw his expression and sighed in annoyance. He knew Ben was only trying to help. And so was Jordan. He shouldn't be mad at them or frustrated, but he was. Jay was also
highly embarrassed, yet he knew Ben would just pester him about it until Jay gave him some sort of reason. So, he would have to suck it up and admit to something Jay absolutely hated about himself. "Look, I suck at reading, alright? I haven't finished a book in my life and, even if I had, I can't read any Arabic. Dad never taught me," he snapped.

Ben pulled back quickly and then stared for a minute. "O-oh... um, I didn't really think about that..." he said as he looked down at the book and the golden swoops that he vaguely recognized as a completely different alphabet. "I didn't even notice it wasn't in English. I'm sorry. I didn't mean anything by it, and I'm sure Jordan didn't either!"

Jay took a few deep breaths and nodded a little. "Yeah, I know you didn't," he muttered. "And I'm sure the book would be very useful for anyone else. Just not my stupid self."

"Hey now, you're not stupid," Ben said, a little surprised and upset to hear his friend say that.

Jay gave Ben a disbelieving glance. "Please. I know I'm no Carlos or Evie, alright? I mean, I'm not to the level of the Gastons or anything, but I'm not delusional either," he said as if it were simply a fact. "But it's fine. We all have our strengths, right? This just isn't mine."

Ben didn't at all like what he was hearing, and he didn't really believe that Jay was 'alright' with the words he just said as he wanted Ben to believe. "I don't think you're stupid at all," Ben said firmly. "I'm sure with an English version of this you'll do just fine. I'll ask Jordan if she can find one," he said with utmost confidence. He was so sure of himself that Jay didn't have the heart to tell him that being in English probably wouldn't be all that helpful.
Outside sounded like a war zone. Colorful explosions of magic streaked across the sky as people screamed and ran for cover. Evil cackles and maniacal ranting rose over the chaos in sharp peaks of noise. She didn't listen to what was being said but still knew it was nothing good. Monsters roared as they ran past windows and she could almost make out swords clashing. The fighting was everywhere and yet seemed distant as she made her way slowly through the halls. All of the lights were out and some were even entirely broken where they hung on the paneled walls. She knew that the hall should be warm and pleasant but it was the very opposite. The air was cold to the point that she was surprised she didn't see her own breath in front of her face.

Goosebumps rose all over her arms but she couldn't tell if it was from the chill or from fear. She could almost swear someone was watching her from somewhere even though there wasn't anywhere that they could be watching from. There was nothing in the hall big enough to hide someone.

The carpet was sodden down with moisture and squelched around her heels with each step she took. Paintings on the walls had their faces burnt out of the canvases and the curtains had been torn from their rods. Several of the windows had been broken and glass shards were littered all over the floor. She stepped around the mess caused by a huge tree branch that had been tossed through the pane. Wind whistled over the hole, sounding almost as horrible as the screams still ringing in her ears.

She wasn't sure where she was going and yet she had no hesitation as she turned down a second hall and continued to walk. The walls had been scratched deeply and several busts of various heroes had been knocked over and smashed across the floor. She paused at the sight of a familiar face that had been broken into a few dozen various sized pieces.

After a moment of staring, she started to walk again. Her shoes no longer made the carpet squish as she stepped but the lights were still out. The screams and sounds of fighting were still filtering in through the broken windows of the other hall and never seemed to get any more distant.

She reached out to one door and slowly turned the knob. The tumblers clunked far louder than she expected as the latch moved back and let her push the door forward. She half expected the hinges to squeal when they moved but they were strangely silent, which only helped unnerve her further.

The room was small and dark but she barely noticed anything else about it due to what was just inside the door. Her eyes widened and her breath caught hard at the mess spread across the rug. What had been a light sandy colored carpet was streaked and marked with shades of red ranging from light pink to ruby. Puddles of it were still seeping into the fibers of the carpet.

He was face down in the middle of it and the dim light from somewhere was shining off of his scarred back. His hair was matted down with red and stuck together in quickly drying clumps. His legs were lying at awkward angles like he had been mid motion before just collapsing. Dented
black metal was wrapped around his wrists but the most horrifying thing was definitely the state of his hands. Deep cuts that ripped all the way to the bone were all over his mangled limbs. Bits of flesh and skin had been torn away and fingers were clearly bent in strange ways.

She felt as if she would be sick as her eyes stayed riveted to the horrible wounds despite her desire to look away. The red was darkest and spread the furthest underneath his hands. The carpet was still turning red as screams echoed.

Mal woke up very unsettled and reached over to put a hand on Evie's purse. Evie tightened her grip on it without even waking up and Mal took several slow breaths to calm down. Her heart was racing to the point it ached and she knew that was probably not healthy. A quick glance out of the windows so dirty they were fogged over told Mal that it was probably getting close to one or two in the afternoon.

Mal swallowed hard and sat up on the couch that she'd napped on before looking around. Carlos was sleeping curled up in an armchair just like a small animal. Evie was on the other half of the couch that Mal had been napping on. Iago and Othello were both perched on a pile of boxes in the corner tucked in close to one another. Aziz, however, surprised Mal. The Arabian Prince was awake and fiddling with something in his hands where he was sprawled across his chair with one leg over an arm carelessly. "... I think you would have fit right in here on the Isle," she murmured so that she didn't wake the others.

Aziz looked up and then shrugged. "My dad knows what it's like to grow up poor on the streets without anyone to count on so he made sure that I didn't get too pampered," he said before holding up what he had been fiddling with so that Mal could see. Mal was a little confused at the small hour glass on the end of a thin chain around Aziz's neck. "My dad gave me this."

"An hourglass?"

Aziz nodded. "He said it's to remind me that before he found the Djinn that's all he had."

Mal frowned. "He had an hourglass."

"Time," Aziz corrected. "He had nothing to his name but he had that, and with time -and a bit of good fortune- you can change your situation. Mom prefers to say time and hard work but... I guess either would work."

"When you don't have anything you're not too picky on how that changes," Mal agreed. "Did you sleep at all."

Aziz frowned and then shook his head. "I tried, but I couldn't stop thinking long enough." He looked over at where Mal was sitting. "You didn't look like you were sleeping very well yourself," he prompted. "Bad dreams?" He had noticed that Mal had been shifting and muttering in her sleep but she hadn't been loud enough that he thought he needed to wake her up.

Mal shrugged. "I've had better," she said honestly. She tried hard to not dwell on her nightmares and instead got to her feet to stretch. "We should get started looking for a way off this piece of crap island. You hungry at all, Aziz?"

"A bit," he said.

"Well, we should probably get the others up and get something and then we can go down and try and find a Goblin that has passable English skills," Mal said as she reached down to give Evie a slight shake.
After only about ten minutes of effort, all of the teens were awake. "Anyone else have really bad dreams?" Carlos asked as he rubbed his eyes. Evie and Mal nodded in answer. "... I miss Dude. I never had bad dreams when he's around..." he muttered unhappily.

"Something about being here again really makes it hard to have good dreams," Evie agreed as she got up from the couch and glanced into her bag to assure herself that the lamp was still there. She quickly buckled the purse closed again. "So, what's first?"

"First is food," Mal answered. "Then the docks."

"Oh... sorry, Z," Carlos said.

Aziz frowned. "Sorry for what?"

"Let's just say our food here is... absolutely horrible," Carlos told him. "We'll try and pick something that won't make you gag too badly, though."

"Any chance for coffee?" Aziz asked.

"Yeah," Mal answered. "No claims to the quality of it but we have coffee here. The goblins make it."

"Sounds like we're going to the Slop Shop," Carlos said with very little enthusiasm.

Aziz raised an eyebrow. "That's not a very encouraging name..."

"It's not supposed to be," Evie commented. "We don't really pretend like it's anything great. 'Customer service' isn't something that exists here, but at the very least we don't bother lying in our advertising."

"Hard to lie when everyone knows you've got junk," Mal muttered before gesturing. "And not exactly worth it either. Let's go, guys. I want to have a plan for getting off this rock in place by tonight." She didn't like the idea that they had a full day on the Isle left to endure but she would make sure that they all survived and got home safe. Then they wouldn't ever have to worry about this place again other than getting the rest of the gang off it.

Fewer people stared at them as they made their way through the streets towards the Slop Shop but Mal was extra vigilant. Without her Mother ruling, the chances of running into the Evil Queen, or Cruella, or Jafar was much higher. Mal wanted to avoid all three of them, but running into Jay's dad would be the absolute worst case scenario. Mal knew that Jafar would be pissed since they left the back of his shop quite obviously broken into. And when Jafar got angry he got violent. Jay's countless black eyes, busted lips, and other injuries proved that without a doubt.

Mal shelved her usual method of walking right down the middle of the street to instead stick to the sides where they would not be as easily noticed. They reached the outside of the Slop Shop without any trouble and then Mal nodded to Carlos. "I'll go grab us something. Too many of us in there will only draw attention. You keep an eye out here, Carlos." Carlos nodded even as Mal crossed the street boldly.

The Goblins eyed her warily when she came in. Obviously remembering how she had stolen countless breakfasts from them when she lived on the Isle. Mal kept her head high and a smirk on her face as she casually wandered the edge of the few tables that were in the store. Mal would like to not need to steal any food but money didn't work the same way on the Isle that it did in Auradon. Once the Goblins saw she actually had money on her they would make sure she had to spend it all and Mal was counting on using her cash to bribe their way onto the barge off the Isle.
More than a few eyes were on her but Mal made sure to not alter her pace around the shop and
snagged a few rock hard pastries off plates as she passed by. She did have more than herself to
feed, after all. There were a few cups of coffee being made behind the counter and Mal timed her
approach carefully.

Just as the busy Goblin making the drinks turned to grab a lid from behind him, Mal reached over
and casually picked the two cups up. She quickened her pace and about halfway across the room
she heard a shout. The Goblins scrambled but she was already out of the door before they could
even get out from the other side of the counter that had been designed for people much larger than
them.

Mal didn't head back across the street and instead down a side alley and disappeared so that the
Goblins wouldn't be able to follow her. She took a sip of one cup and leaned back against a
shadowed spot to wait. After a few minutes, the others found her and she handed the other cup over
to Aziz. "We're sharing so don't drink it all," she said. "And tasting it is not advised. It's particularly
burnt tasting today."

Aziz hesitated but then took a taste. He nearly shuddered but made not vocal protests.
"Impressive," Carlos said as Mal handed Evie the second cup and started to pull out the stolen bits
of pastry. "I was sure you'd do more than just cringe at it."

"It's... definitely hard to drink but I'm not exactly in the position to complain," Aziz pointed out
before taking another sip and then clearing his throat as if the coffee had gotten stuck there. "Why
were those Goblins chasing you out of the place, by the way, Mal?"

"Because I didn't pay," Mal said as Carlos broke one rock-like scone in half.

Aziz stopped halfway through reaching out to take the offered half from Carlos and withdrew just a
little. "We'd have stuck out more if we had paid," Evie told him. "Besides they overcharge for
everything to make up for those that steal. We steal from them, they gouge others, those others
steal from someone else to pay the outrageous prices. That's the way the economy works here."

"It's also why having a good thief in your gang was necessary to success and why mine was the
best," Mal said. "I snatched Jay up as soon as I could because I might be a good thief but even I
can't keep up with him. And eat that, Aziz. It's all you're going to get for a while."

Aziz felt awkward but did as he was told. The scone was barely edible. He ended up having to dip
it in the horrible coffee just to soften the dough enough to take a bite. The combination of
cardboard like pastry coated in some strange chalky flavor and burnt coffee that had a really
strange aftertaste was stomach churning but Aziz managed to choke his share of the pilfered
breakfast down. "And you guys used to eat this stuff every day?" Aziz asked as he tried to run his
tongue around his mouth to get the taste out. "No wonder you decimate the breakfast table all the
time...."

"Hey, you can survive off it," Carlos said with a friendly pat on Aziz's arm. "That's the important
thing here."

"I... think I'm going to have to argue with that statement," Aziz said. "I don't feel like I'm going to
survive after eating that." His stomach was already distinctly unsettled.

"Well just don't throw up," Evie cautioned.

Carlos nodded. "Never throw up unless you really can't help it," he added. "Waste of food."
Aziz shook his head. "I take it if I drink some water it'll have a weird aftertaste too?"

"Probably," the others agreed in unison. "We used to think that Auradon had weird water because we couldn't taste much in it," Mal told him. "And it not being cloudy."

"Remind me to talk to Ben about shipping bottled water or something over here, damn," Aziz said. "Even in Agrabah we've got supplies of clean water..."

The three Isle kids exchanged a few glances before shrugging. "That's just the way it is," Mal said. "Now, if we're all done eating, let's get down the docks and haggle with some Goblins."

"Won't they be kind of upset with us if we stole from other Goblins to get breakfast?" Aziz asked.

"Like we said, it's just the way things work here," Evie told him. "Even the Goblins in the Slop Shop have probably mostly forgotten about it by now. We all have more to worry about than petty theft."

Mal nodded. "And us especially," she said. "So let's get to it."
Chapter 29

Chapter Notes

A little bit of a short chapter but I haven't had a lot of writing time the last few days.

There were two 'docks' on the Isle. The one that Uma claimed as her turf that had been built back before it was the Isle-of-the-Lost and was instead the Isle-of-the-peaceful-but-poor-village-people. King Beast had somehow convinced (or just threw his weight around) the original inhabitants of the Isle to leave for the whole island to be turned into a prison. Before booting all the villains and minions to the Isle, Beast had built up a few modern buildings such as some warehouses and a larger, more industrial dock. He hadn't put a lot of effort into the new constructions since only villains would be around but he gave them at least some minor infrastructure. Mal personally thought the idea was more likely to have been Belle's but had never questioned her boyfriend's father about it to be sure.

The industrial docks were a little further north up the coast than Uma's docks so that they were just outside the town and were much larger than the original ones to accommodate the large barges that brought the Isle the trash they lived off of. Since the barge was due to arrive tomorrow, there was nothing left of the previous haul to pick through anymore. That meant that only Goblins were around.

Mal quickly found a major problem in trying to get off the Isle by way of the barge. The Goblins were not interested in dealing with the kids at all. Mostly the Goblins just shouted and cursed at them to get lost and wouldn't listen as Mal tried to get one of them to actually get one of their leaders who might speak English. "This is not working," Carlos muttered as they regrouped by the port entrance after having been chased off the docks for the third time that afternoon.

"We'll need to do something, though, this is the only way we have of getting off the Isle," Evie said.

Mal frowned and folded her arms across her chest. "We'll stow away if we have to... although I don't really want to run that risk," she said. The consequences of being caught stowing away on the Goblin Barges was well known on the Isle. They would toss you over the side where you would probably either drown or get eaten by crocodiles and or sharks. None of those options were terribly appealing for anyone hence none had ever tried such a thing.

Aziz thought for a minute about the problem. "Would they listen more if they saw this?" he asked as he carefully pulled a golden ring from his pocket to show the others. The heavy ring that denoted Aziz's royal status glinted even in the dim light of the shadows that they were standing in.

Mal quickly put her hand over the gold band so that the telltale jewelry didn't get spotted. "Why the hell did you bring that?" she demanded. "Are you insane?"

"I forgot to take it off," Aziz replied. "At least I didn't wear the thing when I realized it. It's been in my pocket the whole time."

"You are super lucky you didn't get pickpocketed then," Carlos muttered. "That thing would be so gone."
"I think that being mistaken for Jay is why nobody's been going for me," Aziz muttered as he tucked the ring away again. "In fact, everyone we pass puts their hands over their pockets instead of reaching for mine…"

Mal snorted a little. "Yeah, that sounds about right."

"But, you're right that it might make the goblins listen to us more," Evie murmured. "... or it could get us into massive trouble."

"We'll only use it if we don't have any other options," Mal said. "I would much rather not open that can of worms if we don't have to. The wrong person spots that and we'd be screwed... royally."

Carlos and Evie suppressed their amusement even as Aziz gave Mal a bland look. "You're hilarious."

"Let's see if we can find the office. There should be some Goblins there that speak English," Carlos suggested. "I would think that there's a sign somewhere for it."

The others nodded and headed back out into the port to see if they could find the office. Mal ignored the Goblins that shot her dirty looks and just kept her ears and eyes peeled for anything that might be in the least bit useful for getting them off the Isle. Mentally she was going through all the people she knew of on the Isle that could speak Goblin even though she didn't want to bring in anyone that she didn't trust explicitly.

If anyone on the Isle learned that there was some temporary hole in the barrier that could be opened it would be horrible. No doubt all the villains would use that to escape the Isle, which nobody wanted. Least of all their children. Mal wasn't even sure that it would be smart to bring all of the kids over to Auradon. Some of them were almost worse than their parents after having grown up with nothing but evil. Mal would like to think that just getting to a better place would change them like it had her but she knew that was Auradon optimism at work rather than Isle realism.

As she was off looking for something helpful, Mal walked past an alley and saw something odd out of the corner of her eye. She had already moved past the alley and so slowly walked back. Harry Hook was sitting on top of several boxes polishing his hook with the red scarf around his waist while Gil was talking to a Goblin. In Goblin.

Mal stepped down the alley, and Harry instantly looked over at her. He raised an eyebrow but didn't immediately acknowledge she was there any other way. Mal thought he looked every inch a guard dog for Gil even though she doubted that Harry was even trying to understand what the two were talking about. The Goblin and Gil seemed to reach some sort of agreement, and the Goblin left while grumbling something under his breath. Gil grinned widely as he turned to face Harry. His smile didn't even fall as he spotted Mal just a few feet away. "Oh, hey, Mal! What're you doing here?"

Mal ignored the question. "You speak Goblin?" she questioned.

"Well, yeah," Gil said as if it were the most obvious thing in the world. "I do the shopping for dad... we need a lot of eggs." Gil was still smiling a little vacantly, but Mal knew that was his base setting.

"Right..." Mal mused. She supposed that was why there was always hardly any eggs on the barges that came in. Gil must bargain with the Goblins to get them before anyone else somehow. "Hey, Gil... can you do me a favor?" she asked.
"Oh, su-"

"Hold it," Harry said, putting his hook out in front of Gil to stop his immediate and excited answer. Gil was always willing to help most people, and so Harry had taken to working interference otherwise Gil would get taken advantage of all the time. "We seem ta be doin' an awful lotta favors fer ya lately, Mal..."

"So, what'dya want, Harry?" Mal asked.

Harry eyed Mal for a moment then slid off of his boxes. "Stay here, Gil," he said before gesturing for Mal to follow him.

Mal raised an eyebrow but went along with the pirate to the beginning of the alley away from where Gil was standing and fiddling with a chain bracelet around his wrist. "Yer takin' kids offa the Isle, right?" Harry asked lowly.

"... yeah," Mal agreed. Since she'd already arranged for Freddie to leave she supposed there wasn't any use to deny it.

"Great. Then I want ya ta take Gil outta here fer helpin' ya," Harry said.

Mal frowned a little. "Gil?" she echoed. She had assumed after that first question that Harry would want himself off the Isle.

"Look at him," Harry commanded. Mal glanced back down the Isle at where Gil was still waiting patiently and looking around obliviously. He really wasn't cut out for life on the Isle, and everyone knew it. "If he comes inta the chip shop one more time with bruises all over 'im, Imma have to kill Gaston."

"Which one?"

"All of 'em," Harry nearly growled. Mal looked back at Harry at that. Though Mal had known that Gaston the First wasn't shy with his fists she hadn't heard that Gastons Jr. and the Third were like that too. Well, not more than any other street punks. Harry nodded a little even though she hadn't asked aloud. "They treat 'im like their own whippin' boy an' I'm about ready to hook 'em. He used ta be smarter than this, Mal, then his dad cracked his head open an' he hasn' been the same since."

Mal frowned even more at that. Gil had never been the brightest, none of the Gastons were, but Mal hadn't known that Gil had ever been different than he was now. She looked back down the alley. "Does Uma know you're doing this?" she asked.

"She's been tryin' ta get him off too," Harry said. "All of us really. Bu' Gil first before he gets killed. Ya know wha' tha's like, Mal. I know ya do." Mal tried to not shift uncomfortably but wasn't entirely successful. She could distinctly remember thinking very similar things about several of her gang members including but hardly limited to Carlos, Jay, Dizzy, and Yzla.

Gil seemed to finally notice Mal was looking at him and waved. Mal tried to smile but didn't think it worked. She turned her attention back to Harry. "I'll get him off, Harry. I promise. And... tell Uma if she wants all of you off... I'll add you to Ben's list."

It was Harry's turn to look surprised. "You'll what?"

"I'll add your crew to the list to come off the Isle. I can't promise it'll be quick for the rest of you, but I'll move Gil to the top along with Dizzy," Mal promised. "You have my word on that."
Harry’s eyes flicked over Mal’s face searchingly. "Why?"

Mal considered how to answer that for a moment. "Because I hate Uma, but she shouldn’t be here any more than any of us should," she finally said. "And... she’s not all bad, I guess." If she was trying to look after her crew like a real leader, then Mal supposed she deserved some grudging respect.

"Some o’ us should be here," Harry said before glancing back at Gil. "His brothers are jus’ like his old man..."

Mal didn’t have any response for that besides nodding in understanding. "... can I get Gil’s help now?" she finally asked. Harry studied her for a moment before nodding and gesturing with his hook-wielding hand. Mal walked past and went to Gil. "Hey. I need you to talk to some Goblins for me. Think you can translate for me?"

Gil smiled. "Sure!"

"Great, come with me," Mal said with a gesture to follow. Gil nodded and followed along with Harry only a few paces behind.

"So, what'dya need ta talk ta Goblins for, Mal?" Harry asked lightly.

Mal glanced back at him and tried to figure out the best way to phrase things. She couldn’t just out and say ‘oh there’s a secret way of getting off the Isle and I want them to smuggle me and the others off’ like an idiot. Harry might not like most of the villains on the Isle anymore than Mal did but if kids started smuggling themselves off the Isle en masse then their parents would definitely notice, and that would be a huge problem. The adults of the Isle could never know about the temporary hole that they were looking to open up. "It's a secret, Harry," Mal said. "But it's about how to get back to Jay with the thing that'll help him."

Harry narrowed his eyes slightly. "You gonna smuggle it out ta him or something?" he guessed.

"Or something," Mal agreed. It was insanely unprofitable to try and get the Goblins to smuggle things into the Isle for you. They gouged the prices so much even the adult villains struggled to make a profit off things smuggled in. Smuggling still happened but usually only with the most necessary of things. Getting things taken out with the Goblins was less expensive but also rarely happened because that would imply you had someone helping you on the outside of the Isle, and nobody wanted to get tossed onto the Isle for helping a villain. Luckily, Mal just needed to get herself and her group out beyond the barrier so that the magic would return to Carpet.

Harry grunted a little. "I suppose tha’ makes sense... ya got someone waitin' fer it then?"

"Of course," Mal shot back. "What do you take me for? An amateur?"

Harry held up his hand and hook in a defensive gesture. "Alrigh', alrigh,' Jeez, yer as touchy as Uma sometimes ya know that?" Mal cast him a glare, and he just smiled, knowing perfectly well that both Mal and Uma would take plenty of issue with any comparison between them. "Don’ shoot the messenger."

"I don't know how anyone puts up with you," Mal grumbled. Harry grinned wider.
Chapter 30

Chapter Notes

They're getting close to getting off the Isle again.

Gil was only too happy to translate for Mal. Harry was still watching suspiciously, though, so Mal had to be really careful how she phrased things to not give too much away. Going through Gil to talk to the Goblins took about an hour of back and forth before Mal finally had a tentative agreement. Mal and the others would come down to the docks that night just before the Goblins left on the barge and hammer out the details with one of their number that actually spoke English. Mal would then have the less-than-enjoyable task of trying to talk her way onto the barge with the others. She was hoping that the money she had brought from Auradon from all the times she had spelled girls' hair (well, what was leftover after E got her fabrics, anyway) would be enough to get them to the barrier.

"Is tha' it then?" Harry asked as Gil waved goodbye to the Goblin that was shuffling away.

"Yeah. That's it. I can finish up with them when they bring an English speaking Goblin tonight," Mal confirmed. Harry nodded and put a hand on Gil's shoulder to drag his attention away from wherever it had wandered. Mal studied the two boys as Harry started to almost drag Gil off. After a little stumble, Gil caught himself and seemed to realize they were moving off. Gil smiled and started chattering about something that Harry barely seemed to be listening to.

Mal hadn't ever seen Harry acting in the least bit protective before. Uma certainly didn't need protection and Harry wasn't close to too many other people on the Isle. He wasn't even close to his sisters from what Mal could tell. But suddenly, watching Harry nearly dragging an oblivious Gil off, probably back to the safety of their own turf, Mal was reminded strikingly of Jay. Mal never would have thought she'd see anything between the two boys that was even slightly similar to each other aside from their ability to brawl but she seemed to be getting shocked quite a lot about Harry lately. She had been very caught off guard when Harry had asked her if Jay 'wanted to kill him over their breakup still' in Jafar's house. Mal had barely managed to come up with an answer even as her head reeled under the strange way Harry had phrased it.

At first, Mal had been certain Harry had said 'breakup' just to get a reaction from her and hadn't been serious. But looking back Mal just couldn't help but wonder if Harry hadn't been using that word because it really was what happened and not just to get a rise. She frowned some more as the two pirates disappeared. Mal never had gotten the full story out of Jay. Hell, she would be surprised if she'd gotten half the story out of the thief. Jay never admitted to anything unless he absolutely couldn't get away with dodging it any longer. But now, looking back after Harry's - probably accidental- hint, Mal remembered little things that she'd dismissed before as her imagination or as Harry just being the little shit he was.

Like the way, Jay and Harry used to fight before their blow up. Like they were half enjoying it, and they even bantered back then opposed to just trying to gut one another. And when Aziz said Harry had groped him thinking he was Jay, Mal had just assumed that the pirate was trying to get Jay pissed off. Carlos' explanation of Harry having a real interest in Jay had been dismissed entirely because Mal had been sure that Jay would have told her if Harry made a habit of something like
that. But if Harry were just a handsy ex...whatever-the-hell-they-had-been then Jay probably wouldn't say anything.

Mal wasn't sure how to react to any of these realizations. On the one hand, she had no problem with Jay being with whoever made him happy (boy, girl, both, neither, whatever). There wasn't the time nor inclination on the Isle to give a damn who was attracted to who so issues like being gay or bisexual wasn't even a thing. But, on the other hand, Mal was sure that the breakup -as Harry put it- had been bad, and Jay had been hurt and not just physically. Considering how badly beaten Jay had been after that fight in Uma's territory and the way he'd nearly drowned himself in booze for a few weeks after it seemed apparent now Jay had been suffering. That Mal took a hell of a lot of issues with. Nobody hurt her boys or girls. She had let Jay get away with not telling her what the deal had been with the fall out around Harry Hook before, since it had seemed such a tender topic, but now Mal was determined to get to the bottom of it once this genie debacle was settled.

Mal realized finding out the truth now after so much time probably wouldn't help and she had a feeling she was going to want to kill someone once she did, but she had clearly allowed Jay to hide things from her for too long. She wasn't doing this secret shit anymore. She shouldn't have let it be to begin with and felt like a crap leader for letting Jay dodge her questions.

The loft was empty so late at night but Mal liked painting when nobody was around to make a huge racket. Mal headed over to the box where she kept her spray paints but paused when her foot kicked something solid and heavy that went clattering across the concrete floor. She frowned and looked down to see that her foot had collided with an empty bottle that certainly hadn't been around before.

Mal walked forward carefully until she spotted what the clear cause was. Jay was sprawled out on the couch with his face still swollen and knuckles bruised from his recent fight at the docks that Mal was still pissed off about. Around the thief was what had to have been the max number of bottles that Jay had been able to fit in his pants after a round of thefts. All of them were empty including the one in Jay's limp hand. Mal frowned and went over to her second to see if he'd poisoned himself or not.

Jay was still breathing but looked soundly passed out. Mal frowned and kicked the couch he was on hard. "Jay!"

"What the hell, Jay?"

"Wha?" Jay asked back, clearly lost on what Mal had thought was a pretty obvious question.

"Care to explain what the hell is going on here?" Mal asked a little more clearly. "I count six bottles including the one I kicked. Did you drink all these today?" she asked, a little worried despite herself. She reasoned it would be hell trying to find a replacement thief as good as Jay was hence it was alright to be concerned if he was drowning himself in alcohol. For practicality purposes.

Jay frowned at the question. "... no. Yes. I can't 'member," Jay finally slurred out.

"You're going to kill yourself at this rate," Mal said with her hands on her hips. "What's going on? Your dad?"

"No," Jay answered before lifting the empty bottle in his hand. He tried to take a drink and then frowned when he realized there was nothing left. "Oh, shit," he grumbled. "Jus' my luck..."

Jay stared at her for a minute. "Ya know, I am beautiful!" he said entirely out of the blue. Mal wasn't sure what that had to do with anything, but before she could question it, Jay was continuing, "I am. I fuckin' am... and-and I'm super good in bed. Like... really super good. An' tha's not a crime."

"Uh huh..." Mal agreed. "And was that in doubt somehow?" she asked in confusion.

Jay didn't seem to hear the question. "Ya know the best thing about being super good in bed? I can make anyone love me. I can. I could even make you love me if that weren't really, really weird sounding. I don't want you to love me, Mal. Not like that. That would be like... like really, really weird. But I could! An'... an' I am so hot. I'd fuck me. A lot."

Mal was even more lost than before but, considering how drunk Jay had to be, she supposed it stood to reason he'd be rambling nonsense. "What does any of that have to do with why you're drunk as shit?"

Jay blinked up at her. "... I'm... really, really drunk."

"Yeah, I've noticed," Mal said before rubbing her temples. "I wanted to know why, though."

"Harry," Jay finally said.

Mal looked up sharply at that. "What about Harry?"

Jay opened his mouth but then closed it with a frown. It took a moment, but then Jay looked up again. "He's a bastard," he said with finality. Mal almost slapped a hand to her face. That was entirely unhelpful. Mal had already known Jay's current assessment on his rival. He'd ranted about Harry Hook for a good hour as Evie patched up his wounds.

"Did he do something, Jay?" Mal asked.

Jay frowned again and seemed to think hard. "... nothin' he hasn't done before..." he finally muttered. Mal wasn't at all sure she liked the sound of that, but before she could gather enough of her scattered thoughts to question Jay further, the thief had passed out again.

Mal never had found out what had happened to cause that particular late-night incident, but she hadn't pressed either. She should have, and she regretted it immensely that she'd let herself forget about it. Mal turned and went to go find the others after shelving that issue in her mind for later. She'd have to find something to do to make it up to Jay, but that couldn't be done on the Isle. "Any luck?" Evie asked as they finally all gathered together about fifteen minutes later.

"I arranged to meet with the Goblins -including one that speaks English- tonight at one," Mal said. "They leave for the barrier half an hour after that, so we've got that time to convince them to take us out to it."

"And how are we going to do that?" Aziz asked with an eyebrow raised.

"I've brought bribe money, but we might have to flash that ring of yours too," Mal admitted. "Either way, we'll have to convince them. It's the only way we're going to be getting off the Isle and get that lamp to Jay."

The others nodded. "Since we have to wait until one, we should probably hide out until then," Carlos said. "The less chance we have of running into our parents, the better."
"Right."

The group of them made their way back to the loft using as many side alleys and shortcuts as possible to avoid any chance of running into the ex-vizier. When they got back to the loft, Aziz crashed on the couch that Mal and Evie had slept on the night before. "You okay, Z?" Carlos asked.

Aziz gave a thumbs up but didn't lift his head. "He didn't sleep when we did," Mal supplied. "Let him get a nap in now." Aziz gave a muffled thanks at that and Mal couldn't quite help her amusement from showing. Aziz really would have fit in surprisingly well on the Isle, she thought. Too bad he was still too pampered to truly have any idea how to survive if he'd been dropped here alone.

Carlos spent the afternoon while they were waiting working on something dealing with his collection of old electronics while Evie doted on Iago and Othello like they were a pair of morning doves opposed to temperamental parrots. Mal continued a mural she had been working on for the better part of a year that displayed her and her three lieutenants.

They had been keeping themselves busy for several hours when a small rock hit the window. Mal frowned and looked over, unsure if she had really heard that right. Another pebble followed the first and Mal was now more than a little curious. She dropped her can into the box she got it from before heading over to the window in question. Mal heard one last pebble hit the foggy glass before she got to it.

When the window was opened, Mal was surprised to see Uma standing across the alley on a fire escape. "Uma. What're you doing here?" she asked.

"Harry told me something ridiculous," she said, leaning against the railing.

"Yeah? So?" Mal asked with an eyebrow raised.

Uma narrowed her eyes and then flicked some of her long aqua colored dreadlocks over her shoulder. "That you said you'd put my crew on some... list thing to get us off the Isle?" she questioned.

"I did say that," Mal agreed. "And I meant it."

Uma scoffed and straightened. "And why would you do that?"

Mal knew that Carlos and Evie were hovering somewhere behind her in case they were needed, but Mal was sure she had a handle on the situation. "Because... I think Auradon might be big enough for both of us," Mal said.

"Big enough for both of us?" Uma echoed before giving a scoffing laugh. "Are you serious right now?"

"Yeah, I am," Mal said. "Or would you rather stay here serving your mother's cooking to pirates for the rest of your life?" Uma's smile fell into a scowl instantly at that idea. "I thought not. Like I told Harry. I'll get Gil out first since he's the one in the most danger. Then we'll try and get you guys out along with my gang. Then we never have to see each other again."

Uma was still scowling. "Why? It's not like you to do favors for people."

"It's not a favor," Mal replied. "Living in Auradon isn't as easy as you think. They've got all these stupid rules and opinions that you only come up with from not living with villains around. But none
of us deserve the crap around here that we have to put up with. Not even you. So, I'll give you your shot and if you blow it and get sent back here that's on you."

"Auradon made you soft," Uma scoffed.

Mal narrowed her eyes. "... I can sleep through the night not worried someone's going to sneak in and kill me or worse," Mal pointed out. Uma's eyes widened just a little. "I think that's worth whatever it's cost me. Don't you?"

"I'm not going to become a simpering little princess like you," Uma said firmly.

Mal snorted. "I'm hardly that. But you're like me, Uma. What happens to you don't mean shit as long as your crew's taken care of. And this'll take care of them," Mal pointed out. "I'm not saying I like you any more than I ever did or expect you to become a friend or anything disgusting. But I intend to take every one of the kids off of this Isle even if I have to come back for them myself one by one. You just have to let me do it."

Uma studied Mal for another few moments before nodding. "Alright. You screw us over on this, and I'll rip your pretty little head off," she threatened.

"I'm shaking," Mal replied in a deadpan.

Uma glared before heading down the fire escape. Mal watched her for a moment before closing the window. When Mal turned around, she was face to face with Carlos and Evie. "What was that about?" Carlos asked.

"Just a bargain I made," Mal said. "Nothing serious."

"You're going to take Uma and her gang off the Isle too?" Evie questioned. "Are you sure that's a good idea?"

Mal sighed. "No. I'm not sure. But, I figured that they deserve a shot at least. I mean, where would we be if Ben hadn't given us one? Still stealing to eat enough and risking death every time we upset our parents? I won't do it anymore, and I won't let anyone else do it either," she said firmly. "Even if they do piss me the hell off."

Carlos and Evie glanced at each other. "Makes sense to me," Carlos agreed. He was so much happier in Auradon, and he knew Evie was too. The selfish Isle part of him wanted to horde that happiness but he knew that there was plenty of everything in Auradon for all the kids of the Isle. The only problem was access.

Mal turned back to the closed the window and locked it again. "Did you guys know that Gil used to be smarter than he is now?" she asked. When Mal turned to look both of her friends had surprised expressions. "Yeah. Harry told me that Gaston cracked his skull and that's why he is the way he is."

"Brain damage..." Carlos muttered. "That... explains an awful lot."

They were all quiet for a moment before Mal sighed. "How many of us do you think have problems that won't ever go away because of what our parents did to us?" Mal asked. "Jay's always going to be at risk now because of Jafar... and Evie, you still don't always eat even though we have plenty of food now. I won't let it keep happening. No more. I am so done with this whole bag of shit we were handed," Mal said firmly. "So, yes, I'm going to get Uma and her gang off this rock along with us. Then maybe Harriet's crew or something. I don't know. One gang at a time, I guess."
"We're with you, Mal," Evie said as she reached out to take Mal's hand. "We don't want any others hurt anymore either."

"None of our parents are fit," Carlos grumbled. "Never have been and never will be."

Mal nodded and reached out to pull Carlos and Evie both into a brief hug. "Ben's on our side about it. We've just got to renew our efforts to convince the council," she murmured.

"I'm on your side too," Aziz said from the couch. The three Isle kids whipped around to stare at him. They hadn't realized the Arabian Prince had woken up during their conversation. "I kind of think every person in Auradon should have to come here to the Isle for a day. I never really thought about the Isle before Ben’s proclamation but... it really is horrible here."

"It is," Mal agreed.

Aziz smiled some and got to his feet fully. "When we get back, I'll make sure everyone knows I support whatever you and Ben do," he said to Mal. "Because you're right."

"Thanks, Aziz," Mal said sincerely. "Your support will really help."
Chapter 31

Chapter Notes

Look at me with two chapters out today... this ends the first part of the story. I have two maybe three planned out. The third might end up being a sequel though. So we're quite a ways through our little adventure.

Luckily, waiting for one in the morning to roll around wasn't difficult. Mal wrote out a letter to the others of her gang assuring them that they would be coming off the Isle as soon as Mal could manage it. That she was in no way going to leave them here to rot. She pinned it to the wall of the loft just before they left. Evie triple checked her purse, and the lamp inside of it and Carlos put his now finished project on one table with instructions on how to use it. It hadn't been easy for him to switch the handheld game thing to work off a wall socket rather than batteries but he'd managed it and even replaced the broken parts of it.

Aziz felt awkward again but followed the others out of the loft and into the night. "Stick right by us, Z," Carlos said firmly.

Aziz nodded and kept in the close-knit formation that the others had made instantly upon reaching the street. Mal was even more on edge than usual as she led them in a roundabout way to the docks again. She almost felt as if things had gone just a little too well for them here. Mal made sure to avoid any hint of someone dangerous as she led the way. She practically re-routed them twice to avoid even a chance at running into someone that might be around.

Mal knew she was acting a little paranoid, but she couldn't help it. If they didn't get off the Isle now, it would be months before another chance arose and then who knew what would happen to Jay. This was the exact reason she had a rule that none of them were left alone if sick or injured, but there really hadn't been any other options this time.

"Jay is going to be so pissed we left without him," Carlos said as if he were reading her thoughts.

"He'll be pissed but alive," Mal replied. "Much better than the alternative." The others agreed with that statement instantly.

When they finally reached the docks again, there was a small group of Goblins waiting. Mal signaled the others to wait and stepped forward alone. One of the Goblins, the one wearing a hole-riddled captain's hat and looking particularly peeved came to greet her. "You're the one that wants to make the deal then?" he asked in a gravelly voice.

"That's me," Mal agreed. "And I'll pay you for your part."

The Goblin grunted. "Of course you will. But what is 'our part' that you're talking about?"

"Get my friends and me there out to the barrier when you go to Auradon. You don't even have to take us all the way. Just to where the shield drops," Mal explained.

The Goblin in front scowled darkly. "I'm not getting in trouble with the King by takin' kids off the Isle," he denied. "It took me ten years to get to captain this barge I ain't throwin' it away for a
"You won't be going against the King by doing this," Mal assured him. "And like I said. You'll only take us halfway. Not like anyone will see us on the ship to blame you for."

"How much are we talking about in pay?" the Goblin captain asked.

Mal pulled out a small pouch and shook it to make the coins rattle. "I've got a little less than three hundred here," she said.

The Goblin eyed the pouch hungrily for a moment but then snorted. "That might get two of you over. But not all four," he said. "Double it, and then we'll talk."

"Not gonna happen," she said firmly.

"Well, then pick two of you to stay," the Goblin shot back. "Because I'm not sticking my neck out for anything less than six."

Mal sighed and then waved Aziz over. "Yes, you will," Mal said. "Because we're not just some street kids." The Goblin raised a nearly non-existent eyebrow. Mal gave Aziz a gentle slap on the arm. "Show him."

Aziz looked a little uncomfortable but then reached into his pocket. He pulled out his ring and made sure that the Goblin got a good look before sliding it onto his finger where it normally sat. There was murmuring among the Goblins, and the captain stared with huge eyes. "My name is Prince Aziz of Agrabah, and I need to get off this Isle."

There was some more muttering, and the Goblin eyed the pair of teens in front of him. "... fine but I want you to put in a good word for us Goblins with the King after this," the captain said firmly.

"Consider it done," Aziz agreed. Everyone knew that the Goblins were trying their darnedest to earn enough favor to get them released from the Isle of the Lost using everything from their distant relation to Dwarves to little favors for royals. This would fit in nicely with that.

The Captain held his hand out. "The money too," he said.

Mal rolled her eyes but then dropped the pouch in the Goblin's hands and then gestured for the others to hurry over. Evie and Carlos did so with Evie still clinging to her purse protectively. Mal almost told her she was making it too obvious something important was in there but didn't. Mal couldn't say she wouldn't be doing the same thing if she was the one carrying Jay's lamp.

The Goblins got them a shadowed corner underneath a tarp held up by various boxes to huddle under on the way out. "Well, we're on the boat," Carlos said. "Now I guess we just wait?"

"As soon as we get past the barrier we can use Carpet again," Aziz agreed. "We can head straight to the hospital that way."

"Good. The faster we get there, the better," Mal said.

It seemed to take longer than the half an hour they were expecting to feel the ship moving finally, but that might have just been nerves. They were doing the very last leg of their journey after all, and if anything went wrong, all their hard work and deals would be for shit.

The ship creaked uncomfortably as it left the port and seemed to take forever to move through the water. The kids peeked out from under the tarp to gauge how fast they were going. "It's not exactly
a speedboat," Aziz muttered.

"We got on it," Mal said. "That was the part I was most worried about."

Carlos nodded as he fiddled with his keychain. "Maybe you should lay out Carpet, Z. So that when
we get past the barrier we can take off faster. I don't want to give the Goblins any reason to think
we're cheating them." Goblins were nasty when you cheated on a deal with them. Unless you were
significantly more powerful than them of course.

Aziz thought for a moment but then did as Carlos suggested. There wasn't a whole lot of space to
unfurl the rug, but Aziz managed to do it and then settled in to wait. The group of them were too
tense to chatter as the ship took its time in heading to Auradon.

Luckily, for the teens hiding out under the tarp, the barrier didn't go too far from the Isle, and even
with the barge going only a few knots an hour they got to the edge of the magical shield without
them having to wait an excruciating amount of time. The shiny yellow wall in front of them was
surprisingly ominous even though all the teens knew that it wouldn't hurt them.

The barrier in front of them rippled for a brief second and then parted like a curtain just before the
ship passed through. The kids watched in awe as the boat squeezed through the opening and then
the yellow wall slid back into place the very second the ship was through. "Wow... really don't
give much room for error do they?" Carlos said as he watched the barrier now behind them.

"No, they don't," Mal agreed.

Suddenly, the Carpet popped up and seemed to shake itself. "Carpet!" Aziz said happily. "Great,
think you can get us back, buddy?"

The Carpet straightened and seemed to salute with one tassel before flattening down on the ship
deck. Iago and Othello, who had followed the kids, took off flying on their own even as the teens
got onto Carpet. As soon as they were all settled, Carpet rose again and then took off at a speed
that made Carlos yelp and cling tightly to Evie.

Mal finally breathed a sigh of relief as Aziz guided them back across the water. They passed Iago
and Othello in the air, but neither parrot seemed to mind that in the least. She had been endlessly
worried that something would go wrong, but now that they were off the Isle again she supposed
she had just been paranoid. Jay would be safe now, and his father hadn't even shown hide nor hair
of himself the whole time they were on the Isle. Mal didn't think things could have gone any better
than that.

Despite the late hour and the fact that they were definitely going to stick out like sore thumbs, they
went straight to the hospital. "What if they released him?" Evie asked as they hopped off of Carpet
in front of the building.

"Then he'll be at school," Mal reasoned. "It's not like it'll be hard to find him here in Auradon, E."
On the Isle, yes, Jay had countless bolt holes that would make him impossible to find if he didn't
want to be. In Auradon he was much easier to locate.

The group of them quickly entered the building and all but ran to where they had last seen their
friend. Mal slowed when she got to the door though, seeing how dark it was inside. She cursed
under her breath that Jay was probably asleep but went in despite that.

Jay was looking mildly better where he was sleeping on his bed. His leather cuffs were back in
their spots, and the bags under his eyes were less pronounced. Ben was dozing off on a couch by
the wall and Mal couldn't quite help but smile. She did love that boy for staying with her best male friend while she couldn't. Mal didn't think many others would be so understanding.

Mal went to go give Ben a slight nudge. If he wanted to go get real sleep now that they were back, he should be given a chance. Aziz chuckled some as he saw the decorations on Jay's cast and Dude, who had been sleeping on a nearby chair went running to Carlos. Carlos quickly picked the dog up and cuddled him close. "I missed you too, buddy," he murmured into the terrier's fur.

Evie went to Jay as Ben jerked awake under Mal's gentle shakes. "Hey," Mal greeted. "We're back. Thanks for staying with him."

Ben smiled a little and rubbed his eyes. "He was pretty freaked when he realized you left without him," Ben said. "But I think at this point he's probably just going to be mad."

Mal snorted. "Probably."

Evie leaned over and gave Jay a gentle shake. If the thief really were in need of rest he wouldn't wake up from such a light touch and Evie would let it go but she did want to check up on him if she could.

Jay woke almost instantly although he looked a little disoriented. "E?"

"Hi," Evie said with a huge smile. "We're back."

Jay stared for a moment as if processing that before pushing himself up. "You shouldn't have gone without me! I mean, are you insane?" he asked. "What the hell is wrong with you trying to break into the shop?"

Carlos turned on the light and caused both Jay and Ben to flinch at the sudden brightness. "We didn't try. We did," Aziz said.

"And we didn't even see Jafar," Mal added.

Jay frowned. "You didn't?"

"Apparently, he's had to hire Goblins to do your old job, so he was out meeting with them," Carlos supplied.

Jay snorted. "Bet his profit margin went hella down..." Jay frowned as he looked at Aziz. "Are those mine?"

Aziz looked down at his outfit. "Oh, uh, yeah," he said. "I had nothing that would blend in."

"Yeah, no kidding," Jay drawled.

" Anyway, the point is," Mal said. "We did it. E." Evie smiled and plopped her purse on the side of Jay's bed and then flung the lid open. She carefully pulled the lamp out with both hands and held it out to Jay.

There was a long silence in the room, and Mal frowned. "Well, don't thank us too much. We might die from being overwhelmed," she drawled as Jay just sat there.

Jay sighed and reached out to take the black and silver metal in his hand. "Oh, guys..." he breathed although he sounded regretful rather than awed. "I really wish you had talked to me before going..." he murmured as he studied the lamp he'd been given.
"What's wrong?" Aziz asked. Jay did not look as happy or relieved as he would expect.

Jay looked up at them finally. "... this isn't mine. It's just a piece of junk I found when I was a kid."

"No. No!" Mal denied as she stepped forward. "That was in his safe!" she insisted. "Right where it was supposed to be!"

"And my dad also knows that I knew he kept it there," Jay said as he put the lamp down on his side table. "He must have switched it out with this one when I didn't come back knowing that I would never have time to search all his hiding spots for it if I came back. But my lamp doesn't have any fancy gems in it or anything. I'm not worth that much."

"First off, don't talk about yourself like that," Mal said firmly. "Second... second we will do... something about this."

"Like what?" Jay asked. "It's not like we can just switch what lamp I'm stuck with."

Aziz straightened some. "Are you sure?" Everyone looked over instantly at the Arabian Prince. Aziz shifted a little, uncomfortable with the stares he was receiving. "Well, I mean, are you? I don't know all the ins and outs of Djinn. Maybe there is a way to... I don't know, replace one lamp with another?"

"If anyone would know it's Jordan and her dad. We can ask them," Ben suggested. "Because I highly doubt a second trip to the Isle will work now that Jafar probably will be missing that lamp."

"Oh, he knows it's gone," Carlos said. "We kind of didn't have time to make it a sneaky break in."

Jay groaned and fell back against his bed. "Great. Just great."

"We're sorry, Jay," Evie said.

Jay sighed and opened his eyes to look at them again. "It's not your guys' fault. It's my old man's. He's the ass that got me into this mess," he muttered. "And... thanks for trying anyway."

"We're not giving up," Mal said firmly. "We just have to regroup and figure out what to do. But we're not going to let anything happen to you, Jay. Not now, not ever."
Chapter 32

Jay was indeed discharged the next day and allowed to go back to school although he quickly found that to be a bit of a mixed bag. While he enjoyed not being stuck in that hospital bed any longer and he certainly got plenty of attention that he was always happy to get, walking really was a pain and the lack of a little button to dole out painkillers was very sharply felt. The doctors still gave him pills to take for the pain but he wasn't supposed to take more than one in the morning and one at night, and before the week was out Jay started really having to resist going back to his room halfway through the day and snitching another despite orders.

Jordan kept coming to Jay and Carlos' room after dinner and letting Jay hold her lamp for a while to keep the tarnish at bay while they searched for a more permanent solution. The black spots were still spreading but less rapidly so at the very least it was buying Jay some time. Jordan, Evie, Mal, and Carlos were pooling their researching skills to pour over every magical tome (Mal and Jordan) to every history book (Evie and Carlos) for any mention of a way that might help Jay short of going back to the Isle for the real lamp. Jordan had even contacted her father, but the ten-thousand-year-old Djinn was in the middle of the jungle somewhere playing hooky with Baloo and apparently got crap cellphone reception. Jay would have thought an all-powerful Djinn would have better methods of staying in contact, but, then again, Jay had no idea where his phone was so maybe he shouldn't talk.

Aziz was also hanging around near constantly. Though he didn't have any particular skill to help now, he seemed to have made it his mission to keep Jay's black mood from continuing if he could help it. Aziz was the one that insisted Jay come down to at least watch the tourney practices even if he couldn't play. At first, Jay had resented the suggestion as it made him very, very bitter seeing the others playing while he couldn't. But slowly he realized even watching was better than nothing at all -not that he would ever tell Aziz that he was right.

Jay was sitting down on the bleachers with the annoying crutches that he was forced to use and cut into his underarms laying beside him and Mal crouching down on a lower step as she drew all over his cast. The team was going through passing drills as Jay watched. He was itching to pick up a stick and join them but he annoyingly couldn't. "So," Mal began without looking up. "Some interesting things happened on the Isle."

Jay glanced down at her but she was still coloring in the purple and red flames that were going to serve as the background for whatever it was she was decorating his leg with. "Oh yeah?" he asked. "Like what?" Mal began without looking up. "Some interesting things happened on the Isle."

"Harry Hook groped Aziz thinking he was you," she said casually. She was surreptitiously glancing up at him through her lashes so saw the brief expression somewhere between anger and hurt fly across his face. That was practically proof enough in Mal's mind, but she continued on. "Did you know he could stick his hand in your fish tank without getting eaten?"

Mal switched out the marker in her hand and shrugged. "Harry Hook groped Aziz thinking he was you," she said casually. She was surreptitiously glancing up at him through her lashes so saw the brief expression somewhere between anger and hurt fly across his face. That was practically proof enough in Mal's mind, but she continued on. "Did you know he could stick his hand in your fish tank without getting eaten?"

Mal could see Jay's jaw was definitely clenched and looked up more directly at him. "... you going to tell me or do I have to fill in the blanks myself?" she asked softly.

"There's nothing to tell," Jay said. "We used to get along, now we don't."

Mal drew another careful line on Jay's cast. "... and then there was when he asked me if you still wanted to kill him over your breakup. His words."
"Sounds like you didn't need me to say anything at all," Jay grumbled.

"Jay. How deep did you get with him?" Mal asked.

Jay didn't answer at first and just stared at the practice that he would much rather be involved in. Mal was just sitting there waiting, and Jay knew that she was dogged when she wanted something. Jay was too, but Mal always seemed to win these little tests of will. Jay sighed and reached up to rub a hand over his face. "... pretty deep," he muttered. "I was younger and stupider. But, hey, never made that mistake again."

"Why didn't you tell me?" Mal asked before she could stop herself. They both knew why he hadn't told her. Relationships didn't happen on the Isle, and if she had found out that Jay was in even a pseudo one with someone in another gang, she would have hit the roof. Jay didn't bother to answer, and Mal sighed before turning her attention again to the flames she was drawing. "... you could tell me now," she offered.

They sat in silence for several minutes. Mal wasn't going to push Jay to talk about it if he really, really didn't want to, but oddly enough, Mal had found that they didn't always need to speak to make each other feel better. Just the offer was usually more than what they expected so was sometimes enough. She would never have listened before, and he would have never shared it. That was being vulnerable, and you didn't do that and survive on the Isle.

"... we started when I was fourteen," Jay muttered after another few minutes of just sitting there. "Just every once and a while we'd knock boots, ya know?" Mal nodded in understanding. Random sex with people, even enemies, was common enough on the Isle that she wasn't surprised at all that was how the mess started. "Then... we did it more often and suddenly..."

Mal glanced up at her longest friend as he scowled at some nonexistent point. "Suddenly?" she prompted after several minutes of silence.

"Suddenly... I realized we weren't just fucking around anymore," Jay muttered. "He called me gorgeous, Mal."

"Well, you are," Mal said. "And he's not blind. Just a loon."

Jay shook his head a little. "He was the first person to call me that," he said. "I was just a whore to everyone else..."

"... that young?" Mal whispered. She had figured out that Jay did that when he was desperate, but she hadn't had any idea of when he'd begun resorting to selling his body.

"... younger," Jay said so softly Mal almost didn't hear it. "That's how we met... the pirates... have a grudge against little boys..." Mal cursed and wished she could go back to the Isle and pummel some washed up old perverts. How dare they touch Jay like that! "Can't really be jailbait on a prison Isle, I guess..." Jay muttered.

"That's not funny," Mal said firmly.

Jay sighed but then shook his head. "No... it isn't," he agreed. There was another long pause while Jay regathered his thoughts. "At some point... I stopped charging him. I don't even know when. I just... was fucking him because I liked it. I liked him. He still slipped me money because he knew I needed it but... I never made him pay me."

"So, what changed?" Mal asked. Something had to have changed. If they went from that to hating each other's guts, then there was a trigger.
"He... suddenly remembered I was a whore, I guess," Jay muttered as he looked away.

Mal frowned at the dodge. She in no way believed that Harry would just out of the blue remember that and they'd break up over it. She would get on Jay's case later about calling himself a whore but right now she had to pull the rest of the sordid details of what went wrong out of him. "Jay. What happened?"

Jay leaned forward to bury his face in his hands for a long minute. Mal waited as patiently as she was able. Finally, Jay straightened again and dragged his hands down his face. "... I fucked Uma."

"What!?"

Jay winced. "She paid me," he almost whined. "She paid me a fuckin' lot. More than anyone had ever paid. I couldn't turn it down!" Mal tried her best to bury her reaction to the news. If there was one thing she hadn't expected to hear, it was that. The very idea of Jay being in bed with Uma made her pissed off to no end. "Please, Mal, I know it was a stupid mistake! Don't get all glowy eyes on me!" Jay nearly pleaded.

Mal fought down her anger as best she could and blinked away the burn in her eyes before she looked up at Jay again. Getting pissed off now wouldn't change what happened years ago. "So, you screwed the shrimp and Hook got pissed?" she surmised. Jay winced at the wording but nodded anyway.

"He's always adored her for some reason, so I should have known he'd get jealous," Jay muttered. "I don't know why it blindsided me..."

Mal wanted to tell him precisely why. It seemed obvious to her why something like that would cause such a rift, but she didn't want to hurt Jay more so she kept it to herself. Instead, there was something a little more pressing that she needed to find out. "Do you miss him?"

Jay practically froze. "W-what?"

"Harry. Do you miss being with him?" Mal repeated.

Jay went quiet and seemed to think about it. Mal let him puzzle out his answer at his own pace and went back to her drawing. "Sometimes," Jay finally said. "I haven't... It's always been business since then... And that-that really sucks..."

Mal reached over with her free hand to grab Jay's. "You're not a business," she told him firmly. "You are worth so much more than any of that shit."

"... I don't feel it."

"You are," Mal insisted. She had very rarely seen Jay looking so hurt before. He didn't cry, but Mal could imagine easily from his expression that it was a close thing. "Is he why you say you won't date?" she asked. "Are you that hung up on him?"

"I'm not hung up on him," Jay denied. Mal raised an eyebrow. "Okay, maybe a little. But he's not why. The people here would be disgusted if they knew even a fraction of what I did because people paid me. It disgusted me but I still fuckin' did it."

"Because you were trying to survive," Mal said instantly. "Don't you ever be ashamed for surviving that hell hole, Jay. Not ever." Jay just stared at her with that wounded expression that she hated seeing on his face. Mal gave Jay's hand a quick squeeze before going back to her drawing and letting Jay regain his composure at his own pace.
The two of them sat there for a while in silence. Mal occasionally glanced up at Jay, but he seemed off in his own little world. She couldn't imagine what would be rolling through his head right then, but she doubted it was anything good. There was so much baggage there that Mal really didn't think she'd ever get to the bottom of it even if she wanted to, which she didn't. Jay was allowed to keep his hurts bottled up just as much as she was and prying each and every one of them out wouldn't be fair.

After a while, Mal finally noticed Jay's expression relax again. "You okay?" she asked softly.

Jay nodded. "I guess."

"I told Uma and Harry that I'd put their crew on the list to come over," Mal informed. "That was why I pressed so hard. I didn't want to cause you more problems on top of everything else."

Jay was quiet. "Do they have a date yet?"

Mal shook her head. "No. They aren't next on the list. Gil and Dizzy are," Mal told him. "I convinced Ben to bring them over next week."

"Gil?" Jay echoed. "Why Gil?"

"It was part of the deal I made with Harry," Mal explained. "He's worried that Gil will get killed by Gaston if he's on the Isle too much longer. He kind of reminded me of you protecting Carlos, actually."

Jay made a face. "Please don't tell me you're going to start trying to match-make or anything."

"I'm not," Mal assured him. "But it was what I thought when I saw them together. It surprised the hell out of me."

"Yeah, well, Harry's got a side he doesn't show to too many people. I haven't seen it in a while myself, but he did seem to have a soft spot for Gil. Saw him like a little brother or something, I think," Jay answered.

"I'm glad he's not as entirely crazy as he seems," Mal muttered.

Jay snorted. "He was not my boyfriend."

"He was," Mal said, still smiling. "In Auradon they're called boyfriends," she clarified. She was more than slightly amused to see pink rush across Jay's cheeks.

Jay glared a little despite the blush. "He was not my boyfriend."

"Yeah, okay," Mal said not bothering to sound convinced. "You just hung around with him and fucked him, and he called you nice things. On the Isle, you might as well have been married."

Jay pushed her hard with his hand, and Mal laughed even as she caught herself. "Shut up, Mal. I never should have talked to you!" he grumbled. Mal tried to apologize, but her huge grin probably ruined it. "You are just the worst..." Jay muttered as he crossed his arms.

"Well, we are rotten," Mal said, still smiling.
Jay studied her for a moment before sighing. "To the core," he finished for her.

Mal leaned over and gave him an awkward half hug. "That's my Jay."

"You're still the worst," Jay declared. Mal could only cackle with amusement and go back to her decorating attempts.
Jay hated crutches. They were so uncomfortable to use, but he'd quickly found that putting any weight on his encased leg was far too agonizing to actually do for more than a split second. Making it even harder was that Jay's bag slung over his shoulder made him slightly off balanced, and the bag hit his back awkwardly with each movement. Luckily, the crutches didn't seem to put off his fans any, and they still giggled and blushed every time he gave them a wink or a casual, flirty observation about how good they looked. It really helped keep his spirits up that he was still able to send a group of princesses into a fit of eye fluttering coy laughter with so little effort. "You're terrible," Aziz said in amusement as yet another group of girls blushed as they walked past.

"What else am I supposed to do to entertain myself?" Jay asked as he swiveled his head back around.

"You could try this novel thing... it's called studying," Aziz drawled.

Jay made a face as he hobbled along beside Aziz. "If I were in the mood for a headache I'd just hit my head against the wall and save myself some time," he replied.

"Just because your leg is busted doesn't mean you can't still be put on academic probation, ya know," Aziz told him.

Jay sighed. "I wish you people would stop harping on my stupid grades," he grumbled. "I'm trying, alright? It's not like I've ever had to worry about things like this before. Grades on the Isle were on how nasty you could be. I didn't have to worry about stupid dates or how many freakin' atoms are in a whatever..."

Aziz shook his head slightly. "In a way, I envy you guys not having to learn about those sorts of things, but supposedly it's all important information," he said. "Plus that makes doing it all now harder, which I'm sure is no fun."

"It's really not," Jay said unhappily. "I have no idea how Evie and Carlos do it."

"I would probably have a hard time catching up too," Aziz said. "Sometimes I still have a hard time, and I've been learning about this stuff all the while. Dad got me tutors for over the summer, so I don't fall behind... or so he claims."

Jay snorted a little. "Sounds like fun," he said sarcastically. "Even more school on top of the school you already have to do."

"Yeah. Hard to stay awake during that too," Aziz said. "An Agrabah summer will put anyone into instant doze off mode."

"I'll have to take your word for it," Jay said as he started to somewhat awkwardly climb up the stairs. He felt stupid balancing on one foot while shifting the crutches up to the next one but after a few steps he got a steady rhythm going for it.

"Well, you could come find out yourself," Aziz said.

Jay paused and looked back over his shoulder at his teammate on the step below him. "What?"
Aziz shrugged. "Come visit Agrabah. I mean, why not? It's where you're from."

"I'm from the Isle," Jay corrected with a slight edge.

"Alright, technically true," Aziz conceded although he thought that statement still wasn't exactly right. "But your heritage is Agrabah. You should come see it at least once. Heck, maybe you'll even like it."

Jay scoffed even as he reached the second floor and stepped away from the stairs. "I somehow doubt your mom and dad would be super stoked to meet me, Aziz."

"They'd be fine with it. My parents don't judge," Aziz argued.

"... don't they sort of, by definition, judge?" Jay asked. "Like they preside over trials and things in Agrabah, don't they?" His dad may not have told him a hell of a lot about Agrabah - other than 'hot, dry, and miserable' - but he did rant a few times about how he'd been judged by a 'lowly street rat' and a 'haughty princess' before being sent to the Isle of the Lost. Jay supposed that Jafar could have been talking figuratively, but he really didn't get that impression from the way his father had been talking.

Aziz gave a half shrug. "Well, I mean, sure for big things. But Dad also believes in second chances so it's not like he'll just throw you in the dungeons or something."

"Okay, see, you have dungeons," Jay said. "I'd rather not even risk that."

"Most of that space was converted into storage areas," Aziz argued with some exasperation. "There's only, like, three cells left and they're really nice now and barely ever used."

Jay rolled his eyes. "You are a real crappy salesman, Aziz," Jay said. "I'm sure if anyone in the world were to find their way into those cells, it would be me."

Aziz sighed. "You're paranoid."

"And you've seen where I grew up," Jay shot back. "I think you can cut me some slack on that."

"... touche."

"What?"

"Uh, touche... it's French. It's what you say in fencing when someone gets a hit in. Especially when it's a really good one," Aziz explained.

"There's a word for that?" Jay asked. He'd always just called that 'winning' rather than anything fancy. Then again, his brand of sword fighting was probably not considered 'fencing' like Aziz was talking about.

Aziz nodded. "There's a term for most things in fencing. But people also use touche when someone has a really good point in an argument. Anyway, there's no reason you should be nervous about coming to Agrabah. I'll be there, and I can show you around. It'll be fun."

Jay wasn't a hundred percent sure about that, but Aziz did seem sincere, and Jay didn't really think the Prince would deliberately screw him over. Habit told Jay to be careful despite what he thought personally. Jay quickly thought up some excuse, but before he could say it, a hard wrenching sensation he was far too familiar with caused him to stumble.
"Jay!" Aziz quickly caught him with one arm while Jay threw out another to the nearby lockers to brace himself. "Are you okay?" Jay didn't immediately answer since he was far too busy trying to breathe despite the way his insides tried to escape his body. "Jay?" There was another jerk and Jay barely caught himself from doubling over.

Already, Jay could feel sweat building on his skin as the insistent calls stole almost all of his attention. Despite trying his best to not double over from the pain, Jay suddenly found himself staring at the floor. He didn't dare move from where he was in case he lost his lunch, but he really wouldn't rather not be doing this in the hallway where anyone could see.

"Jay? Can you tell me what's going on at all?" Aziz asked as he tried to keep his worry contained. He didn't think he was doing that good a job of it.

Jay took a few deep breaths to try and control himself before glancing up at the Arabian Prince. Aziz looked more than a little worried, but Jay couldn't think of anything to say to dismiss this incident. "My dad..." was all he could actually manage before another painful twist in his chest made him double over again with a half-stifled noise.

Aziz grimaced in sympathy since he knew just how hard it was to get Jay to make any indication of pain. The guy had a bone sticking out of him and hadn't even screamed, after all. The few people still in the hall between classes had stopped and noticed the unusual scene. "Let's get you to the nurse," Aziz said as he bent down to pick up the dropped crutch from the floor. "And keep your head down. Your eyes are going gold."

"I'll be fine in a minute," Jay protested shakily.

"Well, that's nice. I'm still taking you to the nurse," Aziz said as he hooked Jay's arm around his neck. "So, don't even bother arguing."

"... jerk," Jay said.

Aziz almost rolled his eyes but didn't. "If that's the best you can do you really are feeling bad. Come on."

Aziz tried to help Jay along as best he could, but Jay was simply not able to move along very fast. He kept having to stop and regain his bearings. Aziz was growing more and more worried each time Jay brought them to a halt. He was looking more than a little pale and was sweating bullets as he hobbled along. "How is your dad doing this?" Aziz couldn't help but ask.

Jay struggled another few steps before stopping. His eyes flashed molten gold again as he struggled to keep his breathing as even as possible. Jay swallowed hard against the rising nausea of having his insides twisted and pulled. "The lamp," he managed to mutter.

"Shit," Aziz grumbled. "Now I feel even worse about not getting the right one..."

"Not your fault," Jay said before closing his eyes to pool his strength together. "I think I'll be good now."

Aziz stared for a moment. "Really?" he asked. "So... If I let you try and walk on your own you won't fall flat on your face?" he asked in disbelief. Jay hesitated, and Aziz nodded. "Uh huh, that's what I thought. Stop being stubborn." Jay was still struggling to keep up even at a slow pace, but Aziz was determined.

"You stop being stubborn," Jay grumbled.
"Brilliant comeback," Aziz said sarcastically. "Come on, before I have someone go get Mal and Evie to make you behave."

Jay glared a little, which Aziz actually found very unsettling with how his eyes were flashing gold. "Behavin' isn't my thing..."

Aziz rolled his eyes but turned his focus back to getting Jay to the nurse's office. He should have known that Jay would make even getting himself medical help difficult. Even still, Aziz took it as a bad sign when Jay actually did stop arguing about being taken to the nurse's office.

Luckily the nurse's office wasn't too much further down the hall, and Aziz was able to get Jay there without the latter completely collapsing. Jay groaned a little as Aziz helped him onto the bed and then started telling the nurse what had happened.

Despite his complaints, Jay was glad to be lying down. His organs were being thrashed, and his head was swimming. Jay barely paid any attention to what Aziz or the Nurse was talking about and instead just closed his eyes and tried to breathe through the discomfort. He felt like he was going to be sick again and he really, really hated being sick.

Jafar had never before tried to get Jay to respond during the day before, so Jay had been caught entirely off guard. He should have expected it anyway since he knew what a bastard his father was. Jay was humiliatated that anyone in the hallway would have seen him so pathetic and could only be glad that he didn't actually vomit everywhere like he still felt like doing. His muscles were twitching beneath his skin from a build-up of energy and pain, and he couldn't seem to control them.

Jay dared to open his eyes again although he stayed half curled up on the hard bed. The nurse's office bed was so much less comfortable than his bed in his dorm but getting up wasn't about to happen.

Across from the bed was a cabinet with a little lock on the front and glass panels showing what was inside. Lots of little boxes and bottles and vials were filling the shelves neatly, and Jay tried to distract himself from his pain and nausea by trying to make the swirling labels stop moving around so much. It wasn't really working, but if he just laid there and felt miserable, he thought it might just be worse.

Jay was distantly aware of talking going on but wasn't listening in. Jay knew his father was trying to make him miserable like he was always trying to do but he wasn't about to give in. He could handle a little gut curling sickness and muscle shredding pain. Jafar couldn't keep it up forever, and then Jay would be free to just continue on with his day. Well, he'd be sore and have no appetite, but Jay had dealt with worse. Jay lifted his shaky hand to wipe some sweat off his face and pull his hat back down.

"You okay, Jay?" Aziz asked as he put a hand on Jay's shoulder.

"... rainbows and sunshine over here," Jay muttered.

"Is this why you were in my bed that time?" Aziz asked. "Because your father was torturing you?"

Jay frowned at the question. He really didn't like thinking that his father was 'torturing' him. That word didn't feel... right to associate with himself. He couldn't think of himself that way even if the whole thing was hell to put up with. "I wouldn't say tortured..." he grumbled.

"Oh no? Then what would you call it?" Aziz asked challengingly. "He knows this hurts you doesn't
Jay didn't answer and just focused on the swirling labels. He couldn't answer because it came way too close to thoughts he was very careful to never fully realize. Aziz sighed and sat down on the edge of the bed. "How often does he do this?"

"As often as he needs to, to prove his point," Jay answered without hardly thinking about it. "If I weren't so dense it wouldn't last as long."

"You're not dense," Aziz said. "And I really don't know what else to call it but torture when he's doing it deliberately, for no reason, and there's no way for you to stop it."

Jay frowned. "Just... don't call it anything. Just leave it at my dad's an asshole. Why's everything gotta have a title?"

"Are... are you defending him right now?" Aziz asked in a shocked near-whisper.

"No," Jay denied. "I'm not defending anything but... he's my dad. That's got to mean something."

Jay wasn't entirely sure what it meant, but he needed that to be true. There had to be some sort of worth in being the son of Jafar. Some teeny tiny speck that Jay could at least be sure of. He didn't know what he would do if he really were just a means to an end.

Aziz frowned but, after several minutes, sighs. "You're right. Sorry. Do you need anything?"

Jay shook his head even as he shuddered from another pull at his insides. "... I'll be fine."

"Okay. I've got to get to class, and the nurse is kicking me out," Aziz said. "Feel better, huh?"

"Sure," Jay agreed as he closed his eyes. Aziz sighed again but left Jay alone. The thief tried to get some rest, but that was futile. The wrenching sensations just kept coming one after another. The nurse came in to check on him several times, but there wasn't really much she was able to do. The aspirin she provided did fuck-all to fight the pain.

At some point, Jay was aware of a bell ringing meaning that the classes were changing, but he didn't even trust himself to get up much less leave the nurse's office. It didn't help he couldn't be certain which class he was supposed to be in currently.

Jay tried again to find something in the office to focus on other than the desire to just curl up and cry or vomit every single internal organ out of his body. Either option was really appealing to him just then. Even his hair hurt where it was sticking to his sweaty face and neck. Jay's glowing eyes settled on the cabinet across from him again since it was so damn convenient. His head wasn't really up for struggling to read but maybe by the time he made sense of the labels the pain would have vanished. Jay figured it was worth a shot if nothing else.

It took most of the afternoon for his pain riddled mind to make sense of even a few of the labels and even then he wasn't sure he was reading the words right. What in the heck even was levocetirizine? It sounded like an evil spell or something. Jay was sure he was making up words or just really really wrong until he reached one label that he eventually managed to put together to say Morphine.

Jay frowned. That one sounded really familiar. Wasn't that what the doctors gave him at the hospital? He was pretty sure it was. Maybe that would help now. Jay shook his head and reminded himself he wasn't supposed to take those other than those two times on the bottle in his room. The doctors hadn't explained it really well, but they'd said something about it being bad to take too much.
Still... at the hospital, it had really made him feel so much better.

Jay clenched his fist tight against his side and resolved himself to be good. For once. The pain would go away eventually. His father couldn't keep rubbing the lamp forever. It was just a matter of waiting it out. However long that would take. Jay tried not to linger on the fact that the medicine that helped before was so close, but it was hard when it was right in front of him in that cabinet.

But, Jay reasoned, his hands weren't steady anyway, and that cabinet had to be locked. So no reason to even try and break in. He didn't even want to. Jay winced at the lie he'd just thought and tried desperately to believe it. Jay scowled at the bottle sitting there all temptingly. Why couldn't anything ever be nice and simple? It was like the world loved to see him do the wrong thing over and over again.

Fine. He really wanted the stupid pills, if only because he knew they would help. Already the pain and nausea had gone on longer than any other time Jay could remember. Aziz's words came back, and Jay did his best to not think that word himself. That was not what was happening. All of this was only because Jafar hated being ignored. Jay's fist tightened. Really. That was all it was.

Suddenly, as he glared at the pills, smoke wrapped around the bottle from nowhere. Jay's eyes widened at the ribbon of golden vapors spiraled until he couldn't see the pills at all. He realized a half second later that he felt something hard and smooth in his fist. The smoke disappeared from in the cabinet, and the bottle was gone from where it had been sitting. Jay was almost too scared to look at what he was suddenly holding, but he forced himself to do it.

Right there in his hand was a bottle full of little white tablets. Jay couldn't tell if he was upset or relieved.

Chapter End Notes

It is my intention for every genie to have their own magical smoke color, kind of like in Once Upon A Time how everyone's magic is a different colored smoke.

Genies is blue (obvs)
Jafar was red
Jordan is light purple
And my baby Jay gets gold. Because he's worth it!
"There's nothing useful in any of these stupid books," Mal growled as she slammed the current spell book she was flipping through closed hard and running a hand through her hair angrily. She had been spending all of her free time lately trying to come up with some way to free Jay from his father. When Aziz had come to her just a few hours ago to say he'd had to nearly carry Jay to the nurse's office, she had decided to skip out on her last few classes of the day and redouble her efforts.

Evie, Carlos, and Jordan glanced up from their own thick research books. "Well, switching lamps isn't really supposed to be done," Jordan said. "It makes sense that the answer on how to do it would take a little while to find."

"Aziz said Jay could barely stand up with help. We don't have a 'little while' to figure this out," Mal snapped. Jordan recoiled a little and Mal made an effort to calm herself. "I'm sorry... I'm just frustrated." Her biggest concern was making sure her friends were safe, and she couldn't do that when Jafar had Jay's lamp still. Mal hadn't considered that Jay could be hurt from a distance by not having the lamp. She knew he was ill without it, but that was a little different from collapsing in the hall due to being actively tormented.

"I understand," Jordan said.

"Maybe we're going about this the wrong way," Evie said thoughtfully as she played with the heart and crown pen topper that she had made from a couple of old barrettes that she had glued together.

"What do you mean?" Carlos asked. "What other way could we even go about this? We have a lamp and a genie. Now we need to link them up. I wouldn't think that it would be any different than connecting a circuit." As far as they could tell there wasn't anything inherently magical about the lamps that genies were linked to. They just served as the necessary vessel. Therefore, any other lamp should be able to be substituted. Heck, Carlos even theorized things that weren't traditional oil lamps would work if they really wanted to get creative.

Evie frowned as she continued to fiddle with her pen. "Well, how do genies even get bound to lamps?"

The three Isle kids turned to Jordan instantly. Jordan sighed just a little at having to explain but had resigned herself to such questions when she had agreed to help, in the first place. "Well, when a Djinn is 'born' -whether that's by a wish or naturally- a lamp is created along with that Djinn. My lamp just appeared in my crib with me a few days after I was born. Kind of confused my mother, but I needed a lamp, so my magic provided one. Lamps are supposed to be pretty personalized."

"Which is why Jafar's was all black and evil looking?" Carlos asked. As they had been researching lamps and genies, they had come across several drawings of Jafar's lamp and were kicking themselves for not having thought to look any history up before going to the Isle. Even without waiting for Jay to wake up they would have found important information that could have avoided
this mess. The books would have shown pretty clearly that Jafar's lamp didn't have jewels embedded in it.

"Yes," Jordan agreed. "It was made when he wished to be a genie and was essentially 'born' that way. Now, because he shifted someone else into his role that means, in theory, we should be able to shift Jay over to a different lamp as well since it wasn't his to begin with."

Mal frowned as she thought about that. "Well, if we break the link... would Jay's magic just make him a new lamp? Like yours did?" she asked.

Jordan hesitated and thought about it. "Maybe... or it might be that it would kill him. I don't even know how we would be able to break a connection between a Djinn and their lamp."

"That sounds too risky then," Carlos said. "Even if we could figure it out."

Mal tapped her finger on the top of the table as she thought. After a moment, she looked over at Jordan. "Jafar used a wish or something to do the transfer, Iago said. Could we do that again?" she asked. Jordan was a genie after all. If anything was worth a wish, it was fixing this mess.

Jordan hesitated. "Well, we're really not supposed to use wishes..." she said. "Or any magic for that matter."

"This is sort of extreme circumstances," Mal argued. She didn't give a flying rat's ass about what Fairy Godmother's position on magic was (which she still found incredibly hypocritical) and would gladly do whatever it took to save Jay.

"... let me check my book. Usually, wishes that interfere with other Djinn go all monkey paw on us," Jordan said. "And the last thing we need is for a wish to backfire and hurt Jay more."

"Monkey paw?" Mal echoed. "What's that?"

"Monkey Paw is a short story where every wish that's made comes with horrible catches," Evie explained. "Those wishes aren't made through a genie though."

"No, but every genie can add those sort of clauses to their wishes. And sometimes they show up on their own. It's part of the unpredictability of magic," Jordan explained. "And it's why 'don't make wishes with genies' is a pretty popular phrase nowadays."

Carlos frowned. "If genies can put clauses into their wishes... why didn't your dad do that to Jafar in the first place?" he asked.

"Dad had been trapped for ten thousand years. The concept was a little new for him to be aware of," Jordan defended. "But none of that is important other than being careful to not make things worse by trying to use magic. If we go about trying to wish the problem away, we have to be very careful about how we phrase it. We wouldn't want one of you to end up somehow getting stuck in Jay's place."

"Well, can't we just use your lamp to wish Jay free?" Evie asked, slightly exasperated. There were so many stupid rules.

"No. That wish has to be done on the lamp that Jay is linked to," Jordan said with a sigh. "Ancient safeguards to make sure we Djinn didn't all get wished free by one misguided mortal. We also can't wish each other free for similar reasons."

"Who even made all these stupid rules?" Carlos asked in frustration.
Jordan shrugged. "My dad, being the oldest of us, might know but he doesn't like to talk about the old days much. Not even mother's managed to pry the story out of him," she explained.

"Well, there had to be some way it happened," Evie argued. "Even in Fairy Lore, there're stories about the Queen and King who started it all."

"There are stories, but I have no idea how true they are," Jordan replied.

"Well, most stories have at least a little fact in them," Mal pointed out. "Which one sounds the most likely to you?"

Jordan sighed and thought about it for a moment. "I'm not sure if it's the most likely, but the story I've most often heard is that about a human wizard." Jordan noticed the others looking at her expectantly and closed her book. She had might as well tell them even if she wasn't sure how much help it would be. "This human, whose name isn't recorded, absolutely hated Djinn. The story goes that when he was a young man his beautiful wife was the most sought-after woman in the country but was very loyal and loving. A Djinn spotted her and fell in love but when she rejected his advances the spirit savagely murdered her. Finding his wife's mangled body, the man swore to find her killer and get revenge.

"He searched years and years for some sign of the monster that killed his love but never could find it. It took him twenty years, but he finally stumbled across a different Djinn at an oasis in the desert. He attacked the Djinn blindly but could not damage a spirit made of smoke and flame. The Djinn, however, was not mad and only curious as to why he was randomly attacked. The man told the spirit his story and managed to trick the Djinn into giving him an unrestrained wish. The Djinn thought the wish would be used to bring his wife back from the dead, as that is what the man said would ease his hatred. And after all, why would this grieving man not want that? The man's wish, however, was that every Djinn would be bound to a lamp for all eternity locked in a prison and forced to perform penance for the crime in the form of three wishes to whoever owned the lamp. And the Djinn, being a spirit of nature and magic, was forced to keep his word and granted the wish.

"The man thought that he had won his revenge. The Djinn that was tricked, however, repaid the betrayal of goodwill by turning the human into a Djinn along with the rest of us... making him a slave to his own scheme. And forced to pay his own penance for enslaving those who had done him no harm. And the first of the few limitations on wishes was born. No wishing people back from the dead, since that was the fake wish that tricked the Djinn." Jordan fiddled with the bracers around her wrists for a moment before looking back up at them. "But that's just the story. However the binding did happen; apparently, people were a lot more terrified of us and what we could do back in the old days. Plus, there were some nasty Djinns that did some pretty unpleasant things to humans because they were spiteful or thought it was funny. So, we all got lumped together, and when mortal wizards figured out how to bind us up -whether by wish or just other spells- they jumped on it," she explained. "Most of the oldest lamps haven't been found again because they were dropped in giant pits or thrown into the ocean in a box filled with stones... and other excellent ways of making sure they weren't found."

"Wasn't another really old lamp found a little while ago, though?" Evie asked as she picked up her phone and started searching for the internet article she had barely glanced at. She had spotted it while looking through various internet pages but at the time hadn't had any reason to notice the news. She hadn't known that one of her best friends was a genie himself.

"Yeah, that was Barqan. He's... not very friendly," Jordan said awkwardly. She'd met the other Djinn just before coming to Auradon Prep and hadn't liked the spiteful green Djinn very much at
all. "Very bitter after how long he was trapped in his lamp. I don't think he'd help us much."

Mal frowned. "How long will it take you to read up on the rules of making wishes like giving Jay a new lamp?"

Jordan opened the heavy book beside her again. "I'll start now," she said before flipping through a few pages. "Hopefully, it won't take me very long, but there's a lot of information in here. I know in the early days Djinn tried to find lots of workarounds for the magic binding us, so I'm sure there's something useful in here somewhere."

"Has anyone checked on Jay?" Carlos asked.

"Aziz did before he went to tourney practice," Mal answered. "Said he looked better but was sleeping. Which, shouldn't you be at practice, Carlos?"

Carlos scoffed a little. "I don't care if I get benched, unlike Jay. This is more important," he said. Mal smiled and nodded in agreement. "But, I think I'm going to go check on Jay."

"Make sure he isn't acting like an idiot," Mal told him.

"I try not to tackle futile tasks, Mal," Carlos said with some amusement. "Even breaking through the barrier was possible. Getting Jay to not do something stupid is so much harder."

"Iago should be hanging around," Evie said. "Maybe you should take him in too. I'll bet he's worried for Jay just as much as we are."

Carlos hesitated for a moment but nodded. "Right... if I see him," Carlos agreed with some amount of trepidation. Carlos made it a rule for himself to not venture too close to the parrot because he rather liked having ten fingers that worked properly. He used all those digits for so many fine motor skills that it would be a real pain to lose one.

Dude pranced in place beside Carlos as he gathered up his things from the table. "Come on, boy, let's go see Jay." Dude gave a single bark as Carlos headed towards the door. Carlos smiled down at the little terrier that was trotting along beside him so happily.
This is kind of an awkward chapter but I needed something to bridge from last chapter to the next one... so necessary evil and all that.

Iago, Carlos eventually found, was sitting outside the window of the nurse's office. The nurse hadn't wanted to open the window and let the parrot in, especially since Iago cursed at her from the other side of the glass. Loudly. Once Carlos managed to convince the nurse that Iago wasn't going to be in the way and that he wasn't in fact murderous (Carlos might have been fibbing slightly on that part), the parrot had taken to perching everywhere in the room so long as it had a good view of the teen on the bed. Jay spent most of the afternoon and some of the evening in the nurse's office dozing off until finally being sent back to his room with Carlos.

Carlos almost swore that Jay was drunk with how he was stumbling and leaning so heavily on the crutches and Carlos. Jay had to be practically poured onto his bed where he promptly passed out again. Carlos frowned but knew that there was no way Jay could have gotten anything to drink in the nurse's office of all places. Plus, Carlos thought he had a pretty good nose for alcohol since his mother drank so much and he didn't smell any on his friend.

Dude hopped up onto the bed beside Jay and crawled up under the Arabian's arm to be tucked in close. "Back off, dog." Iago snapped from his perch on Jay's headboard. Dude laid his head on his paws and stubbornly stayed still. Iago grumbled some more but since he wasn't actively attacking Dude, Carlos decided to ignore him for the moment. And he absolutely wasn't going to mention that Iago was acting like a jealous girlfriend or something. Carlos felt it was likely that he’d be gouged or something equally unpleasant if he did.

Pulling out his phone, Carlos uneasily glanced at his friend. He would really like to know why Jay was acting drunk and how worried he should be about it. Carlos quickly texted Evie saying that Jay had been released and they were back at the dorms and then pocketed the phone again. “Hey, Jay? You out already?” Carlos asked.

Jay didn’t even slightly stir. Carlos frowned and looked at Iago. “Does he seem off to you?”

“He’s tired from all the stress he’s been under lately,” Iago pointed out. “I wouldn’t worry about it. The nurse probably gave him something to help him sleep or something like that. She’s supposed to be looking out for his best interests, after all.”

“True…” Carlos mused aloud. Although he had never really met Nurse Melinda before this incident so he had no idea if she was an open minded sort of Auradonian or one of those that couldn’t seem to see beyond their infamous parents. He rather hoped it was the former. Carlos looked at Jay one last time before going over to his laptop and opening it up. He didn’t want to leave Jay alone when he was acting off so he would continue his research on the internet rather than at the library. Carlos was faster with digital data, anyway, and had only been using books earlier because a lot of the information in them hadn't been digitized.

Carlos was only working at his computer for about ten minutes when the door opened and the girls came in along with Doug. “Hey guys,” Carlos greeted. “He’s out like a light.”
Jordan frowned and went over to the sleeping teen. “Well, he still could use a bit of bond therapy so I’ll just tuck this here,” she said as she pulled her lamp out of her bag and carefully tucked it under one of Jay’s hands. “I don’t know how much longer using my lamp as a Band-Aid will help, though.”

“You won’t have to do it too much longer,” Mal assured her even though they hadn’t come up with a rock solid alternative idea yet. “As soon as we find a way to transfer this bond somewhere else then everything will be fine.”

“I don’t think Jay will like Doug finding out about him too,” Carlos commented as he eyed the dwarf carefully.

Evie tried to smile but it looked very sheepish. “I might have accidentally let it slip to him what was going on…”

“E…”

“It was an accident!” Evie defended. “I had to give some reason for pushing back my gown deadlines on him and… well, you know how terrible I am at lying…” Carlos supposed that was true enough. For being the daughter of the Evil Queen, Evie really could not play anything close to the vest. Her lies were pretty much never believable. Then again, Carlos didn’t have a whole lot of room to talk. He wasn’t a huge liar either. Carlos had never seen the point in lying when his mother really didn’t care what he said whether it was the truth or not. Her punishments were horrible either way.

“Well, so long as you’re the one explaining it to Jay,” Carlos told her. “Because I’m not getting near that with a ten foot pole.”

Evie made a face but nodded in agreement. She knew she would have to beg Jay to forgive her for letting his secret slip out yet again… maybe knit him a new beanie or something. He was wearing the first one that she’d given him to death and back. “Actually, I think Doug might be able to help us,” Jordan said.

“How’s that?” Doug asked curiously. While he was surprised and intrigued by the whole situation he had really just shown up to display some measure of support for his friends. He wasn’t really an expert in magic or genie or anything like that.

Jordan turned to face the other teens in the room. “I’ve been looking through my book and while there’s no way to guarantee that a monkey paw situation will occur, some Djinn have noticed that there might be some link between that happening and it being with humans. Doug, being the son of a dwarf, might be less likely to trigger horrible consequences.”

“But it’s not for certain,” Mal prompted. Jordan shook her head and the room fell into silence for a moment. “Well, every little bit helps, I guess. Would you be willing to help, Doug?”

Doug looked surprised and even blinked several times. “Um, yeah, sure. I mean… I’ll do what I can… so long as it’s not anything too crazy. It’s not crazy is it?”

“No, Dopey,” Evie said fondly. “It’s not crazy. You just have to make a wish.”

“A wish. Okay. That doesn’t sound too hard…” Doug said hesitantly. He was still waiting for a catch of some sort. He just had a sixth sense that things weren’t as simple as the villain kids wanted to make it sound. “What’s the wish?”

“I’ll have to write it out for you,” Jordan said. “But I want to be sure it’s absolutely perfect so give
“I’d rather do this now,” Mal complained.

Jordan sighed. “I would too, but trust me, waiting is definitely the better option here.”

“Don’t take it personal, Jordan. We’re just used to rushing in and just dealing with things as they happen,” Carlos said. Flying by the seat of their pants was just the way they had always worked. They figured out the plan as they went and so far hadn’t been thwarted too many times. It was just horrible luck that this was one of those few examples. “Waiting around never really worked well on the Isle. You took the opportunities as they were presented to you.”

“That’s also how you ended up stealing a lamp that wasn’t Jay’s,” Jordan pointed out in a very carefully neutral tone. Mal scowled darkly at her anyway. “I’m just saying… maybe you should try things with a little more… Auradon way for now.”

Evie put a hand to Mal’s shoulder. “Waiting one day isn’t that long,” she pointed out softly. “And we’ll be keeping an eye on him.”

“Things are going to be hectic enough tomorrow without this,” Mal complained. “Dizzy and Gil are supposed to be arriving in the morning and I told Ben that we’d show them around.” Being the first transfers from the Isle left Mal and the others in a very odd position of being the ‘authority’ on how to adapt from Isle life to Auradon. It was a role Mal did not remotely feel qualified for but there wasn’t anyone else to do it either.

“I’ll research it all night long and run the wish by Fairy Godmother before breakfast to see if she thinks that anything bad would happen from it,” Jordan promised. “By lunch we could have Jay perfectly safe and healing on his own.”

Carlos raised an eyebrow. “You think the Fairy Godmother will be willing to look over something that you are obviously planning on using for magical means and just… go with it?” he asked incredulously.

“Of course not,” Jordan said. “I’ve got a project coming up in Theory of Magical Mishaps… you know, the class that’s supposed to teach us why relying on magic is bad? And I’m planning on saying this ‘pretend wish’ is what I’m going to base my project on.” Jordan looked quite pleased with herself and the others had to begrudgingly agree it was a pretty solid cover story. Mal hadn’t thought that the Genie girl would be able to come up with one.

Although Mal had no idea if Ben had told the Headmistress about Jay’s ‘condition,’ she was willing to bet that Fairy Godmother was not going to change her rules on magic so easily. For a fairy with a magic wand that could do crazy magic Mal thought that she sure seemed to have some sort of phobia about it. Maybe she should ask Jane why her mother randomly went from spelling people happy to pushing no magical solutions. There had to be some reason somewhere, right? Well, a puzzle for another day. “Fine,” Mal finally said with a sigh. “You have until tomorrow lunch to figure out how to phrase it but that’s it. The longer Jay is in danger the worse it’ll be.”

Jordan nodded instantly. “Right. Doug, I’ll come and find you when I have the wish ready. You’ll just have to repeat whatever I write down for you.”

Doug nodded a little. “I think I can handle that…” he still wasn’t entirely sure how he would be the best choice for making this wish but if that was how he could help then that was what he would do. He just hoped it worked because he hated seeing Evie so sad about anything. Plus, Jay was an alright guy. The thief didn’t even pick on anyone in the band for playing instruments even though
he didn’t hide the fact that he found it a lame pass time.

“Great. Tomorrow then. Hopefully before the others get here because I don’t want anyone from the Isle finding out about this,” Mal said firmly. Auradon after Auradon citizen finding out was one thing. Isle Kids with potential grudges was altogether different.
Jay could remember the exact moment he realized how his father actually saw him. Not as a son but as a tool. It was when he was six and Jafar had actually taken Jay along during a very rare visit across the city to Nasira. Jay's Aunt Nasira lived in a small two-story house and worked out of her home doing... well, Jay wasn't entirely sure what she did, but he assumed she scammed people much like Jafar did. Jay wasn't sure why Jafar had brought him along that time since almost immediately he told him to get lost. Nasira said to him that Jade was upstairs in her room. Jay had been a little confused but went upstairs anyway.

Jay had quickly realized that when his Aunt Nasira said 'her room' she had actually meant what it sounded like. Jay's cousin actually had an entire room for herself. It was cramped, and a bit drafty from a window that had cracks spider-webbed across it, but it was her own. Jay didn't even have a bed and Jade had a whole room. It had baffled Jay to no end, and he couldn't even remember what he did up there with Jade while their parents did whatever downstairs. He only remembered when he was called back downstairs by Jafar. It was the usual shout of 'boy,' and just like that, it clicked that Jay almost never heard Jafar call him by name. It was always 'boy' (or 'son' if Jafar was looking to get something). The only time Jafar said 'Jay' was when they were in public and Jafar wanted to appear as if he actually cared for some reason or another, and Jafar absolutely never called Jay by his proper name. Jay had realized it subconsciously, but now, when faced with all the things his cousin had compared to him and how his Aunt actually said Jade's name without it being pried from her, the harsh truth slammed into him. Jafar didn't give him things - not to toughen him up or because he didn't have things to give because Jay's thefts weren't enough. That was how Jay always rationalized it, but really, Jafar didn't actually like him. Jay didn't at the time know the word for what he actually was, but he knew then that he wasn't treated like a son. And it hurt.

Jay supposed he should have gotten used to it after a few years, much less a full decade. But waking up after yet another example of how his father just didn't care was miserable. He reached up to his side table and grabbed the medicine he had for pain. He took two rather than one because he didn't even want to get up, much less try and hobble around. Hopefully, the extra strong dose would help with that.

After another ten minutes just lying on his bed, Jay finally got up and made his way to the bathroom. He couldn't shower with his leg in a cast, but he cleaned up as best he could before redressing. Evie had been kind enough to alter one of his pants so that he could still get them on with the cast and have almost the same amount of coverage. It required Evie to cut apart the pants and put in zippers to hold it all together again but it worked, and Jay was glad to be able to wear his usual leather.

By the time Jay had got dressed again and limped out of the bathroom, Mal had entered the bedroom and was sitting on Carlos' bed. "Hey," Jay greeted. It was only then that he realized that Carlos wasn't there. Jay mentally kicked himself. He should have realized that the second he woke up not only after washing and getting dressed. "Where's Carlos?"

"At breakfast," Mal said. "When he told me you were still sleeping when he left, I decided to come up and check on you."

Jay frowned and looked over at the clock on his side table. It was a lot later than he thought. Breakfast was almost over at this point. "Sorry, guess I was more drained than I thought."

"I brought you something," Mal said as she nodded her head to the desk by the door that Carlos sometimes used. Jay looked over and saw a napkin with a bagel with a few slabs of bacon between
"I figured you wouldn't be getting down before breakfast and you'd be a pain all day if you didn't get something to eat."

"I would not be a pain," Jay protested even as he went to pick up the bagel from the napkin and took a big bite out of it.

"Ben told me that the limo from the Isle is on its way back and should be here in about half an hour. We should go down to meet it," Mal said. "And since you're so slow right now we shouldn't waste time."

Jay glared at his friend even as he chewed. "You're hilarious," he drawled. "I'm not that slow."

"You are right now," Mal replied as she got up from her seat. "Also... we think we've found a way to fix this mess with you and your lamp."

Jay frowned. "How's that?"

"Jordan is coming up with a wish that will fix it, but she's being almost annoyingly cautious about it," Mal explained. "We'll be doing it today. Hopefully, Jordan gets the last details worked out while we're showing Dizzy and Gil around. I told her we were doing the wish before lunch."

Jay hesitated for a moment and then stuffed the last bite of his breakfast into his mouth. He wasn't sure how comfortable he was with a wish being what 'fixed' this whole mess. After all, a wish was what got him into the current cluster that he was in. "You're sure this is the best way to do it?"

Jay asked after he'd swallowed.

"The only other option is going back to the Isle and trying to steal the right lamp this time," Mal said. "And I don't think we'd get away with such a heist twice. We were pretty lucky to do it the first time."

"True..." Jay mused as he pulled his one boot on. It was weird only walking around with one shoe, but the pain in the ass cast was, again, getting in the way. "When Ben told me what you'd gone to do I was sure you'd all end up dead or something."

"Iago pointed us around any traps we were about to set off," Mal said. "So, without Jafar actually there, it wasn't all that bad. Still lucky and went tits up at the end but better than expected."

Jay nodded and got up. "Well, enough depressing shit. Let's go say hi to the newbies," he said with his usual cocky smile in place. Mal rolled her eyes at his attitude even if she was kind of glad that his strange behavior from the night before seemed to have disappeared. "Where's Iago?" Jay asked, suddenly noticing the overprotective bird wasn't around.

"He's been spending a lot of time with Othello in our room," Mal said. "So, without Jafar actually there, it wasn't all that bad. Still lucky and went tits up at the end but better than expected."

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Mal sighed. "Right. Sorry... how long was your dad doing that for anyway?"

"I took a pill to sleep through the end of it, so I'm not sure," Jay mumbled. "He usually doesn't keep it up for more than an hour or so. He's been getting more and more annoying about it lately, but since it's not like I can go to him even if I wanted to, he's got to give up at some point."

Mal matched Jay's speed through the hall and down the stairs though it was slower than usual. Jay was getting pretty proficient with the crutches, but stairs were still a slow spot. "Did he
ever use that against you on the Isle?” Mal asked even though she was sure she knew the answer. She could remember a few times when Jay would just up and leave their group. Sometimes he would make an excuse sometimes he wouldn't.

"Usually only when I was late to give him his money," Jay said. "I guess he figured if he called me too often he would be interrupting me as I was thieving or something. Hence less money."

"It must have been horrible," Mal muttered. "I can't imagine how annoying it would be to know when Mom wanted me home." Not that Maleficent really cared much when Mal showed up at home but having a magical tether (for lack of a better description) would have been the worst. She had no idea how Jay could have put up with it.

Jay shrugged, which looked a little odd due to the crutches. "You get used to it, I guess."

"You shouldn't have had to," Mal replied as they finally got outside. Jay didn't have a reply and just continued towards the front of the school. Mal sighed but followed him.

The morning was bright and cheerful and everything just so typical in Auradon. Birds were signing, and it wasn't terribly hot, and a gentle breeze was rustling the trees and flowers. Mal kind of hated it while also kind of adoring it. She was always so conflicted about everything in Auradon. Auradon was nice, and the worst thing about being around nice things was that you yourself didn't feel horrible anymore and thus didn't want to do awful things to other people. While that was great if you were trying to be nice like Mal now was, that flew directly in the face of everything she had been raised to believe in and achieve.

Jay was glad to see when he arrived at the front of the school that, unlike when they arrived at Auradon, Ben had gone for a more low-key situation. No marching band, not a group of people waving flags and cheering even though they didn't believe at all in what Ben was trying to do. Instead, this time it was just a small group mostly made up of the villain kids already at Auradon, Ben, a few other royals that were favorable like Lonnie and Aziz, and Fairy Godmother.

"When are they going to get here?" Evie asked as she craned her head to try and see further down the road.

"The driver said they'll be here in ten minutes, E," Ben assured her with a smile even as he greeted Mal with a kiss on the cheek.

"Hey, finally woke up?" Carlos greeted as Jay stopped beside him. "Or did Mal have to pull you out of bed again?"

"I did not have to be pulled out of bed," Jay denied. "And you could have woken me up before leaving," he added as Iago flew down from a flagpole to land on his shoulder. "And you're a great bird abandoning me to go to breakfast with Evie."

Iago fluttered his wings. "I was hungry," he said as if that made it perfectly acceptable. "Besides, you get cranky when I wake you up."

"That's because your idea of waking me up is to screech in my ear," Jay replied with more than a little annoyance. "You're twenty times worse than that alarm clock that Carlos made me."

"You mean the one you 'lost' and I found later on in the campus yard when I was walking Dude?" Carlos asked. "Directly in line with our window as if it had been chucked with all someone's strength?"

Jay didn't even look slightly ashamed. "Yep," he said with a pop at the p.
Carlos shook his head. "You're horrible."

"Well, you make horrible alarm clocks, so we're even," Jay countered.

"That's not even at all!"

"Boys," Mal called to drag their attention back to the situation at hand. "I see the limo." Evie was nearly bouncing in place she looked so excited, and it was hard to not share her enthusiasm. "Easy, E. You don't want to pass out on us," Mal said with a smile.

"Oh, I know we just saw Dizzy a little while ago, but it feels like ages already," Evie said. "I've been so worried about her."

"We know, E," Jay said. "But she'll be safe now."

Evie gave him a dazzling smile as the car pulled up in front of them. Dizzy, apparently just as eager to see them as they were to see her, didn't even wait for the driver to get out and open the door before she was bursting out of it and rushing forward. "Evie!"

Evie met Dizzy halfway and picked her up in a huge hug. Jay was sure that the squeal would be able to be heard all the way across campus. "Did they do that when they saw each other on the Isle too?" he asked Mal.

"Uh huh."

Jay snorted but didn't bother fighting down the smile. "Good to see some things don't change."

"Yep," Mal said.

As Evie swung Dizzy around Gil stepped out of the limo. He was blinking up at the sky and the castle that was Auradon Prep. Gil looked entirely lost and confused. "Gil!" Carlos called.

The son of Gaston quickly looked over and then smiled widely. "Oh, hi guys!" He shouldered his rucksack and came over to where the others are. "This place is something else, huh?"

"Yeah, it's something else alright," Jay agreed.

Gil seemed to pause and then almost visibly start to think. After about thirty seconds, his expression changed. "Hey, Jay! What's that thing on your leg? It looks really heavy."

"I broke my leg. This is how they fix that here, apparently," Jay answered. Gil nodded, but Jay noticed that no real understanding seemed to cross his expression. Gil was painfully easy to read.

"Just don't break any bones and you'll be fine, Gil."

Instantly, Gil brightened fully again. "Right! I can do that!"

Ben cleared his throat and stepped forward. "Hello there. I'm King Ben. I'm very glad that you both decided to accept our offer to come to Auradon and I hope very much that you'll be happy here," he said. He'd learned that long speeches didn't go over well with kids from the Isle so didn't go into a long spiel like he'd tried to do the first time. "If you need anything just come to any of us and we'll do our very best to help you out."

"Harry said I had to come," Gil said with a confused frown.

Ben tilted his head to the side and looked over at Mal questioningly. The only reason he had been so willing to push the transfers through so quickly despite the opposition to such a thing, was
because she had told him both Dizzy and Gil desperately wanted to come to Auradon. That they genuinely wanted to be better people and that put them in extreme danger on the Isle. The council hadn't been happy with Ben throwing his weight around, but he'd been secure in doing it knowing that Mal knew both candidates personally and vouched for them. He would have to ask her what she had neglected to tell him later when they were alone.

"He probably just didn't want you missing out, Gil," Mal said quickly. "You know how Harry can get." Gil nodded a little as if that made sense but Ben wasn't entirely sold on that.

Fairy Godmother took that moment to step forward. "Hello there!" she greeted warmly and perfectly happily. "I'm Fairy Godmother, and I'm Headmistress here. Since it is the weekend, you'll have a few days to get used to the grounds before your classes start so just relax and don't be afraid to ask us anything at all!"

Dizzy stared up at the Fairy Godmother open-mouthed for a moment. "You're Fairy Godmother? The one that... sent Cinderella to the ball?"

Fairy Godmother's smile got just a touch more strained. "Yes, dear, I am."

"Oh..."

There was an awkward silence as the weight of history pressed down on all of them. Not only had Dizzy's heard horrible things about the fairy that had helped Cinderella all her life but Gil also had to listen endlessly to what his father wanted to do to the King of Auradon aka Ben's father. Evie was the one that saved them by cheerfully and loudly ushering Dizzy away. "Let's show you around, Dizzy! There's so much I want you to see! Auradon is even more beautiful than we imagined."

"Come on, Gil," Carlos said. "I'll give you the cliff notes version of the tour." Gil didn't have any idea what 'cliff notes' were, but he went along amiably enough.

Ben frowned. "That could have gone better."

"Don't worry about it," Jay said. "It could have gone better, but it could have gone way, way worse too. Besides, after dealing with the stuff between Audrey and her family and Mal... Dizzy and Gil will be easy," he assured the King as he started after his friends.

"I feel sort of stupid not even thinking this could be an issue," Ben muttered as he kept pace with the thief. "I mean, I knew it could be one, but for some reason, I guess I just shelved it in my head or something. And Gil isn't quite what I was expecting, honestly. Mom said Gaston wasn't the brightest bulb but, well, Gil looked..."

"Totally lost?" Jay finished. Ben nodded in agreement. "Yeah, that's Gil. He's always been a little... slower than even the other Gastons."

"Gastons... plural?" Ben echoed. He knew that Gaston had three sons, but he hadn't known any of their names before Mal had said she wanted Gil brought over from the Isle.

Jay nodded. "You'll find most villains on the Isle are super self-absorbed. Sort of goes with the whole villain shtick. Gaston is worse than most. Three sons... all named Gaston. But he doesn't really care how confusing that makes things, he just can't seem to think of a better name than his own. Gil didn't want to be Gaston the Fourth and make things even more confusing than it was with Gaston, Gaston Jr., and Gaston the Third, so he started using other names. I think it was around the time he started hanging around Ursula's daughter that he came up with Gil and it just
stuck from there," Jay explained. "It went with the fishy theme of his shrimpy leader, I guess."

"Wow... I didn't know it was possible to be that self-absorbed..." Ben muttered. His mother had told him all about Gaston, but part of Ben just hadn't been able to believe it entirely. He just had no context to make someone like Gaston seem remotely real. Who even ate that many eggs and filled a wall with antlers like that?

Jay actually snorted at Ben's bewilderment. "There's a whole class at Dragon Hall devoted to things like that. Both Gaston twins were in it, and it was the only class they were remotely good at. Being vain pricks runs in their family."

Ben nodded but still seemed more than slightly confused but Isle normalcy. Jay almost thought it was cute how easily they could befuddle the King with truth, but it was a little too sad to find it charming. Plus Jay tried to not think of guys as cute as he personally would hate to have that word slapped on him. Plus the whole 'Mal's Boyfriend' thing sort of dampened that. Ben looked up and saw that the others were already almost to the cafeteria doors. "Oh, we're falling behind."

"You go ahead," Jay said with a slight incline of his head. "These damn crutches cut into my arms like mad, and I hate using them. I'll take a minute and catch up with you guys at the library or something."

"Are you sure?" Ben asked. "We can probably get you something to help with that discomfort. I can only imagine how hard those must be to use after a little while. Maybe some pads or something?"

"That would be amazing," Jay said. "But, yes, I'm sure. I'll be right up. Not like I'm the one in need of a tour or anything."

Ben still looked skeptical, but after Jay shooed him off with a few more reassurances, the King hurried after his girlfriend and their friends. Jay waited until he was sure Ben was far enough away to really be leaving before digging into his pocket for the small bottle he'd put there. He hadn't really meant to take the pills with him, but Jay had done so automatically. The two tablets from that morning didn't seem to have done as much as he hoped, so Jay quickly swallowed another dry before putting them away again. He was sure whatever problems the doctors had been blabbering about when you took too many of the little things weren't that serious. People here in Auradon were just special little snowflakes that couldn't handle hardly anything. Jay would be fine with whatever side effects there might be.
The minute Mal saw Jordan coming closer, she snagged Doug by the arm and slipped off to meet her. Ben, Evie, and Carlos could more than handle showing Dizzy and Gil the campus that had the two Isle kids in awe at every new room they entered. Dizzy and Gil were so busy staring up at the incredibly tall bookshelves to notice Mal and Doug hang back and then part from the group.

"Alright, I think I've got it," Jordan said as she held up a slip of paper.

"Great, let's do it now before Jafar makes things even worse somehow," Mal said.

Jordan nodded in agreement and Doug could do little more than allow the two girls to drag him off to the dorms. When they got there, Jordan handed him her lamp and Mal was holding onto the spare that they had stolen from Jafar's safe. "How will we know if this works?" Mal asked.

"There should be some visual clue from the lamp," Jordan said with a nod towards the one Mal was holding. "Either it'll be surrounded by my magic for a moment or it'll change to look like however Jay's lamp is supposed to look or at the very least it'll glow or something."

Mal nodded and looked over at Doug. "Ready?"

"Yeah," he said although he looked and sounded nervous. Doug was far too aware of all the ways magic could go wrong and wishes could take radical turns for seemingly very little reason. Be careful what you wish for was very much true in Auradon.

"Alright," Jordan said as she handed him the slip of paper. "I'm positive this is the best way to phrase it."

Doug nodded and looked over the paper quickly before clearing his throat. "I wish..." He cleared his throat again. "I wish that the oil lamp in Mal's hand was turned into Jay's genie lamp."

They all stared at the lamp in the tense silence that followed. "Um..." Doug hesitated to voice his full thought aloud but it didn't seem to him as if anything had happened at all.

Mal was not so shy. "Nothing happened, Jordan."

"Damn," Jordan reached over to take the lamp from Mal and examined it carefully. "I don't understand. It should have worked." She was positive that she'd phrased the wish properly and yet she could tell very definitely that the lamp had no magic in it at all.

"So... the wish backfired?" Doug asked nervously.

Jordan shook her head. "No, something would have still happened if it backfired. It wouldn't have been pleasant but it would have been obvious," Jordan thought about it for a minute before sighing heavily. "There's only one explanation I can think of."

"Which is?" Mal prompted.
"As my father would say: no exchanges, returns, or refunds," Jordan said with a sigh. "I thought that because the wish wasn't fully granted yet we could slip an exception through, especially since I wasn't the Djinn to grant the first wish in the first place."

Mal scowled and kicked Jay's bed in annoyance. "Damn it! Why can't anything go our way?"

"How do you know the wish isn't fully granted?" Doug asked as Mal glared green flames at nothing in particular. She was so incredibly pissèd off but she was keeping her temper focused on something that wouldn't quiver in fear.

"Because he has a broken leg," Jordan said. "A Djinn only has legs when we want them so you can't really break them. If, say, my father broke his leg he'd be able to just literally snap his fingers and would be fine."

Mal's scowl darkened. "Maybe he just doesn't know how to do that," she reasoned.

"It would be pretty instinctive to lose the legs and bring them back without the break," Jordan argued. "Even if he didn't know what he was doing we spiritual creatures don't tend to like being hurt and fix the problem as fast as we can."

"Jay has a high pain tolerance," Mal muttered. "That might have had something to do with it."

"I suppose," Jordan said although she sounded uncertain. "The other problem we might be having is if the real lamp is still on the Isle then the magic might be having a hard time getting through the barrier."

Mal picked up the black and silver lamp and glared at it. She was really really starting to hate all the weird rules around Djinn. Whoever had cursed them to be like they were was really getting on Mal's last nerve. Sure that person was probably dead or whatever but that hardly mattered. "Now what the hell are we supposed to do?" And more importantly, what was she supposed to tell Jay? Mal had all but promised that he would be free from his father today and she did not like breaking her word to her people. Especially not to her closest three friends.

Jordan chewed at her lower lip as she thought about the problem. She considered it lucky that the wish hadn't backfired on top of failing but now she was struggling to think of other options. If the problem was that the lamp was on the Isle and the barrier was blocking the wish, then no wish involving the lamp would work either. They couldn't wish Jay free because they would, again, need his lamp. The barrier that protected them from villains was becoming quite the problem in some very unexpected ways. Suddenly, Jordan remembered something and quickly reached for her phone. "I'm an idiot!" she scolded herself.

"What?" Doug asked as he carefully put Jordan's lamp down on the desk by the door.

"I may not be able to get a hold of my dad until he comes out of the jungle but I didn't even think about calling Auntie Scheherazade," Jordan said as she started scrolling through her phone. "She knows everything. She can probably help us come up with a new plan."

Doug frowned just slightly. "Scheherazade? As in the one who had all those stories she told to the ancient king?"

Jordan nodded. "That's her. Something happened between her and the rest of Agrabah a while ago and so she doesn't talk to many of us anymore. She just lives in the desert and does her own thing. But she always has good ideas," Jordan said as she put her phone to her ear to listen to it ring.

"Is she really your aunt?" Mal couldn't help but wonder.
"Well, not technically, but I've known her since I was a baby," Jordan answered. Just then the phone picked up. "Auntie!? It's Jathibiyya. I need your help. Do you think you can come to Auradon?" Mal crossed her arms impatiently. "It really is important, though... It has nothing to do with Aziz, no... What do you mean 'it always has something to do with Aziz'? That's not even a little bit true."

Mal's eyebrow went up as she listened to Jordan's half of the conversation. "Well, it doesn't and Aziz has always been very nice to you so I don't see why you're so disapproving of him... Auntie! That's not even funny... I'm serious and you are not someone I'd take love advice from to begin with! Stop saying that!.. It really isn't about Aziz. It's about Jafar's son, Jay... Auntie Scheherazade? Are you still there?"

There was a long pause and then Jordan frowned. "I'm not joking. Why would I even joke about something like that?" Jordan tucked one arm under her other as she listened to the voice on the other end of the line. "Listen, I'll explain everything when you get here but I really do need your help... Alright... Yes, I'll see you soon."

Jordan sighed and hung up the phone. "Alright, she's coming and she should be able to help."

"Are you sure you trust her?" Mal asked. "It didn't sound like you got along that well." Well, compared to how most Auradon kids spoke to adults, anyway.

"I'm sure. She prefers making bargains to making wishes and she always upholds her word. Auntie Scheherazade considers it a matter of honor to always keep her word. So, if she says she'll help, then she will," Jordan assured Mal.

Jay really did mean to go meet with the others up at the library but he also had found a perfectly comfortable spot on a bench and was enjoying just relaxing for a minute or ten. The pain from his leg and just his general state was finally dulled down enough that he could doze off without as much problem.

Jay had his injured leg extended so that it was slightly more comfortable and Iago was perched on his other knee. Jay was sure he wouldn't be interrupted seeing how he was at a bench along the backside of the building. Not as many people walked behind the school but Jay had found the path was a little shorter and he was definitely looking to shave off every extra step he could until he was healed up.

The breeze tugged at his hair but his hat kept the majority of the strands in place. The sun felt good against his skin and it was a sensation that Jay had come to really appreciate. There was never bright sun on the Isle and no real replacement source of warmth either. Jay had always felt just a little too chilled on the Isle but he'd gotten used to it, especially since he didn't make a habit of wearing sleeves.

"Hi there, Jay," someone said.

Jay opened his eyes and frowned. "Reza?"

The scr awny little Arabian standing in front of him had his arms folded over his chest and a scowl on his slightly rat-like face. The nerd that was constantly being outsmarted by Carlos looked very unhappy and even more dirty than Jay would have expected. "Long time no see, Jay," Reza said nastily.

"How the hell did you get here?" Jay demanded as he straightened in his seat.
"Amazing the amount of space under a limousine. Prodigious even," Reza said. "The ignoramus guard didn't even bother to look. Very indolent if you ask me, that is to say entirely too insolvent. It wasn't the most consummating of rides since it wasn't terribly enjoyable to hold on to the undercarriage but I was able to do it through sheer force of my indomitable intelligence and flagrant will."

Jay scowled. He hated when Reza used big words for no other reason than to prove he knew them. Jay half thought it was a direct jab at himself for barely being able to read and having no idea what some of those words meant, but he knew that was probably not true. Reza was just an asshole who thought he was smarter than he was. Carlos even told Jay once that Reza used words where they didn't even make sense just because he could. "Well, you're not staying here," Jay said. "Ben'll send you right back to the Isle when I tell him you snuck over."

"You won't be telling him anything," Reza denied smugly.

"And why the hell would I not?" Jay demanded.

Reza still looked unbearably smug as he reached into a heavily patched messenger back that was over his shoulder. Jay narrowed his eyes but then felt his heart practically seize up when the smaller Arabian pulled a hauntingly familiar lamp from his bag. "Because I won't let you," Reza said with a smile.

Jay jumped to his feet and swiped for the tarnished metal but Reza was used to dodging bigger kids and was fast of his feet. He sprung back several feet with his cocky grin still in place. "How the hell did you get that!?"

"How else?" Reza asked. "Your father gave it to me. I'm getting a very fortuitous deal, really. I get to come to Auradon and get two wishes where otherwise I wouldn't have gotten any, that is to say I would have had nihility. And in return, all I have to do is use my last wish to get your paternal figure here."

"Give it to me, Reza," Jay ordered with his hand out.

"Oh, I don't think so," Reza replied, keeping the lamp right against his chest. "Because, you see, for the first time, I'm the one in charge. That is to say, I'm the big machismo. And you have to do what I say."

Jay snarled angrily and lunged again but his busted leg failed him and he barely caught himself from falling face first to the ground. Reza backed away again and kept clutching his prize. "You should listen to him, Reza," Iago squawked as he tried to keep his balance on Jay's shoulder. "It's dangerous to mess with Djinn and wishes."

"Oh, please, you'd say anything to steal what's mine," Reza scoffed.

"It's not yours, it's mine!" Jay snapped. He did his best to bury his panic beneath anger, but seeing that lamp in the hands of someone he didn't in the least bit trust was terrifying. Jay had struggled so hard to make sure something like this never happened. That he would never be at the mercy of some random person. And yet here he was in that exact situation.

Reza tilted his head a little as if thinking about that before shrugging. "Well, the wishes are mine. And you have to give them to me," Reza said with his nose in the air.

"Then make them and get lost," Jay growled. He might not be able to keep Reza from making wishes on the lamp but he could try and get it over and done with as quickly as possible.
"Now, hold on," Reza said. "I'm not a moron, ingrate. I'm not going to rush my wishes and make stupid ones. I'm already giving up one for Jafar, I've got to use my amazing, unceasing intellect to make the best wishes possible."

"Why bother giving Jafar a wish at all?" Iago asked. "He can't make you do it."

Reza narrowed his eyes. "I'm no traitor. I made a deal and I'll keep it."

Jay scoffed. "You're a lackey just like your father," he accused. "Doing whatever my dad says without even a shred of ambition for yourself. It's so pathetic."

"I am not pathetic!"

"You are," Jay insisted as his eyes glowed gold.

"We'll see about that," Reza snarled. The smaller Arabian thrust the lamp forward. "Get in."

"No!"

"You don't have a choice," Reza said nastily. Jay was about to argue when he felt the familiar gut wrenching tug inside of him. The air seemed to flee his lungs all at once and he couldn't quite help but double over. Reza said something else but Jay wasn't really listening to him anymore. He was staring in transfixed horror as golden smoke came from nowhere and began streaming from his body towards the lamp. The sun bounced off the smoke as if it was full of glitter or specks of actual gold - in a way it was pretty but also terribly unsettling for the teen that couldn't stop more and more of himself from dissolving into it. Turning into smoke didn't hurt but it was still horrifying. Jay felt like he was falling over in slow motion as more and more of his body broke and streamed away. Jay tried to fight and pull back but it was like fighting gravity after he'd already jumped from a roof. The world suddenly sped forward and rushed past and then went dark.
Chapter 38

Reza was quick to flee from the open, brightly lit yard of Auradon Prep. He didn't currently have a place to go, but he didn't think it would be that hard for a genius like him to find a good hiding spot. After just an hour or so of searching, Reza found a small shed that seemed to have been forgotten about and still held a rusted old mower and smelled obnoxiously like old oil and gasoline. Reza decided that the hut at the edge of the school's property would do for right then until he could devote a bit more time to finding nicer accommodations. Of course, he could always wish for a castle to live in, but he would have that by the end of all this anyway so that would be a waste of his very valuable payment.

Reza shoved some old bottles and rusted hand tools off of a workbench and hauled himself on top of it. The table wobbled but held together, and Reza let himself get comfortable leaning back against the drafty wall of the shed. The scrawny Arabian reached into his messenger bag and pulled out the lamp that he had been given for his assigned task. He frowned a little at the metal. Bits of black were flaking away like pieces of burnt paper and ash. The flakes drifted off as easily as dust and Reza blew across the surface to knock even more of the debris away.

Somehow, during the time it had been tucked into Reza's bag after having been used to trap Jay, the lamp had been changing. Reza had no idea why the metal would be changing like it was, nor did he really care, but he had to admit it was fascinating to watch. Reza was careful not to rub the lamp in his hands even as more and more of the black started to lift away. He didn't want to release Jay until he knew what he was going to wish for.

Inside the lamp, where it was dark and cold and wet just like the streets of the Isle, Jay was slowly waking up. He shivered and pushed himself over so that he would be lying on his back rather than his front. Half of his long hair was wet and stuck uncomfortably to him. Despite being cold and damp from half lying in a puddle of murky, unpleasant water for however long he'd been unconscious, he was also burning up. His skin was on fire and maddeningly itchy.

Jay scratched at a spot on his neck as he tried to gain his bearings on what was happening. He shivered and didn't remember much except the horrific sensation of being sucked into a tiny lamp. Jay thought for a moment he'd be sick but managed to take several deep breaths to calm down.

"Jabir!"

Jay's glowing golden eyes flicked open instantly at the familiar somewhat obnoxious voice. "Iago!" Jay pushed himself upright and stared at the bird sitting on the street just beside him. "What are you doing here?" Iago could have easily escaped and not been brought into the lamp along with Jay. There was no reason for the parrot to have been caught up in it unless he'd allowed it deliberately.

"I wasn't going to let you be in here by yourself," Iago said. "I know how you hate small spaces."

Jay tried to not visibly stiffen and instead focused on breathing at a slow and controlled pace. "It's not so bad," he said although he was very deliberately not looking around. Even as Jay said that, he was trying hard to not notice how trapped he felt. Though there were no apparent walls at the moment, there was pitch black outside of just a foot or so from where he was, and that was as good as walls to his sense of claustrophobia.

"What's wrong with your neck?" Iago asked.
"Hmm?" Jay asked in confusion.

"You're scratching like crazy."

"It's just that my skin is all scratchy," Jay answered as he tried to stop himself from using his nails on that same spot of skin over and over again. He didn't want to draw blood or anything.

"Itchy," Iago corrected.

"Whatever," Jay said. "Now tell me what you're doing here. You could have gone to the others!"

"He'll have to let us out to make a wish," Iago pointed out. "I'll go to the others then. I'm more worried about you right now."

Jay scoffed even as he scratched a section of his arm. "I'm fine. I'm not some little kid afraid of the dark."

"You were never afraid of the dark," Iago said calmly. "But tiny spaces are a different story. I remember how you used to scream and fight to keep from being put in the crawl space. And stop scratching!"

Jay hadn't even realized he was still scratching and quickly pulled his hand away. "That place was cramped even as a kid. Of course, I wouldn't want to go in there," he said as he forced his hands into his lap. "But this place isn't so bad..."

That was a lie. An incredibly bad one because Iago could no doubt see the minuet trembles in his shoulders and hear the slightly faster rate of his breathing. But Jay wasn't about to admit that he was struggling to keep his calm in the small dark place. Though the ground was familiar as if he were in any alley of the Isle, Jay had never felt claustrophobic in an alley. He could always see ways out even if those ways out were mostly blocked or would require acrobatics to use. Jay knew they were there and so could easily keep his confidence. Even at home, he knew several ways to escape from each room... except for that horrible crawl space. There was only one way in or out of that place.

"Jabir!"

Jay shook himself out of the disturbing memories of trying to claw his way out of an inescapable hole. "S-sorry. What?"

"You're making your panic worse," Iago said as he fluttered over to sit on Jay's arm. Jay suddenly realized he'd been scratching again and forced himself to stop. "Listen to me," Iago ordered. "I've been in here before, remember?"

Jay nodded and swallowed hard. If he didn't think about how tiny the space was, he wouldn't feel like he was suffocating. Of course, that led to obsessing about not thinking about it which made it obvious he was. "The lamp wasn't like this before," Iago continued, "Which means the insides change and you can make this better."

"I-I don't know h-how..."

"Close your eyes," Iago commanded.

Jay didn't want to close his eyes. That never seemed to help in the past. Suddenly he felt something hard and cold press down against his back and Jay realized a wall had closed in on him. He let out a strangled noise of panic and tried to scramble forward but quickly found another wall almost
against his knees. Jay couldn't go anywhere!

Another sound choked Jay as it escaped and he felt the walls close even more. "Jabir!" Iago squawked loudly. "Listen to me! You're making things worse the more panicked you get!"

Jay tried to calm himself, but the lamp was just becoming more and more cramped around him. He could barely even breathe, and black dots were swimming in his vision. Suddenly a brightly colored wing slapped him upside the head. "Jabir! I said to listen to me!" Iago snapped. "The lamp is shrinking because you keep thinking it is! You can change it to a much better inside if you just. Calmed. Down."

Jay dragged air in as best he could, though his lungs didn't want to expand. He tried again and barely got any better results. "That's right. Just focus on breathing," Iago coached as he tucked his head under Jay's chin. "And pet me," he added imperiously.

Jay was barely listening but reached up to run his fingers over Iago's colorful back as he tried again to breathe like a normal human being. He still wasn't entirely successful. Iago kept repeating his advice over and over as Jay's fingers slowly messed with his feathers. Agonizingly slowly, Jay started being able to take deeper and calmer breaths and relax again.

"Better?" Iago asked after several almost regular breaths in a row.

"Y-yeah, I think so," Jay murmured as his fingers still moved against Iago's back.

"Good. Now, think of an actual room," Iago said. "When Jafar was here, this place looked a lot like his old lab so you can make it look however you find it comfortable."

Jay was skeptical, to say the least, but he wasn't in the mood or mental state to really argue with Iago over it. So, instead, he closed his eyes and tried to do as he was told. The first room that came to mind wasn't really a room but rather that tiny hole again and just like that Jay was struggling to breathe. "Jabir! Focus! You're stronger than this!" Iago snapped.

Iago knew that Jay was trying his best and that it wasn't the teen's fault in the least that Jafar had left him traumatized in ways he'd probably never be entirely over, but he also knew that would respond better to a slightly harsher tone. Plus, it was hard for Iago to be comforting when he was worried. "Think of a different room!" Iago ordered again.

Jay had to try several times to drag his mind away from tiny cramped crawlspace and to something more comfortably sized. He tried to remember his dorm that he shared with Carlos. That was a nice room. And Jay knew it well so he could remember it better than making up something off the top of his head.

Jay tried to picture as much of the room as he could and only focus on that instead of the darkness pressing down on him. "There you go," Iago said after nearly half an hour of Jay struggling.

Jay risked opening his eyes again and was relieved to see that he wasn't swamped with cold darkness anymore. Instead, he was in a room similar to his dorm at school but not exactly the same. The floor hadn't changed from hard stone, but it wasn't dark grey or wet anymore. The bed from his dorm was sitting against a wall with a rug similar to the one Jay used to sleep on at the shop on the ground just beside it. A low chaise was where the couch should have been, and there were several hanging lights around the room. "You're in control of how this place looks," Iago said as Jay slowly got to his feet. "The more you panic about being in the lamp, the worse it'll be."

"... but I still can't get out," Jay murmured, and the lights dimmed instantly.
"No, but you will be let out," Iago said. Jay didn't seem to hear the parrot and so Iago bit Jay's arm. "Ow!"

"Don't focus on that!" Iago scolded. "You'll be let out again and then when you get the lamp back you can come and go as you want." Jordan had control of when she was in or out of the lamp, but then she had been given her own lamp to keep hold of making her, her own master. Once Jay was able to get his lamp too he'd be in the same position.

Jay was quiet as he walked over to sit on the edge of the bed. Though it looked almost the same the bedding was different. The fabrics were softer and smoother, although Jay had no idea why. It wasn't as if he imagined the bed being any different than it was. Maybe it was just some quirk of the lamp. "... I don't think I like it in here," Jay said after several minutes.

"Then change it until you are happy with it," Iago replied.

"I don't know what I would change," Jay admitted. "The only room I've ever had is the one I'm sharing with Carlos."

Iago thought he should come up with something to tell the unhappy teen, but he couldn't think of anything really appropriate. He did notice that Jay was scratching at his neck again. "Stop scratching!" he scolded.

Jay scowled at the bird. "I can't help it. My skin feels like it's covered in something and it's making me itch!"

"Well sit on your hands then," Iago ordered.

"I'm not sitting on my hands like a child," Jay replied even as he scratched again at the skin behind one pierced ear. Everywhere itched and it wasn't going away. Quite simply the sensation was driving him crazy. Of course, he knew that scratching wasn't really helping but he couldn't help it.

"Jabir! Stop it!" Iago snapped.

"I can't!" Jay snapped back. "It bothers me!"

"You're ripping your skin off!" Iago squawked.

Jay froze with wide eyes. Iago gestured with one wing to where Jay's other hand had been scratching along his forearm. Jay twisted his arm to look and gasped in horror at the long strips of tan that were peeling away like old paint from the rest of his arm. Beneath his skin was a strange second layer that was smooth and warm like ordinary flesh but a warm golden color that wasn't at all natural for someone to be. "W-what!? What's happening?"

"You're in the lamp for the first time ever," Iago said as he hopped closer. "That must be your Djinn form starting to assert itself."

"My wha!?"

"You're a Djinn," Iago said. "The only reason you never took that form before is that you've been on the Isle where there isn't any magic. Being in the lamp must be speeding up the transformation finally." Iago had had suspicions that this was what Jay's pain had been caused by before but hadn't been able to prove it.

"W-well, can I stop it?" Jay asked as he covered his arm with his hand as best he could.
"I don't think so, kid," Iago told him, although he regretted it slightly. He knew how badly Jay did not want this to happen. "It's been held off too long already probably."

Jay wrapped his arms around himself and did his best to not scratch anywhere else despite his skin itching like mad. He didn't want to accidentally speed this up more than he already had. "I don't want to be some weird... floating torso guy," Jay muttered as he brought his legs up to tuck his face into his knees. He'd rather stare at nothing and pretend it wasn't happening. Jay wasn't even aware of the fact that the cast around his leg had disappeared and his leg was no longer bothering him. Jay was too concerned with the sick feeling in his stomach and the way his skin was still burning and itching.

Iago waddled closer to where Jay was curled up on the bed and tucked his little bird self into the teen's side. "How long will this last?" Jay asked as he dug his fingers into his pants. He was both dreading his legs disappearing and trying to not rip his skin apart.

"I don't know," Iago admitted. "But resisting it probably isn't going to help."

"Shut up," Jay snapped. He was too stubborn to just let himself become something other than human. Jay didn't care if he already technically wasn't. He didn't want it to be visible. Jay bit back the groan of his bones burning and his muscles beginning to tingle unpleasantly. The sensations were the worst in his legs and feet, but at least they were still there.

Sweat began to bead across his skin, but Jay stubbornly refused to let go of his pants to try and ease the discomfort by shedding any layers of leather. His eyes were burning as if he had been staring at a computer for way too long and no amount of blinking seemed to ease them. Somehow Jay knew that his eyes were constantly gold by this point. Jay took a risk to lift a hand and rub his eyes, but even that didn't help.

The metal bracers under his leather ones were burning hot against his wrists and made Jay want to claw his hands off, but he refused to even loosen the laces on the leather cuffs. "You don't have to be so tough," Iago murmured. "You're shaking trying to hold it all in."

"S-shut up," Jay growled. He wasn't going to break down into tears just because he felt like his skeleton was trying to grow too big for his body all at once or because his skin felt like it was being attacked by thousands of bugs or even because his eyes were burning so severely that his eyes were watering. Jay was much too stubborn to let any of that show. So what if he was shaking? The thief could handle a little pain. Had before and he would manage again.

There was a long silence where Jay choked back whimpers and little noises of pain, but neither said anything else. Jay's shaking got worse as his mortal body continued changing cell by cell. "I'm sorry I can't be more help," Iago said from where he was cuddled against Jay.

Jay's watering eyes overflowed, and Jay tucked his face deeper into his knees. He wasn't crying. It was just that his eyes needed the moisture because of how badly they were burning. Jay rubbed his face against his arm to get rid of the tear tracks. "... thanks for coming in here with me," he murmured to the parrot beside him although he wasn't sure if he was loud enough to be heard. Jay couldn't say for sure what would have happened if he had been in the lamp alone but he did know it would have been at least ten times as bad as things were currently.

On the one hand, Jay was glad that Mal and the others couldn't see him as such a mess but on the other, he really, really would love to have them nearby. Iago was a comfort, but he was still just a parrot. Iago's heat against his side was almost unnoticeable, especially with how Jay's organs felt like molten lava inside his body. "You'll be okay," Iago said. "You can make it through this. I know you can."
"I feel like I'm going to die," Jay whispered.

"You won't," Iago stated firmly. "It only hurts because of how drawn out it is. If you were going through it as fast as Jafar did it would have only stung for a moment."

"I should never have made that stupid wish," Jay hissed. He was angry, and not for the first time, at his stupid younger self. Jay had known better than to just do what his father said like that and yet he'd done it anyway. No wonder his father called him a moron.

Iago poked Jay in the side, causing a grunt of pain. "You had no way of knowing that it would work," Iago replied. "Don't beat yourself up over something so foolish as being tricked by Jafar. You're hardly the first or the last that has been."

"He told me he was gathering magic. I should have known he knew what he was doing," Jay snarled. "I was an idiot."

"You had no way of knowing," Iago loudly repeated. "Absolutely no way of knowing. Besides, he would have beat you if you hadn't. I was there! I remember what happened. You had no choice and no way of knowing what would happen!"

Jay shook his head without lifting his face from his knees. "I would have rather taken an extra beating as a kid," he said.

"It wouldn't have stopped at one beating, and you know it," Iago snapped angrily. "Jafar would have beat you until you agreed to make the wish no matter how long it took." Jay shivered but didn't argue. He couldn't argue because Jay knew that Iago was right. Jafar would have made him make the wish one way or another. Knowing that didn't really help Jay not think that the whole situation was still his fault somehow.

Jay risked letting go of his knees to dig into his pocket. He pulled out the little bottle of pills and shakily opened the lid. "What is that you keep taking?" Iago asked suspiciously.

"A stronger aspirin," Jay answered before downing two. "Everything hurts."

"If you can sleep you might want to try," Iago suggested. "It might help."

Jay shook his head slightly. "I don't think I'll be able to sleep."

"You should still try," Iago said. He was trying and failing to not sound too much like a scolding mother, but he couldn't help it. "You seem tired." That was a half-truth at best. Yes, Jay looked tired, but he also looked to be in agony where he was curled up on himself.

"I'd rather just sit here," Jay murmured into his knees. He didn't want to admit it, but Jay was worried that if he did manage to fall asleep then he would be plagued by nightmares of his skin peeling off and tiny rooms with no exits and, of course, his father -as always- telling him what a useless disappointment he was. Iago decided to not argue about it and just hope that Jay would exhaust himself and fall asleep sooner or later.

Outside of the lamp, Reza was still staring transfixed at the changing metal in his hands. He hadn't noticed it happening, but at some point, the simple curve of the handle had morphed into a rearing cobra with its hood unfurled. The markings on the back of the golden cobra were made from tiny flecks of rubies, emeralds, diamonds, sapphires, and amethysts. The cobra was holding a highly polished diamond in its jaws and from behind the bigger gem was a thin golden chain that connected to the lid of the lamp.
Reza blew away a few more thin flakes of black to reveal more of the lamp underneath. The Arabian was still surprised to see the red enamel that decorated the spaces between the sweeping golden engravings. On top of the bright red, which reminded Reza of the spices that his mother cooked with, were little jewels and further enameling. The red and gold were definitely the predominant and most eye-catching colors, but as Reza watched, tiny spots of enamel within the decorations changed to spots of blue, green, and purple to match the gems in the back of the cobra's hood.

Reza had never seen anything like the lamp he was holding before. The gold and red enamel were so shiny without even a little polishing. Reza could tell that just the small jewel chips carefully placed amid the gold and enamel decorations would be worth quite a lot if he had any idea how to get them out of their fastenings. The biggest jewel was the diamond held in the cobra's mouth, and somehow Reza got the impression if he tried to pry that gem loose he'd get killed or something. For being sculpted from gold and decorated with jewel chips, the cobra was frighteningly lifelike.

Reza couldn't quite help but run his finger down the curve of the Cobra handle and then picked up the lid of the lamp. The Arabian couldn't help his curiosity and peered into the lamp. There was nothing inside of the lamp that he could see, but he knew that Jay was definitely in there. "I have never seen such a fancy ass lamp," he muttered to himself as he put the lid back on. Even if the lamp wasn't holding a Djinn, it would be killed over on the Isle for how much money could be gotten out of tearing it apart or melting it down. Reza realized after putting the lid back that the knob on the top had a carving of a parrot flying with little emerald and sapphire chips across the wings on it. "You really are full of yourself, Jay." Reza had always hated Carlos the most, but Jay had a particular amount of hatred too for being the son of Jafar. Jafar was the reason Reza's father got thrown onto the Isle, and Reza had to grow up somewhere that his brilliance wasn't appreciated. All his father had done was throw Jafar a few little bones when he was the royal vizier. That was hardly a reason to throw him onto an island prison with such horrible murderers and psychos.

The last few specks of black blew away, and Reza turned the lamp in his hands to examine it from every angle. "Well, I guess I need to get down to business, don't I?" he asked nobody. He would need the perfect plan to get his revenge on that not-nearly-as-brilliant-as-him-Carlos-de-Vil. Luckily, Reza was impossibly smart so an ideal plan shouldn't take very long to figure out.
Chapter 39

Chapter Notes

The long awaited appearance of truly Genie Jay! And the cobra motif continues...

Mal was still annoyed at the setback of freeing Jay from his father's schemes but tried her best to not show it as she, Jordan, and Doug headed down to the cafeteria to meet up with the others. She'd really been looking forward to giving Jay his new secure lamp and being able to put all this behind them. The only silver lining here -if one could even call it that- was that Jordan was sure that her Auntie would be able to come up with some sort of backup. And if that failed, Mal was not opposed to demanding Ben send in some sort of military forces or something to get Jay's real lamp. What the heck else could they be good for, anyway? Mal was sure that Ben's advisers would be all for removing a real genie lamp from Jafar's clutches on general principle and they wouldn't even have to be told who's lamp it actually was. Yes, sending in some sort of brawny armed forces was a nice, straight-forward solution that Mal was having a hard time of talking herself out of after yet another setback.

Mal saw that her friends were sitting at their usual table and Gil was nearly cramming something that looked like mashed potatoes into his mouth while Dizzy was enamoured with a giant pile of ice cream in front of her. Mal couldn't quite help but smile at the way Dizzy was staring at it like the cold treat answered all of life's problems. "I hope she had something before the ice cream," Mal said as she took her usual seat beside Evie.

"I made her eat a sandwich first," Evie agreed although she was smiling so hard that Mal thought that the princess' cheeks had to hurt.

Lonnie also looked incredibly amused by Dizzy's reaction although Mal could tell that she was also a little taken aback from the odd set of her eyes. Mal figured that Lonnie had forgotten that the Isle kids didn't get things like sweets. The leader of the villain kids didn't think that Lonnie had ever quite grasped the full truth of life on the Isle even after the cookie making debacle. "I can't wait until she tries it with chocolate syrup on it," Lonnie said quietly.

"She'll flip out," Mal agreed and Dizzy paused after each bite of ice cream to gush about the taste. And it was only vanilla, Mal noted. There was no telling how Dizzy would react to other flavors.

Mal glanced over at Gil again and rolled her eyes when she realized what she first thought was mashed potato was actually egg salad that the son of Gaston apparently hadn't bothered to put in a sandwich bun. So typical. Then Mal noticed there was a distinct off-ness about the table. It only took a second to figure out what it was after she noticed. "Where's Jay?"

"He said he'd join us later," Ben said. "After he rested for a minute. But I would have thought he'd show up by now..."

Carlos sighed as he scratched Dude's neck. "He probably fell asleep somewhere," he said. Jay was able to fall asleep anywhere if he felt safe and comfortable enough and all of them knew Auradon was about as safe as one could get. "I'll call him. He'll be pissed if he misses food."

"Especially after he only got breakfast because I brought it to him," Mal added while Carlos pulled
out his phone and quickly swiped his thumb this way and that on the screen.

Carlos put his phone to his ear even as he continued to pet Dude, who had jumped into his lap and was sniffing at Carlos' plate with interest. After a moment Carlos frowned. "Jay! Where the hell are you? Call me back," Carlos said and then hung up. "No answer."

"Maybe he just slept through the phone?" Aziz offered.

"Nah, he has it loud enough to wake him, he just probably doesn't have it on him," Carlos replied as he pocketed his phone again. "He's always forgetting it in his bag or on his side table. He's hopeless."

"You'd think he'd be better about that considering how he always was about his stuff on the Isle," Freddie commented as she put another few drops of Tabasco onto her french fries.

Carlos shrugged. "Maybe it's because he can barely be bothered to learn how to use it," he suggested. Though Jay knew that electronics were valuable and good theft targets he had very little interest in how they worked or the details about all the extra features. The thief had even told Carlos once that he really didn't care about his phone so long as it made calls. Carlos was sure that Jay only had pictures of their group for their contact info because Evie had gone and done it herself before Carlos had gotten the chance.

"He'll show up soon," Evie was certain. Jay might have missed breakfast but there was no way he'd miss two meals in a row. Jay could eat enough for three people if he was really hungry.

"Ya know, this is a really good way to eat eggs," Gil said through a mouthful of egg salad and gestured to what was left with his spoon. "Better than the way dad makes them."

"I didn't think Gaston could cook," Mal prompted with an eyebrow lifted.

Gil paused but then shook his head. "Nothing besides eggs. He cooks eggs because he says I can't do it right," he said and then shoved more egg in his mouth. Judging by how much Gil had eaten just since Mal had sat down she almost cringed at how many actual eggs the boy had scarfed for lunch. Mal wasn't sure how he didn't get sick from them all. Mal liked eggs just fine but the idea of that many was not at all appetizing.

"Well, I'm glad you like it," Ben said a little awkwardly. He also had never seen someone so enamoured with egg salad before. Gil gave Ben a smile and continued eating. Ben was glad that Gil really did seem harmless even though Gaston's son implied he hadn't really been the one to want him off the Isle. Ben still had to get an answer to that out of his girlfriend but Mal had disappeared before he could ask her.

Lunch continued on with idle chit chat but Mal didn't like how even after the meal was starting to wind down, she hadn't heard or seen Jay. "Carlos, try Jay again." Carlos nodded but still didn't get through. "Where the hell has he gotten off to?" Mal demanded even though nobody could possibly answer her question.

"Well, Iago is with him so he should be fine," Evie pointed out as she offered Othello, who was sitting on her shoulder and nearly blending into her hair, a piece of apple that she had cut into slices for him.

"I guess, it's just weird he'd not show up," Mal muttered unhappily as she watched the blue parrot crunch on the slice of apple. After a minute, Mal got to her feet. "I'm going to go look for him. He's probably being stubborn and trying to get here without his crutches or something." It was a
perfectly reasonable excuse but even as Mal said it she wasn't convinced.

"I'll go with you," Aziz said as he got up as well. "I'm done eating anyway."

Mal eyed the Arabian for a moment before nodding. Carlos was after them along with Dude just a heartbeat later. When Mal raised an eyebrow, Carlos shrugged. "Evie and Ben can handle things," he excused. Mal thought about arguing but then decided against it. Auradon Prep's campus was pretty big and depending on Jay had found to hide out it could take a while for just a few people to find him. She would take all the help that she could get.

"You know where he runs off to, Carlos?" Mal asked.

"There's a few places," Carlos answered as he put Dude down so that the little terrier could trot along beside them on his own four legs. "But I'm sure I don't know them all. You know how Jay is." Jay had always had a habit of keeping at least one or two bolt holes secret from everyone in case he didn't want to be found.

"Well, we don't have much of a choice so we'll check where you do know first and then go from there," Mal said. "Hopefully, he's in one of them and I can yell at him for not having his phone on him. Again."

Carlos snorted. "Good luck getting him to actually carry it. I've found it all over the room completely out of battery way too many times to count. If it weren't for me it would never be charged at all." Carlos thought for a minute, "You know, that might actually be the problem now. If Jay does have it on him it is most likely dead."

"I'm still gonna yell at him," Mal said decisively. Jay might never feel the need to have the phone on him but Mal wanted to be able to get in touch with him whenever she had to. Especially now that he was hurt and vulnerable.

Aziz chuckled a little. "You know, you could always get him one of those new fancy watches that answer phone calls. They're pretty expensive still but he probably wouldn't lose it like he would a phone."

Mal considered it for a moment before shaking her head. "He'd never give up his cuffs to wear one," Mal said with a little disappointment. Aziz's suggestion would have been a good idea otherwise.

"Well, maybe we can get E to find a way to hook it to one of his cuffs," Carlos suggested. "We might finally have an idea of what to get him for once." Aziz raised an eyebrow. "Jay is a monster to try and shop for," Carlos clarified. "I mean, what do you give a guy that can literally just steal it if he really wanted it? And now that we're here in Auradon he cares more about tourney than things you can buy. He's gone from one extreme to the other."

Mal nodded in agreement. Although she couldn't help but find this extreme the better of the two options. Jay seemed so much happier now that he was not worried constantly about monetary wealth and accumulating things. "We should split up and search," Mal said. "We'll cover more ground that way." Carlos and Aziz nodded in agreement and the three of them went off in different directions.

Iago wished he could do something more than just sit on the headboard of the bed and try to talk Jay through what was going on. The thief had lost his composure a while ago and was now crying from the pain. Jay tried his best to lie still even as another jolt of pain made him scream and cling
to the bedding under him. He had torn the fabric in several places from how tight his grip was, but he didn't care. Sweat was soaking both him and the comforter that was absolutely failing to live up to its name.

Jay felt another small portion of his leg shatter and screamed into the mattress beneath him. He didn't dare try to move his legs as each time he did, it set off an entire chain reaction of tiny explosions along his bones. He could feel the shards digging into his muscles which were already feeling as if he had pulled each and every one. Jay's body was shaking from the agony of it but he couldn't quite find the mental clarity to reach for more of the morphine in his pocket.

"It's okay," Iago said even though he was sure that Jay wasn't listening. "It will be over soon." Iago was pretty sure that was true, at least. From what he could see, about half of Jay's pants were now flat and empty. It was horrifying to watch as the teen's lower half was slowly broken apart and taken away. Iago was sure that if Jay wasn't fighting it as hard as he was then things would be going smoother, but Jay was terrified and stubborn and would not allow himself to let go.

Jay screamed again as the small pieces of bone exploded into dust and seemed to rip through his muscles. Every single second was worse than the one before it. Jay wanted to crawl away even though there was no real source of pain that he could find. His legs were just shriveling up and breaking apart. He didn't dare look down after his shoes had fallen off and he'd made that exact mistake. Jay would have nightmares for the rest of his life from the sight of his feet curling in on themselves and dissolving like some weird horrific sand sculpture.

"Just hold on, Jay," Iago babbled, just so that there was something other than screaming and crying for Jay to try and focus on.

Jay barely even heard Iago and just tried to not scream every other second. Jay couldn't quite help but writhe as another bit of his legs fractured as if being crushed by an invisible anvil. It was the worst pain he'd ever felt and it only got worse when he moved. When he moved, his hips screamed like two pieces of metal grinding against each other. Jay had never felt such agony in his lower half. Not even that first time as a kid when he sold himself or when his customers forgot he was roughly half their size or when his father found out he had customers and showed him what he thought about it. None of that felt good but was paradise compared to what he was feeling now. Even his lower spine was white hot under his skin and there was nothing that Jay could do about any of it.

Jay's kneecaps cracked apart like plates with nails being driven through them and the thief shrieked in pain. Both joints popped apart and tore while the bones shattered like glass.

The pain was finally too much and Iago almost sighed in relief when Jay passed out from it all. Iago risked fluttering down from his perch to land beside the teen on the bed. Iago had wanted to stay beside Jay but the thief had all but crushed him when his bones first started breaking. Now that Jay was too unconscious to fight the change Iago noticed it happening a lot faster. It had taken hours for half of Jay's legs to disappear but only a fraction of that time later and Iago was certain that they were gone completely. Iago wished he had hands so that he could comfort the boy he had watched all his life.

Strips of Jay's skin were still falling away and much faster despite the teen not scratching at it any longer. Iago settled down beside Jay and tried his best to not fret.

The glittering smoke that had appeared to drag Jay into the lamp swept across the teen and Iago had to jump back to avoid somehow getting caught up in whatever was happening. He watched anxiously as the smoke dissipated and then Iago landed beside Jay again. Iago was sure that Jay
would not be happy when he woke up but at least it seemed to be over with finally.

Jay's skin was a flawless again and golden opposed to tanned. The bracers around his wrists were still tarnished but the black was less prominent and Iago figured going away the longer they were in the lamp. Jay's long dark hair had somehow ended up tied with a red piece of fabric into a ponytail. A golden snake was wrapped around the red hair tie and matched the little rearing cobra hoops that were in his ears holding decent sized rubies in their jaws. A red sash was hiding the place where Jay's upper half ended and his lower half (which was now just strange near solid smoke) began. Iago thought that Jay was rather impressive looking but doubted that the teen would feel the same. At least it was over with and Jay could finally get some rest and recover from such a traumatic event. Now Iago would just have to find some way to get that lamp away from Reza.
Mal hated, beyond anything else, being worried. But she definitely was. They had searched all over campus and hadn't found any sign of Jay at all. Mal tried to reason that Jay could still be fine, but when he didn't show up for dinner either, she couldn't believe that any longer. Jay wouldn't be gone this long.

Though Mal's instinct was to find out what happened herself and fix everything and bring her best boy back, Mal wasn't that familiar with Auradon to go on a rampage and find Jay by herself. Not even with the help of the other Isle Kids could she do an effective search. So, she did the only thing that made sense. "Ben!"

The King startled some and turned sharply to see Mal almost storming over. "Mal? What's wrong?" He hadn't seen Mal since lunch and hadn't been at dinner due to his Kingly duties, so he had no idea why she looked about ready to breathe fire. Her eyes were glowing again, and Ben knew that meant real trouble.

"Jay's gone."

"Gone?" Ben echoed. "Gone how?" Though this was Jay and he didn't really have a place to go to for a break -like a home or anything, Ben was trying to stay optimistic.

"Gone as in nobody has seen him at all since this morning!" Mal snapped as she began to pace back and forth in front of where Ben had stopped. "It's not normal. Something's happened to him. I know it!" Mal exclaimed. "The wish to save him didn't work, and now he's gone, and I don't know what else to do!"

Ben watched Mal pace angrily for a moment. "Okay. First thing. How do you know that the wish failed?" he asked, trying to stay calm even though he wasn't feeling calm on the inside. The Isle Kids were important to Ben too and having one missing was indeed serious.

"Jordan could tell it didn't," Mal said with a dismissive hand wave.

Well, that was probably a pretty certain conclusion if Jordan had said it, Ben figured. "Where have you looked for him?" Ben asked next.

"Everywhere!" Mal snapped. "He's nowhere on campus, and neither is Iago."

"If Iago is with him, is he really in danger?" Ben dared to ask. Iago seemed to genuinely care what happened to Jay so Ben figured the parrot wouldn't let anything seriously bad happen without telling them something.

"Iago's a bird, Ben," Mal pointed out. "He might be able to talk, but he's never been able to stop things happening to Jay before."
Ben winced a little at the anger directed at him. "... fair point. Alright. Well, I'll inform the police, and we'll start looking for him," Ben said as he reached out to put his hand on Mal's shoulders and finally stopped her pacing. "He's going to be okay, Mal. I promise."

"But, he never just disappears like this," Mal said, unable to help but still worry. "Not unless something's really wrong."

"We will find him," Ben insisted. "I'll go and let everyone know that he's missing right now." Mal still wasn't entirely convinced that would help but nodded. At the very least if anyone did spot him somewhere, she would be able to find out about it. Ben leaned over and gave Mal a kiss on the cheek before hurrying off. Mal watched him go for a minute before pulling out her phone and sending out a group text to the others.

By the time Mal got back to the dorms, she was calmer, although not by much. Her mind was rapidly flipping through all of the terrible scenarios that might have happened. Helped, not in the least, by all the horrible things she had seen in her life growing up on the Isle. When she opened the door to the boy's room, she wasn't in the least surprised to find Evie and Carlos already there. "Freddie is looking after Dizzy and Gil," Evie said before Mal could even ask.

Mal nodded in understanding even as she began pacing again. She couldn't help it. Mal always felt better when she was doing something, and the nervous energy caused by her worry wouldn't have let her just sit down and relax anyway. So, she paced. "Was there any sign of him at all?" Evie asked after several minutes.

Carlos was the one to answer with a negative. "It's like he just disappeared, which considering he's got a broken leg and has to use crutches right now seems a little unlikely," he said.

Mal's phone went off and, since she hadn't dropped it, quickly unlocked the screen. It was a text from Ben. "Apparently, Audrey saw him sitting on a bench this morning while she was heading to the library," she informed the others even as she typed out an answer. She waited for a minute and thankfully Ben's reply was quick. "Just after the limo left."

"That was probably right after he split off from Ben then," Carlos mused. "He said he was taking a rest, right?" Mal nodded in agreement even as she continued to text Ben.

"At least someone saw him," Evie said in an attempt to be positive.

Mal couldn't quite help the scathing reply that came out, "People saw him when Jafar beat him to a bloody pulp too. Didn't help him then either." Evie nodded sadly at that and Mal sighed. Evie looked like someone had just taken away her sewing machine. "Sorry, E. I don't mean to take it out on you."

"You're worried," Evie said. "We all are."

Before Mal could say anything else, her phone went off with Ben's reply. "Audrey didn't see anyone with him, or him leave," she informed the others before tossing the phone onto Jay's messy bed. "Useless."

There was silence in the air for a minute before Carlos perked up. "Maybe not. Did she say which bench that she saw Jay at?" he asked as he hopped off his bed and went to Jay's side of the room.

"Well, she said it was on her way to the library, and there's only a few benches between here and there," Mal said thoughtfully. "I'm guessing he wouldn't have gone far if he was going to rest... so probably that one back by that flowery tree."
"It's a dogwood, Mal," Evie supplied.

"Right that," Mal said, not actually caring what kind of tree it was. They had known what she meant after all.

Carlos grabbed up one of Jay's shirts. "I read that some dogs can track lost people if they have a scent to follow. We can try and see if Dude can follow wherever Jay went from that bench," he explained as he picked up the dog that had come over to him when Carlos said his name.

Mal was uncertain, but she didn't have any other ideas at the moment, so she nodded. "Let's try it." At the very least it couldn't give them any less information than they already had.

Within five minutes the three of them were at the bench in question, and Carlos put Dude down beside it. "Alright, buddy. I know you know what Jay smells like, but I brought this just in case," Carlos said as he held out Jay's shirt. "Find Jay for us, Dude."

Dude tilted his head to the side for a moment and seemed to be slightly confused, but after Carlos extended the shirt a little more, the dog took a few sniffs. Dude grabbed the shirt and tugged, but Carlos held firm. "No, Dude. We're not playing. I need you to find Jay."

Dude tugged a little more but, when Carlos wouldn't indulge in the game, let go. Mal crossed her arms impatiently off to the side as Carlos again tried to explain to his dog what he wanted. Mal looked around at the spot that the bench was in and didn't really like it. Though hardly hidden, it also wasn't in a place most people would pay any attention to. Like the back of an alley on the Isle. And those spots that nobody looked in were always where the worst things happened.

Finally, Dude started sniffing around the bench. "That a boy," Carlos encouraged as the terrier went under, and around, and on, and sniffed every inch of the last place that Jay had been spotted.

Evie was fiddling with her bracelet as she watched. "He isn't going anywhere," she whispered to Mal.

"Well, he's not exactly trained for this," Carlos piped up, having heard Evie despite her intention for him not to. Evie gave Carlos an apologetic smile, but Mal was more focused on the dog that was still going round and round the bench with his nose to the ground.

After a minute, Dude finally moved away from the bench. The three teens exchanged various looks of surprise and excitement before hurrying after him. Dude continued to sniff the ground as he trotted along. "That's it, boy," Carlos encouraged as they followed behind.

Mal couldn't help but start to get optimistic and excited. Maybe this would actually work! Hopefully, they would find Jay in no time at all and then she could slap him upside the head for worrying them.

Dude wandered off into the woods behind the school and, though they were confused, the villain kids continued to follow. There was a very overgrown trail that Dude was following. "Is this one of the hiking trails?" Mal asked. She knew there were several on the grounds that went through the woods, but she had never gone on any of them.

"It looks kind of old," Evie commented.

"No," Carlos said as he climbed over a fallen tree that Dude had crawled under. "I've been on the hiking trails with Dude before. This isn't one of them," he said confidently.

"Then where the hell are we going?" Mal asked as Dude continued sniffing his way down the trail.
Carlos and Evie had no answer for that, but they found out only a few minutes later. Dude turned a corner, and the three teens hurried to follow.

Just around the bend was an old shack that looked like it was half falling down. The door was even crooked on its hinges. "Well, that's not creepy," Carlos muttered. Dude barked from where he had stopped by the door and then happily trotted back over to his owner. "Yeah, good job, bud," Carlos said as he bent down to pick the canine up.

Mal steeled herself and nearly marched over to the door. "Jay? Are you in there?" she demanded as she flung open the door. The inside was just as much a mess as the outside was, but there was a distinct lack of Arabian thieves around. Mal cursed and kicked an old oil can in frustration.

Evie and Carlos came over to peer inside as well. "Why did Dude lead us here if Jay wasn't inside?" Evie asked as she looked at the rusted lawnmowers and thick cobwebs all over.

"Maybe he got confused," Carlos muttered as he scratched Dude's head.

Mal scowled at the inside of the shed but then noticed that the workbench on one side had suspicious marks in the dust and dirt. She stepped into the cramped hut and realized someone had brushed over the mess recently and left long drag marks behind. "Someone was here," she said as she looked around more carefully.

"Jay?" Evie asked hopefully.

"Dude did bring us here," Carlos added.

Mal didn't answer and instead looked for any sign that Jay had been there. Usually, he would leave behind a tell of some sort if he knew that Mal would be hunting for him. Typically, something small like a little J carved somewhere. Mal often left an M for Jay to find in return. But Mal didn't spot any carved marks anywhere that might mean that her friend had been there. Then again, if Jay hadn't expected Mal to come looking for him, he wouldn't have left a mark either.

Mal sighed and was just about to tell the others that they were heading back when something abnormally shiny in the corner caught her eye. Mal frowned and kicked a few more cans and tools out of her way as she grabbed hold of a rusty trash can and pulled it out into the open.

Mal's expression turned darker than it had ever been on Auradon as she reached in and pulled out the shiny thing. The dim light in the hut had been caught by the end of one of Jay's crutches that had been shoved in the can. Most of the crutch was hidden under old leaves and other debris, but there wasn't a single sign of rust or weathering on it anywhere to say it had been there for any length of time. After another second, she found the other crutch.

"How is he getting around without those?" Evie asked with wide, worried eyes.

"He can't," Carlos said.

There was a tense silence for several minutes. There was really only one option. Somehow, someone had taken Jay. He was injured so it wasn't impossible for someone to have gotten the drop on him but it hadn't honestly been what Mal was expecting. Jay didn't lose fair fights very often. Heck, he didn't even lose unfair fights often. And who would even want to take Jay? Nobody on Auradon that was for sure.

Mal, angry and worried, took her anger out on the trash can. She kicked it hard and sent it flying into a tree. "We have to tell Ben," Carlos said. "If Jay's been kidnapped..."
Mal was glad that Carlos didn't finish that sentence. On the Isle, if a kid were snatched that kid wouldn't be seen again at least ninety-nine percent of the time. Mal didn't know how common kidnappings were in Auradon, and she hoped the chances of getting him back alive was better, but she couldn't help but think the worst.

Evie suddenly straightened. "Look," she breathed as she went over to where the trashcan was now lying on its side with all its contents falling out. After just a second, she pulled out a familiar decorated piece of plaster. It was definitely Jay's since it had every tourney player's name, as well as Mal's huge Evil Lives design, across it. "How..."

"That's not possible," Carlos said. "They were going to have to cut that off him."

Evie turned the entirely whole cast over in her hands in bewilderment. "It's not even cracked... How did it come off? And what happened to Jay?" Mal wished she had an answer to give, but she had no idea.
Chapter 41

The knocking on the door was rather insistent and annoying, especially considering how early in the morning it was. Nasira wasn't in the best of moods as she opened the door but resisted stabbing her visitor with her dagger due to having shared a womb with him. "Jafar, do you realize how early it is?" she demanded even as her brother brushed past and went to her cabinet of mementos against the wall. "And what are you doing here?"

"Where do you keep the orb?" Jafar asked, ignoring her questions entirely.

Nasira narrowed her eyes and shut the door firmly. "Why do you need to know?" she asked back.

"I have plans for it. Tell me where it is, Nasira," Jafar said as he moved things around to peer behind several statues.

Nasira folded her arms across her chest and tapped her shoulder lightly with the end of her dagger. "I'll ask again, brother. What do you need it for since the magic doesn't work here?"

"I won't be here much longer," Jafar answered as he opened a drawer in the cabinet. He made an annoyed noise and then slammed the drawer shut. "Don't be a brat and tell me where you've hidden it," he snapped. He knew he should have brought Jay here more often and had his useless son steal some of Nasira's more useful items.

"You're the brat, little brother," Nasira replied dryly. "Whatever escape plan you've cooked up this time will no doubt work as well as your last one. I see no reason to give you my things."

Jafar glared over his shoulder at her. "It's different this time," he said unhappily.

"Oh? And how is that?" Nasira asked with a sharp eyebrow raised.

"This time the boy's helping me whether he likes it or not," Jafar growled more to himself than to her.

Nasira's scowl grew darker. "His name is Jabir. Not 'boy,' brother."

"I'm fully aware of what his name is," Jafar said dismissively. "He's the one that doesn't live up to it." Jafar yanked another drawer open and slammed it closed again after he didn't find what he wanted. Jafar's heir was not much of a 'comfort' in the ex-vizier's experience. Definitely much more of a burden.

"You shouldn't say things like that when I have a knife in my hand, Jafar," she warned him. Nasira very much contemplated stabbing Jafar, but she did still -for some reason she couldn't honestly explain- love the bastard. "He's your son."

"Bah," Jafar replied before finally turning around. "He's a disgrace, and you know it. The idiot can't even read."

Nasira glared. "And who's fault is that, Jafar? Maybe if you had spent some time trying to help him rather than just berating him all the time, he'd have learned."

"My time is valuable," Jafar replied dismissively. "I can't afford to waste it on a dunce."

Nasira really, really had to fight her urge to stab her twin. "I never should have brought him to you."

I should have raised him myself," she hissed in annoyance. It was a mistake she'd long regretted but only realized after it was too late to change things. By the time Nasira realized that Jay got bruises and cuts from Jafar rather than from schoolyard fights, Jafar had already begun teaching Jay to steal everything not nailed down. Jafar enjoyed the free income too much to allow Nasira to take Jay away even though he often complained at how much of a 'disappointment' his son was.

"You've gone soft, Nasira," Jafar scoffed.

"If being soft means I don't hurt my own child, then yes, I suppose I am," Nasira shot back. Nasira had found that becoming a mother had significantly changed her outlook on life. Jade was the light of her life, and she could never imagine doing anything to hurt her. She was so much happier despite the horrible place they lived and wouldn't trade Jade for the world. Nasira could still be nasty and spiteful and very much a villain, but she reserved that now mostly for people who tried to hurt her or her daughter. Nasira had assumed -somewhat naively, she soon realized- that being a father would be equally good for her brother.

Nasira couldn't place why Jafar had such little connection with her nephew. Nasira knew that when they were kids that Jafar had the ability to care for and protect others. She had just assumed that -like her- he had forgotten what doing that actually felt like and how satisfying defending someone you cared about could be.

Initially, everything had seemed to work just like Nasira wanted it to. Jafar had seemed delighted to have Jay as an heir and took good care of him for the most part. Jafar still had a temper and Jay was a rambunctious and active child that tested Jafar's patience at every turn. Nasira sometimes worried since Jay got into everything and Jafar's house was cluttered beyond belief even then. But Jay seemed well fed, clothed, and happy every time she stopped by. When Jay started talking so early, Jafar had been absolutely delighted. He took it as a sign that his son would be as brilliant as he was. Jafar's temper got better, and Nasira really thought everything would work out wonderfully. But then Jay hit roadblocks that he couldn't seem to overcome, and Jafar's good opinion of his son turned south remarkably quickly. Nasira had tried to help, but Jafar shut her out, and Nasira allowed herself to become too frustrated by her brother's stubbornness.

Nasira felt immensely guilty about allowing her brother to push her away. Especially as more and more bruises started showing up on her nephew as he got older. And then Iago left, and Nasira could only worry even more. Her one possible chance of getting information had flown the coop and left Nasira even more out of the loop than before. That distance between Jafar and Nasira led to even more problems because it meant that Jay didn't trust Nasira nearly as much as she wished he would. Nasira did understand, they were too much like strangers -despite the relation- it was just regrettable.

Jafar scoffed again and went over to another cabinet to start rummaging around in there. "I haven't even told you the latest disgrace," Jafar said.

"Oh? And what's that? Him finally finding a better place to live where you can't touch him anymore?" Nasira asked sarcastically. "That would be smart and hardly a disgrace." She was glad that Jay had not returned from Auradon. He was safe there and wouldn't have to worry about being essentially homeless half the time.

"No, although that is infuriating as well," Jafar said. "After all I've done for him..."

Nasira rolled her eyes so hard she thought that she might lose them. "What exactly have you done for him, Jafar? You didn't even give the boy decent clothes half the time."

"You've never tried to clothe a growing boy," Jafar shot back.
"I'd argue that neither have you," Nasira sniped.

Jafar cast a glare at his sister again. "Don't get high and mighty, Nasira," Jafar said. "I gave him food and shelter, and everything required."

"You made him buy that food and shelter," Nasira argued. "That's not what a father does Jafar."

"I taught him the truth of the world," Jafar said while turning to face Nasira directly again. "The one who has the money has the power. And that's just the way things are. I saw no reason to have delusions about what is important in life."

"He didn't need a lesson like that before he even hit double digits," Nasira hissed. She didn't particularly agree with that lesson either, but that was beside the point. "Children shouldn't have to buy their place in their own house! Even our father never made us do something so ridiculous!"

Their father had hardly been a glowing example of good parenting but other than being somewhat emotionally distant and unbearably strict about their grades he hadn't been so bad.

Jafar rolled his eyes. "Holding it back would have done him no good. And, quite honestly, I tire of this repeating argument. Where is the orb?" he demanded.

"Since you still haven't told me what you want it for, I'm not going to tell you where it is," Nasira replied.

"What do you think I want it for? I'm going to get my revenge on that wretched Aladdin," Jafar growled. He clenched his fist so tightly his knuckles turned white. "I have a perfect plan already in motion. He'll pay for ruining everything and sending me to this hell hole of an Island!"

Nasira sighed and reached up to rub her forehead. "Would you give up on that already?" she demanded. "Every time we try and get revenge we only end up in a worse situation than we were already in! Can't you just be happy that you're alive?"

"You call this squalor living?" Jafar shot back with a huge gesture at Nasira's cramped house. "How can you accept this? We were the most powerful people in Agrabah and now look at what they've reduced us too! Do you want to continue to have your daughter growing up in this?"

Nasira couldn't help but stiffen. No. She didn't want Jade to have the Isle for her only future. But she was cunning and not quite as obsessive as Jafar was. She knew when to switch tactics, and this was one of those times. "There are better ways than to try and kill Aladdin... again."

"My dear sister," Jafar said sweetly. "Who said anything about killing him? I'm just going to make him wish he were dead."

That sent a chill down Nasira's spine. "... and what is Jay's role in all this?"

"Why, the most important role," Jafar said although that hardly answered anything at all. "He's going to be the one to treat Aladdin to his fate."

"He won't do what you want," Nasira said. "You've not endeared yourself to him in the least."

Jafar just smirked. "You act as if he'll have a choice in the matter. But he'll have to grant me my wish. That's what every Djinn has to do."

Nasira frowned. "Jay isn't a Djinn..."

"You're behind the times, sister," Jafar said as he rolled up one sleeve to show his own bare but
scarred wrist. Removing the manacles from himself had ripped his forearms apart, but he considered that well worth it to be free from his slavery.

"Jafar... what have you done?"

"What I had to," Jafar snapped. "And frankly I'm getting quite tired of you questioning me! It's sickening how you've accepted this place!"

"I've not accepted it, but I'm not about to use my family as pawns to escape it either!" Nasira yelled. "I didn't agree to bring you your son for you to treat him so horribly! I did it to bring back the brother you used to be!"

"Don't delude yourself, Nasira," Jafar said as he fixed his sleeve to cover his forearm again. "Someone was going to have to do the hard part to get us off of this rock. Why not him?"

Nasira stared at the question. "Because he's your son!"

Jafar's face was turning surprisingly red. "He is no son of mine, Nasira! No son of mine is so stupid as to not even be able to spell his own name! No son of mine cannot read a simple passage in a children's book! And no son of mine stands on a street corner and sells himself for a few dollars to every disgusting degenerate that walks by! I will not claim a child that is a cheap, idiot, whore!"

Nasira's surprised face quickly darkened, and she unfolded her arms finally. "Get out, Jafar," she said firmly. "That's way beyond too much."

Jafar sneered. "It's the truth, Nasira."

"I don't care if it's the truth or not, Jafar," Nasira said as she lifted her dagger in front of her. "You do not call your son something so horrible. So get out of my house, and I don't want to see you back."

Jafar narrowed his eyes dangerously. "Don't you point that knife at me, sister. It is a fight you don't want to get into."

"I said out," Nasira repeated firmly.

"Mom?"

Nasira didn't turn to look at the stairs where Jade's voice was coming from. She kept her eyes locked on Jafar's with her blade between them. "Mom, what's going on?" Jade asked as she stepped down the stairs and then stopped abruptly at the scene of her mother and uncle facing off in the living room. Though she knew that her mother and uncle didn't really get along very much anymore, she hadn't expected knives to be pulled. Especially not so early in the morning.

"Jade, go back upstairs," Nasira ordered.

Jade hesitated for a moment but then hurried back upstairs to her room and closed the door with a slam. Jafar sighed. "Are we really going to let it come to this, Nasira?" Jafar asked.

"I'm afraid so," Nasira replied.

Jafar sighed and pulled his own dagger out of the back of his belt. "A pity."
Jay's head was throbbing as he slowly woke up. Everything felt sore, and Jay couldn't help but groan as he pushed himself over onto his back instead of his stomach. He instantly noticed that something felt off but didn't want to risk opening his eyes to look. Jay felt opening his eyes would make his headache worse -like it would during a hangover.

"Jabir?"

Jay groaned again at the sound of Iago's voice. "... shouldn't call me that," he murmured.

"How do you feel?" Iago asked, and Jay felt his feathers brush along the edge of his face.

Jay contemplated his answer for several moments before coming up with what he thought was a fairly accurate description. "Like I got dragged behind de Vil's car... by my hair." Jay paused for a second. "Over rocks. Everything's fucking sore as hell..."

"The soreness should go away," Iago said.

Jay grunted a little even as he reached for his pocket and the pills he kept there. His eyes flew open when his hand felt cold air with just the faintest barrier around it -like thin cling wrap or the wall of a bubble- rather than his actual leg. Jay pushed himself up quickly to look down. The golden vapors that were his lower half swirled lazily across the bed. It was only when Iago dropped in front of Jay's eyes and shouted his name did the thief realize that he had screamed in horror at the sight. His legs were gone.

"Jay!" Iago shouted again to try and pull Jay's attention away from his own lower half. Iago flapped his wings furiously a few times, and Jay finally managed to tear his eyes away from himself. "Jabir, just stay calm. This is just what you are," Iago squawked.

Jay tried to take a few deep breaths, but they came out sounding more like gasps. "My legs are gone, Iago," Jay said in a voice that was not even nearly as strong as he wished it would be. "... they're gone."

"I know," Iago said as he hopped closer. He didn't dare try and land on Jay's lower half. Iago didn't know if he even could, but he figured whether he could or couldn't, neither would cause a good reaction from the teen on the verge of panicking again. "But you're alright. Does it hurt?"

"N-no," Jay said shakily before lifting his hand to rub his hands over his face. The sight of gold covering his hands as if he had stuck them in a bucket full of the stuff startled him, and Jay let out another shout. "What the hell!!?"
"It's okay!" Iago said quickly. "Remember, Djinn come in lots of colors!"

Jay forced himself to take another breath. "R-right... right," Jay said as he tucked his hands under each arm. "This is so freaky... where are my clothes?" he asked in a near whine.

Iago pointed with one wing off to the side. At first, he had thought the clothes had just vanished, but Iago had noticed them, after a little while, in a pile on the floor. "They're over there," Iago told him.

Jay rolled to the side and reached down to grab them. His leathers were just out of reach, and he stretched further with a sound of annoyance. Jay tried hard to not notice how strange his arm looked and only focus on trying to reach even one little edge of his clothes.

Jay grunted in frustration as he leaned even further over to try and reach. He could almost touch one fold with his fingers. "Jay..." Iago began in warning. The parrot didn't speak up quite fast enough, though, and Jay lost his balance to fall out of the bed. The newly born Djinn hit the ground hard and grunted in pain.

"Fuck!" Jay shouted, not really from pain but frustration.

"Are you okay?" Iago asked as he leaned over the side of the bed.

Jay growled a little, pushed himself up, and tossed his hair back behind him. "I'm fine," he grumbled as he started rummaging through his clothes. "Not the first time I've been pushed out of bed."

"You weren't pushed, you fell," Iago pointed out.

"Same difference," Jay snapped as he reached into the pocket of his pants and pulled out his pill bottle. He quickly popped it open and downed a couple of the tablets inside.

Iago would have frowned if he could have. "Are you still in pain?"

"I'm sore," Jay replied sourly. "And I just fell out of a bed onto my face." He slapped the cap back onto the bottle before turning back to the bed. Jay stared at it for just a minute and then sighed. He really hated everything about this situation. Jay crawled back to the side of the bed and then hauled himself up as best he could with only his arms.

Everything felt so strange without legs. Jay kept expecting to feel something beneath his waist and he... sort of did but certainly not what he usually did. Jay felt like he wasn't nearly smart enough to explain the sensation very well. But, if he were forced to do so, he would have said it was similar to when someone's legs were asleep to the point that they could barely even feel them and only then when you put weight onto them.

Jay was lucky he was so physically capable because he was able to haul himself back up onto the bed with some effort. "You can get up, you know," Iago said as Jay laid back against the comforter and stared at the lamps hanging from the ceiling above him.

"Shut up," Jay grumbled. "I don't know how this stupid stuff works yet."

"You're probably thinking about it too much," Iago said as he awkwardly shuffled across the bed to stand beside Jay's head. "You don't think about walking when you do it."

"I've been walking for seventeen years," Jay replied.
"Sixteen," Iago corrected. "Even you weren't so amazingly active to be walking as a newborn."

Jay cast Iago an annoyed glare. "Point is, I've been doing that for ages. 'Scuse me if it takes me a hot minute to figure out fuckin' floating!" he snapped angrily.

Iago decided to take Jay's show of temper as a good sign rather than become annoyed about it. An angry Jay wasn't much fun to be around, but Iago found that infinitely more preferable than a scared, panicky Jay. "Think of it this way, you don't have a broken leg anymore," Iago pointed out with an attempt at cheer.

Jay glared even harder at the parrot beside him. "You are not funny, you pigeon on acid."

"What did you just call me?" Iago asked in shock. "Where did you even hear that? Have you done acid?!"

Jay rolled his eyes. "Where would I have gotten acid in Auradon?"

Iago hopped closer to peer down at Jay. "That wasn't an answer, Jabir."

"Oh come on, don't make yourself molt. What does it even matter at this point?" Jay asked. "It's not like I'd be getting anything that hardcore ever again, even if I have taken it in the past. I'm a freak." Jay rubbed his face with one hand. "A weird glowy freak with no damn legs."

"You know, you should be able to reform them," Iago said. "Djinn can take virtually any form they want."

Jay dragged his hand down his face to peer out at the parrot from over his fingers. "And how do I do that?" he asked.

"I'm not sure," Iago admitted. "But I feel as if it would be a lot like making the inside of the lamp change. However, you imagine yourself is how you'll be."

"Well, I didn't exactly imagine myself this way in the first place," Jay said as he pushed himself up and gestured to his golden form. "I liked how I looked, thanks." Jay had always felt comfortable in his own skin up until his skin ended up looking like those hot chicks that got killed in that one spy movie Jay had half watched.

"You don't look bad, you know," Iago said. "You pull off gold well."

Jay was silent for a moment as he stared down at his golden hands. "... all my life, Dad's only ever cared about looking for a lamp and getting gold," he murmured. "I really, really hate this color, but I've been trying to get it so long, I guess it makes some horrible sense that I'd finally get more than I can stand to look at and it's my own goddamn skin."

"You can change that too," Iago reminded. "You just have to remember and imagine what you looked like before and you should be able to do it. Visualize what you want."

"Imagination and visualizing really aren't my strong suits," Jay grumbled. "That's more for Mal and Evie... they're the creative ones."

Iago huffed. "Well, if you don't try then you definitely won't be able to change it. Now, close your eyes and think about how looked before you passed out. That's all you have to do," Iago coached. The bird wasn't actually sure that was how it worked, but he couldn't imagine the process being that hard either. Jafar had figured it out remarkably fast when they'd been stuck together in the lamp just after Aladdin won the day the first time.
Jay looked skeptical at the bird for a moment but then sighed and closed his eyes. Iago watched as Jay tried for several minutes to get some measure of control over his form, but nothing seemed to be happening. After another few minutes, Jay let out a noise of frustration and fell back across the bed again. "Why does my luck have to be so absolutely effed all the time?"

"Take a break and try it again in a little while," Iago suggested. "I'm sure you'll get it."

Jay sighed and rolled over onto his stomach to look at the mostly barren room he'd made before passing out. "No wonder Jordan's dad went nuts in here," he muttered. "Cabin fever's going to be a bitch."

"We won't be in here that long," Iago assured him. "Reza sounded like he had something in mind, so I'm sure he'll be wanting one of his wishes granted soon."

"Oh goodie," Jay said sarcastically. "I can't wait."

Iago carefully moved back to where Jay had rolled. "Everything will work out, Jabir. I promise."

Jay side-eyed Iago before sighing and dropping his chin onto his folded arms. "I hope you're right," he muttered. Suddenly, the hairpiece keeping his hair gathered into a tail disappeared so that his hair fell into his face. Jay frowned and lifted his head enough to free one hand. He reached up to run his fingers through his now loose hair.

Iago couldn't help but laugh. "It figures that your hair would be the first thing you manage to get back to normal," the parrot said. "You're so stubborn about it and all."

"I like it long," Jay replied automatically as he ran his hand through the length of it again a few times. His hair fell right back into his face, but he didn't bother moving the curtain of it out of the way yet again. He finally put his hand back and rested his chin on his forearms. "I kinda didn't notice it was up, to be honest..."

"It looked good," Iago said. "But then, you usually do."

Jay looked over at Iago again. "What's with the random compliment?"

Iago was glad that he couldn't blush because he hadn't really been expecting to be called out on it. Iago didn't really want to admit that he was trying to make more of an effort to give Jay more of a reason to raise his shockingly low self-esteem. Jay was actually amazing at being confident considering how little self-worth he seemed to have and Iago was determined to improve Jay's view of himself. "It's just the truth."

"You're acting weird today, bird," Jay replied.

"Oh, because you've been acting entirely normally yourself?" Iago shot back. Jay made a face and then stuck his tongue out at the parrot. "Do that again, and I'll rip it off," Iago threatened.

Jay rolled his eyes. "I'm not seven-years-old anymore, Iago. I know when you're making empty threats," he said.

"It's not an empty threat," Iago denied.

Jay snorted at that and rolled onto his back again. "Yeah, sure it's not, baba." A second later, Jay's eyes went huge as he realized what he just said. Jay only very rarely spoke any Arabic, and even then it was usually only to curse since that was most of the words he knew. And he hadn't said that particular word in over a decade.
An uncomfortable silence settled for a minute before Iago cleared his throat. "... didn't think I'd ever hear you say that again," he admitted.

"I wasn't going to," Jay muttered as he looked as far away from Iago as was possible. His face felt hot, and he had no idea if he could blush with his new skin tone, but he wasn't about to ask if it was showing up, just in case it wasn't.

Back when Jay was still young, and before his difficulty reading became apparent, Jafar had actually tried to teach his son some Arabic. Jay had quite often mixed up the meaning of short words and randomly cut off the endings of longer words. It was just a cosmic coincidence that the begging of the word 'parrot' sounded an awful lot like the word for 'daddy' when Jay had chopped it up. Jay had quickly fallen into the habit of calling Iago that instead of his actual name. Jay's childish butchering of the language had frustrated Jafar to no end, and the ex-vizier had stopped teaching Jay as much of his native language. And then Jay, at barely five years old, made the mistake of calling Iago his little nickname in front of Jafar, which he somehow hadn't done before. Jafar had already been angry that Jay was still struggling to read and when he heard the boy call a parrot something he definitely was not, Jafar had raged.

Jay had never really spoken Arabic after that except to curse. Iago never would have admitted it, but he'd missed hearing the boy call him baba even though he knew it could be taken wildly out of context. Or, perhaps, it was a bit more truthful than either of them wanted to admit.

"I don't mind, you know," Iago finally said.

Jay's eyes darted in Iago's direction for a split second. "... it feels weird to call you that now," he murmured.

Iago ducked down and rubbed his feathery head against Jay's cheek. After a moment, Jay gave in and reached up to scratch Iago's neck with two fingers. Iago couldn't quite help the little noise that escaped at the feeling of being pet. "You can call me whatever you want, kid," he whispered.
Chapter 43

Jay was aware that time was moving outside of the lamp. He wasn’t entirely sure how he knew it, nor could he really tell how much time, but he did intrinsically know that time was moving on while he was stuck in his prison. Inside the lamp, Jay was forced to simply wait. He hated every endless second of it. For all Jay knew years could have gone by without him, although he doubted very much that it had. Reza didn’t seem the type to just allow his ‘vengeance’ to just wait for a while. Besides, if he did want Jafar’s favor, waiting years to make that wish would be a bad move.

Each second that Jay spent in the lamp felt like a whole day and yet because there was no way to actually tell time in the lamp it could also be that Jay had been stuck for only a few hours. Jay wondered if the longer he was in the lamp the better he would get at figuring out the weird sense of timelessness that he was currently struggling with. After all, Jordan’s dad had known how long he had been stuck in the lamp when he was let out so surely there had to be some way to figure it out. That came later though. First, Jay really needed to get a handle on this floating thing.

In a way, Iago was right that Jay was thinking too hard about it. Jay, after practicing for quite a while, was able to eventually get the hang of hovering at about the same height he would have been if he’d been standing. But the second he tried to move from that spot, he’d try to walk and then remember quite suddenly that he had no legs. Jay would hit the ground immediately.

Jay was getting beyond frustrated and hit the ground beside him as he failed yet again to move anywhere but from a single spot. “Why is this so damn hard?” he demanded. “I’m getting tired of falling all over the place!”

“You haven’t been trying that long,” Iago said. “The more you stress about it the worse it’ll be.” It would be like Jay trying to read all over again. When Jay got frustrated what little progress he made always evaporated, which led to a truly nasty cycle of failures and anger until Jay just gave up on whatever it was.

Jay let out another noise of frustration and raked his hands through his hair. “The one thing I have always been good at is jumping around and stuff. Now I can’t even do that!”

“This is only temporary,” Iago reminded him. “Once you get the hang of your form then you won’t ever have to be without legs again.”

Jay sighed heavily and fell back across the floor. “What if I don’t though?”

“What if you don’t what?”

“Get my legs back…”

“You will,” Iago insisted. “Jordan is a Djinn and she has legs.” Jay nodded but didn’t look fully convinced. Iago sighed and flew down to land on Jay’s chest. “Do you trust me, Jabir?”

Jay blinked at the parrot. He hadn’t really expected that sort of a question from Iago. Still, Jay decided he would answer anyway. “… yeah. Course I do…”

“Then trust me now,” Iago demanded. “I’m not going to let anything happen to you and you will definitely get the hang of this Djinn thing.”

“… but what if I can’t do this?” Jay asked.
“You can,” Iago insisted. “You’ve never failed when it counted.”

Jay didn’t agree with that statement but knew better than to argue with Iago about it. The macaw would just continue to insist on it and Jay didn’t think he had the mental ability to deal with that right then. Instead, Jay decided to let what Iago had said go without protest and lifted a hand to scratch the bird behind his feathered head. Iago closed his eyes and let out a noise of appreciation. Jay smiled despite himself. “I guess I can still do this, huh?”

Iago nodded under Jay’s hand. “You’re the best at it.”

“I think you’re biased,” Jay said in amusement.

“Shut up and take the compliment,” Iago ordered gruffly.

Suddenly, Jay gasped as he felt the yank on his internal organs of being summoned. He couldn’t do anything at all as his body broke apart into golden smoke to rush out. Jay had no idea where the opening to the lamp was but it seemed to be somewhere above him. It all happened too fast for him to figure out more than that.

When Jay formed again and regained his bearings he was less than pleased to realize that he was still legless and gold and was now in front of Reza. Jay’s hair had been put back up but at least Jay was no longer as terrified of himself. He folded his arms across his bare chest and eyed Reza unhappily. “What?” he demanded.

“That’s not a very nice greeting,” Reza said although he was smiling.

“And why should I give you a ‘nice greeting’ again?” Jay asked.

Reza ignored the question and instead eyed Jay’s transformed body. “Well, don’t you look the proper Djinn now. Even have the smoky bottom half and everything. You know… I still sort of had some doubts your dad was telling the truth about you but I guess he was being honest.”

“You had doubts even after you sucked me into a lamp?” Jay asked. “I thought you were supposed to be smart.”

“Shut up!” Reza snapped. “I’m your master and you’ll treat me with the respect I deserve!”

“Which would be none,” Jay replied instantly. “The only reason that you’re not dead right now is because you’re protected from me because you have that stupid lamp.” Jay said while pointing to the lamp in Reza’s hand. That was when he noticed how very different his prison looked. “What the hell did you do to it?”

“I didn’t do anything,” Reza said unhappily. “It happened all on it’s own.”

“And why the hell would it change?”

Reza snorted. “Well if you don’t know I’m not going to explain it to you,” he said as he paced a few steps in either direction.

Jay was unimpressed. “Meaning you don’t know.”

“Of course I know!” Reza snapped. “But I’m not going to waste my very valuable time explaining something so absolutely infinitesimally simple to an utter moron like you. It would be an atrocious misuse of my intellect.”
“I’m sure,” Jay drawled. For the first time, Jay looked around the room they were in and frowned. “Where the hell are we?” It looked almost like a dorm room at Auradon Prep. But why they would be there of all places, Jay couldn’t fathom. Surely Mal and the others had to know he was missing by now. Reza would be stupid to hang around the school. Also, this room looked like it hadn’t actually been stayed in for a while and as far as Jay knew all the rooms in the dorms were occupied. Therefore, Jay had no idea if they were actually still at Auradon Prep or not.

Reza waved the question away as if it were entirely unimportant. “We’re where we won’t be found anytime soon,” he said. “Now, you’re going to grant me my first wish.”

Jay scowled at that. “Seeing how I don’t have a choice…” he grumbled. “Just get it over with.”

“Since I am already a genius to rival any other-“ Jay snorted at that. Reza glared at the floating teen. “Don’t interrupt. It’s very rude.”

“Well it’s rude to draw out a simple ass sentence. Just say ‘I wish to get sent to the Isle’ and be done with it,” Jay replied.

“Why would I ever want to wish for that?” Reza demanded in outrage.

Jay shrugged. “A guy can dream.”

Reza glared daggers at Jay, who was utterly unbothered by it. He stood up to Mal’s glares. Reza’s were pathetic in comparison. “As I was saying. Since I am already a genius to rival any other, I wish that I were the most handsome guy in Auradon. So handsome that nobody will recognize me.”

As soon as Reza said the words, Jay couldn’t quite control himself. Before he even realized he was doing it, Jay had lifted a hand and snapped. He only had a split second to understand what was happening as the sound echoed unnaturally through the room. The same golden vapors that Jay was now getting very accustomed to seeing, sprouted up from the floor to wrap around Reza entirely.

When the smoke cleared only a few seconds later Jay was facing a completely different Reza. His narrow rat-like face had shifted around entirely and he’d grown taller. Reza was model perfect now and Jay admitted he was hot. Jay was still annoyed though. “Vanity and vengeance… my life is being ruined for vanity and vengeance…” Jay really really wanted to punch someone. Reza would be a great start.

Reza ignored Jay entirely and went to a mirror on the wall to examine himself. His eyes, now darker and framed with long coal black lashes, widened at the sight. With a squared jaw and straight nose he really was unrecognizable. Reza lifted a hand to put against his cheek and smiled as he realized that the face in the mirror really was his.

But then, as he watched, something odd happened. Reza’s tanned skin started… bubbling, for lack of a better term. His handsome face turned blotchy and shiny in places and more tiny bumps kept appearing. Reza whipped around to face Jay again. “What did you do!?”

Jay shrugged. “Your wish was to be handsome. You are,” Jay said. “But you didn’t say anything about if you had to look past hella bad acne to notice.”

“You… you bastard! Fix it!” Reza demanded angrily as he stormed up to Jay.

“No exchanges or refunds on wishes,” Jay said with far more satisfaction than he would have thought he’d get. “Don’t worry. I’m sure sometime in the future they’ll come up with an acne
cream strong enough for you.”

Reza screamed in anger and cursed. Jay only felt even more glad he’d managed to slip that little bit of fine print into the wish as he saw Reza’s reaction. But then, Reza surprised the hell out of him. Jay wasn’t expecting anything beyond shouting so when he was suddenly slapped hard he was caught off guard. Jay turned back to face Reza completely and glared. “That was a bad idea,” he growled. The slap hadn’t even hurt that much but Jay was pissed that such a little weasel would even do it in the first place.

“Oh? And what are you going to do?” Reza demanded. “I’m still your master!”

Jay’s glare darkened. “You only have two wishes left, Reza. Then you’ll see what I’m going to do.”

"I'm not scared of you!” Reza declared.

"That's your mistake," Jay said. "Now what are your other wishes, asshole?"

Reza hesitated and eyed Jay warily. "I'm not ready to make them yet," he said. "Back in your lamp."

Jay narrowed his eyes but had little choice in the matter. Reza studied the lamp in his hands uneasily after Jay had disappeared into it again. Things were more complicated now and he wasn't all that happy about it. Now Jay wanted to kill him even more. Reza shouldn't have let his temper get the better of him. Reza was so busy contemplating that he didn't even notice Iago sitting on top of an old dresser.
Chapter 44

Chapter Notes

This was a weird chapter to write... making a chapter about a character that is bored and not making the readers bored is haaard. Also, fly Iago! Fly!

“Hey,” a soft voice called. Harry looked over at the teen lying beside him. It was very late and Harry was honestly surprised that he wasn’t alone in bed by now. “Not that I don’t appreciate seeing you... but why am I seeing you?”

Harry frowned at the question and rolled over to wrap his arm around the Arabian’s waist. “Can’t I jus want ta spend time with ya?” he asked curiously.

Jay’s eyebrow went up. “Yeah... but usually you don’t come to the shop to find me,” he pointed out. Harry tried to not show anything on his face as he traced some of the thin straight scars that cut across Jay’s back from one of his father’s many beatings with his free hand. Harry hadn’t wanted to wait to see Jay until Jay needed the money. He couldn’t wait that long. So he’d decided to risk hunting the thief down at the Junk shop for once. Jay had been understandably surprised but had come along anyway. Jay turned his head to look at Harry more directly. “Alright, Harry. Spill. What’s going on?”

“I just realized somethin’ is all,” Harry said unhelpfully.

Jay gave Harry an unimpressed stare. “You dragged me all the way here and have barely kept your hands off me even for a second. What. Is. It,” Jay demanded to know. Harry had no sense of personal space but even he wasn’t one to cling to another person like he had been doing that night.

“... they’ve stopped,” Harry finally said.

Jay was a little lost, but only for a moment. The pirates having stopped molesting Harry could only be a good thing, so Jay was a little confused why the son of Hook was acting like it was something bad. Jay half turned to better face his most routine lover. “So, why do you look like you’re going to have a breakdown? You’ve always wanted them to stop.”

Harry was quiet for a minute before lifting a hand to brush Jay’s steadily lengthening hair back behind one ear. Jay had stopped cutting it about six months ago and already it was almost to his shoulders. “Have they stopped touchin’ you?” he murmured. He already knew the answer to that question. Jay wouldn’t keep coming around the Jolly Roger on the pirates’ paydays if he wasn’t getting something for it. Harry wouldn’t regularly find Jay wandering the halls if he weren’t coming out of someone’s room. Jay looked off to the side and didn’t bother answering. “Jay... ya didn’t do something to keep ’em off me, did ya?”

Suddenly, Harry was being pushed back and Jay shifted so that he was straddling the pirate and pinning him down. “Don’t be ridiculous. They wouldn’t do what I said no matter how much they enjoy my ass,” Jay pointed out.

“Then why the hell did they stop?” Harry asked in confusion. “Am I not pretty anymore?”
Jay rolled his eyes. “You know damn well you look good,” he said in annoyance. “Maybe your dad finally decided it wasn’t okay for his lackeys to be raping his son,” Jay suggested instead. “Or maybe one of your sisters said something.”

“I guess…” Harry murmured although he wasn’t convinced of either of those two options. He and his sisters weren’t close and his father had been ignoring the situation for several years now. Harry didn’t really think that Captain Hook would suddenly care about a little boy’s wellbeing. Even if that boy was his own son.

Jay leaned down. “Hey now, this is good. Why worry about why it happened?” he asked as he brushed his fingers through Harry’s hair. “Just be glad that it did. No more dodging and hiding in your own house. That can’t be bad, right?”

“No… not bad,” Harry agreed as he let his own hands find comfortable resting points on Jay’s hips. Jay smirked and covered Harry’s mouth with his. The two boys kissed for several minutes until Harry broke it to sigh. “I am glad they stopped,” he admitted as he rested his forehead against Jay’s. “I’m jus’ confused too. Yer the only one I’m fuckin’ now.”

“Wha? You’re not fucking Uma?” Jay asked with an eyebrow up. “I’ve seen how you look at her.”

Harry hesitated for a minute but then shook his head. “No… I mean, she’s hot, yeah, bu’ I don’t think I’d know what to do with a girl,” Harry muttered. “I don’t think she’ll be all for me fuckin’ her in the ass…”

Jay snorted a little. “Probably not. But it’s not that different fuckin’ girls than it is fuckin’ guys,” Jay said. “Easier actually… you want some pointers?” It wasn’t as if Jay’s only customers were slobbery old men or anything. After a few years on the street he’d gotten more experience than he had any right to have.

Harry studied the boy still straddling him for a minute before shaking his head. “Not now,” he answered. His hand rubbed up and down Jay’s thigh. “Ain’t like I need pointers on how to make you moan.”

Jay snorted again and lightly slapped Harry upside the head. “Don’t get all cocky. It’s my job to inflate your ego,” he said. “Half that noise is just to make you feel good about yourself. You’re crap in bed.”

“Oh, yeah? That why ya get hard before I even get yer pants off?” Harry asked with a light smack against Jay’s backside.

“I jerk myself before you show up so you think I’m excited,” Jay replied without hesitation.

Harry rolled his eyes hard. “Sure ya do.” Jay chuckled a little and gave Harry another quick kiss before rolling back off to lay back down beside the pirate. Harry turned again to be on his side. “Do you have to go anytime soon?” he asked.

Jay paused but then shook his head. “No. Dad’s not expecting me back anytime soon,” he said. “Why?”

“Because I hate it when ya have to rush off,” Harry admitted. He wouldn’t normally admit to something like that but he was feeling unusually forthcoming today and couldn’t quite censor his words in time.

"Nah," Jay replied with a smile. "I'm all sexed up with nowhere to go."
Harry smirked at that and rolled to pin Jay beneath him. "I'd say yer only half sexed up..." he leered as he started rocking his hips against Jay's. "Bu' I can fix tha' fer ya..."

Jay couldn't quite help but moan appreciatively and arch up against the pirate's chest. Harry swooped down to kiss him even as he hiked the Jay's legs up higher over his hips.

Jay woke up with a start and looked around with confusion. It took him a minute but then remembered where he was. Jay groaned and let his head hit the pillows beneath him. "Fan-fuckin-tastic," he grumbled. Now, not only was he stuck in the lamp, he was alone, and left horny from that tease of a dream. How he was horny without even a lower half he had no clue but apparently it was possible. Harry might have been an ass and Jay was still holding his grudge, but the Arabian had to admit the guy was definitely one of the better lays on the Isle. Jay rarely had dreams that got him hot and bothered, he figured it was because of what he used to do, but the few times he did the dreams were always about one of only a few people. Despite personal feelings, Harry still was one of Jay's featured dream fodder.

Jay lifted a hand and rubbed it over his face. "Fuck you, Harry..." he groaned even though Harry wasn't actually responsible for Jay's brain. Jay would really prefer for his brain to leave the naughty dreams to when he wasn't also having a personal crisis about what he was, but Jay supposed that was par for his terrible course. Maybe it was just because for the first time since Jay was thirteen he hadn't had sex in months that his libido was suddenly going through withdrawal or something.

Wanting to take his mind off of whatever his teenaged cock -which wasn't even currently there- wanted, Jay pushed himself up from the bed to look at the barren room more fully. Maybe he should try to make this place a bit more comfortable or something. He'd managed to get it looking like this so far, so surely he'd be able to get it even better if he tried.

Jay extended a hand to the empty space and closed his eyes to try and concentrate like he had the first time. Jay wasn't sure what he wanted to make really but he needed something to keep himself occupied and not as frustrated. His mind kept rifling through various options of what he could do to keep himself busy but wouldn't settle on anything.

Jay dropped his hand with a sigh and opened his eyes again. Sure enough, there wasn't anything there. "I hate this place," he groused to nobody.

The silence lingered and Jay hated every second. He wasn't so used to sitting in silence. Even when he was with the others in the library where they were supposed to be all quiet then never were. Admittedly, they often weren't because Jay himself was always complaining about being made to study. But that was really beside the point.

Jay fell back against the bed again and stared up at the darkness that just went on endlessly above him. He wasn't sure where the hanging lamps were hanging from up there but Jay supposed there was some sort of ceiling he just couldn't see. Jay closed his eyes again and tried to just relax even though nothing about the situation was relaxing. Part of the reason he had given in and gone to sleep earlier was because he was being quickly driven crazy from being trapped in the lamp. Unfortunately, after a long nap like the one he'd woken up from, he wasn't in the least bit tired anymore.

"... I am so, damn, bored," Jay said with another sigh.
open any of the locks and let himself out to go get the others. Iago couldn't even try for the lamp since Reza was keeping it in a cabinet beside the bed and, again, Iago had no thumbs.

Keeping quiet so that Reza didn't notice him was difficult since Iago wanted nothing more than to rant at the boy who was in the bathroom washing his face as if that would magically cure his curse of acne. Iago fluttered from his perch on top of the dresser to the window and peered outside. While he'd been waiting in silence the light of afternoon had slowly moved across the room and then disappeared.

From what Iago could see they did seem to be close to Auradon Prep. Iago was quite familiar with the castle's towers from how many times he had flown over them by this point. But Iago didn't think they were actually on the school grounds. He could vaguely recall a building sitting where they were but nobody ever went into or out of it so Iago had taken little notice of it before. It had just been a random piece of background to be ignored. Iago found it frustrating to be so close to who he knew could be of help and yet foiled by his lack of human appendages. He couldn't even reach the lamp and summon Jay out himself, which would fix pretty much all the problems.

Iago turned his head to peer up at the lock of the window. The latch wasn't even in place and Iago fought the urge to yell in frustration. Normally, Iago was perfectly happy being a bird, but this situation was really driving him a bit crazy. Freedom was right there and he couldn't get to it because of a stupid pane of glass!

Iago pecked at the glass for a moment even as he listened to Reza muttering darkly in the bathroom. The water faucet turned on again so that the teen could try washing his face yet again. Iago might have told him that it was useless. A Djinn's curse couldn't be dealt with so simply and Reza would need some sort of magic to cure himself but Iago also didn't like the idiot so wasn't about to give that piece of advice.

Although, Iago thought as he eyed the window, with Reza making that much noise in the bathroom it might cover some other sounds. Iago continued to eye the old single panel glass window and then looked around the room. The bedroom was pretty barren but the parrot did spot an old fashioned alarm clock with the bells sitting on top of a side table. Iago quickly grabbed it up in his claws. The room wasn't very big so he had to fly in a few circles to build up speed. The running water was enough to cover the noise of his wings but Iago knew that the second he did what he was thinking of Reza would know something was up. Iago didn't think he had much choice though.

Iago flew a few more times in the circle and then cut a different angle. At the last second, Iago pulled up and let go of the alarm clock. He heard the shatter of the window's glass as the clock went straight through it and Reza's startled exclamation. Iago nearly crashed into the ceiling from how he had to pull up at the last second and even hit with his claws and wings before he managed to push off again.

Reza came barging in but Iago was already swooping down towards the broken window. "What the hell!!?"

"You picked the wrong guy to cross!" Iago shouted back as he tucked his wings in to make it through the small hole in the glass. He felt the jagged edges scrape along his feathers but he made it through and then spread his wings again. If Iago hurried he could get Mal and the others before Reza took off, which he was definitely bound to do.

Iago flew as fast and as hard as he could to get to the dorms in the distance. He hoped it wasn't so late that it would be hard to get them awake. He hadn't thought to look at the time on the clock before flying it through the window. Oh well, if they were asleep, Iago would just throw rocks at the window or yell through it or something. He would get them up and tell them to haul ass and
save Jay before he woke up the whole dorm. Hell, waking up the whole dorm might not be a bad idea anyway.
Chapter 45

Carlos, after their initial meeting, had never really found too much cause to be afraid of Mal. Not until right now anyway. Carlos did what came naturally to him and stayed quiet and out of the way as Mal shredded her pillow in a rage. Not that Carlos didn't understand her feelings. He was worried about Jay too, it was just his worry didn't tend to manifest as destruction. Carlos kept petting Dude nervously and glanced over at Evie. The blue princess was playing with her brush and makeup compacts as if not sure what to do with her hands. Mal was causing the room to look like a flock of birds had exploded in it, but both Carlos and Evie recognized when to just stand back.

Evie had managed to get Mal into something vaguely resembling pajamas -black and green leggings and a loose purple tank top- in a desperate ploy to try and get Mal to rest. But that was as far as either of them had managed. Carlos winced as some fabric tore under Mal's nails. Carlos instead thought they were starting to look more like talons or claws but kept that to himself. Othello had taken off in terror as Mal's rage boiled over and Carlos was pretty sure he'd be found again in Dizzy's room in the morning. Carlos kind of envied the bird his ability to escape.

Mal cursed loudly and flung a handful of stuffing at the door even though it only flew about halfway across the room before fluttering down to the ground. Carlos glanced at Evie uneasily. If this kept up, Mal wouldn't have a bed to sleep in. Evie fiddled with her brush for another moment before putting it down on her vanity and turning to Mal completely. Carlos saw how she rubbed her hands on her blue satin sleep shorts nervously. "Mal, you need to try and calm down," she said very bravely, Carlos thought.

Mal whipped around, and Carlos edged back from the venomous green eyes that were very much enraged. "Calm down!?" she echoed. "It's been a week and Jay is still fuckin' gone!"

Evie and Carlos both flinched. "Yes, but you haven't slowed down this whole week," Evie continued to plunge forward. "You're not going to be able to help Jay at all if you're too exhausted to do anything."

"I'm not exhausted. I'm pissed!" Mal growled.

Evie sighed and moved to fiddle with the bottom of her over-sized broken-heart t-shirt she used as a sleeping top. "I know. But ripping up your bed isn't helping anyone either..."

Mal glared for a solid minute before taking a deep breath and then letting it out again. As she exhaled the glow in her eyes dimmed and her shoulders slumped. "I don't know what else to do," she admitted. "Someone's taken Jay, and we don't know how, why, or where to."

Carlos fiddled with the strings of Dude's spotted hoodie that matched his own. "We'll find him," he said, trying to stay positive even though that was very hard with so little information. "Everyone is keeping their eyes out so whoever has him can't get very far."

"I promised him nothing would happen to him," Mal muttered. "I promised and the very first thing he gets kidnapped? I am the worst leader ever..."

Evie hurried forward instantly. "No you're not," she denied. "It's only because of you that we're living here in Auradon and have a chance to be happy at all."

"Yeah, if you hadn't decided to trust Ben and give us a chance to be good we'd all be... probably dead by now, actually," Carlos muttered. "I know I would be..." His mother would most likely have
killed him when he refused to hurt Dude.

Mal didn't look entirely convinced about that, but she did at least nod in a sort of half agreement with her friends' assessment. She looked from Evie to Carlos and then back to Evie again. "I just want all of you to be safe and happy," she explained. Mal had always known that having friends was dangerous. Any sort of connection left you open to being hurt through others, but she hadn't been able to hold back her desire for friends, and she thought she probably had the best of friends anyone ever could have. So, Mal was determined to protect them no matter what it cost her or how difficult.

Evie was suddenly there wrapping her arms around Mal's shoulders. "We'll find him, M. It would be too boring without him around," she said with an attempt at a smile. "After all, who would me and Dizzy practice hairstyles on?"

Mal couldn't quite help but laugh. Jay and Yzla, the two people with the longest hair in the gang, had often been ambushed by Evie and Dizzy on slow days to serve as makeshift mannequins. Although Jay continually protested whenever Evie and Dizzy practiced on his long hair, Mal had definitely noticed that he didn't actually try very hard to get away when they were on the styling rampage. So long as they didn't cut his hair, he just sat there and endured whatever they had come up with.

Carlos grinned a little as he too recalled the memories of the gang hanging out at the loft. "Not to mention he's the best at finding booze for parties," he added. Carlos had tried figuring out where Jay stashed stolen goods like that or where he was somehow getting them from but had never been successful. Many a party had been fed solely through Jay's talents. "Speaking of, we should definitely celebrate once this mess is all straightened out."

Mal rolled her eyes at that. Even though she had allowed her gang to throw occasional parties she still wasn't the biggest fan of them. Jay, however, was the polar opposite of her in that way and loved a party. "I'm sure Jay will love that," she agreed with only a hint of exasperation.

"I'm sure he will," Evie agreed. A slightly uncomfortable silence fell over them after that, and none of the teens seemed to know how to break it.

Carlos scratched along Dude's flank and wondered what else they could possibly do to find their missing member. There had to be something that they were overlooking. Somewhere or something that had escaped their searches. People didn't just disappear into thin air, after all. When things settled down, Carlos was definitely going to get that watch thing for Jay that Ben had mentioned. At least then Carlos would be able to track him wherever he was.

Suddenly something hit the window, and all three of them jumped. "Let me in! Let me in! Let me in!" A familiar grating voice screeched. There were thumps and scratches and all sorts of a racket at the window as the parrot seemed to be too panicked to bother actually landing on the sill.

Mal hurried over and flung the window open. "Iago!"

Iago nearly tumbled into the room but managed to catch himself at the last minute. "Let me in! Let me in! Let me in!" A familiar grating voice screeched. There were thumps and scratches and all sorts of a racket at the window as the parrot seemed to be too panicked to bother actually landing on the sill.

Mal hurried over and flung the window open. "Iago!"

"Iago?!" Carlos echoed as he got up from his seat. "Reza's here?" he asked as his mind whirled and attempted to put the scattered pieces together.

"Yes! And he has Jabir! Now come on!" Iago snapped.
Carlos still wasn't entirely sure what was going on, but he scrambled off the bed he had been sitting on to hurry out of the room with Mal and Evie. Iago was flying pretty fast but would halt briefly to make sure the kids were behind him. Carlos had no idea how someone like Reza could keep someone like Jay prisoner. Reza was tiny compared to Jay and wouldn't have been able to overpower the thief even with injuries.

"How could Reza have Jay?" Carlos asked as they took the stairs of the dorms about ten at a time in their haste. Carlos nearly tripped but managed to grab hold of the railing just in time and swing himself down the next flight.

"He has the lamp," Iago supplied.

"He has what?!" Mal demanded as she burst through the doors to lead outside.

"Jafar gave it to him so that Reza could wish him here to Auradon," Iago told them.

Carlos' jaw very nearly dropped. "That moron!" He had always known that Reza had an over-inflated idea of his own intelligence but this was a bit much, Carlos thought. Every kid on the Isle knew that making deals with the big villains would only ever end badly. You couldn't trust the adults to keep their word. "And he's actually going to go through with it?"

"Seems like it," Iago agreed.

Mal let out a sound of annoyance. Why anyone would want to help an abusive ass like Jafar, she had no idea, but she also didn't much care. She was going to get to Jay before that happened. She swore it. "How far is he, Iago?"

"In the visitor's building," Iago said with a quick gesture up ahead of them. The visitor's building was only ever used at the beginning of the school year and during events like Parent's day and when other school's sports teams would come for games. It was sort of like a private hotel at the edge of the grounds. Currently, nobody was using it, and that must have been why Reza had taken shelter there.

Carlos was the fastest of all of them and started to pull ahead. "What room is he in, Iago?" he asked as Dude hurried along beside him and barked excitedly.

"I don't know I flew out the window and I was in the lamp with Jabir before that," Iago answered, sounding mildly frustrated.

"We'll find him!" Mal assured vehemently.

Carlos nodded in agreement. They were already almost halfway across the yard, and the full moon was bright enough that Carlos was sure he wouldn't get lost in the short stretch of woods between the two buildings even if he didn't take the trail that wound its way through the trees as if it had nowhere important to go.

Suddenly, Carlos felt something catch his foot, and he went tumbling forward. "Carlos!"

Carlos pushed himself up and let out a short noise of surprise and fear as the silver painted grass was obscured by dense golden smoke that came pouring out of nowhere. He had just enough time to glance up and see Mal and Evie's faces before that too was blocked out by the fog. "Carlos!"

Carlos couldn't help the short scream that escaped as a shock went through his body. It was like that time he accidentally zapped himself while working on the way to put a hole in the barrier only about a million times worse. He heard the girls scream for him, but he couldn't respond. Carlos
continued to scream as his whole body seemed to twist into itself and then rip apart in about fifty
different directions. Every inch of his body hurt and all he could see was gold flashing in front of
his eyes before even that went dark.

When Carlos came back to his senses, he was glad he wasn't dead even though he felt like he really
should be. "W-what happened?" Evie asked from nearby.

"That was Jabir's magic," Iago said. "Reza must have made another wish."

Carlos groaned some and blinked. Strangely everything was still in odd monotones that he figured
was from how much that had hurt. "Are you okay!?" a voice that Carlos was sure he'd never heard
before asked.

He looked and saw Dude standing beside him looking very anxious. "I'm okay, buddy. At least I
think so... what happened?"

"Carlos? Carlos... if you understand me I need you to try and say something." That was Mal,
sounding very oddly worried.

Carlos looked over and was surprised a little surprised at how Mal and Evie were looking at him.
"I'm alright, Mal. At least I think so," he told her.

Mal and Evie exchanged an uneasy glance. "I don't know if that means he understands us or not,"
Mal admitted. "Carlos?"

"I said I'm fine, Mal!" Carlos said in slight exasperation. "Now come on, we have to go get Jay,
right!?"

"I didn't know you could do that!" that strange excited voice said from somewhere to Carlos' left.

Carlos turned but again only saw Dude. "Okay, who is talking?"

"I am!" Dude said happily. "Are you going to stay like that?"

Carlos stared for a moment and then suddenly things slotted into place. He looked down at himself
finally and couldn't help but scream. White fur with black blotches in no particular order was
covering every inch of a sleek body complete with four thin legs and a whip-like tail. Carlos
scrambled but found himself falling all over the place as his strange body didn't cooperate.

I wish that Carlos de Vil were really a dog!
Chapter 46

Jay glared at Reza darkly from where he was floating in the middle of the room. "I cannot believe you made me do that," he grumbled as he folded his arms over his chest. Being forced to hurt his friends was horrible. Jay had never liked what he'd become, but he definitely hated it now that it was going to affect the most important people in his life.

"Oh shut up," Reza snapped as he packed a small ragged bag full of his few belongs that he'd brought and stolen. Jay eyed his lamp right beside the bag and tried to figure out how to edge closer to it. If Jay could just steal it back... "He got what he deserved. Kind of too bad Cruella wasn't around. I bet she'd love to see her son now."

Jay barely repressed a shudder. "You have issues... All this because Carlos is smarter than you?"

"He's not smarter than me!" Reza snapped as he whipped around. "I'm the smartest! I always have been!"

"Then tell me something, Mr. Genius... how does this end well for you?" Jay asked. "Do you really think my dad is going to just... let you go off on your own?" That wasn't Jafar's style. Jafar never lets anything-or anyone- go from his clutches. Jay knew that painfully well.

Reza just scoffed. "I'll have completed my end of the bargain," he said as he dropped the last bar of soap that he'd pilfered from the supply closet into his bag. "Speaking of. We'd better get to it before your friends get here."

Jay's eyes widened as Reza picked up the lamp from where it had been sitting right beside him. Jay held out a hand. "Reza! Reza, listen to me! You do not want my dad here. Trust me, if you wish him here, it will not end well for you."

Reza didn't seem to believe him. "Just because you're terrified of the old man doesn't mean I am," Reza said. "And I'm no traitor. Not like you." Jay tried to hurry forward to grab the lamp, but Reza was gripping it tightly and already speaking in a loud voice. "I wish Jafar were here at Auradon Prep instead of on the Isle of the Lost!"

Jay tried desperately to think of a loophole, any loophole at all, even as his thumb and middle finger came together. He scrambled to try and stop the inevitable and at the very last second Jay managed to think up one tiny thing. The snap echoed out unnaturally, and golden smoke swept through the room.

Jay couldn't see anything at all and wind from nowhere at all tossed his hair every which way. The room looked as if a small tornado had formed in it and Jay nearly gasped as he suddenly felt as if he had run for about five miles. He braced himself on a nearby bureau as he felt like he might fall from where he was floating. Jay supposed getting through Fairy Godmother's barrier was hard, even for a wish made to a Djinn.

The wind slowly faded and the golden color filling the room started to fade away. When the smoke cleared entirely, Jay nearly whimpered when he saw his father standing right before him. He let out the breath he was holding and did his best to not look intimidated. He wasn't so sure that he was successful. Jay had never wanted to see his father ever again. "Dad..."

Jafar smiled in an unfriendly sort of way. "Hello, son... you've been ignoring me," he said. Jafar
moved closer, and Jay tried to shift back to keep the distance the same, mostly out of the habit of not getting within easy striking range.

"Not like there's a phone in the shop," Jay said. He was rather glad that his voice didn't shake too much when he said that. This was his worst nightmare come to life, and he was sure that Jafar could see how utterly terrified he was. This was quite a bit worse than seeing his legs slowly disappearing or his skin coming off. Jafar was angry. And that anger was currently all on Jay.

"I had to come all the way here just to get you to speak with me," Jafar continued as if he was somehow hurt by that. His eyes trailed down Jay's new form, and his eyebrow went up. "I see you finally grew into yourself. It took you long enough, but then you always were so terribly slow." Jay wanted to come up with some sort of response to that but, like usual, his father's words cut and seemed to take away any retort Jay could think up. When Jafar wasn't around, Jay could usually think of some sort of snarky reply, but face-to-face was those words evaporated. Jafar grunted at Jay's silence and then turned to Reza.

If Jafar had any thought on Reza's new face or heavily acne-riddled skin, he didn't say anything about it. Instead, he just held out his hand. "The lamp." Jay shook his head to tell Reza to not give it over but was ignored entirely. Reza was slightly wide-eyed but handed the lamp over without protest.

Jafar hummed and turned the lamp over in his hands thoughtfully. "Well, well, this is impressive," he said before eyeing Jay. "You finally brought me the gold haven't you?" Jay wasn't sure why he felt embarrassed by the sight of the lamp suddenly, but he was. Perhaps it was the mocking tone that his father was using, implying what Jay already knew that he wasn't worth that sort of lavish lamp. "Now, we can get down to our revenge."

"Your revenge," Jay couldn't help but correct. He didn't have any revenge to take. Not aside from slapping Reza a few dozen times for being a complete idiot.

"Don't talk back!" Jafar snapped, and Jay flinched on reflex. It had been a long time since he'd heard that tone and had apparently lost his ability to not react to it.

Reza was looking between them uneasily and grabbed his bag. "Well, I'm just going to be going-"

"No," Jafar snapped. "I need you still."

"But I did what you wanted! Our deal is done!" Reza argued.

"And I am extending it," Jafar said as if it were obvious. "I still have jobs for you to do, Reza. This one can't do them in his state," he added with an annoyed head jerk in Jay's direction. Reza looked bewildered and quickly growing afraid. Jay almost snorted an 'I told you so' but bit it back. He really rather not have Jafar's attention back on him.

"I have to get out of here!" Reza argued. "They're going to be looking for me!"

Jafar raised an eyebrow. "And that is my problem? You should have been more discrete." Reza's jaw dropped, and he seemed to be trying to come up with a response. "Now, come on, we need to retrieve my scepter and then we can go to Agrabah and reclaim what is mine."

"You can't," Jay said.

Jafar turned quickly. "What was that, boy?"

Jay mustered his nerves and folded his arms over his chest again. "You can't do either of those
things," he said firmly. "The wish was to bring you to Auradon Prep... I did. The wish didn't say anything about letting you leave the grounds. Here and the Isle. That's all the places you can go, pops."

Jafar's eyes blazed before he whipped around to Reza. "You idiot! Can't you even make a wish properly?" he nearly roared.

Reza flinched back and kept his bag in front of him like a shield. "I did what you asked and wished you off the Isle!" he protested. "It's not my fault he did that!"

"Of course, it is! He would obviously do something like this, moron! Djinn aren't to be trusted! Especially not useless traitors like this one!" Jafar yelled while pointing at Jay.

"It's Jay's fault!" Reza argued. "He twisted my words unfairly!"

Jafar practically growled before stalking over and raising his hand. Jay looked away even as he heard the sound of flesh getting hit. Reza cried out, and Jay found it really wasn't that satisfying a noise. It seemed that Jay wasn't cut out for vengeance so much. Jafar was suddenly in front of Jay and grabbed him roughly by the hair of his ponytail. "And you. If you think this will stop my plans you're mistaken," he spat. "You are still going to help me whether you like it or not."

Jay cried out some as his hair was pulled and he was forced to bend to try and keep the bulk of his hair from being torn out. He reached up to try and grab hold of his father's hand and loosen the grip. Jay wasn't successful and only ended up bent further and staring up at the enraged looking Jafar. "Well, boy?"

"Y-yes, father," Jay forced himself to say. Jafar's eyes blazed, and Jay saw him lift his other hand, already curled into a fist. Oh, Evil, what had he done wrong this time? Jafar's fist slammed hard into the side of Jay's face, and a painful light flashed behind one of his eyes in a way that Jay was very familiar with.

"What was that?" Jafar demanded.

Jay opened his eyes again even though his face was throbbing already. "Yes... Master," he said reluctantly.

Jafar eyed him for a second before grunting and letting Jay's hair go. Jay lifted a hand to his face, which he was sure was already bruising, even as Jafar turned back to Reza who was cowering on the floor. "Come on. Since you ruined this location and since I apparently can't leave the grounds... we will need to find somewhere else to be," Jafar said as he picked up Jay's lamp again.

Jafar turned and held up the lamp. "In," he ordered. Jay again was forced to comply and streamed into the lamp unhappily. He could only hope that keeping Jafar on the school grounds wasn't going to prove a mistake. Unfortunately, it was the only thing he had been able to think up that might slow his father down even a little bit.
Carlos did his utmost best to stop freaking out, but it was proving to be very hard. While he wasn't afraid of dogs really anymore being one was an altogether different prospect. Everything from what he was seeing to how he moved was different from normal. Carlos found it hard to just sit still and let his brain work through everything what with the panic and the influx of new sensations. What even were all these smells he was picking up now?

"Carlos! Carlos, calm down," Evie said as she gently put her hands on the somewhat unusually long hair at the scruff of his neck. Most Dalmatians had shorter hair than Dalmatian-Carlos seemed to have.

Carlos couldn't help but whip around at the unexpected feeling and slammed his snout into Evie's shoulder by accident. Luckily it didn't hurt, but the impact did startle him. "Carlos!" Mal reached out and put a hand on his barrel chest and gently held him down. "Calm down, pup. You're okay," she said in the most calming voice that she could manage.

"You look good!" Dude supplied. "This is so much fun!"

"This is not fun!" Carlos denied.

Evie wrapped an arm around Carlos' new body in an effort to comfort her friend. She still wasn't sure if Carlos could even understand them, but he was very obviously in distress. "It's okay, Carlos. We'll figure this out," she said.

Mal nodded in agreement. "I'm sure Jay thought of something to make us be able to reverse this," she said. She had no idea why Reza would want to turn someone into a dog, but she trusted her second-in-command to have done something to try and make things work out in their favor. Jay would do whatever he could to protect them.

Carlos couldn't quite help but whine and squirm in Evie's hold. Though he trusted the girls and knew he needed to calm down, he didn't really want to be touched right then. He wanted to... well, he wasn't sure actually. Running away seemed like a pretty good idea right then. Carlos had nowhere to go, but he was anxious and frightened of himself.

"Carlos," Mal said firmly. Carlos couldn't help but look up at her instantly at the tone. "Relax. Just breathe." Carlos focused solely on Mal as best he could and took as deep of breaths as he could. The breaths came out more like huffs, but slowly he was able to slow them down until he wasn't panicking quite as badly.

Mal tried to give him a smile and rubbed his head, ruffling his silky ears a little even though that felt weird. "That's right. Stay calm, pup. You know that Jay wouldn't just let you stay like this. I bet he's got some sort of loophole worked out for you," she assured him. "We just have to go get him back, and then he can tell us what he did."

Carlos huffed a few more breaths before nodding. He was still feeling a bit of panic which was making something deep in his chest flutter uneasily. Carlos pushed those feelings down as best he could. Mal was right, after all. Jay would have tried to do whatever he could to not leave Carlos permanently a dog, although Carlos did have to wonder why a Dalmatian. Some sick cosmic joke or one of Rezas? Whatever the reason, Carlos really found it in bad taste all things considered.

Evie gathered up the tangle of Carlos' clothes that had ended up on the ground after Carlos'
squirming and flailing about and neatly folded them over her arm. "The next wish would be to bring Jafar over," Iago said from where he was circling above them. "Let's go! Panic about being a dog later."

"Hush up," Mal snapped at the parrot even as she got to her feet. "Not like we see our friends turning into dogs all the time."

"Are you okay to come with us, Carlos?" Evie asked as she also got up from where she had been kneeling. Carlos agreed even though the girls only heard a bark. Evie and Mal exchanged a look and then shrugged. Hopefully, Jay would have made things easy to reverse because Carlos as a dog -while adorable looking- was not something they really wanted to be a permanent thing.

Carlos stumbled a little for the first few attempts to move but he managed to get the hang of moving his four feet pretty fast. Dude scampered beside him, and they quickly outpaced the girls on the way to the visitor's dorm. The trail through the short stretch of woods was a little cluttered from fallen branches and leaves but easy enough to follow.

Of course, Carlos hadn't thought ahead to the part about getting into the building. He was forced to stop at the front doors and growled in frustration at the fact that he couldn't turn the knob at all. "Doors are the worst," Dude supplied from where he was looking up at Carlos. Carlos briefly found himself thankful he was at least still bigger than his own pet.

"Doors are the worst," Carlos muttered as he glared sulkily at the doorknob. If he had thumbs, this wouldn't be a problem. Carlos glanced behind him at where the girls were just coming through the treeline.

Mal reached for the door as soon as she got close enough but the knob wouldn't turn. She scowled and jiggled the door hard, but it remained locked. Mal cursed, and her eyes glowed bright green. Evie put a hand on Mal's bicep and asked, "Mal, what was the door unlocking spell?"

"I don't remember," Mal growled as she jerked the door again.

"Yes, you do," Evie denied. "Just calm down and think. It ended with... kick or something right?"

"...yeah, something like that," Mal agreed with only half her attention as she glanced around for an open window or something.

"Mal! Think!" Evie said. Mal glared at Evie in annoyance. "We'll get in faster if you can remember, Mal! For Jay!"

Mal made a face but then closed her eyes and took a deep breath to try and remember the spell. She didn't have much reason to remember that one though since she'd only used it a few times. Mal had to think for another minute before she opened her eyes again and fixed the doors with a determined look. "Make it fast... make it fast, make it quick. Open now without a kick."

The doors stayed shut, and Mal made a noise of frustration before kicking the door herself. "Damn it!"

"Mal, that had to be close," Evie said.

Carlos tried to encourage his leader too, but all that came out was barks and whines that neither girl could understand. Evie at least glanced down at her transformed friend, but Mal didn't even bother. Mal pursed her lips and glared at the offending doors again. "Make it fast, make it quick..." she muttered as she tried to recall the exact words of the spell. "Make it fast, make it quick. Open... Open up without a kick!"
The doors flung open, and Mal allowed herself a brief smile before hurrying inside. Carlos had already taken off into the building and was trying his best to put his new senses to good use. Luckily, he lived with Jay so he figured that picking out the Arabian's scent wouldn't be too hard.

Carlos felt weird sniffing around but buried the strangely embarrassed feeling he was getting by trying to use his new senses. This was more important, and he was mostly sure that Mal and Evie wouldn't pick on him later for it. Iago led the charge up the stairs at the end of the hall up to the third floor.

Once Carlos got onto that level his nose was able to pick out the faint smell of something very familiar. The scent of sandalwood soap and just a hint of spicy smokiness that Carlos had never before been able to identify or place but now he understood was clearly from being a Djinn. It was a warm, pleasant scent that Carlos couldn't help but associate with safety and comfort, and that was even before his dog nose made it so much more evident than it had ever been before. "It's Jay!" he shouted even though the girls couldn't understand him. Carlos took off running down the hall without really checking if he was being followed.

Following his nose seemed to come quickly to Carlos, he wasn't sure if that was because of the magic or having to scrounge for food so often back on the Isle, but it was true. Carlos managed to find a door that he was all but certain the smell of Jay was coming from and halted right in front of it. Strangely enough, he could also smell other scents that he couldn't identify.

Mal reached past Carlos and opened the door. This one wasn't locked, and Mal opened it a little harder than needed, so the door flung open so hard it hit the other wall. The door bounced and slowly started to close again before Mal managed to catch it.

Unfortunately, inside the room, there was no sign of anyone. A window was broken, and a light was on in the bathroom but no actual people. "This is where we were," Iago said as he flew in. "I had to break the window to get out! He had Jay here!"

Mal stalked into the room and took one slow look around. Reza might have been keeping Jay there, but neither were there anymore. Mal felt like smashing something but turned to Carlos. "Can you find out where they went, Carlos?" she asked. "Track Reza down or something?"

Carlos wasn't sure since he wasn't nearly as familiar with Reza's scent as Jay's but he nodded anyway. He would give it his best shot. "Come on, Dude," Carlos said as he started trying to figure out which smells where which. "We have to find out where they took Jay."

"But Jay's not here!" Dude whined.

"I know he's not here, buddy, but he's in trouble, and we have to find him," Carlos repeated. It struck Carlos then that it should probably feel stranger than it did to talk to Dude. Talking to dogs wasn't a regular thing, but Carlos had slipped into doing it with almost frightening ease.

Dude seemed a little confused at that but put his nose to the carpet anyway. "What are we looking for?" Dude asked in a whisper that wasn't a real whisper.

"Reza's scent. He's the one that took Jay," Carlos supplied.

"Oh," Dude said. "... who's Reza?"

"A jerk," Carlos grumbled. "Who makes terrible decisions." Dude made a noise sort of like a whine that Carlos figured was his version of humming. After several more minutes of sniffing around, Carlos found a few drops of blood on the carpet that definitely did not smell like Jay. "I think I
found something!"

Dude came hurrying over to sniff at the spot too. "Carlos?" Mal asked as she got closer. "What is it?"

Carlos wished he could explain, but Mal and Evie didn't seem to be able to understand him. "Iago, can you understand me?" Carlos asked, looking at the bird.

The parrot didn't seem to since he just stared back and then demanded, "What?" Carlos grumbled to himself and then turned his nose back to the new smell. He would just have to track it down as best he could and hope that the others continued to follow him.

Once Carlos was sure that he had memorized the smell, he started to track it. He hurried out of the room with Dude right beside him and then down the hall towards a different set of stairs. As they moved Carlos realized another smell -a harsher smoke smell like something burning to charcoal that made Carlos want to sneeze- was also on the same path.

The trail led through the lowest floor of the building and then to a back door that, upon Mal's inspection, was discovered to be unlocked. Carlos' nose was flooded with a million more scents as they went back outside but he focused in on what he was assuming was Reza's scent. He had to find out where they had gone. Jay was most likely in the lamp again since Carlos couldn't smell him, so the only way they would be able to get him back was to catch up to Reza.

Carlos barely noticed when he entered the forest again and started ciphering out Reza's smell from the scent of leaves and dirt and woodland creatures. Dude was still following Carlos' lead, and between the two of them they could figure out which direction to go that had the strongest smell, even when other scents got in the way. That burning smell was still following Reza's and Carlos was beginning to worry what it was even coming from. Surely, despite Iago's warning, Reza hadn't actually been stupid enough to wish Jafar to Auradon. His arrogance couldn't possibly be that bad... at least Carlos really hoped it wasn't.

The trail wove through the forest with no clear destination, but Carlos and Dude followed it as best they could. Mal and Evie were hiking along behind them, and Iago was scouting around looking for any visible clues even though it was still dark out. Surely, they figured, between all of them something would be found.

They kept searching and tracking for hours and hours. None of them really noticed the time going by other than to be agitated that they hadn't found their quarry yet.

Slowly the sky started to lighten as the night turned into morning. Carlos was better able to see but barely paid attention to that as he focused on smell more than anything. He was only distantly aware that following the trail was getting harder to do and his four feet were tingling as if sore. He had been running around a lot after all. A little soreness was probably to be expected.

As the sun finally started to peek up over the trees, Carlos froze. His whole body was suddenly on fire, and he felt a sharp ripple run through his muscles. Carlos couldn't help the cry of pain as he heard the crunching of bones in his ears. He squeezed his eyes shut tightly and tried to not move and somehow make it worse.

Almost as soon as it started, it was over again, and Carlos opened his eyes to pant for air. "Carlos!" Evie and Mal were beside him instantly, and Carlos realized that they looked bright and colorful again where they had appeared all grey.

"W-what happened?" Carlos asked in bewilderment. He looked around and then down at himself.
He wasn't a dog anymore somehow. But he was very naked. He yelped and quickly covered himself. "I'm naked!"

"You turned back," Mal said as Evie handed Carlos his clothes. "I'm not sure why."

"It must be Jay's loophole..." Evie said she and Mal turned so that Carlos could get dressed. "Maybe Carlos is only a dog at night?"

Mal grunted. "Or maybe it's all werewolf style and only on a full moon?" she suggested. "It was one last night after all."

"I guess we won't know until tomorrow night," Evie muttered.

Carlos quickly got dressed again and then to his feet. He was terribly embarrassed again, but he was trying his best to not show it. "Awww... I liked you like that," Dude complained. Carlos had to do a double take on the fact that he was apparently now just... able to talk to dogs.

"Oh, that's weird..." Carlos muttered. "I can hear what Dude's saying now."

Mal glanced over her shoulder at him. "Well, there are worse side effects. Are you sore or hurt at all?"

Carlos stretched his limbs for a moment before shrugging. "A little but not too bad. Like a hard tourney practice or something," he answered. "Still, would have liked some warning because the actual-" Carlos waved a hand vaguely through the air "-part was very not fun. That did hurt. Like all your joints popping at once only ten times worse."

Evie turned when she realized Carlos had fully dressed again. "What are we going to do now, though? You were the one tracking down Reza."

"Dude can still do it," Carlos said before turning to the little terrier. "Can't you, buddy?"

"Well... I'll try," Dude agreed a little apprehensively before putting his nose to the ground again.

Carlos glanced at Mal and Evie. All three teens were a little unsure of what else to do. "We better find Jay soon... I really would like to know if I'm going to be randomly turning into a Dalmatian again any time soon..." The girls nodded in agreement with that. "Not to mention... I smelled a different scent with Reza that was really unsettling. Kind of like Jay only way, way darker."

Mal's face clouded over and Evie's eyes widened at the news. "We'll find him," Mal swore.
The gang spent several more hours going through the woods until the cross country team came running through and confused Dude. Mal was less than happy about that and it was only Evie's hand on her bicep that was keeping her from going fully dragon on the unsuspecting Auradonians. Mal did storm right up to Ben's room -despite the still early hour- and pounded on the door.

A half asleep Ben opened the door a moment later. "Mal?" he asked through a yawn. "What's the matter?"

"Jay was kidnapped by Reza and now, because of your stupid cross country running thing, Dude lost his trail!" Mal snapped.

"Reza?" Ben asked. "Who's that?"

Carlos stepped up. "Reza's a kid from the Isle. His dad was sent to the Isle for helping Jafar. I don't know how he got over here to Auradon but Iago said he has Jay's lamp," Carlos explained.

"And that he wants to wish Jafar over here," Evie added.

Ben's face fell remarkably quickly. "He wants to what?"

"He might have already done it!" Iago squawked. "His third wish was supposed to bring Jafar over and he's already made two that we know about!"

"Let me throw some clothes on," Ben said. "Then we can put out an alert. Can you give a description of him?" Ben asked as he disappeared into the room. The others followed him even as Ben grabbed a few random clothes from his drawer and started for the bathroom.

"He changed his appearance," Iago said. "That was his first wish. But Jabir paid him back for that wish by giving him a severe case of acne. He didn't enjoy being treated like a plastic surgeon."

Carlos couldn't quite help the snort of amusement. "Sounds like Jay alright," he said.

"Okay, well, severe acne will help identify him at the very least," Ben said as he came out of the bathroom while still pulling his shirt the rest of the way down. "I'll talk to campus security and have them search the grounds for any sign of him."

"We have campus security?" Evie asked in surprise.

"We do," Ben agreed. "We just don't have much reason to call them normally. They were put in place ages ago since so many royal children attend Auradon Prep. It made their parents feel better. But now that all the villains have been rounded up and are on the Isle, mostly the campus security just check visitor passes and put out parking tickets around the place."

Mal grunted a little in understanding. She was a little curious as to if the influx of thefts immediately after they came to Auradon had been noticed by the 'security' or not. They hadn't ever been confronted over it but then again maybe Ben had been protecting them again. "Well, more people looking can't be a bad thing, I guess," she muttered. The idea of asking any sort of law force even just school security guards rubbed Mal the wrong way. She pushed that to the back of her
mind, however, in favor of finding Jay hopefully faster.

"I... also thought I might have smelled someone else with Reza," Carlos murmured.

Ben looked a little confused. "You... smelled someone else with Reza?" he repeated.

"Reza wished Carlos to be turned into a dog," Evie said. "But whatever Jay did had him turning back in the morning."

Ben looked between the three of them. "You've had an eventful night it sounds like," he said.

"It has been kind of eventful, yeah," Carlos agreed.

"We almost had him!" Iago said angrily. "We couldn't have missed him by that much!"

"We'll search the whole grounds," Ben assured them. "But this Reza guy might have left the grounds by now," he pointed out.

Carlos shook his head. "He might but considering how long we were tracking him in the forest he either took the longest route possible or he had no idea where he was going," he said.

"Makes sense since he doesn't go to school here," Evie pointed out.

Ben finished tying his shoes and then grabbed his keys and phone off the side table. "Let's go. We should probably also let Fairy Godmother know about this. Maybe she can come up with some way to safeguard the school against... evil sorcerers."

"If Jafar's already here that won't help much," Iago said. "He'll go straight for his staff, wherever you've hidden that."

"His staff is in the museum along with all the other artifacts confiscated from villains," Ben said. "I'll alert the museum that someone might try and steal it so that they can increase security."

"Please do," Mal said. "The security there sucks." It had been a cake walk for them to slip into the museum and try to steal Fairy Godmother's wand when they first arrived. True, they had ultimately failed but only because the excitement of everything had gotten to them. If the four of them had taken more care about what they were doing, they probably would have been able to figure out a way around the force field.

"Maybe we should even consider moving the staff somewhere else," Evie suggested. "Make it harder to find."

"That's a good point," Carlos said. "Any basic internet search will tell you what all is in the museum. It's not very secure."

Ben frowned a little. "Well, we don't really have to worry about things like that here."

"Maybe Auradon's gotten a little too complacent," Mal replied. "But right now we should really be doing something about Jay being missing and his Dad maybe being lose." Ben nodded and together the group of them headed off to try and make some sort of definitive counter plan to whatever Reza was up to.

Jordan got up early and made her way to the mail room of Auradon prep. She had woken up to a message in her school email account that she had a package waiting for her. The school mail room usually wasn't too busy although they took in quite a number of packages during the beginning of
the school season and around the holidays. The mail room was on the first floor of the main building right across from the faculty lounge since it also housed the teacher mail slots.

The counter of the mail room was set back several feet from the hallway and left open so that anyone could see the stacks of packages and shelves of boxes full of paper that was within. Jordan noticed that several people were already there behind the counter as she came up to it. "Oh, hello there," the somewhat mousy girl with round glasses greeted. "What can I do for you?"

"I got an email saying I have a package?" Jordan slid her school ID over for the girl to see.

"One moment," said the mail girl before disappearing into a book and then off she went into the shelves.

Jordan craned her neck to see but there was too much stuff in the way. After another few minutes of waiting, Jordan saw the girl coming back with a smallish brown box in her hands with fragile stamped all over it. "You have to sign for this one," the girl said handing over a clipboard and pen.

Jordan quickly signed her full name and then took the package and her ID. She didn't bother going all the way back to her room with the box under her arm, however. Jordan only waited until she was outside and then used her dorm key to rip apart the tape and pry the top apart.

At a quick glance the box looked to be filled with green Styrofoam peanuts but Jordan dug around inside with her hand. Soon enough she pulled out a bright silver lamp decorated with pale pink diamonds. Jordan smiled and dumped the packaging into a nearby trashcan before tapping on the front right beside the spout.

A few people that were wandering the school grounds stopped and stared as a pale peachy pink cloud of smoke streamed out of the lamp. Jordan barely noticed and just grinned widely as the older female Djinn formed in front of her. "Auntie, you came!" Jordan said happily before hugging the rather statuesque Arabian lady.

Like most Djinn, Scheherazade had just slightly unsettling golden eyes and dark hair. Her hair fell in a riot of dark curls down her back and her golden earrings poked out from between the strands every time she moved her head. Scheherazade returned Jordan's hug and gave the girl a smile. "Jordan, you are looking well."

"I am. And I'm glad you've come, but things have gotten worse," Jordan said. "Jay's gone missing."

Scheherazade blinked several times. "Missing?"

Jordan nodded. "Yes. Not long after I called you he just disappeared," Jordan said. "We're all very worried. It's not as if he has anywhere else to go but here and he's been missing for over a week now."

"Are you sure he hasn't simply decided to be evil and gone to cause mischief?" Scheherazade asked. "This is Jafar's son we're talking about, after all."

"He wouldn't do that," Jordan denied.

"You haven't known him nearly long enough to know that for a fact, dear," Scheherazade pointed out.

"And you don't know him at all," Jordan replied. "He likes it here and I trust him." Scheherazade narrowed her golden eyes for a moment and studied Jordan carefully. Jordan, having seen that look in her Auntie's eyes before sighed in exasperation. "Can't I have a guy friend without you thinking I
have a crush on someone?"

Scheherazade hummed. "It isn't likely..."

Jordan couldn't quite fight down the heat that raced across her cheeks. "Well, it isn't like that. But he's one of us and we Djinn should stick together, right?" Jordan asked.

"There are some of us that are better off lost," Scheherazade said calmly. "It is far too easy for our powers to turn us cruel and arrogant. Not that some of us needed all that much help in that regard. Jafar himself is proof enough of that. But come, you need to tell me everything that has been happening if I am to help."

"Of course, Auntie."

Chapter End Notes

Scheherazade is going to be an interesting character to write....
Jay glared up at the darkness above him. There had to be some way out of the lamp up there. He knew it and he'd been dragged through the lamp enough times by now that he should be able to figure it out. Without Iago around the lamp was getting more and more impossible to deal with. He was going insane from both boredom and just general lack of anything entertaining to do. Jay had tried for a while to get his legs back again and hadn't been successful. He had a little more luck in figuring out moving while in his Djinn form, however, so now Jay was going to put that to use and actually find the exit to this place. Now that his father was back in the picture, more than ever Jay needed to figure out some escape plan.

Now if only he could.

Jay had managed to float up into the darkness and imagine enough lights so that he could actually see but he wasn't happy with what was revealed. Jay glared at the gold wall in front of him and put a hand on it to test how solid it actually was. Unfortunately, no matter how Jay pushed on it, the wall remained firm. "Damn it," Jay growled before looking around.

The whole ceiling of this prison was a smooth golden dome and Jay could not for the life of him figure out where the exit -that he distinctly remembered being pulled and pushed through several times- was. There had to be a window or a hatch or something that would serve as an exit. Jay pressed his ear to the wall, ignoring the clink of his earring hitting the metal surface of the lamp, so that he could try and listen. He knocked lightly on the wall to try and find any hollow spaces that would tell where the exit was.

Jay spent hours upon hours looking for some sign of the exit to no avail. He sighed in exasperation and flopped back down on his bed to glare at said ceiling. Jay knew there had to be some way, Jordan could come and go from her lamp as she pleased and from the story he'd heard so many times the blue Djinn that Aladdin found had been able to come and go from his lamp once he was actually out of the Cave of Wonders. So what the bloody hell?

Jay ran a hand through his hair and tried hard to think of what he was missing. There had to be something simple or obvious he just wasn't getting about this whole thing. Jay rested his elbows on his smoky lap -barely even noticing that he was doing it as he was so consumed with other thoughts. Jay went through his memory on everything he'd ever learned about Djinn and what Iago had been trying to work with him on before Iago escaped. Maybe, Jay thought, he was over-complicating things. It wouldn't be the first time he'd done that.

Jay looked up at the ceiling again and narrowed his eyes. He tried hard to picture some sort of exit in his mind. Jay imagined everything from a window to a trap door to just a big ass hole in the ceiling in an attempt to make the exit appear. Nothing was working and soon enough, Jay got frustrated. He let out any annoyed noise and grabbed his pillow to throw.

Being trapped in the lamp was really starting to get to him. Jay was feeling twitchy and nervous and he hated both of those feelings. As time continued the twitchy nerves began to morph into a
strange itch that was incredibly uncomfortable and aches that he had no real explanation for. Plus his black eye was throbbing every now and again. Not wanting to deal with his body being a pain on top of everything else, Jay grabbed the morphine bottle from where he'd left it and downed another pill. He only needed the annoyance to go away so he could focus on escaping after all.

Jay still had no idea how to use his magic but he was pretty sure that if he got out of the lamp he would be able to find a phone or something and call for help at the very least. Not the most ideal way of things going but Jay would take what he could. Being at his father's utter mercy was so unappealing he would take whatever jabs to his pride asking for help caused.

Before Jay could really figure out how to work the lamp's exit, he felt a familiar tug against his insides and his automatic response kicked in. He streamed out of the single room he was locked in as smoke and tried yet again to figure out how the exit was coming and going. There had to be something he could use!

Jay reformed in a different room from last time but that was hardly surprising. His father would have found a new place to use as a hideout relatively quickly. The current place looked more like a storage room than anything else although one that hadn't been used in a while. There was even a stack of boxes between where Jay was and the door. "Where are we?" he asked as he looked around.

"Back of the bookstore," Reza muttered from where he was sitting against the wall looking miserable. He had Jay's lamp in his hands and Jay frowned at it.

"You already had your wishes," Jay pointed out in annoyance.

Reza glared up at the other teen and Jay noticed immediately that Reza had not only a black eye but a fat lip and a few bruises coming in on his arms. "You still came out," he pointed out in annoyance.

"I don't really get a choice," Jay replied as he folded his arms. "Now what do you want?"

"Your dad is a brute," Reza grumbled.

"And I told you not to wish him here," Jay snapped. "You should have listened to me."

Reza glared again but Jay was unimpressed. This whole mess was Reza's own fault. "Can you reverse it?" Reza asked after a long minute.

"You know I can't," Jay answered instantly. "You made the wish all on your own and with ample warning as to what a fuckin' stupid idea it was. Now we all have to deal with the consequences of it." Reza frowned but didn't argue about it. Jay glanced around the storage room for a moment for any signs of a phone or a window or something. The only exit seemed to be the blocked door.

"Where is the old bastard anyway?"

"Off looking for a clue to find his staff. He left me here as a babysitter," Reza replied. "The baby here being you, of course."

"Shut your mouth, I'm not the idiot that wished for one vain thing, one petty as hell thing, and one stupid thing that might get us all killed," Jay said as he floated back to lean against several boxes. Too bad he wasn't a ghost or able to move through solid objects. Or at the very least understand how to turn into smoke. He'd be able to get out through the crack at the bottom of the door that way. Maybe even the key hole. "Are you going to keep helping him?" Jay asked.

Reza seemed to think about that for a minute as his fingers fiddled with the chain of Jay's lamp.
The young Djinn wanted to tell Reza to quit doing that but didn't figure Reza would listen since he hadn't listened yet. "Not like I can beat him in a fight," Reza finally said.

"That's a crap excuse," Jay snapped. "You at least can fight him. I can't even do that. Grow a damn backbone, Reza."

"Look at my face!" Reza said with an annoyed gesture at his bruised face.

Jay scoffed aloud. "That's nothing. Come talk to me when he breaks something or knocks out a tooth," he replied. "Or better yet, go tell Mal and have her straighten this out!"

"I can't go to Mal, are you crazy?" Reza demanded. "She'll kill me!"

"Maybe you should have thought about that to begin with then," Jay said. "At the very least let me out of this room and I'll go get her myself."

Reza glanced down at the lamp in his hand and seemed somewhat uneasy. Jay thought that Reza might actually be considering doing what Jay told him to do. That would be the first actual sign of intelligence since the Arabian got to Auradon, in Jay's opinion. But then the door to the storage room opened and Jay whipped around to face it.

Jafar, wearing a hood pulled low over his face and sporting a scowl that spoke of very bad things about to happen, came into the room. He eyed the scene in front of him before closing the door firmly behind him. "What is going on here?" he demanded. "I thought I told you to keep an eye on him... not bring him out of the lamp."

"I was... just making sure he knew his place," Reza said as he jumped to his feet.

Jafar narrowed his eyes and crossed the room to hold his hand out. "The lamp." Again, Reza hesitated. "Now!" Jafar snapped imperiously.

Reza jumped and nearly threw the lamp at Jafar, making Jay sigh in frustration. Reza really didn't have any sort of back bone. Jay hadn't thought much of the teen but now he was thinking even less, if that were possible. If someone had asked him a few days ago, Jay would have been convinced he couldn't think Reza could get more pathetic but he was being proven wrong over and over again.

Jafar held the lamp up and glared at Jay. "In boy. I'm not ready for you yet."

"Yeah, sure, Pops. I'll just wait," Jay said sarcastically as his body again broke apart into a cloud of golden smoke and then streamed into the lamp. He really really needed to figure out how to control that.

Yet again, Jay was relegated to just sitting in his lamp and waiting and he was very near blowing a gasket over the situation. If only he could reach Mal and the others then he could tell them what was going on and everything would be great. Surely he had to be able to do at least a little magic even if he had no idea how it all worked. Jay had done those stupid wishes after all.

Jay laid back across his bed and stared upwards. There had to be something that he could do about this bullshit situation. If only he could reach Mal and the others then he could tell them what was going on and everything would be great. Surely he had to be able to do at least a little magic even if he had no idea how it all worked. Jay had done those stupid wishes after all.

Maybe he could do a repeat of something else. For a moment Jay got a little excited. It would definitely be easier to just do magic again if he'd one it once. But then he remembered the only
magic he'd done was fixing Reza's face, turning Carlos into a dog, and bringing his dad to Auradon. None of those uses of magic seemed all that useful. Nobody on the Isle would be all that able to help him or if they were able they wouldn't be willing.

Still, maybe Jay could use that as a starting point to try and figuring out how the magic worked. He had nothing better to do so Jay tried to push his frustration down and closed his eyes to try and remember how using the magic to grant those wishes had felt like. He figured that there had to be some sort of triggering something or other. Jay would figure it out because he really didn't think he had any other choice in the matter.

Jay thought if he had legs still he would have even crossed them as he tried to focus. He wasn't used to this sort of thing in the least and Jay found it very hard to keep his concentration. Jay kept wanting to give up and do something else but he pushed that impulse down as best he could. The teen was sick of being such a loser that he gave up on hard things. He did it way too often and it had never ended up being the right thing to do. Always it came back to bite him in the ass. Jay was going to actually force himself to figure this out even though it was hard. He couldn't afford to wuss out on this one.

Jay stayed focusing for several hours, giving himself a headache and getting more and more frustrated with every passing minute that nothing happened. After another half hour, Jay finally opened his eyes to glare at nothing. "Why is this so damn hard?" he demanded of nobody. There had to be something simple that he was missing. There just had to be. Jafar could do it so it wasn't like Jay was genetically unable to do magic or anything like that. Magic should be in his blood like it was for Mal and Evie.

"Okay... maybe... I just focus on one thing," Jay said. He realized talking to himself was usually not a good thing but it was too damn quiet in this lamp and he really needed something to fill in the quiet even if it was just himself. That thought stuck in Jay's head and he thought for a moment. Maybe he could fix how quiet it was with magic.

Jay closed his eyes again and focused on remembering the music player that Carlos had made personalized for him. He knew it pretty well since he listened to music when he went out for runs and other work out things. Jay could easily remember what it felt like in his hand and the painted swoopy J symbol on the back that Mal had done.

Jay wasn't sure how long he sat there imagining the player but he was beginning to lose hope that he'd ever figure this magic crap out. Finally though he felt something hard in his hand and looked down to see the golden smoke clearing. In his palm was the familiar shiny black music player and when he turned it over, Jay saw it had the exact same gold and red paint with his initial on it that he remembered. "Fuckin' finally!" Jay said happily. He was so sick and tired of not being able to do a damn thing with magic.

Summoning his music player to him wasn't really that impressive, he realized, but it was the first thing he'd actually managed to do intentionally. Jay turned the player on and smiled a little when the music list was even the same and he hadn't thought about that. So it definitely wasn't just an identical one that his magic had made from his mind.

Jay was just about to start listening to it when he realized that, while he might have his player, he hadn't thought at all about his earbuds. He had no way to actually listen to the stupid thing. Jay fought the urge to throw the player against the wall. "So fuckin' stupid!" he cursed at himself in frustration. Now he was going to have to try and bring those too. As if summoning the player hadn't given him enough of a headache.
Chapter 50

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the short chapter but I wanted to be sure to get something out today since I missed it yesterday

Jafar fingered the orb the size of his fist where it was sitting in his pocket. Though the orb's magic was powerful in its own right, Jafar really needed both it and his staff to make his plan work. He could always make himself a new staff, he supposed, but that would take so much time and effort. Jafar would much rather his revenge be swift before anyone could learn of his arrival in Auradon. Of course, Jafar would need to keep the idiot Reza in line so that nothing could go wrong. Jafar didn't trust the boy very much more than he trusted Jay.

Speaking of Jay. Jafar glared at the lamp that Jay was trapped within. If Reza had been more careful with that wish and not gotten Jafar trapped on the campus, Jafar wouldn't have this problem to fix. He'd had everything carefully planned to work with three Djinn wishes. But now Jafar had to find some way to get either another wish or the staff a different way than he'd planned.

Yes, the staff was a major problem but Jafar also had the added difficulty of staying hidden. The sorcerer very much doubted that he'd be left unfound forever where he was currently. No, it was more likely he'd have to find a new hiding place soon enough.

Jafar pondered the problem another few moments before glancing over at Reza. The boy, while stupid, would at least blend in with the other school children here so would have to do to run errands while Jafar stayed low key. The biggest issue Jafar had was deciding which solution to his current problem he would follow.

Wishing the staff to him would be easiest, and then Jafar could find a magical way to work around Jay's limitation. With both the orb and the staff, even a Djinn's magic should be breakable. However, Jafar needed all three wishes for his ultimate revenge. It had taken him ages to work out the perfect plan against Aladdin.

The first step, Jafar had planned, was to get to Agrabah. Then, with the power of his staff being amplified by the orb, Jafar would be able to make all of Agrabah his to rule. Needing to actually be in Agrabah was the only thing holding him back though Jafar hadn't anticipated it being a problem. Once he had control of Agrabah Jafar would use his wishes. The first wish was to lock Aladdin and the other sickening do-gooders somewhere... Isle-like. Then another wish to take care of Aladdin's son, because Jafar would be damned if he let his worst enemy's son enjoy a happy life. Also, though he was loathe to admit it, Jafar might have been a tiny bit jealous that Aladdin's son was (in Jafar's mind) more successful than Jay. With Aladdin and the prince getting their just rewards, Jafar could use the last wish to become immortal and thereby unstoppable.

But, to do all of that he needed his staff. Technically he could make the wishes using Jay's lamp now but that would alert everyone and Jafar didn't wish to do that without the bulk of his magic at his disposal. He couldn't be sure that he would remember every single annoying hero that was wandering around Auradon. There were, quite nauseatingly, a huge number of Princes and sidekicks and just general meddlesome people that Jafar would need to recall the names of. That, plus Jay's current desire to try and sabotage all wishes, made Jafar want to keep the element of
surprise as best he could.

If he found a way to get a free wish Jafar would prefer to use that to get his staff. It would cut out the need to actually find the staff first. The wish would just bring Jafar's property back without any problem. Although finding it and stealing it would probably be subtler.

Jafar thought about it for several minutes as he pulled the orb out of his pocket to better examine it thoughtfully. The black inky substance inside the orb swirled around for seemingly no reason as Jafar stared. Nasira's fantastically useful little trinket had come to life here in Auradon and was getting more and more active the longer it was in Auradon. Merlin, Jafar knew, would be up in arms if he knew where one of the shards of the Crystal of the Auradon actually was. Ever since a battle with Madame Mim the original crystal had been shattered into almost a dozen pieces. Nasira had tracked this piece down where it had ended up lost in the Agrabah Desert. Though Jafar couldn't use the small orb to its full potential since it was just a shard, but there were plenty of things that it still could do. Perhaps the shard's ability to absorb magic would be enough for him to be somewhat daring and betting on Reza's thieving abilities was a gamble.

"Reza," Jafar growled, having reached his decision.

Reza looked up but stayed curled up in the corner where he had taken shelter when Jafar returned. Reza's face was even more swollen and discolored than before but Jafar didn't feel even a twinge at seeing the damage. "I need you to find someone stupid enough to make a wish on the lamp," Jafar said.

Reza seemed confused. "What do you mean?" Reza asked.

Jafar sighed in utter frustration. Why did all the children from the Isle have to be so entirely useless? "I need someone who can make a wish. Someone easy to manipulate. Surely here in Auradon there is an idiot prince or princess just waiting to make a horrible mistake. Go and find one."

"They'll say no the minute they hear your name," Reza argued.

"Then don't say my name," Jafar spat. "Now go!"

Reza paled and quickly scrambled to do as he was told. Jafar glared as the door closed behind him. He had a terrible feeling that Reza was going to let him down again. Jafar had come to trust his instincts when it came to things like that. Perhaps he would have to come up with a backup plan to getting some idiot patsy to make the wish he needed.

If only he could trust Jay to do as he was told for once, Jafar would just send him to go steal the staff back. Unfortunately, the second that Jay was out of the lamp he would no doubt cause trouble. Jafar didn't even want to risk bringing the rebellious young Djinn out in this room where they were fairly isolated.

Jafar looked over at the lamp sitting on one of the boxes and narrowed his eyes. If only there was some way to ensure the boy's cooperation. But Jafar didn't have his easiest method of control anymore. Here in Auradon, Jay had access to more magic than Jafar. Luckily, Jay didn't have any idea how to use it. Then again, perhaps that benefit of more knowledge would be enough for Jafar to get his way. Jay might currently be more powerful than Jafar since he was a Djinn but Jay didn't know that. He had never managed to pick up Jafar's subtleties.

Jafar narrowed his eyes and pondered what would be the best way to ensure that Jay didn't pull anymore tricks. He was a frustratingly hard headed boy but Jafar was sure that he'd get through his
thick skull.
Chapter 51

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mal narrowed her eyes at the lady genie standing in front of her. Mal didn't trust many people and especially not strangers that had no particular reason to help her or her friends. Scheherazade seemed neutral enough, but Mal hadn't survived as long as she had by taking people's reactions at face value. Jordan had brought her 'auntie' over as soon as she had arrived and, while Mal was glad for the help, she couldn't warm up to a stranger so quickly. Jordan seemed at a slight loss for what to do and had settled for just doing nothing to allow the situation to develop naturally. Mal figured that was probably for the best since if Jordan were to vouch for this new genie, Mal wasn't sure that would actually help her overactive sense of paranoia relax any. "You don't trust me," Scheherazade said after several minutes of silence.

"Oh no, I trust you." Mal said sweetly. "I am full of trust. All the trust."

"Mal!" Evie hissed. "Be nice! She could help us."

Mal crossed her arms and continued to eye Scheherazade unhappily. Though she was willing to go to Fairy Godmother and Ben for problems like this, she at least knew them. She had no basis for if she should allow Scheherazade to know so much about them and the situation. Scheherazade had a look about her that told Mal she was a lot more shrewd than the average Auradonian. Mal recognized that from her own mother although -she had to admit- Scheherazade didn't have that cruel edge that Maleficent always seemed to possess. She was crafty and probably knew more than she would ever tell anyone, but there wasn't any inherent evil that Mal could see. Mal figured that, at the very least, spoke well of the genie.

"I don't think you need to worry too much," Scheherazade said after another minute where Mal just glared silently. "Without his staff, even Jafar would not be able to challenge a Djinn magically.

"And what about a Djinn that hasn't even learned how to switch his form back and forth yet?" Iago asked. He had, somewhat unsurprisingly, took an instant dislike to Scheherazade. Mal thought that distaste, if not outright hatred, was his default for everyone that he met. Although the female genie didn't seem to care what the parrot's opinion of her was.

Scheherazade's face showed her surprise at Iago's words, but she tried to shove it down quickly. "Surely Jafar taught his son at least the concepts behind such a basic thing even if there could be no practice," she said.

"Jafar never taught Jabir anything," Iago said with a huff. "Except maybe how to dodge a punch. And that was more a byproduct than an actual lesson."

Scheherazade looked troubled by that but seemed to decide not to say anything. "At least Jafar may not be here," she pointed out. "You said that you couldn't be sure." Carlos had been hesitant to come out and just say he had smelled Jafar since he had no actual idea what the ex-vizier would smell like but on the other hand, he couldn't think of anyone else that scent could belong to. Nobody else that Carlos could think of would smell like Jay and yet be such a less pleasant version of that scent.

"We can't be sure, but it's been hours already," Mal pointed out. "If Reza hasn't wished Jafar over by now he probably wouldn't be at all and Iago said he was being an idiot and saying he'd follow
"Then we should see about tracking down Jabir as quickly as possible," Scheherazade said. "You said that you were searching the entire campus for any signs of them?"

Ben nodded. "Yes. Systematically. Since Carlos and Dude tracked them through about half of the woods, we started there. Who knows how many other little sheds and things were forgotten about when the property was turned from a castle to a school." There could be any number of little shacks sprinkled in the woods from back when servants were allowed to live on the property or for when hunting was a popular hobby. Undoubtedly, most, if not all, were horribly neglected or falling down but they would still provide basic shelter if someone weren't too picky. Ben didn't think anyone who grew up on the Isle would care the state of their shelter was in. "We have another team coming to take over searching the woods so that the security can focus on the school grounds but they're coming from Sherwood." The Sherwood Search and Rescue was perhaps the most effective in all of Auradon it was just unfortunate that they were located several hours away.

"Unless you can find him sooner," Mal added to Scheherazade.

"I could try to find him magically, but that works best with Djinn I have met before," Scheherazade said. "I'll do my best, of course," she added when Mal's eyes flashed green. "I just don't want you to have unrealistic expectations."

"We aren't the sort to get unrealistic expectations," Mal replied.

Scheherazade was quiet for a moment before inclining her head. "No, I suppose you wouldn't be. Well, I shall see what I can do. If you'll take me to the last place you know Jabir to have been, that might help."

"I can take you," Evie said. "It isn't that far from here."

"I'll go with you," Jordan piped up finally. She could breathe a little easier now that Mal had softened ever so slightly, but she was still a little worried about her aunt.

"Before we do that... our lamps need to be secured," Scheherazade said. "There's already one in the hands of people that shouldn't have them. There's no need to add to that count."

"I could put them in the safe in my room," Ben suggested. "I don't use it for too much so there should be plenty of space for both of them." Scheherazade nodded in agreement and, even though Mal still wasn't entirely happy, left with Jordan and Ben to safeguard the other magic lamps. Evie gave Mal a strained attempt at a smile and a brief squeeze of her hand on Mal's shoulder before leaving as well.

Reza was mentally kicking himself for this fiasco. Somehow everything he'd carefully planned out had gone wrong. He'd missed something, and he hated that. But still, this was all Jay's fault. He was sure of it. Reza just... hadn't come up with the how part yet.

Reza had gotten himself into a very uncomfortable position, and he wasn't entirely sure how to best go about getting out of it. He kept the hood of his jacket down low to hide as he wandered through the schoolyard. On the one hand, not helping Jafar would be pretty stupid. On the other hand, sticking around someone who beat you was also pretty stupid.

If Reza got in any deeper with Jafar, then he'd be even less able to get out of the situation. Then again, if Jafar's plan worked, being the one to help him do it would be a great move. If Jafar failed, well, Reza would be sent back to the Isle without a doubt. Perhaps it was smarter to jump ship
now, as it were? But, no, if he did that and ended up getting sent back to the Isle anyway, he'd be killed pretty dang quick for being a traitor.

So he should stick with Jafar.

... But then again, if he did end up helping put Jafar back, that might get him an excuse for bringing him over, to begin with. Of course, that depended on if Jafar lost or not. Nobody knew that Jafar was in Auradon yet, but Iago did get away so they would be expecting the sorcerer sooner or later. Reza shoved his hands in his pockets and continued to walk aimlessly while his thoughts circled around the problem.

Neither choice was really going to guarantee Reza getting out of the situation unscathed. He had to take some sort of gamble. Either he double downed on the evil, or he tried to backtrack now and hope that changing sides midway through this earned him enough goodwill that he could stay in Auradon. Ah, but then again, he had wished Carlos to become a dog. That probably wouldn't go over well.

Reza was so completely screwed no matter what he did. Either someone or everyone was going to hate him. Probably would be better to make sure at least the villains like him enough to not kill him. Especially since Reza had sort of already dug part of his grave by helping Jafar in the first place.

Reza was too busy debating the pros and cons of his choices (what few options he actually had) and didn't notice where he was going. So, it really wasn't that surprising when Reza ended up slamming into somebody else. Both of them hit the ground, but Reza jumped up first. "Watch where you're going!" he snapped automatically.

"Oh heeey, I recognize you!"

Reza felt his stomach drop straight from his body as his mind supplied him with the name of the person he'd collided with. Gil. Son of Gaston. Reza had utterly forgotten that he'd hitched his ride to Auradon underneath the limo that picked Gil and Dizzy up off the Isle. Almost as soon as the panic had built, however, it started to ebb again. Gil might recognize him, but Gil was also denser than rock. "Hi there, Gil."

"I didn't know you were here," Gil said where he was still sitting on the ground. "It was... it was Rexi, right?"

Reza scowled a little but let Gil use the incorrect name for safety sake. "Uh, yeah... where's your friends, Gil?" Reza asked as he glanced around for any sign of Mal or Evie or a vicious dog looking for vengeance.

Gil looked puzzled for a solid minute. "Uma and Harry are still on the Isle," he said with a thumb jerk in the direction of the bay.

"Riiight," Reza should have realized Gil wouldn't have known that he was talking about Mal. He was an absolute idiot after all. Reza realized at that moment his choice was really very obvious. "Hey, Gil... you think you can come with me for a minute?"

"Why?" Gil asked, sounding slightly suspicious but not looking particularly worried either.

"Because I've got a secret I want to show you," Reza said as he extended a hand to help Gil up. If Jafar wanted an easy patsy, you really couldn't get much easier than Gil. Gil accepted the offered help and practically popped to his feet. "It's not far. Come on," Reza said as he glanced around to
see if anyone had noticed them.

"Hey, we should get Dizzy. She likes surprises," Gil said.

"Um, we'll come to get her after I show you," Reza lied. "You know, that way we won't ruin anything." Gil stared for a moment and then nodded solemnly as if that made some sort of sense. Reza barely managed to not sigh in relief as he led the way back across the nearly empty campus. There were more kids out than Reza really liked, but he knew it could still be much worse.

Chapter End Notes

Someone suggested Chad and that's really a good idea but I'd already set this one up...
Chapter 52

Jay didn't particularly want to get sucked out of the lamp again, but he really didn't have any choice in the matter. He reformed in the same storage room as before and frowned when he saw his father standing there. "You want to go ahead and make those wishes?" he asked as he folded his arms across his chest. He really wanted to get things over and done with, and the best way to do that would be to rush Jafar into making wishes, even though he wasn't counting on his father taking that bait.

"Sit down, boy," Jafar ordered with an impatient gesture at a chair that was just behind where Jay was floating.

When Jay looked back at it, that was when he realized that around the chair was a ring full of chalk scribbles in what he was vaguely able to recognize as Arabic even though he couldn't read it. "What's all that?" Jay asked warily. He didn't at all like the look of about six inches full of things he couldn't make heads or tails of surrounding him entirely.

"Surely even you aren't so stupid as to not recognize a magical circle when you see one," Jafar said as he put Jay's lamp down on a box. "Now sit."

Jay didn't even make an attempt to do as he was told. "You said this wouldn't work," he argued. "That Djinn couldn't be contained in magic circles." Jafar had studied the idea in excruciating detail and had ranted and raved about the failure. He'd been forced to abandon his plans for revenge through those means several years ago.

"That blue oaf wouldn't be able to be contained this way," Jafar said in a sort of agreement. "But you are substantially less skilled than he is. This circle will be more than adequate to hold you in place."

Jay reached out with one hand. After only a short distance he felt a wall and found himself pressing against the invisible barrier. Jay tried hard to push his hand through the solid feeling section of air but couldn't manage it. All that happened was an unpleasant stinging sensation running up and down his arm as if he were trying to push through something electric. The harder he pushed, the more unpleasant the feeling became until it actually began to hurt. After several minutes of trying and failing, Jay pulled his arm back and rubbed his hand and wrist where the shocks had been the worst.

Jafar smiled. "As I said. You're hardly a proper Djinn, boy, so this will undoubtedly be sufficient to keeping you in place. Now sit."

Jay kept rubbing his wrist. "Really rather not," he grumbled.

Jafar's smile turned dangerous, and he easily stepped over the thick line of chalk to put a hand to Jay's shoulder. "I said 'sit,' and I expect your obedience," he growled as he pushed down hard while digging his fingers into the flesh of Jay's shoulder. Jay stayed upright for several moments, but Jafar just pushed harder until Jay had little choice but to fall back into the chair. "Stubborn brat."

"Fine, I'm sitting. Now what?" Jay asked unhappily as he resisted the urge to rub his shoulder now where he still felt where his father's nails had dug into his skin and flesh. He would have marks, Jay was sure.
"Now, you will tell me everything that I need to know about Auradon," Jafar said as he leaned over Jay's chair threateningly.

Jay rolled his eyes. "And why would I do that?"

"Because I am your Master!" Jafar hissed.

"I only have to grant you three wishes," Jay pointed out. "I don't have to answer any questions." That was his one silver lining. Although he was mostly at Jafar's beck and call, Jay didn't actually have to do everything that Jafar wanted. The only times he couldn't resist was when Jafar made an actual wish and Jay didn't see that happening anytime soon.

"You will tell me what I want to know," Jafar said. "Or you will regret it. You can start by telling me where my staff is."

"Don't you already have your stupid lacky working on that?" Jay asked.

"The idiot can't even make a simple wish without screwing it up," Jafar said. "Do you really think that he can manage to get me my staff without issue?"


Jafar narrowed his eyes, but then Jay noticed a different look enter his father's eyes. That manipulative look that Jay used to always fall for but now knew better. "Where is my staff, son?"

"What even makes you think I know that?" Jay demanded.

He expected the hit, but it still stung as Jafar slapped him across the face. "You think I'm an idiot, boy? I trained you better than that. You always find out where the most valuable things in any area are, and you wouldn't have ignored my staff while you've been here. So, where is it? Tell me!"

Jay narrowed his eyes. "Pass." There was no way on earth he was going to help his father get his hands on that staff. Not having it was the only thing that was marginally going well for Jay at the moment. Jafar leaned closer, and Jay managed to keep still and relatively calm despite how his father was looming in front of him. "You don't scare me, pops," Jay claimed, knowing that Jafar wasn't all that fond of the nickname.

"Don't lie, boy. We both know you are," Jafar replied with a hiss.

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Gil wasn't sure where Rexi was taking him. Or was it Rezi? Rusty? Remmi. Roland! No, definitely not Roland. "Rrrrandy?" Gil tried uncertainly. The Arabian looked behind him with exasperation. Gil had been trying out various names for about ten minutes, but none of his guesses were either correct, or he was just not being told if they were. "Come on, tell me what your name is!" Gil said. "It's driving me crazy."

The other boy sighed in exasperation. "It's Reza, alright!? Reza! R-E-Z-A. It's not that complicated."

"Reza! Right," Gil said. "I knew that!"

"Sure you did," Reza grumbled. "Now come on, we're almost there."

"Where are we going?" Gil asked.
"I told you, it's a surprise," Reza said in annoyance.

Gil nodded but wasn't all that satisfied with the answer. Although Reza had told him it was a surprise he had found he really didn't like now knowing where they were going or what they were doing. Surely there had to be something that Reza could tell him about what was going on. "Is this a good surprise?" he asked. He would be much happier if this were a good surprise rather than a bad one. He didn't like bad surprises. Those tended to leave him hurt.

"Er, yes," Reza said. "A great surprise."

Now, Gil wasn't the smartest person in the world. He knew that and was told it often enough that he had no doubts about his smarts. But he did tend to realize when someone was lying to him. He just sort of... knew. Even if he usually ignored that tiny voice in his head that told him something was off, he did hear it still. This time, that little voice was practically screaming, and though Gil would like to ignore it like he usually did, he was finding it strangely hard to do so. "Are you sure this is a good surprise?" He asked Reza as they entered a building that Gil had never gone into before.

"Yes, I'm sure this is a good surprise, Gil!" Reza snapped.

Gil liked that response even less than the one before. He was no stranger to angry replies. His dad and brothers spewed them all the time. And usually, those types of answers meant something terrible was going to happen. Something really, really bad and probably painful. Gil decided to not ask any more questions.

Reza led the way down a short flight of stairs to a darkly lit basement area that Gil didn't like the look of at all. Still, Gil followed down the hall for several feet until the sound of something that tugged his memory brought him up short. He grabbed at Reza's arm just before freezing in place. "Do you hear that?"

Reza paused and frowned. After just a minute, he heard what must have caught Gil's attention. Everyone from the Isle was more than familiar with the sound of fists against flesh and the accompanying grunts of pain. "Oh, that's not good," Reza muttered. He wasn't entirely sure what he should do at this point. Jafar was just at the end of the hall, and it sounded like he was having an unpleasant 'argument' with Jay. Reza was torn. He felt like he should interfere in some way even though he tried to not care about anyone but himself. Reza also didn't want to bring Jafar's attention onto him, though, which made him want to just leave Jay to whatever his fate was.

"This isn't a good surprise is it?" Gil asked.

"... I didn't think we'd hear this," Reza said. "We should probably do something." Reza didn't at all want to, but he didn't like the idea of having to sit back and listen to it either.

"Who is that?" Gil asked, his hand on Reza's arm tightened just a bit. Reza was surprised at how much Gil's grip actually hurt. Then again, he was Gaston's son, so he was probably pretty strong. Gil looked away from the door and to Reza with an uncharacteristically severe expression on his face.

Reza hesitated to answer. Admitting to Jafar being in Auradon was a terrible idea. Admitting that he was the one that brought Jafar over was even worse. And Reza really really didn't want to say that Jafar was probably beating Jay for some reason that Reza didn't even want to think about. Gil glared, and Reza felt very taken aback by it. Gil had always seemed so easy going. Reza didn't even know Gil could glare. Gil just kept staring, and Reza shifted uneasily. "It's... it's nothing."
Gil scowled even more. "What's going on?" he demanded again with his grip tightening a little more.

Reza winced at the grip. "Ow! Let go," he hissed as he tried to pull his arm back.

"Tell me who is in that room!" Gil ordered while pointing at the end of the hall where another muffled violent noise could be heard.

"I-it's Jay," Reza finally admitted. "And his dad."

Gil blinked several times as he processed that information. He looked over at the closed door and frowned. After a minute, Gil's grip finally loosened enough for Reza to pull his arm free. Reza rubbed his arm where Gil had been holding as Gil continued to stare at the door unhappily. "His dad," he echoed.

"Yeah," Reza said. "I guess they're having an argument or something." Well, it didn't sound like an 'argument' so much as outright abuse, but Reza wasn't about to say that. No kid from the Isle liked the word 'Abuse' so much. The kids never liked being painted as victims and abuse seemed to paint that picture far too easily.

Gil looked around and then dragged Reza into a side door that turned out to be a bathroom. "In here," he said before closing the door and locking it.

"Uh, why?" Reza asked, not at all liking the idea of being locked in a room with an unhappy looking Gil.

"If we interrupt he'll only hurt Jay more," Gil answered. "Plus he might hurt us, and then we can't help Jay at all."

Reza wanted to ask how Gil knew that but decided he didn't want to know and just took Gil's word for it. "We don't know how long it'll take though," he pointed out. "Are we going to be in here the whole time?"

Gil hunkered down in front of the door and put his chin on his raised knee. "Don't have much of a choice," he said. "Once Jafar goes away when can go and check on Jay. I hope that Jafar isn't as bad as my dad is..."

"How... how bad is your dad?" Reza asked before he could stop himself.

Gil shrugged. "Bad enough. Doesn't your dad have a temper?" he asked innocently.

Reza felt a very unpleasant guilty sensation. "Um... Dad doesn't really do much at all," he muttered. Though Reza hated being on the Isle and knew that his life would be so much better in Auradon, he made a point to not think about the situation of the other kids from the Isle. Reza's father was a drunk and didn't tend to do anything, including looking after Reza. Reza hated his old man for that, but moments like this really brought home how much more fortunate than some he was to just have a drunk for a dad. Reza felt guilty for wanting so badly to get away when he didn't have as much crap to put up with.

Gil nodded and then put his head back down on his knee. "How did Jafar get here?" he asked finally.

"Ah... I... Jay is a Djinn-"

"A what?" Gil asked.
"A Djinn. You know, a genie?" Reza explained. Gil looked a little less lost and nodded. "Well, Jay can grant wishes and, um, someone wished Jafar over here."

Gil frowned. "That seems a silly thing to do," he said. "Who'd want Jafar off the Isle?"

Reza managed to not shift uncomfortably although it was hard. "No idea..." he said uneasily. Reza didn't want to come out and say he was the one that made this mess. Especially when he didn't have to. "How are we going to know when we can go, though?" Reza asked.

"We'll have to check," Gil said. Reza waited for a moment, but when Gil didn't say anything else, he sighed and sat down on the edge of a nearby sink. At least this bathroom seemed clean and pretty much unused so hanging out inside of it wasn't too terrible. Reza made sure to not look over at Gil, even on the rare times they heard a particularly loud cry from down the hall.

After about forty-five minutes, Reza was starting to really grow restless. "Are you sure we have to just wait?" he asked as Reza tried really hard to push down his nerves.

"They never like it when they get spotted," Gil answered. "It's better to wait. Unless you have some way to stop him yourself." Reza shook his head. He had already been slapped around by Jafar once. Reza wasn't in any hurry to have that happen again since his face was still stinging and sore.

"Right..." Reza murmured.

The pair of them waited another ten or so minutes in awkward silence before they heard the door down the hall slam shut. Reza straightened and stared at the door as the sound of footsteps walked past at a quick pace that Reza couldn't help but think was very angry. Gil got to his feet and pressed his ear to the door. He waited for longer than Reza thought he would and then cautiously unlocked the door to open it.

Gil peered out into the hall and looked around for a moment before slipping out. Reza was unsettled but found himself following the other teen out of the bathroom. Gil paused and seemed to look at the stairs that they had come down earlier for several minutes before going towards the door the noises had been coming from.

"Oh, this feels like a bad idea," Reza couldn't help but mutter as they sneaked closer to the door.

"We have to check on Jay," Gil insisted. He might be from a different gang than Jay but Gil, on the whole, had nothing against the Arabian. He actually found Jay fun to be around, not that Gil really spent a lot of time with anyone besides Harry and Uma. Plus, Gil knew that Harry liked Jay a lot.

Reza couldn't help but whine a little at the idea of this but continued to follow Gil. Part of Reza felt stupid for letting himself follow Gil's lead, but he had no experience here and couldn't find the confidence to take the lead back. The door seemed quite ominous in front of them, but Gil only hesitated for a moment before opening it.

Jay was slumped on a chair in the middle of a circle drawn on the floor and Reza couldn't quite help but let out a noise of surprise and distress at how the Djinn looked. Jay had legs again for some reason but was covered in bruises and cuts. Reza moved closer and crouched down beside Jay, but the older teen was unconscious. Jay's face was bloody and swollen from the beating, and Reza felt incredibly guilty again. He knew this was his fault for bringing Jafar to Auradon and he really hated that feeling.

"Jay?" Reza called gently as he gave the other teen a gentle shake. There was a dark handprint of Jay's one shoulder, so Reza made sure to grab the other.
"He doesn't look very good," Gil muttered.

Reza cast a glare over his shoulder at Gil. "You don't say?" he asked sarcastically. As he was turning back around, he spotted Jay's lamp sitting on a nearby box. "Gil! Get that lamp."

Gil looked surprised and looked around. When he spotted the golden and red lamp on the box, he went over and gingerly picked it up. "This?"

"Yes, bring it over here. We'll put him in the lamp where he can be safe while we get out of here," Reza told him. Somehow, without really noticing, Reza had decided to switch his decision around.

Gil came over while still holding the lamp and eyed Jay uneasily. "Are you sure this'll work?" he asked uncertainly.

"Of course, I'm sure. Just hold the lamp out and order him into the lamp. I've done it before, so I know it'll work," Reza ordered. Gil didn't look convinced. "Damn it, Gil. Just do it! Magic works over here and since I made three wishes already I don't get to give him commands anymore!"

Gil tilted his head to one side. "You made three wishes?" he echoed.

Reza mentally cursed. He hadn't meant to reveal that. "Just do what I said, Gil. Who knows how soon Jafar will be back?"

Gil sighed and held out the lamp. "Man, I really wish Uma and Harry were here-"

"Gil!"

"What?!"

Almost instantly, golden smoke swirled up from the floor a few paces away, and Reza sighed as he watched it grow in size. "You never say 'wish' when you're holding a Djinn lamp, Gil..." Reza said in exasperation.

"... oh," Gil said as he watched the vapors as well with wide eyes.

After another moment, the smoke began to disperse and revealed both Harry Hook and Uma, Daughter of Ursula, standing where the smoke had been. "... wha' the hell?" Harry asked as he looked around at the very different surroundings that he was now in. Just a moment ago he had been in the Chip Shop with Uma, and now they were... somewhere else.

"Hi, guys!" Gil greeted with a slight wave. "I didn't mean to do that, but it's good to see you!"
Harry was still utterly confused as to where he was, but before he could really look around any, he spotted the figure slumped down in the chair just a few feet away. Time seemed to slow to the speed of a sea cucumber as Harry's brain scrambled to identify who it was. Though Harry was sure that he knew the guy, he was also positive that he didn't know anyone that was literally gold or who would wear what looked to be baggy silk pants. The massive swelling and bruising across the guy's face made it difficult to process who he was seeing, but then again, Harry had seen this particular face swollen and bloodied before. The world seemed to speed forward as it all slotted into place and Harry was lurching forward along with it before he even realized he was moving. "Jay!"

Harry pushed aside the weird kid with severe acne that he didn't know as he crouched down in front of the Arabian. "Jay?" The last time he had seen his ex even remotely this badly beaten, he'd done it himself during their breakup, and Harry hadn't felt all that bad considering he'd been nursing some painful wounds of his own. Although, Harry still hadn't enjoyed seeing Jay's pretty face all beaten up then, and he liked it even less now when he didn't know for sure how it had happened or who had done it.

Harry carefully put a hand to the side of Jay's neck to gently push the Arabian's chin up so that Harry could get a better look at the damage. He really, really didn't like how Jay hadn't responded to him. Harry had definitely never seen Jay beaten to the point of unconsciousness before. Behind him, Harry could hear Uma demanding to know what was going on but Harry barely paid her any attention. Harry had no earthly idea what was going on either, but he also sort of didn't care at the moment. He'd let Uma explain it later. Right now, Harry was a lot more concerned with checking on Jay.

After ripping a piece of his shirt off, Harry brought the somewhat ragged thin cloth up to wipe away some of the blood that was staining Jay's chin from his busted lip and nose. Jay's nose was definitely broken, Harry could see the break-even through the swelling, and, as he wiped away more blood, the son of Hook could see quite a few cuts across Jay's face that he had definitely sported before. Those particular slices into Jay's cheek and lip were right over top of the faint and distinctive scars left from the rings that his piece-of-shit father always wore. How that was possible Harry didn't really want to ponder.

Harry's eyes wandered down Jay's bare and strangely colored skin. Cuts and bruises were everywhere, all looked painful but not particularly threatening. They looked like wounds made when someone wanted something and was using pain as a method to persuade. Harry was pretty good at such persuasion even though he rarely had a chance or need to use that knowledge. Most people on the Isle would either squeal before Harry had a chance or were used to being roughed up and wouldn't be convinced to spill their guts that way. Jay is one of the latter of that group - not that Harry had ever had need to try and get Jay to tell him anything.

The pirate was getting more worried the more he could touch Jay without the thief reacting at all. Though they had rarely slept while they were together, the few times it had happened, just a light nudge from Harry had been enough to wake Jay instantly. Harry gave Jay another gentle shake. "Jay, come on, wake up..."

Harry thought he saw the lashes on Jay's slightly less swollen eye flutter slightly and brushed some of his tangled hair away from his face. "Tha's it, Jay," he murmured as Uma seemed to be ranting at whoever that kid Harry pushed out of the way earlier was. "Come on, gorgeous..."
Jay finally managed to open his left eye just a little. Harry was less surprised to see Jay's eye had turned from rich brown to stunningly gold then he perhaps should have been. The gold was pretty, and Harry thought it suited Jay, although currently his eye was bleary and didn't seem to be focusing on anything. Harry smiled in relief that Jay was able to do even that much with how battered he was. "There ya are, gorgeous."

Jay seemed even more confused and then made the mistake of trying to move. The effort turned into an awkward lurch that sent him off balance from his seat on the chair. Harry barely managed to react in time to catch the Arabian before he fell over completely. "Easy there," Harry said as he gently lowered the other teen to the ground. Jay moaned in pain, but Harry ignored that. "Damn, ya got heavy, Jay," Harry complained. Jay muttered something muzzily that sounded vaguely insulting but that Harry couldn't make out. "Ya can punch me later," he assured the thief. Harry had no doubt that Jay would still be upset with him, but right now that didn't matter.

"Ass," Jay slurred faintly.

Harry couldn't quite help but smirk. "Yers is nicer," he replied.

Jay closed his eye again, and Harry's smirk fell immediately and gave his ex another gentle shake. The thief didn't react, showing he'd lost consciousness once more. The pirate definitely didn't like how quickly Jay had passed out. That probably meant that Jay had been hit in the head a few too many times. Harry couldn't entirely stop himself from stroking the loose and bloodied strands of hair out of Jay's face again before looking up at the commotion that was still going on off to the side.

Uma looked about ready to stick a fork in someone, and Gil was holding a very fancy old-fashioned oil lamp to his chest in a strangely protective manner. Harry glanced down at Jay's odd appearance again with wide eyes. The gold skin and eyes, the strange hairstyle that Jay had never sported before, the new earrings that were definitely not the sort that a poor kid from the Isle would have, the loose pants that were perhaps the exact opposite of the leather Jay usually wore, and then the strange golden bracers around his wrists. Harry's eyes darted back to the lamp and then Jay again. The lamp seemed to oddly... fit with Jay's new look. Everything clicked into place, and Harry jumped to his feet quickly. "Wha' the hell is goin' on?" he demanded, no longer entirely content to let Uma figure things out.

"Reza here... was just telling me how Jafar ended up here," Uma said from where she was pinning the smaller teen to the wall.

Harry was startled by the revelation that the kid he was sure he'd never seen before was actually Reza but then quickly latched onto the second part of that statement. "Jafar?" Though Harry had noticed the cuts on Jay's face, he hadn't actually thought Jafar had caused them. Jafar should still have been on the Isle!

Reza flinched and nodded. Harry stormed forward and pulled his hook off his belt. Uma didn't seem surprised at all when Harry grabbed Reza by the front of his hoodie and hauled him forward. "So, how did Jafar get here, Reza?" Harry asked with false friendliness as he brought his hook up closer to the Arabian's pimply and bruised face.

"I... I didn't know he'd do this!" Reza practically squeaked.

"Then yer an idiot!" Harry said even as he practically felt his anger turning into the more manic energy he always had trouble containing. It was so bad this time he was fighting actual trembling of anticipation. He needed to burn off that energy somehow, but he doubted that Reza would put up enough of a fight. "Now, tell me wha' ya did 'fore I hook ya!"
Reza looked utterly terrified, which was only slightly soothing. "It was part of the deal! I get two wishes, and on the third, I bring Jafar here! But how was I supposed to know it would turn out like this!?"

"'Cause anyone tha' pays attention woulda known wha' Jafar does!" Harry hissed as he fought the urge to use his hook as more than a threat. Uma hadn't given him the go ahead, and she was his only real line of common sense when he was in such a manic rage. "Ya think it was only street fights wha' busted up his pretty face all the time?"

Understanding slowly seemed to be building in Reza's eyes as well as even more fear, but he pushed that down as well as he was able. "L-look, we don't have time for this! Jafar could be back any second!" he said, glancing at the door. "He wouldn't have left the lamp behind at all if he thought he would be gone long."

Harry was kind of glad to hear that, and he smiled widely. "Oh? Well then maybe I'll introduce 'im ta my hook," he said eagerly. He'd always kind of wanted to hook Jafar.

"Harry," Uma called firmly. "Not the time."

Harry growled and looked over at Uma. "Bu' Uma-"

"I said no," Uma said with all her authority. "He's got magic here and besides that," Uma jerked her head at the still unconscious Jay, "does your boy toy look like he can wait for you to have your fun?"

Harry tried to not glance at Jay again but failed, and he felt some of that defiance practically dissolve. Uma's first mate found it a little annoying how easily she could find the way to bank his anger even temporarily. Harry tried to hold onto his rage a little longer, but Jay's wounds were still sluggishly bleeding where he was lying crumpled on the floor, and he really could use proper treatment. With an annoyed growl, Harry pushed Reza hard against the wall. "Then how 'bout 'im? I can hook 'im, right?" Reza nearly choked on his own whimper.

"Later, Harry."

"Uma!"

Uma reached over and grabbed Harry's arm. "What did I just say?" she demanded.

Harry really was shaking with anticipation now, and he knew Uma would feel it in his arm. He glanced over at Uma and could see the thoughts and plans forming in her eyes, and if he weren't so desperately in need of some sort of action, Harry might be intrigued. Instead, he was just impatient. "I need ta hook something!" he hissed.

Uma narrowed her eyes and tightened her grip on Harry's arm. "You'll have something to hook later on," she promised. "But. Not. Now." Harry had to fight the urge to argue more. After a moment, Harry loosened his grip on Reza's shirt just a little and lowered his hook to a still threatening but slightly further away position.

Uma nodded and turned to Reza. "You've really cocked this up haven't you?"

"Please don't let him kill me," Reza whimpered.

"We'll see," Uma said. "I'm going to guess Mal doesn't know you're here?" If she did, Uma was sure that Reza would be a smear on the floor somewhere rather than talking to them.
Reza was looking very pale under his acne and tanned complexion. "She... might know I'm in Auradon... but not where," he admitted. Reza wasn't currently sure which would be worse: dying to Mal, Harry Hook, or Jafar. Right now Reza was leaning towards Harry, but that might be just because Harry was right in front of him with a very dangerous weapon in hand.

Uma studied Reza for another few moments and then glanced at Jay. Though Uma wasn't really looking to curry favor with Mal, being the one to retrieve the other girl's second in command would definitely make things better for getting the rest of Uma's Warf Rats off of the Isle. It was an advantage that she really couldn't pass up. And it might have the added bonus of thawing some of the ice that Harry had been throwing off for a while. "Harry. Grab Jay."

Harry gave a start of surprise and looked over at Uma. While Harry knew why he was pissed off and willing to do something he wasn't entirely sure what Uma was doing. She made no secret that she didn't really like Jay for what she perceived as him trying to break her gang apart, so Uma doing something now was a little weird. Still, Harry wasn't about to argue on that particular point so let Reza drop and went over to where Jay was still on the floor. Harry put his hook away so that he'd have both hands free as he knelt down.

"It would be better to put him in the lamp," Reza piped up suddenly. Harry paused and looked over his shoulder. Reza flinched down when the pirate's attention was back on him. "It's just... he's a Djinn, and they heal faster in their lamps... supposedly. I think." Harry was not impressed by the suggestion or reasoning. Reza swallowed hard and found himself second-guessing ever opening his mouth. "At... um, at the very least, he won't be jostled around when he's in the lamp..."

Harry narrowed his eyes causing Reza to shrink even further down against the wall. Harry carefully gathered Jay in his arms and then stood up, causing the Arabian to groan softly. Uma raised an eyebrow, but Harry didn't care. He didn't want to put Jay into a weird-ass lamp. Carrying Jay might be awkward and cause a bit of a scene, but Harry really could not care any less about things like that. He actually kind of enjoyed creating a stir like that although he knew that in this case Jay would be pissed at him -not that that was particularly strange.

"Right then," Uma said somewhat unhappily. Knowing there was a second option besides Harry carrying Jay, she'd now wished she hadn't given the order that she had. She still wasn't a fan of Harry and Jay being close but saying something about it under the circumstances would definitely set Harry off. Uma could call him back from most things, but she did not want a repeat of the incident where he found out what she'd done in the first place. He'd broken quite a lot, including a few bones in his hand.

Uma looked at Gil who was still standing there looking content and holding the lamp securely. "You know where Mal is?" she asked.

Gil brightened a little and nodded. "Well, I mean, I'm pretty sure I do," he added after a moment. "I know where her and Evie's room is!"

"Show us, Gil," Uma ordered as she grabbed Reza by the collar. "And you... I won't tell Mal what you did... yet. But one wrong move and I will."

"I think she already knows," Gil offered. Reza let out a noise of distress.

Uma shrugged a little and didn't release the other teen. "Well, I won't make it worse for you then," she said casually.

"You're just going to let her kill me!?" Reza nearly screeched.
"I don't save useless people," Uma snapped.

"I'm not useless!" Reza denied. Harry scoffed. "I'm not!"

Uma eyed the Arabian carefully. "... prove it," she challenged.

"I... I know what Jafar is after," Reza offered.

"Revenge?" Uma suggested half sarcastically. What else could a villain be after?

"Y-yeah, but I know how!" Reza hurried to say.

Uma thought for a moment before shrugging. "We'll see. Right now we have something a bit more pressing to take care of. Gil!" Gil hurried forward with the lamp.

Harry shifted Jay in his arms as gently as he could before starting to follow. However, no sooner had he crossed the thick chalk lines on the floor than Jay's legs seemed to dissolve. Harry cursed and scrambled to adjust his grip and ended up having to nearly go to the ground so that he didn't drop the injured teen. Harry, Uma, and Gil all stared in surprise at the now legless Jay that Harry was cradling.

"I told you the lamp was better," Reza muttered. Uma gave the boy a shake in reprimand but didn't immediately say anything in reply.

Though they had definitely noted his strange skin change, the Sea Three had never before seen anything like a legless person, and it took a few minutes to process. "Holy hell," Harry breathed.

"Can you still carry him?" Uma asked after a brief shake of her head.

"I... I don't wanna drop 'im..." Harry replied uncertainly.

Reza rolled his eyes. "Like I said. Hold out the lamp and command him in. He'll be safe in there. I promise."

"Your promise is less than chum," Uma replied. After a moment, though, she nodded at Gil. She didn't really want Harry to be carrying Jay anyhow.

Gil looked apprehensive but then held the lamp out. "Jay... um, get in the lamp. Please?" he said.

"That was your 'command,' Gil?" Reza asked sarcastically. Uma glared at Reza, who shrunk down quickly.

Before anyone could say anything else or Gil could attempt to be more forceful, Jay's entire body dissolved like his legs had. Harry gasped when the weight in his arms just evaporated and then golden smoke billowed away towards Gil. The smoke streamed into the lamp that was in Gil's hands and left the three that had never seen anything like that before staring.

"That's freaky..." Uma couldn't quite help but say.

"Pretty typical actually," Reza muttered. Uma gave him another jerk in reprimand. "Well, it is."

Harry got to his feet again and reached out to take the lamp from Gil. "Don't say 'wish' when you're holding it," Gil supplied helpfully. Reza rolled his eyes at the advice. Harry didn't say anything and just examined the lamp in his hands for a moment before putting it into one of the pockets of his red coat. Luckily, he had a few pretty big ones that could actually hold the lamp without showing anything.
Uma looked like she wanted to say something but didn't. Instead, she gestured for Gil to continue to lead the way. Gil almost cheerfully took off through the door, trusting that his friends would be right behind him since they didn't usually allow him to lead the way anywhere.
Auradon was almost painfully bright and cheerful. The amount of sun shining through oddly white clouds that didn't even cover the full sky made Harry's eyes sting slightly although he hid that as best he could. "So where did Jafar go?" Uma asked as she continued to drag Reza along with her.

"I don't know," Reza answered. "But he couldn't have gone far. He's not able to leave the campus."

"Why not?"

"Because Jay made it that way," Reza told her. "He had to bring him but wouldn't let him just leave the school and go on a rampage."

Uma grunted a little to show she understood even as her eyes swept the school grounds uneasily. Harry was equally unsettled by the place. There was just something... off about everything. His instincts were screaming at him that it was all a trap and he needed to be careful.

The grass was so oddly green as they walked across it and there wasn't any sign of trash cluttered in corners and behind buildings. The whole place was surreal, and Harry kept one hand on his hook because everything about Auradon was setting him on edge. Harry caught sight of several students in pastel clothes and sporting perfectly placed hair stop and stare. That was probably not a good thing, but Gil just kept walking, so Harry didn't have time to do more than glare at the onlookers.

Gil happily crossed the big open expanse of grass even though Harry wanted to scold him for it. Big open spaces were such a no-no on the Isle, Harry almost couldn't believe Gil would willingly cross in such an exposed way. The rule was usually to stick as close to a building as possible so that you couldn't be ambushed. Harry hadn't thought Gil had been in Auradon long enough to forget such basic survival instincts. Then again, this was Gil, and he was never so good at following those rules in the first place.

Gil took them into a big building that sprawled across what felt like half the campus that they'd just crossed. Harry was sure it was bigger than the Jolly Roger, which was his only real guide to compare large structures. The stairs felt almost too solid beneath their feet, and Harry couldn't help but spring up them lightly out of pure habit. The wood didn't creak or seem in danger of breaking, but Harry had put his foot through enough pieces of wood just on accident to not trust any set of stairs even the third time he used them.

Uma was looking around the building with a strange mix of confusion, distaste, and longing. Harry knew that the style of the decor was not anything like what Uma would enjoy but there was quite obviously money here and prosperity and that was really what she wanted. What they all wanted.

They got even more stares, and even some open-mouthed gaping as the troop of four Isle kids dressed in all their ragged, dirty scraps of clothes made their way down the hall that Gil had pointed out. A few kids even ducked back into their rooms to make sure they weren't too close. Harry was very mildly impressed that the airheads at least knew when to take cover around a
threat. He had half expected the kids here to be as entirely devoid of self-preservation as Gil sometimes was. Not that avoiding being in the hall with them was really all that impressive.

"I should really not be here," Reza said as he tried to stop.

Uma growled and yanked the boy along with her grip on his collar. "Don't even try it. Or I really will let Harry have ya," she threatened.

Harry couldn't help but light up at the idea and finger his hook. It had been a long time since he'd gotten rid of any stress - several months, at least - and, after everything that had just happened in whatever storeroom they appeared in, Harry was really looking forward to a little action. Reza paled under his acne and quietly allowed Uma to pull him along again. Harry scowled. "Never get ta have any fun," he complained.

Gil suddenly stopped at a closed door and flashed Uma a smile before knocking on the dark wood. Of course, his knocking sounded more like pounding because he never seemed to be able to fully realize how strong he was, but the door held up to it. There was no answer at the door, so Gil hit it a little harder than before.

There was still no answer, and Harry crossed his arms in annoyance. Didn't that just figure?

Just then, a door several down from where they were standing opened and a familiar bespectacled girl stuck her head out. "Gil? What're you- What's going on?!" Her eyes went huge behind her glasses as she quickly identified Uma and Harry standing beside Gil.

Gil didn't seem to notice Dizzy's sudden apprehension and just smiled. "Where's Mal and Evie?"

"They're out searching," Dizzy said, still eyeing Uma and Harry uneasily.

"Oh, yeah..." Gil frowned as he clearly tried to think.

Uma sighed heavily. "Hey, you know where they're searching?" she asked Dizzy. "It's important we talk to Mal."

"I can call them," Dizzy said hesitantly.

"Call 'em?" Harry echoed. If they were close enough to hear Dizzy call them then shouldn't they also hear Gil banging on their door.

"Do it," Uma ordered.

Dizzy nodded and pulled some small device out of her pocket. Harry had never seen an actual working phone before, so it took him a moment to realize that was what Dizzy was holding. She poked at it a few times and then held the phone up to her ear. After just a moment, she started talking. "Evie! Uma and Harry are here, and they say they need to talk to Mal... I don't know. Um, hold on, Evie," Dizzy lowered the phone slightly. "How did you get here?" Dizzy asked Uma.

Uma sighed in frustration. "Listen, if Mal wants Jay back she'll come and talk to me," she said without really answering the question.

Dizzy's eyes went huge, and she quickly relayed the message to Evie who must be on the other side of the phone. Then she nodded as she listened and then turned back to Uma. "S-she says that Mal will be right here and you better not hurt Jay, or she'll... um, do something bad," Dizzy said. Harry was sure that 'do something bad' was Dizzy's censorship than the actual threat from Mal.
"Can I please go?" Reza practically whimpered.

"No," Uma snapped. "And stop trying to get out of it."

Reza still looked massively unhappy and tried to shrink down to be less noticeable. Harry was growing anxious just standing in the hall, but Dizzy didn't seem inclined to let them into her room or the other girl's room. Harry could probably force his way inside, but that would probably just make everything that much more complicated.

The group of them were waiting for about ten minutes when Mal came storming into view. Her eyes were blazing green and set instantly on Uma. "What are you doing here? And where's Jay?" she demanded before she even came to a full stop.

Uma didn't seem disturbed even though they were now outnumbered. Harry quickly counted. Evie as there and so was Carlos, which was entirely expected. Some clean-cut kid that Harry placed as the new King Ben from the posters of him all over the place. Then there was an Arabian girl and boy. The guy struck a chord and, after a brief moment, Harry recognized him as Jay's 'brother' from the Isle. Harry suddenly doubted that explanation though. There was also a slightly mousey kid standing behind Evie with glasses. Harry didn't consider many of them a threat, but they were outnumbered which was never good.

There was a tense moment as both sides eyed each other and then it was interrupted by a screech. "Reza!" The small Arabian flinched as the parrot flew in from pretty much nowhere. "Where is Jay!? What have you done to him!?" Iago demanded. Harry thought that the parrot might tear Reza limb from cowardly limb.

Reza quickly pointed at Harry as he tried to seek shelter with Uma, who looked entirely unimpressed. Mal turned to Harry instantly. Harry just folded his arms and raised an eyebrow. He wasn't scared of Mal. Well, not too much. He did know how vicious she could be, but he was pretty sure he wouldn't be the one on the wrong side of that temper for this situation.

Mal narrowed her eyes and roughly brushed past to open her door and jerked her head towards it. "Inside."

Everyone did as she said but the second the door was closed behind not-Jay, as Harry was going to continue thinking of him, Mal whipped around. "Where is he?" she demanded.

"Harry," Uma said without looking away from Mal or removing her grip on Reza.

Harry, for some reason he couldn't explain, didn't particularly want to reveal the lamp in his pocket. He knew that Mal wasn't going to hurt Jay or anything like that, but Harry was still reluctant. Still, after a moment, Harry made himself pull the lamp out of his coat and held it up.

Mal's eyes widened as did the eyes of pretty much everyone else there. "Now that's a Djinn lamp," Not-Jay muttered even as Mal snatched it away from Harry. Mal turned away and rubbed the side of the lamp. Golden smoke started streaming out immediately.

When Jay reappeared, he was looking just as bad as he had when Gil had put him in the lamp. He was lying on the floor in a battered heap. "Jay!" Mal, Evie, Carlos, and the Arabian girl rushed forward immediately. Mal carefully rolled Jay onto his back and quickly took stock of all the injuries before getting up, her eyes even more venomous than they had been before. "What did you do to him!?"

"We found him like that," Uma replied.
"Jafar did it," Gil added helpfully.

"Jafar? So this idiot did wish him here?" Not-Jay asked with an angry gesture at Reza.

Reza shrunk back again. "Yes, he did," Uma said. Since they apparently already knew that Reza was the one to make the wish she wasn't going to try and hide it. "But we don't know where he is now. We just got here and found him like this."

Harry kept an eye on the ruckus going on around the still unconscious Jay even as Mal approached. She was more focused on Reza than Harry, so the pirate didn't mind splitting his attention. "Give me one reason why I shouldn't kill you right here," Mal challenged Reza as she got closer.

"Mal..." Ben began.

"Not now!" Mal snapped without even looking. "Well, Reza?" Reza audibly swallowed hard. "First you kidnap Jay, then you wish Carlos to be a dog-" Harry glanced over at the very much not a dog Carlos and wondered what had happened there. He doubted that Mal was making that up, but something had obviously reversed it or something. "Then you bring Jafar here and let him do this!? Why shouldn't I kill you?"

"B-because I know what Jafar is planning!" Reza said quickly. "I have information, and if you kill me I can't give it to you!"

Mal looked like she was considering killing Reza anyway and Harry really couldn't blame her for that impulse. He was still somewhat annoyed Uma had called him off. Just then, there was a faint groan. "Jay!" Evie cried, and Mal whipped around instantly.

Mal was beside Jay in a heartbeat while Harry reluctantly stayed back. Jay most likely wouldn't want to see Harry just then. "M-mal?"

"It's alright, Jay," Mal said. "You're safe now. I promise." Jay murmured something else that didn't really make any sense and Mal shushed him gently while brushing his hair back. "Tell me later."

"I can take him back in the lamp and heal him up there," the Arabian girl said. "It'll be faster than taking him to the hospital." Mal seemed apprehensive but then nodded and handed the lamp over to the girl. "This shouldn't take very long," she said before putting a hand on Jay's chest.

A moment later both of them broke apart into smoke, gold for Jay and a strange lilac color for the girl. Once they had both streamed into the lamp, Carlos picked it up off the floor and Mal turned back around to face Reza. "And now you."

Ben stepped up this time and grabbed Mal's arm gently. "Mal. We don't go around killing people," he said calmly.

"He hurt Jay!"

"And he'll be punished but not in an Isle way," Ben said firmly. "We're in Auradon."

Mal glared at Ben with her eyes still flashing, and Harry had to admit he was a little impressed that the King didn't even seem to flinch under her glare. "If the Auradon way of punishing people worked Jay wouldn't have been hurt in the first place! None of us would have had to put up with the pieces of crap parents we have!"

Ben looked mildly taken aback but then nodded. "I know. But Jay is going to be fine, and we have Jafar to deal with," he reasoned. Then Ben turned to Reza. "You're going to have to tell us
everything. And I do mean everything." Reza swallowed hard again, but nodded quickly in agreement.
Chapter 55

Chapter Notes

A little longer chapter than usual to apologize for this one taking so long. Work has gotten kind of crazy lately and has left me pretty tired afterwards when I normally write up chapters.

Jay was distantly aware of a cold tingling sensation all over his body, but especially on his face. He both wanted to wake up and figure out what was causing it while also drifting off to sleep again where the pain was nonexistent. The wounded Djinn could smell the spice of incense burning on the air, although it was yet again a different scent than what he was used to from Jafar's room or what he'd smelled faintly in Aziz's dorm. This one was almost a rich and fruity, sweet smell that oddly reminded him of plums or dates or something like that. Compared to the harsh burnt smell of Jafar's incense it was actually a lovely and relaxing fragrance. Was tasting smells a thing? Because Jay was half sure he actually could taste this one. His tongue felt thick with a flavor that he couldn't identify to the point that he was dying for a sip of anything that would clear it up.

The sensation of cold tingles moved across his heated and swollen face yet again. Nothing about the feeling made any real sense to Jay. The tingling feeling along his nerves caused him to think of static, but the cold was more like when you held an ice cube close by and could feel the temperature rolling off of the surface. Those two things didn't really go together, but it was still soothing.

An odd noise filled the air, and it tugged at something in the back corners of Jay's mind. After far longer than he would have liked to admit, he finally managed to place it as low humming. Nobody that Jay knew hummed though. Well, that wasn't entirely true. Carlos hummed when he was giving Dude a bath. And when he was in the shower, but Jay wasn't supposed to know about that.

Jay tried hard to figure out why that humming seemed familiar to him but was coming up entirely too empty. The tune was gentle and soothing even though Jay couldn't figure out where or who it was coming from. The cold tingle along his skin swept along his face and got a little too close to his swollen eye. That area of his face was especially tender, and he couldn't quite help the flinch as the static stung. Tears built up instantly from the sensation and the one humming stopped abruptly. "Jay?"

Jay tried to open his eyes but he really didn't feel like doing so and therefore didn't actually manage it before giving up. A cool hand brushed across his face and wiped away the tear that had escaped. "Sorry, I'll be more careful. It's just eyes are always hard to heal around... not that I have a whole lot of practice. Still, I promise I'm doing my best." The voice was definitely familiar. And female. But it definitely wasn't Mal or Evie so Jay couldn't figure who was with him. Those were the only girls that would be around him if he was feeling this rotten.

Oh, wait, no. Jay suddenly recalled that he wasn't anywhere that any girl at all should be able to find him. He was trapped with his insane father. Hence the pain he was feeling. He'd had a fleeting moment where he'd thought that Harry of all people had been with him, but that was just proof that Jafar had hit Jay in the head way too many times. Not only could Harry not be in Auradon, but Harry didn't even like Jay anymore. Well, maybe there was a little liking there but not like it used to
be. Jay steered his thoughts away from that very volatile topic. He really should figure out if he were dreaming or not. Maybe he was dead? No... he probably wouldn't hurt so much if he were dead.

That cold tingling feeling was back, but the humming was gone. Jay found he sort of missed it. Things were just too quiet wherever he was without that gentle somewhat inconsistent tune that Jay couldn't place. After a little while of silence, Jay drifted off to unconsciousness again, still feeling the waves of chilled air brushing across his skin.

His dreams were fragmented, dark things that were profoundly disturbing but not quite enough to jerk him fully awake again. Nothing made sense and he didn't try overly hard to figure anything out. Jay really would rather things go back to emptiness because that probably wouldn't make his headache worse. Strange how he still knew his head hurt when he was unconscious. Maybe Jay knew it because of how he was sort of hovering around waking and sleeping constantly.

Jay felt oddly like he was floating and, even though that was a little unsettling, he also couldn't bring himself to care that much. He just wanted all that pain that was slowly dulling to finally be entirely gone. Jay felt that cold hand on his forehead again.

This time, Jay forced his eyes to crack open even though his one still felt too swollen to really bother with. He was caught very off guard to see a somewhat familiar girl leaning over him. He was probably still dreaming, he decided. Because he was pretty sure that he shouldn't be seeing a light purple-colored girl. Jay's mind was still hazy, so it wasn't until she smiled and her golden eyes lit up in relief that he recognized her. "... Jordan?" Yeah, he could still see those two little birthmark dot thingies under her right eyebrow.

"You're awake," Jordan breathed and leaned down to wrap him in a hug that confused the hell out of him, but he didn't protest. "I was starting to really worry," she murmured.

Jay noticed that she smelled very faintly of plums. It was kinda nice. Jay couldn't help himself from closing his eyes and just enjoying the hug even though he wasn't at all used to it. She wasn't hurting him, and it was actually kind of nice to be held for just a second. If he wasn't hurt he probably wouldn't have allowed it but Jay would do damage control later if it were necessary.

Jordan hugged him for several long moments before pulling away from him. Jay finally noticed that, other than being purple, her clothes had changed. Her usual golden jacket had turned into a black tank top that had a thick gold edging and pink rhinestones decorating it while her waist was still sporting that pinky colored sash she usually wore. Under that though, was nothing but the same swirling smoke that had replaced Jay's legs only in lilac. Jay had never seen Jordan in her Djinn form before. He couldn't quite stop himself from staring.

Perhaps Jay was biased, but he thought she wore it better than he did. The thick golden bands she wore looked so much more natural and so did not having legs, oddly enough. "... ya look ev'n prettier purple," he said without thinking.

Jordan smiled widely. "And you look very dashing in gold. Well, you will once I finish," she said as she lowered a hand to Jay's still too hot feeling face. Jay didn't believe that for one second but didn't feel up to arguing the point.

Jay saw a light purple glow around Jordan's hand and felt that cool tingle return. His face felt a bit better immediately, but his eye was still definitely swollen. Not that Jay cared overly much. A black eye wouldn't take too long to heal even without her help. Although he was surprised to know a Djinn could heal. Jay hadn't ever really thought about that sort of thing being possible before. He supposed he should have what with that whole near unlimited power thing, but Djinns were a taboo
subject even in his head.

"I've called my Aunt Scheherazade to help. She's a lot better at this sort of healing stuff since I think she's actually done it before," Jordan said as she continued to brush her hand over Jay's face and body. Jay had no idea who Scheherazade was. He knew he had heard the name, but it was probably during one of his father's rants, and Jay had stopped listening to those ages ago since listening rarely benefited him.

"Wha' happened?" he asked, still utterly confused and groggy, though the second part was slowly getting better.

Jordan paused and seemed to think for a moment. "How much do you remember?"

Jay closed his eyes and thought back even though the effort made his head throb in pain. "Dad beat me. Wanted me ta find his staff," he answered after a minute. He probably shouldn't admit to his father beating him like some helpless little kid, but it was oddly difficult to censor himself right now. Maybe it was just how incredibly tired he was.

Jay felt Jordan's hand against his face again, and he opened his good eye again. Jordan looked pained to the point Jay was sure she was about to start crying. "I'm sorry," Jordan said. "You shouldn't have had to go through that."

"Wasn' your fault," Jay pointed out.

"I'm still sorry," she said before giving him another hug.

Jay was even more caught off guard by this one than the first, oddly enough. He couldn't help but stiffen after a moment and gently lifted a hand to pull one of Jordan's arms away. There was only so much of that he could handle in any given time and he'd already indulged in one hug today. "Jus' tell me what happened," Jay said before Jordan could apologize or make things even more awkward some other way.

Jordan looked like she was going to protest but then thought better of it. Instead, she explained what she knew about how Jay had gone from an unconscious heap on a chair to being healed by her in his lamp. Only when she made mention of it did Jay realize that they were indeed in his lamp. The fact that he hadn't noticed at all was actually a little disturbing to Jay, but he supposed at least nobody except her would see him all gold and Djinn-ified. At least, until Jordan mentioned that the others were waiting outside and reminded Jay that everyone had definitely seen him in this pathetic state.

Jay groaned and lifted a hand to rub over his face, not concerned with the soreness or swelling. "Fantastic... so much for a secret," he grumbled. Jordan looked a little confused by his slightly out of the blue statement, but he didn't clarify. She had never tried to hide what she was since that would be pointless what with her father going by 'Genie' all the time, so she couldn't understand his feelings about it. Jay was never going to keep things quiet now no matter how hard he tried. Like things hadn't been bad enough with just a few trusted people knowing now there were people that Jay couldn't possibly trust to keep his secret. That reminded Jay about what else that Jordan had said. The news that Harry and Uma had been wished over to Auradon was... unsettling.

Jay wasn't sure how bad that news was yet. Uma and Harry had absolutely no reason to not try and abuse his Djinn state to get whatever they wanted. Jay would be helpless to resist if they got their hands on his lamp. The fact that they handed his prison over without a fight was not necessarily a reason to let his guard down. Cooperation one moment didn't mean that they weren't planning something devious further down the line. The idea might be a little paranoid of him, but Jay knew
too well that not being paranoid often led to pain on the Isle.

Although, the situation also raised some unexpected questions. If Harry really was here on Auradon like Jordan said... did that mean that what Jay thought was a hallucination actually real? That didn't seem possible, but the thought wasn't easily dismissed. And if Harry really had been there when Jay thought he had been, had he actually been how Jay vaguely recalled? Harry hadn't held Jay or called him 'gorgeous' in ages. No, that was most likely Jay's imagination. Even after lots of practice being hurt his mind still sometimes imagined comfort that wasn't there just to make him feel better. Harry might have been there, but the pirate had made his feelings about their relationship pretty clear since they'd broken up, i.e., that there should never have been one, to begin with.

After a few more moments, strange peach colored smoke appeared from seemingly nowhere. Jay was very wary as a Djinn he'd definitely never met before formed right behind Jordan. He assumed this was Scheherazade. He didn't know what he had expected from her, but it wasn't what he got. Scheherazade almost looked normal. Her skin tone was a lot more like an average human than Jordan or Jay's was. But it still looked off. Perhaps it was just a little too orange-y or maybe it was that her skin had a slight sheen to it that made it seem unnatural. Either way, her golden eyes fixed on Jay, and he felt every wall he had to fly up immediately. He didn't know nor did he trust strange Djinn.

"Auntie," Jordan said as she went to embrace the older Djinn. Scheherazade turned her attention to Jordan and gave her a hug. "I'm so glad you're here. It's a lot harder to heal than I thought it would be..."

"It's not something we're asked to do very often," Scheherazade said as if that answered everything. She floated over to where Jay was on the bed and moved to sit on the edge, and brushed her long dark hair back out of her face. Jay spotted a few streaks of silver-grey mixed in the curls but not enough to really draw all that much attention if it weren't for the fact that Jay was hyper-aware right then. Scheherazade wore large hoop earrings that glinted as they swayed and had large teal and pale green gems hanging from the lowest point that Jay guessed were probably emeralds that knew would fetch quite a bit of money if he were to pocket them. The gems matched the pale green bikini top with teal edging. The sash hiding where her torso turned into peach smoke matched the edges of the top.

Scheherazade didn't reach for Jay immediately, which the teen was glad for. He didn't really want to be touched right now since he didn't trust her. Not helping was the fact that Jay was hyper-aware right then. Scheherazade wore large hoop earrings that glinted as they swayed and had large teal and pale green gems hanging from the lowest point that Jay guessed were probably emeralds that knew would fetch quite a bit of money if he were to pocket them. The gems matched the pale green bikini top with teal edging. The sash hiding where her torso turned into peach smoke matched the edges of the top.

Scheherazade's golden eyes flicked over him one more time. "So, you are Jafar's son. You aren't quite what I expected."

Jay was instantly annoyed at that. "Yeah, I get that," he said in hopefully a tone that made it very clear that he wasn't interested in getting anywhere near the subject of his father. "Are you gonna patch me up or not?"

"Of course," Scheherazade said with a slight inclination of her head. "Apologies for getting distracted." She held her hand out, and it began to glow with the same peach color as the smoke that was her lower half. Jay kept a wary eye on her even as Scheherazade brushed her fingers across his face. Almost immediately he felt that cold tingle only it was more intense this time. Jay could tell the swelling and bruises were going down quickly. "Healing another is not the same thing as casting a normal spell," Scheherazade said to Jordan. "It's more of a test of your will. You
have to *make* the magic do what you want."

"I really wanted to heal him though," Jordan said with a frown.

Scheherazade gave her a smile and moved her hand down Jay's neck to the bruises on his torso. "I know, and that was why you were able to start the process. Rest assured, you would have eventually healed him, Jordan. I just have more practice with the finicky nature of magic. And one Djinn's magic doesn't always allow another's to work to it's fullest potential. You have to overcome his as well as guiding yours."

"He's right here," Jay muttered in annoyance. He'd really rather not be a lesson.

Jordan gave him a smile. "Sorry, Jay."

Scheherazade was quiet as she continued to heal all of the injuries from the big bruises across Jay's ribs to the small cuts caused by Jafar's rings. Jay kept watching her, but he was definitely feeling much better than he had been. He guessed that if magic could fix him up so well, it wasn't all bad, but he still would have preferred to be human. "Do you know where your father is, Jay?"

Scheherazade asked as she finished healing him and took her hand away from him.

"He's somewhere on campus," Jay answered as he pushed himself upright. He frowned at the fact that his legs were again gone. He had sort of hoped that they'd stay legs after they turned back while he was in the circle. No such luck it seemed. "He got mad that I wouldn't tell him where his staff was. But it's not like he can leave."

"I wouldn't be sure about that," Scheherazade said. "He's quite the powerful sorcerer. And you did leave him an opening."

Jay frowned. "No, I didn't. He's stuck being here or on the Isle," he told her. He might not understand everything (or hardly anything really) about being a Djinn and wishes but he knew that he had made sure to lock Jafar on campus.

"What were the exact words you used? Did you say or, or did you say and?" Scheherazade asked.

Jay's frown only grew. "What does that matter?"

"Because if you used 'and' over 'or' then you opened the door to more locations being added to the exceptions," Scheherazade said. "It is relatively easy to slip 'Agrabah' in between the 'and' to make it 'Auradon Prep, Agrabah, and the Isle' where you can't do that with the or," she explained. "Or implies just the two options."

"It's just a single word!" Jay argued. "That doesn't mean you can just add whatever you want!"

"Magic is heavily dependent on wording," Scheherazade said. "Just one changed word can change the entire meaning of the spell or if it even works or not."

Jay shook his head. "But he still can't get out right? I mean, Dad's not a Djinn anymore, so he doesn't have as much magic as he used to."

"Perhaps not, but he's far more used to finding loopholes than you are to making them," Scheherazade said. "But it's alright. If he can't get to his staff, then he still shouldn't be able to easily get away. We'll just have to find him before he can find or replace his staff."

"Replace?" Jordan asked with wide eyes. "He can replace it?"
"Of course," Scheherazade said. "A staff is just a tool. He would most likely prefer his cobra staff as that was a tool of incredibly high quality and magical potential, but I doubt he's so sentimental to not use a substitute if one was presented to him. Jordan, dear, if you could go tell the others that Jay is healed and will be out shortly?"

Jordan hesitated for a moment but then nodded. "Alright."

Jay scowled at his smoky bottom half. He should have realized he hadn't outsmarted his father. He'd never been able to do that before. Jay wasn't nearly smart enough to actually foil Jafar. The thief couldn't believe that he'd actually thought he'd won. "Can't we just... magic him back to the Isle?" Jay asked. He was hesitant to suggest it since every time magic came up Jay seemed to get the short end of the stick, but Jafar really needed to be dealt with.

"We'll discuss it with Fairy Godmother," Scheherazade said and put a hand to Jay's shoulder.

Jay was surprised, to say the least, but then shrugged the other Djinn's hand off. Scheherazade didn't seem upset although she was still looking at Jay in that way she had been doing earlier. The way that made Jay very, very uncomfortable. "Why do you keep looking at me like that?"

There was a long silence, and Scheherazade seemed to be considering her answer. Finally, she smiled. "I saw you once when you were just a few days old. Your aunt had you and said she was taking you to your father."

That was most definitely not what Jay had been expecting to hear. "... what?"

"Nasira and I were quite good friends before she decided to try and get revenge for your father. So, she came to me to help with you," Scheherazade explained. "You had a terrible cough that she couldn't seem to get rid of and was worried that if she went to the Isle with you sick, you wouldn't survive. She was probably right about that."

Jay lurched forward. "Wait a second! Are you saying I was... I wasn't born on the Isle!?" he demanded. He'd never heard anything like that before. He had heard that his Aunt had brought him from his mother to Jafar, but he'd never had any idea that she wasn't just some hooker on the Isle. That was what Jafar's few mentions of her had implied anyway. "Who's my mother then!?"

"That I don't know," Scheherazade said. "I only know that your Aunt received a letter from your father while she was on the run here in Auradon telling her about you. I'm not sure the entirety of the situation, but she agreed to go to the Isle so long as she could take you and had a few other things."

Jay sat back in shock. His Aunt knew who his mother was? In hindsight, that really should have been obvious, but he'd never really thought much about that before. Probably because Jafar hated ever mentioning her, but if she had escaped being trapped on the Isle, Jay guessed that would explain Jafar's bitterness towards her. Jay wasn't sure what to do with the information that she was in Auradon... or at least had been. He'd long ago stopped actively wondering what it would be like to have a mother since the very few examples of motherhood he had were Nasira, The Evil Queen, Maleficent, and Cruella. Only one of those was any good at it, and Jafar made it clear that Nasira couldn't be trusted either.

Scheherazade studied Jay's reaction carefully but then reached out and put a hand on his shoulder. "I didn't mean to give you a shock. I would have thought you'd known that already," she told him.

Jay shook his head a little. "Dad... doesn't talk about her, so I didn't... I don't know really anything," he muttered. Could he find out more about his mother? Would he even care to do so? He'd never
considered doing it before although now that it was brought up he couldn't help but be curious. Jay had thought that any questions about his mother's identity had been given up on ages ago but apparently, the curiosity was harder to get rid of than he thought. After a moment, he shook his head hard. There was no point in letting something -like suddenly realizing he hadn't sprung up from nowhere- distract him. "Whatever. We need to stop Dad, right? Can you teach me how to get legs and get the hell out of here?" He would question his mother's identity later. Maybe.

"Of course. It's really not that hard-"

Jay snorted. "You've never tried to teach me before," he muttered.

"I promise, it isn't that difficult," Scheherazade insisted. Jay doubted that but let her continue to think it. She'd find out soon enough once she started trying to teach him.
Chapter 56

Jay discovered that he was proven right (at least in his mind) about how easy it would be to teach him even simple magic. Changing his form, from that of a Djinn to his usual human self, was a finicky process that took him a good forty minutes to manage. He was glad for the distraction of it, however, because Jay really didn't want to think about any of the revelations he'd recently had. Scheherazade never indicated that she was upset or frustrated with how hard it seemed to be for Jay to do what should be a simple task. The older Djinn just talked him through it time and time again until Jay had finally managed to urge his body back to how he wanted it. Jay was honestly surprised that she'd kept her cool. Most of his teachers, even the ones here in Auradon, got frustrated with him to the point that Jay gave up for both their sakes. True the teachers in Auradon never yelled at him or anything for not getting what they were trying to teach, but Jay, as a method of pure survival, was very attuned to when people were annoyed with him so he could tell.

Jay had been waiting for the moment that Scheherazade became annoyed with his lack of progress. He would have dropped it immediately since pissing of a Djinn was something ingrained in him to never do. She never seemed bothered no matter how many times Jay needed the process explained. Getting from one form to another didn't even sound that hard when Scheherazade told him what to do. Remembering how he looked was easy since Jay was well aware of how attractive he was. The second step was a lot more difficult. Jay struggled to grasp the weird hand-wavey mechanic of imagining how he looked to actually being like that. Scheherazade had tried to get him to visualize everything from flipping a switch as a sort of mental trigger to saying key phrases that would help him change to finally actual gestures. Snapping his fingers ended up being the way that Jay managed to trigger the change.

"Once you get more practiced with your magic, the actual physical snap won't be needed anymore," Scheherazade assured him. "Right now it's just acting as a cue for yourself and what you want to happen. Many Djinns need such things when they're first learning."

"I snapped to grant wishes too," Jay muttered as he looked down at his fingers. "I couldn't stop myself."

Scheherazade didn't seem surprised. "Instinct is a hard thing to squash, Jay. Some of us still maintain the habit of physical gestures or verbal ticks when performing magic. Jordan's father still points when doing particularly big spells."

Jay wasn't entirely satisfied with that explanation, but it wasn't as if he had a better one, so he let it go. Jay examined himself in the mirror that Scheherazade had conjured so that he could see he was indeed no longer golden. "My eyes are still weird," he muttered. His brown eyes hadn't returned, and instead gold was staring back making the thief very uncomfortable.

"That isn't surprising," Scheherazade said. "Eyes are the hardest things for us to disguise."

Jay frowned but lowered the mirror. The glass disappeared in a swirl of peachy smoke. At least, Jay figured, he had managed to replace his clothes properly. Maybe it was just because he remembered them so well but dressing like he usually did had been cake compared to reforming legs and apparently changing his eye color. "Okay, whatever. Now, how do I get out of here?" he asked as he looked around the dark, indistinct walls of the lamp.

"Very similar to how you reformed your legs," Scheherazade said. "Imagine what you want to happen as vividly as you possibly can and then -since it seems to help you- snap to trigger the magic."
"You say that like it's simple or something," Jay muttered.

Scheherazade shrugged just slightly. "You've been brought in and out of the lamp multiple times now under your own power and through others."

"Yeah, but I keep trying to get out of here, and I can't find an opening or anything," Jay argued with an angry gesture above his head. "You think I haven't been trying?"

"You won't ever find a physical exit," Scheherazade said as patiently as she was able. "This is magic. Stop trying to apply rules where none exist. Just because there isn't an entrance or an exit doesn't mean you can't come and go."

"Well, sorry for needing an actual door!" Jay snapped.

Scheherazade remained calm. "If you need a door... imagine one. Stop looking for one that isn't there and just make it."

Jay lifted a hand and pinched the bridge of his nose. He was getting really very annoyed with the whole of magic. He was not cut out for this sort of stuff. Jay liked it better when he was just a thief. Stealing was something he was good at, and it was a hell of a lot simpler than magic of all things. Why was it so hard to just be normal.

Scheherazade reached over and put a hand on Jay's shoulder. The teen stiffened at the contact and pulled away. "Alright, alright, I'll try again," he said, not wanting to encourage the Djinn to try and comfort him or anything like that. He wasn't in the mood to deal with an overabundance of mushiness right then.

Scheherazade frowned but allowed Jay to pull back from her. Jay closed his eyes and tried to just imagine a door that would be his way out of the lamp. He wanted out already.

With no small amount of frustration, Jay snapped his fingers. Jay wasn't entirely sure what happened when he did that other than he felt an awkward jerk like the whole room was tilted under his feet. The young Djinn didn't dare open his eyes until he heard his name shouted.

His eyes snapped open just in time to get an armful of Evie pouncing on him followed almost immediately by Carlos. Even Mal rushed over although she wasn't as exuberant as their other two friends. Jay could see the relief in her eyes as she smirked at him. "Took you long enough," she said.

Jay couldn't quite help the return smirk. "Sorry to deprive you of my amazingness for so long," he said lightly.

"It was relaxing," Mal lied.

Jay snorted and glanced around the room. His smirk fell quickly when he spotted Uma, Gil, and Harry standing over in one corner. Gil was smiling and gave a wave, but Uma knocked into him with her elbow to make him stop. Uma was frowning and staring at him, and so was Harry. Jay narrowed his eyes at the pirate before allowing his attention to go back to Evie. "Hey now, easy, Princess. I'm fine."

Evie pulled back enough to glare up at him. "Don't say that! You've been missing for a week and a half, and when we finally find you, you're not even conscious!"

"But I'm fine now," Jay insisted. "Look at me. Perfectly fine," he said with a gesture at himself. Jay then noticed Reza practically cowering behind Uma and carefully pried Evie off him. "Hold that
thought, E."

Reza shrunk back even more as Jay stalked forward a few steps. "Reza."

The smaller boy very nearly squeaked. "Now, h-hold on a minute, Jay!"

"Oh, no," Jay snarled. "After what you did, there's no way I'm going to 'hold on,' you rat!"

A hand came out of nowhere to press against Jay's chest and keep him from getting to where Reza
was hiding. Jay looked to the side to see that Aziz was the owner of the hand holding him back.
"Back off."

"Jay, he's not worth it," Aziz said firmly.

Jay leveled an unsettling golden glare at Reza. "I don't think I believe that," he growled. Reza had
ruined everything. The least Jay could do was give him some payback.

"Jay, listen to Aziz," Ben counseled from somewhere further off to the side. Jay didn't bother
turning to look at the King.

"Why should I?"

"Because killing someone in Auradon will get you sent back to the Isle and that's not worth it," Aziz told him firmly.

Reza cowered even lower to the point he looked as if he was about to melt into the floor. "I think it
might be," Jay said. Jay barely noticed that both Uma and Harry looked darkly amused even as Reza
continued to try and hide behind the daughter of Ursula for some reason.

"Jay," Mal called. "Kill him where there are fewer witnesses." That earned Mal an exasperated sigh
of her name from Ben.

Jay still resisted for a moment, but then, at another slight push from Aziz, he stepped back into his
spot in the formation that he and the others had automatically assumed. "Fine." Jay nodded over at
Uma and Harry. "What're they still doing here?" He hadn't expected to come out of the lamp and
still see his ex standing there like nothing was out of place.

"We're helping," Uma said with a smile.

Jay snorted not in the least trusting of Uma's smile or words. "Yeah, I'm sure you are. Why's Reza
cowering behind you? He's not one of yours."

"Maybe he just likes me."

"Weird... people from a desert usually don't associate with shrimp," Jay said with a mockingly light
tone.

Instantly, there was a reaction from both sides. Uma and Harry jumped forward, and Mal stepped
up in front of Jay with Aziz as Evie and Carlos slipped into defensive positions. "Enough!" Ben
said as he forced his way between the two groups. "We're not here to fight each other! Jay! Do you
have any idea where your dad was heading?"

Jay somewhat reluctantly pulled his eyes away from the glaring Uma and Harry to look at Ben.
"Said something about going to go charge something. I don't know, I wasn't exactly listening too
close," he said in annoyance. He'd been on the verge of passing out at the time, and Jafar hadn't
really been talking to Jay at that point.

"Did he mention what he was charging?"

Jay turned to look at Scheherazade who had apparently come out of his lamp while Jay wasn't paying attention. She was standing beside Jordan off to one side where they weren't in the way. Jay thought back for a moment to try and answer Scheherazade's question before shaking his head and shrugging. "Not really. I wouldn't tell him where his stupid staff was so he got all pissy."

"We've already moved his staff so that shouldn't be a problem," Ben said. "You've warned your parents haven't you, Aziz?" Ben asked. "Jafar is most likely out to kill Aladdin."

Jay shook his head. "No," he denied. That earned him a few curious looks, and he sighed. "Dad wanted to use a wish to get revenge. But you can't wish people dead. He had something else in mind," Jay told them. "I don't know what, but it wasn't going to be a simple 'let's kill Aladdin' plot."

If things were as simple as his father wanting to kill Aladdin, Jafar wouldn't have needed a genie in the first place.

"Well, we're already searching the campus for Jafar. We'll find him and send him back to the Isle long before he has a chance to do anything," Ben said with confidence. "There's only so many places he can hide."

"And I will go talk with Fairy Godmother about what we discussed, Jay," Scheherazade said. "Hopefully, by the end of the day, we'll have everything straightened out." Before anyone could stop her, she turned into peach smoke and streamed out of the nearby window to disappear.

"That would be nice," Jordan said. "Knowing Jafar is sneaking around has me a bit on edge."

"You?" Reza asked shrilly. "You've never even met the psycho."

Jay glared at Reza again. "You have no room to talk, idiot. This is all your fault." Reza sunk down again, entirely subdued at the reminder of his own role in the current situation.

"Also, now that Jay's alright, how about all of you get Out. Of. My. Room," Mal said with an annoyed gesture towards the door.

"And where are we supposed to go?" Uma asked with a gesture at herself, Harry, and Reza.

"I really don't care," Mal answered.

Ben sighed a little. Of the various problems, he'd been trying to plan for in bringing other kids over from the Isle, having a problem with the multiple gangs now being near each other hadn't been one of them. The young King had always been a little more concerned with impressing upon them the idea of following rules. He really should have thought about how old grudges between the gangs might rise up, but they didn't really have gangs in Auradon. The worst they had was cliques, and most of the drama surrounding them were generally harmless and easy to fix. Actual violent history was something out of Ben's limited experience. "I'll put you three up somewhere in the dorms for now. But Mal's right, this is her room, and she has a right to make us leave."

Uma's eyebrow went up towards her aqua dreads. "Um, Doug and I can take them to one of the free rooms," Jordan said, stepping forward. "At least until we get everything straightened out."

"We can?" Doug asked in alarm.

"Yes," Jordan said firmly.
Ben looked mildly skeptical but then nodded. "Alright. Thanks. There should be that room at the end of the hall that's free still," he told Jordan. They usually wouldn't have co-ed rooms, but Ben had a feeling Uma and Harry wouldn't exactly appreciate being roomed with random Auradonians even for a few nights. The Auradonians in question probably wouldn't like it either.

Jay watched as, very slowly, Uma and her crew and Reza left Mal's room behind Jordan and a nervous looking Doug. The thief didn't really like the idea of them being in the dorms even for a few nights, but he would just keep his guard up as high as it could go. Ben sighed and then tried his best to smile. "Try not to worry. We have the upper hand now."

"My dad's really good at getting that back, though," Jay muttered. He turned and spotted the lamp he still felt was just a little too... grand to really be his sitting on the table. "And I need to hide that," he said with a sigh. Already he was hating having such an easily exploitable weakness.

"You can put it in my safe with Jordan and Scheherazade's," Ben offered.

Jay shook his head. "Keeping all three in one place is just inviting bad shit to happen, Ben," he said. "Plus, your safe is a piece of junk. I could break into it with my eyes closed."

Ben tilted his head in thought. "You know where the safe is?" The wall safe in his room was hidden behind a piece of otherwise unremarkable wood panel.

"The wood grain on that part of the wall goes the wrong way," Jay supplied. "Door was put in upside down." Ben's eyes went wide. He'd never noticed anything like that before. Aziz nodded in agreement. Whoever had cut out the hiding place for the safe hadn't been nearly careful enough by the end of the job. The faint whorl marks of wood grain were just visible under the dark stain going the opposite way they should.

"I... never noticed. Wait, have you broken into my safe?" Ben asked, looking between both Arabians accusingly.

"Oh, don't throw a hissy fit, bro," Jay said as he picked up his lamp gingerly. "There wasn't anything interesting in it. Not even a cellphone or some princess' gaudy jewelry. All just papers..."

Ben stared at the unrepentant Jay and then to a slightly sheepish Aziz. "Just to see if I could. I didn't take anything," the Prince of Agrabah told him.

"Again, nothing interesting to take," Jay commented.

"I'm getting a new safe," Ben said immediately.

"Sure, go ahead," Jay replied. "Bet I can break into that one too, though."

Ben frowned. "I'll get the Dwarves to build it," he decided. Dwarves were pretty crafty with things like that.

"Kay," Jay said, still not worried in the least as he examined his lamp. "Still doesn't help with hiding this though."

"I've got a few ideas," Carlos said walking up and putting a hand on Jay's bicep. "Also... you've got to tell me what you did to me."

Jay cringed visibly. "I didn't have a choice, Los..."

"No, I know that," Carlos assured the taller boy. "But I'd like to know if I'm going to be randomly
turning into a dog again."

Jay sighed and reached up to push his hand through his hair. "I had like a second to think up some way to not leave you as a dog, and the first thing that came to mind was those stories about people who turn into wolves because of the moon--"

"Werewolves," Mal supplied.

Jay pointed at Mal. "Yeah, that. So, that's sort of what I did..." he finished awkwardly. "I figured you'd be a dog the least amount of time that way."

Carlos grimaced a little. "Well, could be a lot worse... although ending up naked in the woods is far from fun."

"Well, next time we won't be hunting for weasels," Mal said.

"And you made a cute dog," Evie added.

"I'll bet you did," Jay said, glancing beside him at the white-haired teen.

Carlos blushed lightly for a moment before suddenly turning to Jay entirely. "Speaking of. Did you pick what kind of dog I'd be?" he demanded.

"Uh, no, why?" Jay asked, entirely taken aback by the tone. "What kind of dog were you?"

"A Dalmatian," Carlos grumbled.

Jay's eyes widened, and he looked at Mal and Evie to confirm. "You're kidding. " Mal and Evie shook their heads. They were not joking at all. "Whoa, no, Los, I definitely didn't pick for you to turn into a fuckin' Dalmatian. That's just... what'dya call it..."

"Horrible coincidence?" Evie suggested.

"Cruel irony," Mal said dryly.

"Reason for my mother to skin me," Carlos said with dismay.

"She can't hurt you when she's on the Isle," Mal reminded Carlos. "Plus we wouldn't let her touch you." Mal hooked her arm around Carlos' shoulders and gave him a quick but reassuring squeeze before letting him go again.

"Maybe it's your hair," Aziz offered suddenly. The four Isle kids jumped slightly and turned to face the other Arabian, having forgotten momentarily that he was even in the room. Aziz gestured to his own head. "Ya know, 'cause of the colors. Only other dog I can think of that's black and white is a border collie."

Carlos sighed. "That doesn't make me feel all that much better, Z."

Aziz shrugged. "Sorry?" he offered.

"Not your fault, Aziz," Jay said. "If anything it's mine."

"It's not your fault either," Mal snapped.

"Can we all just agree it stinks, but at least Carlos isn't a dog all the time?" Evie suggested. "We need to make sure nobody gets their hands on Jay's lamp."
Carlos nodded. "Right. Like I said... I have a few ideas on where we can keep it."

"Also I should probably find Iago," Jay said. "He's probably worried. Anyone know where bird brain is?"

"He's off looking for Jafar," Aziz volunteered. "Waiting for you to come out of the lamp was making him antsy, and driving us mad. So we told him to go try and locate your dad. To keep him busy."

Jay groaned, "He's gonna be so loud about this whole thing."

"Isn't he always loud?" Mal asked.

"Louder then. Whatever," Jay said dismissively. Carlos held out his hand and, after just a moment of hesitation, received the engraved and jeweled lamp from Jay. "Careful what you say, Los..."

Carlos gave Jay a smile. "I'm not an idiot like Reza," Carlos assured him. "It's in our room," he added with a slight jerk of his head.

Jay and the others followed Carlos out of the girls' room and down the hall towards the boys' room. As they were walking, Jay swore he felt someone staring holes into his back. He paused and glanced back to see Harry leaning against a wall a way down the hall in the opposite direction. Harry's arms were folded like he didn't have a care in the world but Jay didn't buy that for half a second.

The others, noticing that he'd stopped, also stopped and turned. "Jay?" Mal asked, willing to go and scary Harry off if needed.

The ex-thief shook his head slightly, not looking away from his ex for even a second. "I'll catch up," he told his friends. Jay wasn't hurt at all or even sore anymore from being separated from his lamp. He could more than handle Harry Hook. Mal didn't look happy. "Really. It's cool, Mal."

"If you aren't back with us in half an hour, I'm going to come looking," Mal warned.

"More than enough," Jay replied before heading back down the hall. He stopped just a few feet from where Harry was leaning. It took a moment, but then Jay heard the others continue, muttering to themselves the whole time. Jay didn't doubt that they were complaining about leaving him. Hopefully, Mal would shut all of that down. "Harry."

"Jay."

There was a drawn-out moment of silence. "Just spit it out already, Hook. I know you have something to say," Jay ordered unhappily. Harry shifted his weight back and forth for a moment, then finally pushed off the wall to stand on his own.

Harry took a slow breath and then lowered his arms from their defensive posture. "I'm glad yer alright."

"
"Just spit it out already, Hook. I know you have something to say," Jay ordered unhappily. Harry shifted his weight back and forth for a moment, then finally pushed off the wall to stand on his own.

Harry took a slow breath and then lowered his arms from their defensive posture. "I'm glad yer alright."

Jay blinked stupidly for a moment. "What?" Jay hadn't really known what to expect Harry to say, but that had not been it. If he'd bothered to guess, Jay would have assumed that the son of Hook was going to say something about coming to Jay's rescue, probably something unbearably smug that would require Jay to punch the look off his face. But Harry did not look smug in the least. If anything, he looked almost embarrassed -not an expression Jay had ever seen on his face before.

"I'm glad yer alright," Harry repeated. "I been worried."

"Worried," Jay echoed.

Harry looked away from Jay entirely. "Mal said ya were dyin' or something."

"Or something," Jay agreed. He wasn't about to get into the specifics even though Harry had definitely found out his secret. "But why would that make you worry? It's not like you think much about me. Or are you going to try and pull a sudden change of heart on me?" Jay couldn't help but scoff even as he said the words. The idea of Harry flipping his position on anything just because someone was in a tight spot was utterly ridiculous.

Harry sighed and lifted a hand to card through his short hair. "It weren't sudden," he muttered. "It's just ya didn' let me talk ta ya much 'fore now."

"You were never much interested in talking," Jay replied as he folded his arms.

There was an awkward silence between the two boys. "Uma told me tha' she lied," Harry blurted out suddenly. "She didn' mean to a 'course, bu' she did. An' I shoulda never let wha' she told me get ta me in the first place."

Jay, despite himself, was a little intrigued. He had wondered what Uma had told Harry back then to make him so angry. Jay had told himself it didn't matter, but he couldn't shake the curiosity. He hadn't been able to come up with anything that he thought would have bothered Harry so much. "What did she tell you?"

Harry sighed. "Does it matter?"

"Yes," Jay answered immediately. "What was so bad that you hated me after hearing it? You never struck me as the kind to care about sex acts."

Harry seemed to debate his answer with himself for a moment then he sighed. "It wasn't anythin' ya did with her. It was what she said ya told her," he muttered.

There was another long moment of silence between the two villain kids. "Which was?" Jay prompted when Harry didn't offer any other details. Jay was getting even more annoyed that some unfounded he-said-she-said crap had been what Harry had gotten so bent out of shape about, but he still wanted to know exactly what it had been.
Harry worried his bottom lip with his teeth for a moment before finally meeting Jay's eyes. "She said ya told her tha' ya wished more girls would buy ya 'cause sleepin' wit' guys made ya sick. Tha' ya'd only been fuckin' guys cause perverts like them paid more," Harry muttered.

"I didn't ask you to pay me," Jay pointed out softly.

"I figured ya were jus' tryin' to get close ta Uma or somethin','" Harry grumbled. "Tryin' ta lower my guard maybe..."

Jay sighed heavily. "Idiot."

"It ain't like it didn't make sense," Harry said a little harsher than he intended. "I've found ya gettin' sick before."

Jay felt his cheeks burn at the reminder. He had indeed ended up sick on multiple occasions after a trick. Specifically when he was younger. "That was different," Jay muttered. Half the time he was getting sick from drinking too much to try and drown the memories of what he'd just done, while others it was from doing particularly degrading things. "It wasn't them being guys that made me sick. It was... other things."

"So, yer sayin' it never bothered ya?" Harry asked. "Sleepin' wit other guys?"

"You slept with me," Jay replied. "Did it ever bother you?"

"Ya weren't like them," Harry answered.

Jay inclined his head slightly. "Exactly."

"Bu' tha' wasn't the same for you!" Harry argued. "You... When we were together... it wasn' the same for me 'cause ya weren't... ya let me do you. I figured, 'cause o' that ya might be... pretendin' or something."

Jay crossed his arms and looked away as he tried to think up how to best respond to that. Harry was partially right, after all. Harry had always been in charge between them. Jay had never been allowed to venture away from the role the pirates had first pushed him into. Then again, he'd never broached the topic either. Jay had known how important being in control of the sex had meant to Harry. "You... you weren't ready for that," Jay muttered. If Jay had even suggested them switching things up that way Harry would have never agreed. "And it's not like I knew what I was missing."

"Ya still wanted it," Harry realized.

"It's not like I asked, and it doesn't even matter anymore, Harry," Jay said.

Harry frowned and stepped closer to Jay. "It matters ta me," he said firmly.

"Why?" Jay asked. "Are you going to try and convince me you aren't happy with Uma suddenly? That you would pick me over her for the first time ever?"

"This ain't about Uma," Harry said. "I treated ya worse'n ya deserved."

Jay sighed and lifted a hand to rub his eyes. "Yeah, maybe," he said, not about to argue over that point. "But it really doesn't matter, Harry. We weren't good for each other, and you know it. If one little lie could cause what it did, then it was only a matter of time before we imploded anyhow. Probably best it happened there on the Isle where shitty breakups are usual."
Harry's hand suddenly flew out and grabbed Jay by the neck. Jay barely had time to begin his protest before Harry's mouth was covering his own. The kiss was a little rough and intense, but it only lasted for a moment before Harry pulled back a little. "Ya taste different," Harry murmured as he put his forehead against Jay's. They stood like that for just a moment longer. "I'm sorry," Harry muttered.

Jay sighed and pushed Harry back with one hand while he stepped back several steps. "It's not a good idea," he repeated. "Things'll only go south again, and we'll both get hurt."

"Uma wouldn' dare mess wit us again," Harry argued.

"Yeah, but see, I don't trust you, Harry," Jay said.

Harry frowned but then sighed. "Yeah... I guess ya wouldn'," he muttered. An awkward silence fell between them. Suddenly, Harry looked up again. "What if I make it up ta ya?"

Jay blinked several times. "Make it up to me? And how do you imagine you'll do that, Harry?"

"Wha'? Ya doubtin' me?" Harry asked, a jaunty little smirk crossing his face.

"Always," Jay replied dryly. "And has it maybe occurred to you that I might have a girlfriend?"

Harry snorted at that. "Then I'll jus' win ya back if ya do," he said, entirely unconcerned. Jay rolled his eyes hard. Harry's smirk fell a little. "I can' jus' not give it a go, Jay," he said. "I've missed ya."

"If all you want is sex, find someone else," Jay said firmly. "I don't do that anymore."

"Good, 'cause I hated sharin' ya," Harry answered quickly. "An' I will make it up ta ya. I swear."

Jay sighed and shook his head. "Yeah, okay, Harry," he said. The son of Jafar was both entirely unconvinced and unworried about whatever Harry was blabbering about. Harry wasn't what one would call good at apologies, mostly since he almost never gave them. Jay was actually a little shocked that Harry had even said it to him. Harry probably wouldn't keep up his attempt to make things 'up' to Jay, the thief didn't think. Hook's patience was notoriously minimal so he would likely give up pretty quick.

"Ya don't believe me," Harry realized with narrowed eyes.

"I believe you'll try," Jay said. He just didn't believe that Harry would keep trying. "Goodbye, Harry."

"I'll prove ya wrong, Jay," Harry declared even as Jay started to walk away. "Ya'll see."

Jay rolled his eyes again and decided he'd worry about whatever crazy Harry was thinking up later. He was sure that Harry really did feel bad, but Jay was perfectly aware of where he sat on Harry's list of importance. Underneath Uma and Gil and probably Harry himself. Jay didn't even really begrudge Harry that. One's gang was family and if they weren't the most important thing then, what was even the point?

Jay managed to catch up to the others in his room before Mal came looking for him, which was great because Jay really didn't want to explain the conversation he'd just had to her. Luckily, even though Mal gave him a questioning look, there was a slightly louder person to deal with. "'There you are!'" Iago screeched as he flew over to land, somewhat clumsily on Jay's shoulder. Jay ducked down as a crimson wing slapped him upside the head several times.
"Watch it!" Jay protested.

"You watch it!" Iago replied. "Do you know how worried I've been?"

"I'm fine, Iago," Jay told the macaw. "Look, not even a scratch," he added with a gesture at himself.

Iago dug his claws into Jay's shoulder but couldn't pierce through the leather vest he was again wearing. "You had a lot more than scratches when they found you!" Iago snapped. "Can't you ever take care of yourself?"

"I take care of myself plenty," Jay answered.

Iago scoffed and finally settled on Jay's shoulder though he still didn't look happy. "You never take care of yourself," he muttered. "Always getting yourself into trouble."

Jay rolled his eyes. "Well, like you can see, Scheherazade and Jordan patched me up good as new. So stop screaming in my ear, would you?"

"Ungrateful!" Iago squawked. "I go out and look for you, and this is the thanks I get!"

"Iago-"

"So ungrateful!"

Jay reached up and caught Iago's beak to force him to be quiet. "Thank you, Iago," Jay said firmly. "Now could you stop screaming in my ear?" Iago grumbled through his closed beak but then gave the slightest bob of his head. Jay still looked a little wary but let Iago's beak go. The parrot still looked unhappy but just rearranged his wings. Jay smiled and reached up to scratch Iago behind his cheek.

Iago closed his eyes and allowed himself to indulge in the scratch for just a moment. "What do you think about this, Jay?" Carlos called from over by Jay's bed.

Jay looked away from the parrot perched on his shoulder to walk over to his bed. Carlos had pulled out the hidden drawer under Jay's bed and had filled half of it with a strange looking box. Jay's eyebrow went up as he leaned over to peer at the box. "What is this?" he asked.

"It's a little something that I came up with. It's a modified lockbox from the mail room," Carlos supplied as he picked up the whole drawer to hold up for Jay to better see. "I bolted it to the bottom of your drawer. So they'd have to take the whole thing out to get at the box."

"It's a little something that I came up with. It's a modified lockbox from the mail room," Carlos supplied. "You need a number code. I haven't set it yet so that you can make it whatever you want. But it's safer than just a basic combination because you can't just listen for when the lock clicks over an open space. I also left the key from when it was a lockbox because I figured why not?"

"Makes sense to me," Aziz agreed. "But shouldn't we do something to make sure nobody takes the whole drawer too?"

"I'm going to chain it to the bed frame," Carlos told the prince. "Being here in Auradon it's a lot easier to find whatever I need but I still have to find a chain that isn't for just someone's necklace or
"Will a bike chain work?" Aziz asked. "Because I think they sell those at the school store."

Carlos looked very surprised at that. "Oh, yeah, I guess it would. But don't those unlock?"

"Well, yeah, but you probably won't find one that doesn't," Aziz pointed out.

"I can make it so that the lock doesn't work anymore," Evie supplied. "Just have to gum up the inner workings, and that shouldn't be too hard."

"Do it," Mal agreed. "I don't want anyone getting that lamp."

Jay nodded in agreement immediately. "Definitely not."
Chapter 58

Chapter Notes

A little short but I needed a chapter out today

Scheherazade didn't bother to knock as she came into the headmistress' office. Her business was too important to stand on ceremony; besides, Fairy Godmother was probably someone that should be informed that they had found Jay and his lamp and both were now away from Jafar. Although Scheherazade hadn't bothered to tell Fairy Godmother that she was coming or that she had arrived or anything else to that effect, the Djinn knew that the Headmistress was probably aware of her presence in the school.

The Djinn was surprised when she didn't immediately spot the legendary fairy in her office right away. Considering the time of day and everything going on, Scheherazade had figured the office was the most likely place for her to have been. Although Scheherazade disagreed with the 'no magic' rule that had been leveled across Auradon and the Fairy Godmother's support of it, Scheherazade knew that, despite their differences, the Headmistress of Auradon Prep took the safety and future of her students very seriously. Therefore, it wasn't like Fairy Godmother to not be easily reachable in a situation like this.

Scheherazade stepped further into the office, and that was when she saw the familiar usually smiling figure, on the ground. "Faie!" Scheherazade rushed forward and dropped to her knees beside the Fairy to put a hand to her neck. There was thankfully a pulse, but Fairy Godmother's skin was cold and clammy, and she didn't react at all to Scheherazade touching her. Before Scheherazade could do more than make sure that Fairy Godmother was just unconscious and not obviously bleeding or bruised or anything indicating something worse, the Djinn realized someone else was in the room.

Jafar stepped out of the shadows of one corner with a small, misshapen gem in his hand that looked a lot like melted glass. Inside, a silvery blue mist was swirling like ribbons floating in water. Scheherazade quickly got to her feet. "You... so that is what Jay meant by 'charging.'"

Jafar scowled. "What do you know of the brat?"

"I know you won't be putting your hands on him again," Scheherazade said. "Now where did you get that piece of the orb?" she demanded. She recognized the shard of the lost jewel without any difficulty whatsoever. Although, the last she had seen it Nasira had been the one holding it, and Scheherazade knew that Nasira wouldn't have just given it up.

"Where do you think I got it?" Jafar asked. "I'm betting Nasira was going to use this to try and escape the barrier herself, wasn't she? Too bad for her I had already been siphoning off all the magic on the Isle into the lamp, so there wasn't anything left for her to collect."

Scheherazade forced her fists to unclench, not wanting to let Jafar realize how distressed she was to see him holding that artifact. "You had best not have hurt her, Jafar."

"Oh?" Jafar's sharp eyebrow shot up. "And why not? It isn't as if you nauseating Auradonians care if us no-good villains kill each other or not. You cannot claim the moral high ground after you
threw us all away like the trash you feed us."

"That's not true," Scheherazade replied. "You were all sent there because of what you did. For all
the lives you sought to ruin."

Jafar shrugged slightly as he twisted the gem in his hand. "You are hardly one to talk about ruining
lives, Scheherazade. Wasn't it you that helped Nasira? Don't think I haven't figured out what you
did. I was a Djinn at the time. You couldn't magic my ignorance."

"It was the only way," Scheherazade replied. "And none of it would have happened at all if you
weren't such a despicable human being. Everything since then has just been damage control," she
spat. "You might have fooled Nasira into thinking you wanted a son for some altruistic reason, but
if it weren't for your threat, I would never have helped her do what you wanted."

"If it makes you feel better, she did say it was a mistake," Jafar said lightly. "Not that I particularly
care what either of you think. Ah, that reminds me...

who is Jade's father again? Quite odd that... knowing my sister's tendencies the way I do. Almost... magical in a way."

Scheherazade felt something inside her chest freeze at the question asked so casually when it was
anything but. She recognized a threat when she heard one even though she knew that Jafar had no
solid proof about anything at all. "Don't threaten me, Jafar," Scheherazade said as peach smoke
started to gather in the room. "You're not terribly frightening as a mortal without your staff."

Jafar held up one finger of his free hand. "Ah ah ah, I wouldn't do that if I were you, Scheherazade.
Remember what I'm holding." He lifted the gem in his hand higher, and wisps of pink smoke
started twisting towards it. Scheherazade cursed and ruthlessly pulled the magic back to her before
it could get sucked inside the dark stone. Jafar gave a twisted smile. "I thought you'd see it my
way."

"And what are you planning on doing with that exactly?" Scheherazade asked while fighting the
urge to back away. As long as she kept her distance from the orb, she should be safe. Jafar must
have snuck up on the Fairy Godmother and drained her magic, leaving her in the unconscious state
Scheherazade had found her in. "Without the rest of the pieces, I can't imagine it would be much
use for you."

"All I'll need is my staff, and it will be incredibly useful," Jafar answered. "As to how exactly I'm
going to use it... let us just say... I think it's time for you Auradonians to live without magic for a
while. I've had more than enough of it. Do you know how utterly frustrating it is to be forced to
deal with creatures like goblins and fiddle with useless electronics that are already broken to try
and scrape a living? Of course, you don't. You've been living in luxury here in Auradon."

"We weren't allowed to do magic either, Jafar," Scheherazade pointed out. There was even talks
still of an outright ban on magic although that had been stopped due to that not being so fair for
those people (such as Fairies and Djinn) that existed almost solely due to magic.

"Not even close to the same thing!"

Scheherazade sighed and closed her eyes for the briefest of moments. "You know I can't just allow
you to do whatever you want, Jafar," she said. "I'm going to have to stop you from completing your
plans."

"You'll have quite the time with that when all the magic you throw at me will just end up in here,"
Jafar said as he tapped the edge of his gem with one nail.
"I'm sure I can think of something," Scheherazade replied. "I'm quite resourceful when I have to be."

"Mm, no wonder my sister likes you so much," Jafar said. "But no matter how spunky and defiant you are, I'm not going to just allow myself to be sent back to that hell hole. Bring me back the boy, and maybe I'll let you save someone in his place... if I feel like it. You've done that deal before right?"

Scheherazade narrowed her eyes as they glowed molten gold. "To quote a disgraced ex-vizier, 'It's not even close to the same thing.' And I won't be making any deals like that ever again," she promised him. "You are one of those that deserved to never be found. They should have left you in the Cave of Wonders."

"You seem bitter, Scheherazade," Jafar said. "Quite bitter indeed."

"Enough talking, Jafar," Scheherazade said as the smoke built within the room again. "That crystal might be a problem, but it is your mistake to think it makes you invincible."
Chapter 59

Chapter Notes

This feels much more like a return to form. The last few chapters were a bit rough, hence why they were shorter and took longer. Hopefully the climax which is coming closer will come as nicely as this chapter did.

Once the lamp was secured under Jay's bed, he allowed himself to collapse onto the mattress. Though it wasn't as soft as the bed in the lamp had been, he found that he actually preferred it being a bit firmer. Maybe it was just because of what he was used to. He'd grown up sleeping on the floor, after all. Jay sighed and relaxed as Mal shooed Ben and Aziz out of the room with some bull excuse about needing to talk to Jay alone. After only a moment, three other bodies were landing on and beside him on the mattress. Carlos wedged himself against Jay's side with Evie pressing the two boys close enough so that she could wrap around Carlos and put her head on Jay's chest. Mal was on Jay's other side but lying high enough that Jay's head could rest on her stomach, which he did immediately. Their familiar tangle was added to a moment later when Dude jumped up and settled across Jay's legs, making the Arabian thief very glad that they were no longer aching. Iago tucked himself against Jay's chest right above Evie's head and buried his head under his own wing.

Jay wasn't sure how long they laid there as a pile of teens and animals, but it was long enough that he managed to relax fully. He hadn't quite realized he wasn't until the minor tension had finally melted off. Jay felt his beanie get pulled off, but he didn't protest since the only one who could have done it was Mal. "You scared us," she said as she flattened his hair back down from where the removal of his hat had mussed it. "Don't do it again."

"Yes, ma'am," Jay replied casually and without opening his eyes.

Mal's fingers continued to move through his hair and Jay didn't bother trying to get her to stop. He didn't really mind the sensation. Her fingers felt nice and familiar. "What did Hook want?" she asked.

"Nothing important," Jay answered.

"I think it's pretty obvious he wants you," Carlos commented without lifting his head from where it was cushioned between Jay's side and Evie's chest.

Jay snorted and nudged his knee into Carlos' stomach. Not hard enough to hurt, but enough to show his opinion of that. "Shut up, pup. You don't know what you're talking about."

"I've seen you two making out before, Jay," Carlos stated very matter-of-factly.

Jay's eyes snapped open, and he lifted his head to look down at Carlos. "What? When?" he asked in alarm. He had thought for sure they had been way more discrete than that.

"And why didn't you say anything to me?" Mal demanded as she flicked Carlos in the forehead with her free hand. "You know better."
"I didn't want you to freak out," Carlos defended.

Evie lifted her head slightly. "He told me. We agreed it was better to keep it quiet."

"Whoa, whoa! Wait, Evie knew too?" Jay demanded. "For how long?"

"I'm the last person to know about this?" Mal was a little hurt and outraged to be the last in on the secret even though she knew deep down that they probably had been smart to not tell her. She would have demanded Jay keep away from Hook, which undoubtedly would have ended badly. Either because Jay didn't do it and that started a fight with Mal or he did, and that made him upset with her anyway for having ordered it.

Jay nudged Carlos again with his knee. "Tell me how long you knew, pup," he ordered. "We were careful."

"You weren't that careful," Iago said without lifting his head from where it was tucked under one crimson wing.

"Being seen from the sky doesn't count!" Jay snapped. Though he didn't particularly like that Iago somehow knew, that was a little less surprising than Carlos knowing.

Carlos sighed and tilted his head up to look at Jay. "Mom was pretty bad one night a while back, so I snuck out of the house. I figured since I couldn't go home I'd wander around, and look for parts for one of my inventions. I was hoping to find some old fish hooks I could straighten out to make into metal connections, so I was over by the docks. I saw you sneaking around. I was about to go call out, and then, well, you and Hook ducked down an alley. I thought you two were going to have it out—it looked like you would—so, I went to help, but I got there and looked. Well, and you... seemed busy," Carlos explained, becoming a little awkward near the end. "I didn't think it was more than just a physical thing, though."

"I don't think either of us did," Evie added. "When Carlos told me what he saw I was sure that you were just messing around like you were with Elanor."

"Okay, now, why would you bring her up?" Jay asked as he laid his head back down. "I regretted ever giving that girl anything," he muttered. He'd messed around with the Daughter of the Enchantress a few times so that he could sneak into the Enchantress' house and snag a few goodies, but Elanor had very much fallen for his many charms and thought there was some actual emotion involved. She had always been a rather naïve girl considering where she grew up. Even after Jay stole one of her mother's most expensive necklaces, Elanor hadn't wised up and still let Jay sneak into her window at night.

"She did have some unrealistic expectations," Evie agreed.

Mal snorted. "Understatement. She actually thought you were interested in her."

"Well, what can I say? I'm good at making people feel special," Jay muttered.

Silence fell over them for several minutes. Nobody could really come up with a reply to Jay's comment or even decide if they should. Finally, Evie decided to break the slight tension between them by switching topics. "What are we going to do about Jafar?"

"Scheherazade is going to ask FG if we can just magic him back where he belongs," Jay said.

"Since when do we ask permission?" Mal asked in annoyance.
"Since we became good, Mal," Evie pointed out. "We're supposed to follow the rules here."

All of them, even Evie who had said it, couldn't quite help but make a face at that idea. "Lame," Jay commented. "Scheherazade better hurry it up."

"Yeah, I'll feel a lot better if your dad was not on campus anymore," Carlos agreed. "I'm not even that picky to where else he's sent so long as it's not here."

"I'm sure Fairy Godmother will agree this is a special case," Evie said as Jay absent-mindedly tangled his fingers in her long blue hair a lot like how Mal was doing with his. "Sometimes I think even she doesn't like the no magic rule here."

"Just because Ben's Dad had a curse put on him he thinks all magic can't be trusted," Mal complained. "Even Aurora isn't as anti-magic as he is and she had my mom cursing her. Way worse than the Enchantress."

Iago lifted his head to look at the teens under him. "You're just going to have to accept that most heroes are hypocrites," he told them. "They're all plenty happy to accept magic when it helps them, but if someone they don't like tries to use it they change their tune like that. Beast is just worse than most because he didn't get magical help like the others did. We all would have been better off if anyone else had taken the throne."

"Probably right," Mal said. "You should have seen it when I didn't hand over my spell book after Mom was turned into a lizard. I thought he'd turn all big and hairy again."

"If Fairy Godmother says no, use magic anyway," Iago told them.

Jay couldn't quite stop the smirk from crossing his face. "Such a bad influence, baba," he said mockingly.

"Quiet, you ungrateful thief. It's practical," Iago grumbled. "I do all this for you, and this is how you treat me. So ungrateful. See if I ever help you again."

"Right, I believe you," Jay replied without concern. "Also, it's not like I wasn't planning on doing that anyway. I'll just need someone to use the lamp."

There was an awkward silence that lasted several minutes. "Can I call not it?" Carlos muttered. "I don't really like the idea of using your lamp."

"Me either," Evie said as she lifted her head a little. "I mean, maybe if it was Jordan's lamp or someone else's, but it just doesn't feel right to use you like that..."

Jay tightened his hold on their Isle Princess for a brief moment. "It's not using me if I ask you to do it," he said. "I'd much rather have you make a wish and get rid of my father than have to worry about him hurting one of you."

"We will and then after we'll wish you free," Mal said firmly. She had already decided a while ago that she would do whatever she had to so that her second would be safe. And the best way to do that was to make it so that nobody could force him to obedience anymore. "That way you don't have to worry about any of this again."

"... you're the best, Mal," Jay murmured even though it felt like he'd tried to swallow a golf ball whole.

Mal reached down with her free hand to give Jay's shoulder a squeeze. Jay closed his eyes again.
and covered her hand with one of his own. He hadn't entirely expected Mal to make such a promise, but he was glad to have it. "Don't mention it," Mal replied.

Carlos glanced up at their gang's two strongest and couldn't entirely stop the smile from escaping. They might both try to be so tough, but all it took was a few instances like this to prove they were both giant softies inside. Seeing them like this was a huge part of why Carlos had eventually joined their gang. They were so strong but not nearly as callous as they appeared, which was refreshing compared to his mother who was -somehow- even more heartless than initial appearances suggested. "Hey, Jay," he called.

Jay opened his eyes and looked down at Carlos. "What is it like turning into smoke, anyway?"

Jay frowned and thought about his answer for several moments. He didn't really like to think about the sensation. Thinking about that meant that he was admitting that he wasn't human, and, even though Jordan had made him say it out loud, he had a hard time with that idea still. But, since it was Carlos that was asking, Jay felt as if he really should answer. "It's... hard to explain, 'Los. Sort of like falling and your whole body going to sleep at the same time, I guess. Like, dead asleep. The kind where you can flop your foot around and only kind of sort of feel that it's hitting the ground."

"So, it doesn't hurt or anything right?" Evie asked, turning her head to better face Jay as well.

"Not really, but it's disturbing as hell," Jay grumbled.

"I'll bet," Carlos said. "But so long as it's not painful I guess it isn't that bad."

Jay shrugged and didn't answer that. He would still prefer it to not happen at all, but if Mal did what she promised and wished him free, he would, in theory, never have to deal with it again after this. Not that Jay didn't trust that Mal would do as she said. She hadn't ever let him down yet, even if they didn't always get along and Jay sometimes did exactly the opposite of what Mal told him just because following orders too long sometimes chaffed at his very self.

"You made it so that I talk to dogs now, by the way," Carlos said after several minutes. "So, thanks, I guess."

"I did?" Jay asked as he lifted his head. "I didn't really... mean to."

"Magic sometimes just does what it wants," Iago commented. "Even the best sorcerers can't figure out why it does what it sometimes does."

Dude lifted his head off Jay's leg and whined. Carlos, being the only one who had any idea what the terrier wanted, reached down and scratched the dog behind the ear. "Don't worry, boy. I like it now that I'm used to it," Carlos assured.

Jay stared for a moment before shrugging. "Not like you didn't talk to him before," he decided. "It's just... I guess not as weird now."

"I'm not weird," Carlos protested.

"You are completely weird, bro," Jay insisted. "Just, the weirdest. I mean, you actually like school."

Carlos kicked Jay although not too hard. "That's not that weird. You're biased."

Jay frowned and tilted his head. "Is that the swing both ways thing?"
"No, but I'd say it's safe to say you do that too," Carlos answered.

"You're thinking bisexual," Evie added. "Carlos sort of means that you aren't being totally fair. Because you've never been good at school, of course, you don't like it. That sort of thing."

"Oh. Well, duh," Jay said. "I don't get what you three like about it. Gives me headaches."

"It's probably your dyslexia that makes that happen," Iago said.

Jay frowned. "My what?"

"Fairy Godmother thinks you have dyslexia and that's why reading is so hard," Iago said. "That's why you took all of those tests a little while back."

"I had completely forgotten those," Carlos muttered.

Evie nodded in agreement. The tests, for her, had been hard but manageable with a bit of studying. "I guess it does sort of make sense when you think about it."

"There's nothing wrong with me," Jay snapped unhappily. "I just don't like reading. That's not a crime."

"You don't like it because you can't do it," Mal stated. Jay stiffened between them instantly. Though it had never been spoken aloud, Jay's closest three friends never acknowledged his difficulties. "Don't get all upset with me. I only said it because it's true. At least now we have a reason for it. We always knew it wasn't because you were stupid."

"Well, what if I am just stupid?" Jay asked. "Ever think of that?"

"No, because you're not,‖ Mal said almost angrily. "And if you don't stop saying things like that I'm going to have to prove it to you, and I don't think you'll like me doing that very much."

Jay scowled and pushed himself half up. Iago was forced to scramble into the air with a noise of annoyance but quickly settled again on Dude's back. "There's nothing wrong with me," Jay insisted. "Especially not some weird... Chrysalis thing."

"Dyslexic," Carlos corrected.

Jay made a face and went to get up fully. Mal leaned forward and caught him with an arm around his neck before he could do more than shift. "Calm down, Jay. You know we don't mean anything like that. But if this means they have ways of helping we shouldn't turn it down either," Mal told him. "Besides, it doesn't mean anything. You know how Auradon like's it's fancy names for simple shit."

The thief continued to scowl at nothing for several minutes before letting out a huff and allowing Mal to pull him back down into their pile. "There's nothing wrong with me," Jay muttered as Iago awkwardly shuffled back to Jay's chest.

"And I would hurt anyone who implied otherwise," Mal said. "So stop thinking such bad things."

The group of them laid there on Jay's bed in silence for another few minutes. Continuing the topic of school seemed particularly ill-Advice, but none of the others quite knew where to take the conversation from there. Luckily, the four of them had long ago gotten comfortable enough with each other that talking wasn't actually necessary. They could tell by subtle body language how each other were feeling and right then, just like when they first laid down, comfort was what was most
They began to relax into each other's arms again and even started to drift off towards sleep. There was a sort of safety being so close to each other that nothing else could ever match. Nobody could reach any of them without alerting the others and with how they were positioned the weakest members were most protected. The four of them hadn't often resorted to sleeping in such a tangle in Auradon, but life had been far too stressful for them lately to not let themselves indulge.

Thunder ripped through the air followed by screams and instantly the four of them were springing up in alarm. Iago cawed loudly as he flew across the room to land on Carlos' desk and Dude went scampering off to find a place to hide. The bright sunlight streaming through the window was unceremoniously snuffed out, and more loud roars echoed across campus.
The four teens from the Isle hurried to the window and stared out as the sky boiled with dark clouds. "Is that what I think it is?" Evie asked softly as the storm continued to build at an alarming rate. The oddest thing about it, though, was that the top was a smooth dome. A very familiar shape that should in no way be hovering over Auradon. All of the children that grew up on the Isle had memorized that sky from staring up and cursing it practically from before they could even talk.

"That's impossible," Mal said as lightning arced from one dark cloud to another.

The unsettlingly quiet storm continued to rage up in the sky as the gang stared for another minute. "You think your Dad- oh shit," Carlos abruptly cut himself off when he turned to look at Jay.

"What?" Jay asked as the others quickly looked over. Carlos didn't often cut himself off like that, so to hear it now was alarming.

"Your eyes are brown again," Evie told him.

"Well, if that thing is what we think it is, that makes sense," Mal said with another wary glance at the barrier of a storm. "No magic and all. Are you feeling okay, Jay?" she asked as she studied her second in command for any visible signs he was in some sort of distress from the sudden removal of magic.

Jay shrugged. "Yeah, I guess. I mean, it's not like I feel any different from how I did." If he was still separated from his lamp, it might have been a different story as without his lamp he'd been miserable, and the barrier would have helped the pain of that. "Actually, I kind of feel... more like myself than I have for a while," he admitted.

"But why would Jafar put another barrier up?" Evie asked. "After how much time he spent trying to get out from under the other one?"

"It would only make sense if he knew we were going to wish him back to Auradon and he wanted to stop us," Carlos said. "But he couldn't possibly know we were going to do that."

Jay narrowed his eyes as he thought about it. "Maybe he didn't do this," he said. "Maybe someone else put up the barrier to keep him from escaping."

There was a long moment of silence as they digested that possibility. "It is Fairy Godmother's spell," Evie finally offered. "It would make more sense than Jafar doing it."

"We should probably go find Ben and figure out what's going on," Mal said. "The sooner we solve this and get rid of that-" she nodded up at the sky with contempt "-the happier I think we'll all be."

A sudden pounding on the door had all four of them whipping around. "Mal! Open up!" Uma ordered. Mal's face darkened immediately, but she quickly stalked over to wrench the door open.
The purple-haired girl didn't get a chance to ask what Uma wanted, though. Almost instantly, Uma jabbed her finger past Mal to point out the window. "What is that?"

"It's pretty obvious what it is, don't you think?" Mal asked with a scoff.

"What is it doing here?" Uma demanded.

"We don't know," Mal answered with no small amount of contempt. "It's not like we put it there, Shrimpy."

Uma's temper flashed, but she didn't get a chance to do more than lunge before Jay was inserting himself and pushing the two girls apart. He didn't really care if they got into a fight normally, but with his father on the loose and another barrier he would instead figure that out first. "Easy. Let's go find Ben like you said, Mal," he suggested.

Mal didn't look entirely ready to back down, nor did Uma, but after a moment, they did both relax their postures. Uma stepped back just a little, and that was when Jay finally noticed that Harry, Gil, and Reza were hanging back in the hallway, although Harry was fingering his hook as if contemplating using the thing. The two gangs stood there in silence for several minutes before a scream further down the hall, drew their attention away from each other.

"Dizzy?" Evie pushed past Uma and the members of her gang to run down the hall. The rest of the teens were right behind Evie, and soon they were at Dizzy's room. "Dizzy! What happened?" Evie asked as she threw the door open. She came to an abrupt halt though when she saw what was in the room.

"Evie!" Dizzy cried before she was shaken roughly by the iron grip on her arm.

Standing there in all her wicked glory was the horned mistress of Evil herself. "Mom!" Mal caught at Evie just before the blue princess could hurry to Dizzy's side. "What-how!?"

Maleficent made an exaggerated tsking noise and shook her head slightly. "Oh come now, Mal. You didn't really think I was gone did you?" she asked sweetly but with a definite undertone of danger.

"The barrier..." Mal breathed. "No magic."

"That's right," Maleficent agreed, not even pretending to be sweet anymore. "Now, if I remember right from what you were saying earlier..." The teens went pale as they realized that they had discussed everything going on right in front of the cage that Mal kept her lizard mother in. "I have a certain junk peddler and his genie son to thank for this."

Jay fought the urge to back away. "Dad wouldn't do this," he denied. "And I sure as hell didn't help him."

Maleficent laughed at that and waved her hand. "You little brats never look at the big picture," she said before her smile dropped, and her eyes flashed venomous green. "There are plenty of reasons to want all the children of the most annoying do-gooders trapped here under that accursed dome. It might even be worth giving up magic again for a short while." Maleficent smirked and sent a shiver down all the teen's spines. "Just think of it. They'll all crumble instantly. Not as good as cursing them to die, of course, but I suppose it works in a pinch."

"There's still no magic," Mal pointed out. "So we'll stop you and Jafar, Mother."

"And how will you do that?" Maleficent asked, entirely unconcerned.
Jay stepped forward. "You don't have magic either, and we're blocking the door," he said. "Now let Dizzy go."

"Mm, aren't you the protective sort," Maleficent said mockingly. "But I'm not going to do that."

"Yes, you will, Mother," Mal said as she stepped to the side to allow the others to slowly move to better ring Maleficent in. Mal was a little worried that Uma and her goonies would be a problem but was glad to see Uma give just the slightest inclination of her head. They might hate each other, but Mal and Uma at least shared the goal of not letting any Isle kids get killed. Or, Mal realized, it might just be payback for saying she'd get Ben to bring the Warf Rats over. Either way, Mal would take what help she could get.

Maleficent didn't look at all worried at the teens entering the room and just shook her head. "Oh, pumpkin. you might have gotten lucky last time, but you're no match for me," she said before pulling a wicked looking dagger out of her belt and bringing it to Dizzy's throat.

"Dizzy!"

The bespectacled girl's eyes grew huge as she tried to pull away again but Maleficent just yanked her closer. "You're not going to make me slice her skinny little neck, will you, Mal?" Maleficent asked.

Mal hesitated and clenched her fists hard. She knew if she let her Mother go now the chance of getting both her and Jafar dealt with was dismal. But she couldn't risk Dizzy like that either. Mal glanced over at her friends to gauge their reactions. All it took was one look at the tears in Evie's eyes to confirm what she already knew. That she really didn't have any choice.

Reluctantly, Mal stepped away from the door. "Fine. Just let her go."

Maleficent tsked again even as she moved with Dizzy to the door of the room. "So soft, Mal. How disappointing. I raised you so much worse than this," Maleficent said with that annoyingly false sweet tone she liked to use so much to make her seem less dangerous or heartless than everyone knew she was. Maleficent backed out of the room still with Dizzy in her clutches, and the knife held far too close to the small girl's neck.

"This won't work out for you, Mother," Mal said as she tried her best to not look down at Dizzy at all. Seeing the girl terrified out of her mind would only make Mal act stupidly and maybe get them all killed. "Whatever you think you can get out of this, you won't."

"Ha! Of course, I will! If you think Jafar hasn't left a way out from under this barrier somewhere, then you're even more disappointing than I thought!" Maleficent said. "I just have to find it and then it's a simple matter of taking back what was mine!"

"Dad didn't cast this barrier," Jay said. "He wouldn't ever do that."

Maleficent glanced over at Jay and smiled. "I would think you of all people would know just how far Jafar's willing to go to get what he wants," she said wickedly. "How does it feel being a slave by the way?" Jay couldn't quite stop the flinch that barb caused even though he knew Maleficent would only be amused to see it. Sure enough, her smile grew.

Maleficent backed out into the hall. "I think, once I have the world under my thumb, you four will have to be punished for betraying us like you did at the coronation," she said, her eyes glowing green. "You and all those pathetic little 'friends' of yours," Maleficent said with a particularly annoyed sneer when she said the word friends. She scoffed, "Honestly, so worthless, the lot of
"You're wrong," Mal denied.

"That's the problem with you, Mal. You're only half me," Maleficent said with a falsely sad sigh. "Just not anywhere near as evil as you should be. And after I tried so hard to teach you." Maleficent was entirely in the hall by this point, and it seemed clear that if she were going to let Dizzy go now would be the moment. The mistress of Evil made no move to do so, however.

Evie took a half step forward, but Jay caught her before she could get too far. "Careful," he murmured. There was still a knife to Dizzy's throat, and they didn't have magic to just wish the blade away or anything like that.

"Let her go," Evie said although she let Jay keep her back. "She can't help you anymore."

"Oh, but she makes such an adorable little hostage," Maleficent said. "And a hostage is oh so useful... I don't think I can just give her up," she added sweetly.

The was a flash, and suddenly a sword blade was pressed to Maleficent's throat, causing the villainess to freeze where she was. "I think you should," Li Lonnie said as she shifted to better see Maleficent's front.

"Lonnie!"

Where the daughter of Mulan had come from nobody could quite say as they'd all been solidly focused on Maleficent, but her timing was absolutely impeccable. Lonnie didn't even glance at the Isle teens as she held her ancient sword steadily and firmly against Maleficent's neck. "Well? Let her go," Lonnie ordered.

There was a tense moment where it wasn't clear what Maleficent would do. She could still kill Dizzy out of spite but who knew how serious Lonnie was about using that blade. Finally, Maleficent loosened her grip on Dizzy's arm, and the small girl burst free instantly. She ran straight to Evie even as Jay and Harry both hurried forward to help Lonnie deal with Mal's mother.

In surprisingly little time they had Maleficent tied up and gagged and shut away in Dizzy's bathroom where she wouldn't be able to cause trouble. At least, not without magic. Even if magic did suddenly come back, without her staff, Maleficent's powers would be at least a little hindered. "Not that we aren't glad to see you, Lonnie... but what are you doing here?" Carlos asked after they had closed the door on the glaring Mistress of Evil.

Lonnie shouldered her sword and shrugged. "I saw the weird dome thing and realized something was up. I figured I'd come and find you guys since you are literally always the reason something is up," she told them. "Then I saw Maleficent coming out of the room, and I figured I should step in."

"And... why did you have a sword on you?" Jay asked as Evie continued to comfort Dizzy.

"Seemed the thing to have when there's a freaky unnatural magic sucking storm hovering above us," she answered casually.

Carlos shook his head. "The fact that that sentence was uttered and perfectly reasonable is probably a bad sign," he muttered to himself.

"Alright, alright," Mal said. "Now that we've dealt with my mom... again, do you know where Ben is, Lonnie?"
"No, haven't seen him. I told everyone I've seen so far to stay in their rooms in case something super bad is going down," Lonnie told them. "Ben's probably gone off to try and find Fairy Godmother and see what's going on. As far as I know, the campus is supposed to have protections against magical attacks."

"I don't know if a barrier would count as an attack though," Carlos mused.

"Either way... we need to figure out what's going on," Mal said firmly. "So, I guess we should go see if Fairy Godmother is in her office."

"And what are we supposed to do?" Uma asked with her arms folded unhappily. "Just sit here and twiddle our thumbs?"

Mal sighed and turned to face Uma fully. "Well, it's either that or come and do something good like stopping Jafar and whatever he has planned," she said. "So, just how good do you want to be, Uma?"

Uma instantly made a face at the idea of being 'good.' She scoffed, "No thanks. We'll just go and raid the kitchens. Come on, boys." With that Uma and the three boys that followed her left the room muttering about how they weren't goodie goodie pushovers.

"We probably could have actually used them to guard your Mom," Jay said after they were gone.

"Doubt they would have even if we asked," Mal replied.

"I'll do it," Lonnie volunteered. "I don't know much about magic so I probably won't be much help otherwise."

"Thanks, Lonnie," Mal said. "Just... don't take her gag out and you should be fine." Lonnie nodded in agreement with that. Mulan's daughter had no real desire to listen to a villain's ranting anyway.
They ended up meeting Ben and Aziz about halfway across campus also hurrying to the Headmistress' office. "What's going on?" Ben asked as the two athletes matched the four Isle Kid's pace. Luckily, they were able to do so since they routinely ran up and down the tourney field for hours on end.

"We're not a hundred percent sure," Mal said as Jay wrenched the door to the building open for them. Mal rushed in first, but the others were right behind her. "We're hoping this barrier was FG's doing and not Jafar's."

"Why would it be Jafar's?" Aziz asked.

"To keep us from sending him back with magic... or to trap the kids of all the heroes here where they can be hostages," Carlos supplied as they hurried up the stairs.

The six of them burst into the office and instantly came to a stop. The room was a mess with scorch marks everywhere and broken furniture against the walls. Papers were ripped up and spread everywhere, and Fairy Godmother and Scheherazade both were lying on the ground unconscious. "Shit," Mal said as the moment's hesitation broke and the teens rushed in. Aziz went to check on Scheherazade as Ben went to Fairy Godmother and the Isle Kids searched the room for any sign of Jafar. "What the hell happened?" Mal demanded as she looked around for some clue as to why Jafar would have attacked two very powerful magical women and how he had even won.

"He must have been after something," Jay said.

"Yeah, but what?" Carlos asked. "It isn't like Fairy Godmother keeps her wand here or anything like that."

There was a moment of silence before they heard a faint noise. "Scheherazade!" Aziz shifted his grip on the Djinn even as the others rushed beside him. "Scheherazade, what happened?" he asked.

"Jafar..." Scheherazade said as her eyes fluttered slightly.

"What was he after?" Mal demanded. "You have to tell us so that we can stop him."

Scheherazade seemed to struggle for a few moments. "Scheherazade," Jay called firmly. He needed to stop his father before things got even more out of hand and the female Djinn was the only one who could possibly tell him anything about what he was up to. Scheherazade's eyes fluttered again, and he managed to focus on Jay's face. "What did he do?"

"The crystal..."

"Crystal?" Mal echoed. "What crystal?"
Whatever it was, Mal thought it sounded quite ominous. "... Nasira."

Jay started slightly and leaned closer. "Aunt Nasira's crystal?" he asked in alarm. "He has that?"

Scheherazade nodded even as her eyes fully closed. Jay cursed aloud. "What crystal is she talking about?" Ben asked.

"My Aunt has a crystal that she found in the desert before she was sent to the Isle," Jay said. "It absorbs magic or something like that. But she kept it hidden. She wouldn't have ever given it to my dad. I know because Dad wanted it bad and she wouldn't give it to him... and I couldn't ever find it when Dad told me to steal it from her."

"So, how does he have it?" Ben asked.

Jay shook his head. "Probably not anyway that's good for my Aunt. But if he has that... he can get around the barrier," Jay said. "It's the same sort of trick he used before to make me into the Djinn. He stored up a bunch of extra magic in the lamp and then I made the wish."

"If he gets a lamp he'll be able to use it despite the barrier," Mal surmised. "Crap. We have to go get all the lamps on campus. Now."

"When he realizes my lamp isn't where he left it he's going to be pissed off," Jay said as he got to his feet.

"You know, this might actually not be so bad," Mal said as her mind quickly rifled through all the different information she knew. "If we get that crystal... we can wish him and my mother back to the Isle even with the barrier," she pointed out.

"Your mother?" Ben asked.

"Oh, yeah, Maleficent is back to normal now," Evie supplied. "But we have her tied up, and Lonnie is guarding her."

Ben's eyes widened. "Oh, is that all?"

"But we'd need the crystal," Carlos pointed out. "And if Jafar has it-"

"I can get it," Jay interrupted.

Mal narrowed her eyes instantly. "Jay, there is no way in hell you're getting anywhere near that bastard again."

Jay sighed. "I'm the only one he'd let that close, and I've stolen from him before," he reasoned. That was how he'd gotten the key to the safe from Jafar long enough to make a copy of it. Stealing from Jafar was tricky and very dangerous. Jay had been caught at it before and definitely regretted those times, but he was also sure he was the only one who could pull it off at all. Mal, however, looked far from convinced. "Mal, I can do this."

"There is absolutely no way it's happening, Jay," Mal decided.

"How else are you going to get the crystal?" Jay demanded.

Mal frowned. "So we don't get the crystal. We'll find another way."

"What other way?" Jay asked. "Mal the longer my Dad is here, the more people are going to get hurt."
"What if we distract him?" Carlos said suddenly. "Would that make it easier to get the crystal off him?"

Jay hesitated for a moment before nodding. "Yeah. But I have no idea what you could distract him with..."

"We can think of something," Carlos said.

"What part of no wasn't clear?" Mal asked. "I am not risking anyone for a piece of rock."

Jay frowned. "Not even if that rock can save us from worse?" he asked. "Trust me, Mal. If my Dad has that crystal and somehow gets a lamp to wish himself out of here or whatever it is he's looking to do with it... we are all in big trouble."

"He might have a point," Aziz commented. "Best to take care of this now."

Mal scowled darkly. "We don't even know where he is," Mal pointed out. "So this argument isn't worth anything."

"If it's to get Jafar out of Auradon it is," Ben denied. "Mal, I understand you don't want to risk someone getting hurt, I don't either, but we have a chance to get rid of Jafar now before anything worse happens." Ben was a little surprised that Mal was so against taking this risk when she had rushed off to go back to the island to get Jay's lamp. Then again they had literally just patched Jay up after being beaten senseless by Jafar so that probably had a lot to do with it. "Look at what he did to Fairy Godmother and Scheherazade."

"Mal," Jay said, drawing his leader's attention over to where he was kneeling. "I'm going to do this whether you want me to or not. If we can get that crystal, then we can wish away the barrier with my lamp and then we're free to wish my dad and your mom where they belong."

"And if you get hurt again?" Mal demanded.

Jay sighed. "It's not like I've never gotten hurt before. But, if it makes you feel better, I promise I'll be careful."

"It doesn't," Mal replied instantly.

"Tough. But I will take a distraction if you guys can manage it," Jay said glancing at the others. "Every little bit and all that."

"Someone should really go get the nurse," Carlos said from where he was by Fairy Godmother's head. The two women on the floor seemed to just be knocked out, but they really shouldn't be left lying where they were either in case it wasn't that straightforward. "Then we can go after Jafar."

"Plus we have to find Jafar in the first place," Evie pointed out.

"He'll be going back to get my lamp," Jay said. "Pretty sure I know where we were."

"Alright. This is a terrible plan," Mal said with a heavy sigh. She didn't like it in the least, but she knew Jay well enough to realize when he was serious about doing something. "Fine. Ben, can you take care of Fairy Godmother and Scheherazade here? The rest of us will... go be incredibly stupid."

Jay snorted some. "Way to show optimism there, Mal."
"I'll show optimism after we aren't dead from this," Mal told him. "You're sure you can do this, Jay?"

"I'm sure," Jay said firmly. "I did it before, and I can do it again." Mal sighed again but then got up.
Ben took off from the office first, heading towards the back of the building where the door closest to the main building was so that he could get the nurse. No matter what they did to try and get a handle on Jafar they would definitely need to make sure that Fairy Godmother and Scheherazade were looked after. Ben said he would join up with them again shortly in Carlos and Jay's room since it was quickly decided his lamp would be easiest to use. Scheherazade was unconscious, and Jay wasn't about to put Jordan through the unpleasant wrenching sensation that happened to one's insides when summoned by someone rubbing your lamp. Jay wasn't entirely thrilled with having to be the Djinn used, but he was practical enough to know it was the best option.

The five remaining teens were on their way out of the front of the administrative building when they were brought up short. Jay felt his blood run icy cold at the grin on Jafar's face where he was standing at the bottom of the large staircase. It was the same smile that Jafar had always put on when he knew he had the advantage and was about to use it. Also, it meant that Jay was screwed. Hard. Jay hadn't had a chance to plan out how he was going to get close enough to steal from his father yet. And they hadn't even discussed that distraction idea. Sure, Jay had a guaranteed way of getting close enough to pick Jafar's pocket, but that involved massive damage to his face and Mal would flip the fuck out if that were how this went down. Not that it was Jay's first choice either. He'd just had his face fixed, after all. "Well, well, I had wondered who I had heard running around up there," Jafar said as he stood there with one hand behind his back and the other fiddling with a chain around his neck. Jay was willing to bet everything that was where the crystal was, which made him curse silently. Getting something off Jafar's neck was always the hardest type of theft that Jay ever attempted. "I didn't think it would be you. Though, that does save me a trip."

"Hey, Pops," Jay said after a quick glance around the room. There were plenty of escape paths through windows and doors. Jafar was standing right in the center of the entry hall though so he could probably reach them before they could get across the room to an exit or even exit himself if they tried to swarm him. Jay didn't know for certain when Jafar would decide the odds had swung out of his favor, but he did realize he couldn't let that happen until he had the crystal. The ex-thief stepped forward to make sure that his father's attention was soundly on himself and not any of his friends. "You know, with this barrier you're not gonna be able to do anything," he said. Jay knew that his father was already trying to work around that, but the teen had found that admitting when he did know things never helped him out. Jay figured that since his father knew he wasn't the smartest, and that the thief was sensitive about it, so Jafar would never think that Jay would play it up.

Jafar scoffed. "Of course you would think that," he said with no attempt to hide his distaste. Despite expecting it, Jay couldn't quite help but feel heat rise to his cheeks at the slight. "I've gotten around barriers before. This is no different."

"But you don't have the lamp," Jay said as he took another cautious step forward. The others were
slowly moving as well, but he wasn't entirely sure what they were planning to do. Hopefully not anything silly like trying to surround Jafar or something. Jay didn't think that would end well and he certainly didn't want any of his friends getting hurt. He wished he could warn Mal and the others that his father was never unarmed but there just wasn't a way to do that. Their hand signs weren't that elaborate. Although, he supposed just 'weapon' would work. Jay flicked his hand behind his back where he was sure that the others would see it and Jafar wouldn't and made the sign.

"I don't need a lamp, you idiot," Jafar said with narrowed eyes.

Jay practically felt the others bristle at that. What surprised him though, was when Aziz stepped up beside him before Mal could. "Whatever the hell you're after, you're not going to get it," he spat out. "Then you're getting sent back to the Isle where evil bastards like you belong."

Jafar looked slightly surprised but then smirked in a way that Jay recognized as very dangerous. That was the look of Jafar when he knew something that Jay didn't or was plotting something particularly evil. "Ah, the other one. I was wondering if I'd spot you around. Aziz isn't it?"

Aziz recoiled just slightly. He hadn't really expected Jafar to recognize him or know his name. It wasn't as if he was Ben and his face was plastered everywhere. "Other one?" Jay heard Carlos mutter in confusion somewhere behind him.

"You'll find soon enough, little Prince, that I always get what I want," Jafar continued. "Isn't that right, son?"

Jay couldn't quite help but stiffen as Jafar turned his attention away from Aziz and onto him. Even though he knew -he knew- that it was just his father trying to manipulate him, that word was too loaded to entirely ignore. Jay had known for years that Jafar didn't actually consider him worthy of the title 'son,' but hearing that word made Jay want to do whatever he could to keep Jafar sounding so pleased with him. Jafar was so rarely happy and almost never acknowledged him at all.

Mal suddenly stepped in front of Jay, and he didn't have to look to know his leader's eyes would be glowing bright green. "Leave him alone," she growled. She had never sounded more like a dragon then right that second.

"Ah, Maleficent's daughter," Jafar said lightly. He didn't seem intimidated in the least by her anger. "I thought I might find you nearby. I'm sure I have you to blame for causing such blatant disrespect lately. You always seem to be the cause."

"You're damn right," Mal snapped.

Jafar grunted. "Such a horrid girl. Your Mother should be proud," he said in a tone that made it clear he didn't really believe that. Then again, Jafar had never had a very high opinion of Mal. Jafar didn't like girls that showed much spirit and liked even less that Jay had made friends with one of the most outspoken ones on the Isle.

Suddenly, Jafar turned his head to look at Carlos who had been edging around to one side. "You don't think I don't realize what you're trying to do, do you, mutt?"

Carlos froze where he was. Jay quickly pushed forward, not wanting his father's attention on his friends. He shouldn't have let himself falter in the first place. "I know where your staff is," Jay said impulsively. Jafar's attention instantly snapped back to Jay entirely.

Jafar smiled wickedly. "Very good, son. Where is it?"
"Let them go and then I'll tell you," Jay said.

Jafar's smile fell instantly. "Is that a condition?" he asked in a dangerous tone. "You know better than to think you can set conditions with me, boy."

"I guess you won't know then," Jay said as evenly as possible. He hadn't tried this trick in a long time since he'd ended up having trouble breathing for three weeks due to badly bruised ribs and a lot harder time flirting because of the damage to his face.

"Am I going to have to teach you yet another lesson?" Jafar questioned through his teeth.

Jay couldn't quite stop the step back that came automatically. "Well, I am a slow learner," he said. Jay wished that his voice was steadier than it actually was. He hadn't tried to so blatantly stand up to his father in years. Jay felt a slender hand wrap around the wrist of the arm that was still hanging back where it was hidden behind his body. Judging by the lack of spray-painting callous he knew it had to be Evie's. A part of him wished that didn't comfort him as much as it did, because he was positive his father would notice.

"You don't learn at all," Jafar growled as he took a few steps to the side so that he was further away from where Carlos had again been trying to edge closer. "We're going to have to have another talk, aren't we?" Jay stiffened, and though he tried his best not to let it, his brain snapped back to the last time he'd heard his father say something like that.

"We need to have a talk."

Jay looked up from where he had just finished emptying out his pockets of all the trinkets and coins that he'd stolen that day onto the counter of his Father's shop. That was an odd tone of voice for his Father to have taken and it set alarm bells off in Jay's head. With a quick glance beside the old register, Jay was able to count ten empty bottles of beer, which was definitely a bad sign. Jafar got a lot worse when he'd been drinking. "Talk about what, pops?" he asked as casually as he was able.

"I had a very interesting customer today," Jafar said as he picked up a pocket watch from the pile and examined it as he walked around the edge of the room. "Do you know what he wanted?"

Jay knew that he probably couldn't possibly answer the question, but Jafar didn't sound like he would accept silence this time around. "A toaster?" he offered, mostly because he was staring right at one that was sitting on a shelf.

"Don't try and get smart, you're terrible at it," Jafar snapped as he put the watch into a case made from several doors nailed together and a window for the top. Jay glanced behind him to watch as Jafar very carefully arranged the watch and then locked the cabinet. "No, he came in to complain."

"Complain?" Jay echoed in confusion. People complained all the time to Jafar. Usually about the quality of their purchases or something else that his Father didn't give two shits about. Complaining about being ripped off by Jafar was about as useful as pissing into the wind.

Jafar started walking again, and Jay felt his anxiety climb when his Father locked the front door as he went. That meant that Jafar was really and truly pissed off about whatever had happened. Not that Jay didn't still have escape routes, but the front door would have been the easiest since it had the fewest locks and Jay wouldn't have to climb through it. "About prices of all things," Jafar said.
"Prices? He can go to Hades' place then," Jay said. That was their usual response to complaints about prices. Usually, that was enough to remind people that Jafar's Junk Shop was ultimately the better deal since you weren't also in danger of losing your soul like you were when dealing with Hades.

"Apparently not," Jafar said as he rounded the room to head towards the counter again. "Because, you see, Hades doesn't have what he wanted." Jafar's voice was starting to get somewhat more dangerous, and Jay glanced over uneasily.

"Well, I steal better shit," Jay said in an attempt to lighten the tension he was feeling. He still wasn't sure what this was about since it definitely seemed like his Father was angry at him, but Jay certainly didn't set the prices in the shop. All he did was supply the stuff, clean the junk up, and sometimes tend the front when his dad didn't want to.

"Of course you do," Jafar replied, sounding almost fond for a second, which was almost more alarming. "But that's not quite what he meant. You see the exclusive item that he was complaining about the price of... was you."

Jay barely had a second to register what that meant before Jafar grabbed a fistful of hat and hair and slammed him forward. Jay felt his nose crack as his face met the front counter. Jafar pulled his head back up rough enough to half pull the beanie off Jay's head. "Dad!"

Jafar growled and slammed Jay's head down again before grinding it into the rough surface. "Don't you call me that, you disgusting degenerate!" Jafar flung Jay back, but the teen didn't have a chance to do more than roll to his side before he was being kicked in the gut and chest. Jay curled to try and protect himself even as Jafar's rage exploded. "You're no son of mine! My son would never lower himself to being a two-bit whore!"

Jay grunted in pain as Jafar's foot slammed into his stomach despite how he'd tried to shield himself. "You're just like your whore of a mother! Pathetic, unnatural, worthless slut!" Each insult was punctuated by another hard kick to wherever Jay wasn't protecting. A particularly hard kick to his already bleeding face left Jay dazed on the ground. "You don't deserve everything I give you!"

Jafar kicked Jay hard enough to half roll him over, and suddenly he was there wrapping his hands tight around Jay's neck.

The battered teen instantly choked on the gasp for air he tried to make as Jafar squeezed. Jay kicked and squirmed to try and get out from under the enraged ex-vizier even as his hands pulled at Jafar's. He couldn't do much more than pull at Jafar's fingers and try to get out from under him since the magic of being a Djinn kept him from hurting Jafar at all. Jay couldn't even use his nails as more and more air was denied him. Black spots were starting to pop across his vision as Jafar's fingers kept digging in harder and harder.

Jafar didn't even seem to realize how tight his grip was or how Jay's face was starting to turn different colors. All he was aware of was how entirely outraged he was to find out what Jay had been doing. Jay struggled harder, but he couldn't manage to get Jafar off. His vision was getting grey as he struggled to breathe and he was vaguely aware of more insults being flung at him by his father. Desperately, Jay abandoned pulling at Jafar's hands to tug at his leather cuffs and expose the gold bracers beneath.

The flash of gold broke through the red haze of Jafar's rage, and he loosened his grip after another second of squeezing. Jay gasped for air before the coughing and choking came. His neck was already starting to bruise and swell as he tried to recover. Jafar got up and kicked Jay hard in the side. He was still furious at Jay. Jafar couldn't risk killing the boy, which Jay well knew, but he certainly wasn't done punishing him for violating Jafar's sensibilities.
"You're a disgraceful whore," Jafar spat as Jay turned onto his side to try and better protect himself again. "Even more worthless than I thought. A dirty, used up tissue."

Jay tried his best to ignore his Father's words and just focus on getting further away. He pretended that the tears burning at his eyes were only from how his lungs and throat were burning or how his face and torso were aching and bleeding. Jafar stomped hard on Jay's arm where he'd been trying to pull himself away, and the teen couldn't help but let out a shout of pain as Jafar ground his heel down.

With a disgusted look on his face, Jafar grabbed hold of the arm he'd just stomped on and yanked Jay up. Jafar slammed Jay back against the counter hard, causing several of the beer bottles to fall over and all the air that Jay had struggled to get to escape again. Jay heard a bottle shatter against the ground even as his arm was twisted back behind him painfully. "That hurts!" Jay gasped though Jafar was well aware of that.

Jafar snapped for Jay to shut up even as he grabbed at the front of Jay's pants. "W-what are you doing!?" Jay demanded as he tried to twist away. Panic and fear were building quickly.

"Stop that!" Jafar ordered as he all but ripped Jay's pants open. "If you want to be nothing more than a dirty, cheap hole for men to fuck then I'll give you what you want."

"Father! No!"

Jafar used his free hand to punch Jay in the side hard, causing noises of pain from the teen. "Shut up! I wouldn't have to do this if you weren't acting like a piss pot for men to cum in!"

Jay screamed and thrashed to try and get off the counter. Jafar reached across to grab one of the knocked over bottles even as he wrenched Jay's arm further up. Jay continued to struggle, and his Father kept twisting with his grip until Jay's arm snapped. The pain made Jay scream even louder, but the neighbors were used to ignoring screams from Jafar's Junk Shop when it was closed.

Everything became a blur of pain and degradation until Jafar finally seemed to have reached the end of his rage and tossed Jay onto the ground. A large piece of glass from the broken beer bottle sunk into Jay's already bruised side as he landed. Blood spread out across the floor as Jay curled into himself. Everything hurt so much, and his Father's words were echoing loudly through his head. The words calling him terrible names and demanding to know if he liked it since he was such a pervert.

Bloody, bruised, and brutalized, Jay struggled to stop the sobs or at the least stifle them so that Jafar wouldn't get angry again. Jafar coldly watched him for a moment before scoffing, "Utterly pathetic." Jay barely even heard it and was just glad when his Father turned to disappear into the back of the shop.

Jay wasn't sure how long he laid there before he managed to get some semblance of control over himself. He just remembered the bloody bottle shattering as he threw it and how each step hurt. Jay had no idea how he ended up making his way to the loft and the others, but he somehow did and was glad he'd managed to fix his pants enough that it wasn't immediately apparent anything except a beating had happened.

"Jay!"

Jay jerked hard and suddenly realized that he was shaking and cold sweat was covering his skin. Mal's purple hair was right in front of him along with Aziz, both blocking his view of Jafar. Evie and Carlos were on either side. Jay swallowed hard and took a few deep breaths to try and shake off
the feeling. He was still struggling to not think about that memory and was ashamed to have been pulled back into it in the first place.

"You won't touch him again," Mal was saying.


Jay closed his eyes tightly for a moment to push his father's voice out of his head. Why couldn't he stop shaking?! He had to get a grip! The others were counting on him. "It's okay, Jay," Carlos muttered to him. "You're okay."

"It's not okay," Jay denied.

"Jay, we won't let him hurt you," Evie said as she rubbed his bicep.

"I'm fine," Jay insisted as he opened his eyes again and forced himself to step forward. He was still shaking, but he couldn't find the energy to be annoyed by that right then.

Jafar seemed amused as Jay pushed past Mal and Aziz. "What's this now? You look upset, boy," Jafar said almost pleasantly before glaring. "Don't think you can stand up to me. You've already proved you can't."

Jay hesitated for a moment. Jafar had a point as much as he hated to admit it. Jay had a breakdown from just a simple sentence. Just a word. A warm hand landed on Jay's shoulder, and Jay ripped his attention to the side to see Aziz had closed the gap between them again. "He doesn't control you anymore, Jay," Aziz whispered into his ear. "He's not protected from being hurt by you."

Jay almost felt something inside of him shift at that realization. That was true and he'd somehow entirely forgotten it. Jafar wasn't his master. Jay felt a strange calm after that reminder and looked at Jafar again. The ex-vizier was still smirking in that superior way that Jay utterly hated. Jay actually realized there wasn't a single thing about Jafar he didn't hate. Every single part of his father was utterly horrible, and he hated him.

How was Jafar getting closer, though? Oh, Jay was walking, he realized about halfway across the room. He wasn't even really thinking as his hand balled into a fist. Jay was just so. Damn. Mad. Jay saw the second Jafar noticed the difference just before he pulled his arm back. Jay stepped into the punch and threw every bit of his not insignificant strength and weight behind it.

Jay was sure it was pure surprise on Jafar's side that allowed the punch to connect but he didn't really care. He just found it satisfying to finally not be the one with the broken nose for once. Jafar's cry of pain and surprise was not something Jay had ever heard before and he'd only ever seen Jafar fall back after he'd been drinking. Jay's hand throbbed where his knuckles had connected. There was dead silence in the room as Jafar just laid there sprawled out on the ground with blood starting to stream down his face.
Chapter 63

Chapter Notes

Not really happy with how the fight with Jafar turned out... action scenes are what I consider my biggest weakness. But here it is.

Also, there is a new dirty oneshot between Harry and Jay if you didn't notice and I put everything in this series into chronological order since it had been mixed up willy nilly.

"You punched him in the mouth," Mal said not sounding too surprised but impressed.

Jay nodded although he felt a little weak in the knees from shock at his own actions. He'd never thought he'd be able to do it. "Yeah." It had felt amazing to finally punch the bastard. Even if Jay was still half expecting to wake up.

"Bout time someone did," Carlos muttered. He was real tired of hearing the pompous ass talking. Jay almost had to physically shake himself to get his brain working again, and was about to hurry over to search for the crystal when his father began to push himself up. Blood was on Jafar's face and fire was burning in his eyes.

"You'll regret that, boy," Jafar hissed furiously.

"No, he really won't," Mal said as she moved forward to Jay's side. Jay thought it was a little silly how immediately better he felt with Mal backing him. And when Aziz came up on Jay's other side, Jay felt the remaining tension fade surprisingly fast. Perhaps it was just because Jay had never actually stood up to his father with help before, but he certainly felt a lot more secure with the other teens standing right there.

Jafar reached into his robes to pull out what looked like a shiny lump of glass on the end of a chain. "With both a Djinn and Fairy Godmother's magic in this... that barrier is nothing to me," Jafar said as he clenched his hand around the stone tightly. Rays of light in powder blue and pale peach started shining from the stone through Jafar's fingers. Red smoke erupted from the floor and swirled over Jafar's body. Jay reacted quickly once he realized what was happening and dragged both Mal and Aziz back several feet and away from danger.

Fire erupted from the smoke even as the three teens scrambled back to where Evie and Carlos were by the foot of the stairs. The fire died down surprisingly quickly but something far more terrifying took it's place. There was a low hiss and from the smoke rose a giant hooded cobra head with red eyes and teeth like swords. "Oh... I forgot he could do that..." Aziz breathed with huge eyes.

"Yeah, sorcerer and all that," Mal said as the huge body of black and red scales filled the entry hall and blocked off their exits. "That's... going to be a problem without magic."

"Do you see the stone?" Carlos asked as his eyes flicked over the long coils of Jafar's transformed body.

"There!" Evie said pointing to Jafar's right side.
Jay's eyes darted to that side and easily spotted what had caught Evie's attention. Wedged in the very corner of that side of Jafar's hood, right were the extra skin met his long body, there was a tiny fold that the stone had ended up wedged into. The crystal was still shining different colors and Jay narrowed his eyes. Although Jafar had never taught his son magic, Jay had cottoned onto a few of the basic idea just by overhearing them while Jafar ranted. "He needs to keep hold of it to keep using magic," he realized aloud. "We get that and he turns back. He'd have no choice."

"We'll distract him," Mal said even as the snake that was Jafar hissed and spread his hood a little further. "Jay, you get the stone."

"Is he venomous?" Carlos asked as the fangs in Jafar's mouth dripped.

"Oh yeah," Jay said even as his eyes started moving over the room for any idea how he was going to get several feet above his own head to reach his goal. He had to get that stone back he just didn't know how that was going to happen when so near his father's very dangerous cobra head. "Don't get bit."

"Thanks for the advice," Aziz drawled just before the group had to scatter to avoid Jafar's first strike. Evie let out a short scream but she was quick on her feet even in dangerous looking heels. Carlos cursed as he bailed to the side and Mal's eyes were pure green from her anger.

Jay moved as fast as he could towards his father while Aziz darted up the stairs and yelled what sounded like a really unpleasant insult in Arabic although Jay had never heard it before. Jafar hissed and swung around to face the young Prince. Jay took the chance to leap onto one massive coil of muscle and scales.

Feeling Jay land on his body, Jafar whipped around again instantly. "Don't think you can cross me!"

The momentum of Jafar moving caused Jay to loose his perch but he had long ago learned how to fall properly and was able to roll once he hit the ground. Carlos was beside Jay and helping him up almost immediately. Jafar snarled and reared back, but before he could try to bite the boys, something hit him hard in the side of the head.

Jafar turned yet again to see Evie had thrown her shoe at the snake and had her other ready in her hand to repeat. "You harlot!"

"Don't call her that!" Mal snapped as she finally managed to pull a sword off of the wall that she'd been trying to free since they split up. The blade was a bit too long and heavy but Mal managed to lift it up enough to look vaguely threatening.


"It'll still do it's job," Mal said.

"I won't be defeated as easily as your mother," Jafar told her.

"Carlos," Jay muttered as Jafar and Mal stared each other down. "I have an idea but I need you to get my dad to look that way," Jay said pointing to the left.

Carlos frowned. "What're you planning?"

"Just trust me," Jay said as he ran to the nearest wall and grabbed hold of the carved wood door frame. He did very much appreciate that all these old castle buildings had a ridiculous number of unneeded decorative flourishes everywhere. The details gave him so many handholds, which he'd
discovered very quickly when they came to Auradon.

After a moment, Jay heard Carlos yelling something and Jafar's hiss of agitation but he didn't pause to look at what was happening. He really needed to focus on what he was doing. Though there were plenty of handholds for him none of them were actually large enough or particularly comfortable to grip.

Jay heard more Arabic yelling from Aziz even as Evie yelped. Jay risked a glance back and was relieved to see Evie had hidden behind a suit of armor and only seemed a little shaken rather than hurt. Aziz had to quickly dodge Jafar's attempt to bite him in half and Jay turned his full attention back to climbing up the wall.

Climbing took longer than Jay really wanted it to take but he didn't have too much of a choice if he was going to enact his plan. Once Jay reached the top of the front door, he took looked behind him. Jafar was trying his best to bite Mal who was recklessly slashing at Jafar each time he got too close. Jay managed to catch Aziz's eye and let go of the molding he was clinging to so that he could wave hard to the right.

Aziz looked mildly confused, but then, after a moment, Jay could tell that the other Arabian understood. Aziz ran to the side so that he was far to Jafar's right. "Hey!" Aziz yelled while waving his arm. Jafar turned immediately with a loud hiss. "Come here, ya washed up old piece of crap!"

Jafar's hiss of anger sounded like a train letting off steam and his eyes blazed with hate. "You are even more horrible than the pair of dolts that raised you, Prince," Jafar snarled.

"Yeah? Well at least we don't live by selling junk!" Aziz shot back. "Two-bit hack!"

Jay knew that would be more than enough to enrage his father and sure enough he saw the massive cobra rear back and his hood flare open as he prepared to strike. There wouldn't be a better chance so Jay jumped as hard as he could. Jay hit Jafar in the side a lot lower than he had wanted but he managed to cling to his father's transformed body even as Jafar yelled and started to thrash. The teen had to reach up to cling to the edge of Jafar's hood so that he wouldn't slip off. "Hold on, Jay!" he heard Mal shout. Jay would have made a snarky reply to that but he was way too busy trying to not be thrown off.

"Let go!" Jafar ordered but Jay ignored that and focused instead on pulling himself up higher.

It took every bit of strength in Jay's arms to not be flung off and manage to get up high enough to actually reach into the small fold of skin over the crystal. Just as Jay wrapped his hand around the rock, Jafar was able to twist enough to snap his jaws around Jay's leg. Jay screamed as the sharp fangs ripped into his leg and crushed his bones. Fire went racing through his bloodstream with frightening speed and Jay was yanked off by Jafar's grip on his calf.

Jay hit the wall hard and then the ground. "Jay!"

The others raced to his side even as Jay shook his head to clear it and pushed himself off the ground. The bite as well as being thrown into solid objects had hurt like a bitch, but Jay still felt the hard smoothness of the crystal in his fist. Jay had to shake his head to stop the ringing and his vision tilting all over the place. Jafar let out a scream of utter rage as red smoke wrapped around his snake body.

Jay held up the crystal so that the others could see it. "Cake."

Mal reached over and took the stone from Jay's hand. "Good job. But you did just get bit and
thrown into a wall," she said.

"Uh, more importantly," Aziz said with a nod to where the red smoke was fading away to leave a very angry looking Jafar.

"Give that back!" Jafar snarled as he pulled out his wickedly sharp and wavy blade.

Mal quickly pushed the crystal at Carlos. "You're fastest. Go!"

Carlos' eyes went huge but Mal just repeated for him to run. Jafar stormed over and made a grab for the white-haired teen but Aziz jumped up and inserted himself between them before he could. Carlos scrambled back and then darted for the door as Mal got to her feet as well. Evie stayed crouched beside Jay as Mal and Aziz stared Jafar down. "You'll regret that," Jafar said.

"You keep saying that but I really don't think I will," Mal said. "None of us will ever regret standing up to you. Not anymore. We're better than our parents."

"Delusional girl," Jafar sneered. "You're not better than us. You're weaker than us."

Mal scoffed in return. "If we were weaker than you then we wouldn't be in Auradon living happy in the first place! You're all just miserable and bitter we got our happy ending."

"Did you now?" Jafar asked almost kindly. "Well, you'll soon realize that these so-called 'heroes' aren't so heroic. It won't take long for them to throw you off to the side for their own benefit. Because that's what. They. Do."

"We aren't like you!" Aziz snapped.

Jafar actually laughed at that. "Of course you are, boy," he said. "It's human nature to sacrifice others for your own profit. We're a greedy, horrible species. And to deny that means that you're just terribly naive."

"Or we're more evolved than you," Evie said.

"Don't try and act beyond your intelligence girl," Jafar replied.

"Dad, that's enough. You lost the crystal. You can't win now," Jay said as he cautiously got to his feet. He had to put all his weight on his uninjured leg and a pool of blood was under his one foot but he ignored both of those things.

Jafar narrowed his eyes. "I'm not afraid of a few set backs. I, unlike you, am more than capable of winning in spite of such things. I always do."

"No, you don't," Aziz said. "If you did you wouldn't have been sent to the Isle of the Lost in the first place."

Just then, Jay felt a familiar horrible wrenching sensation. Carlos must have gotten back to the room. "Speaking of... You're about to go back," Jay told his father.

"So send me back!" Jafar declared. "I'll just come back."

Jay couldn't fight the urge to bring his hand up and his fingers together. "Not in this lifetime, Pops," he said just before snapping. Golden smoke started pouring from nowhere and wrapped around Jafar like a cloak. Almost immediately, Jay felt the drain of trying to get around not one but two barriers. Evie caught him as his weakened leg gave out on him. The smoke kept swirling as
black dots appeared across Jay's vision.

The smoke wafted away as Jay leaned a little more heavily on Evie than he meant to. The space in front of the teens was now empty of an psychotic ex-vizier turned sorcerers. "I kind of thought that would be harder," Mal admitted.

"Dad's not stupid. Without the stone he was too outnumbered to do more than yell at us," Jay offered as he slowly sat down beside the blood puddle.

"Well, now we just got to get rid of the barrier and patch you up," Evie said as she knelt down to look at Jay's leg.

"I'll be fine," Jay said dismissively. "Someone should go get Carlos."


"Right," Aziz agreed as he bent down to hook Jay's arm over his shoulders. "Let's go, Jay. By the way, you really need to stop breaking your legs."

Jay gave the other Arabian an annoyed look. "You're hilarious."

"Thanks," Aziz said with a huge grin.
The four teens made their way back towards the dorms with Jay hobbling along. He still felt incredibly weak from sending Jafar and Maleficent back to the Isle with magic. Jay hadn't really put a whole lot of thought into just how difficult it would end up being. Well, he actually hadn't thought about it in any sort of way, only to the point he knew he would have to do it and not beyond. Aziz was luckily pretty strong himself from playing tourney, and was able to keep Jay pretty much entirely upright even though his leg was horribly broken and poison was racing through his veins.

"You hangin' in there, Jay?" Mal asked as they hurried across the lawns.

"Oh... yeah. Broken leg, poison making everything feel like it's on fire, and I'm pretty sure a concussion, so nothing out of the ordinary for us," Jay replied. "A Tuesday, I'd say..."

"Yeah, you do sound a little loopy," Evie said as she glanced at Jay worriedly.

"You'll be fine," Mal said. "Once we get the barrier down, then magic will be back, and you can get all healed up just like last time."

"You know we're not actually supposed to use magic even for healing," Aziz said.

Mal cast the Arabian a glare. "Don't you give me that right now. I couldn't care less what sort of stupid anti-magic rules you have here in Auradon. Save it for when Jay isn't bleeding all over the place."

"I could probably bandage him up some," Evie offered.

"We're almost to the dorms. It's faster to just get him there so we can wish the barrier away," Mal answered as she did her best to not run. It wasn't that she cared if anyone saw her running across the lawn but she knew that Jay wouldn't be able to keep up with her. She glanced back behind her and almost winced at how pale and sweaty he looked. Mal didn't know how deadly Jafar's venom was, but she was just going to go ahead and assume very.

"Oh, Allah! What happened!?" Jordan came running from the dorms they were heading to with eyes wide.

Mal didn't stop in her path, forcing the female Djinn to step out of the way. "Had a meeting with Jafar... went about as well as you'd think," she said even as she wrenched the door open for the others.

"What is going on around here?" Jordan asked as she quickly matched their pace. "First this barrier thing shows up and then the nurse calls and says Auntie Scheherazade has been attacked and won't wake up and now you fought Jafar!?"

"Jafar stole magic from Scheherazade and Fairy Godmother," Evie explained since Mal was
preoccupied with slinging Jay's other arm over her shoulders so they could help him up the stairs. None of them really liked how unfocused his eyes seemed to be becoming every second. "He used some stone to trap it and was using it to fuel his own spells even with the barrier over the school. We got it back, and Carlos used it and the lamp to wish Jafar back to the Isle but Jay got a little beat up during it."

"He used a lamp?" Jordan asked, seemingly horrified.

Mal flashed green eyes. "What would you have preferred us do, Jordan?" she demanded. "We don't exactly have a whole lot of options under this barrier."

Jordan pursed her lips. "Alright, I guess that's true," she admitted. "But still, you should be careful with wishes."

"Yeah, well, once we wish Jay free that won't even matter," Mal said.

Jordan almost stumbled. "W-what?! You can't do that. At least not yet. You have to wait until he's at least an adult or else he might have complications," Jordan said.

"What kind of complications?" Mal demanded.

"Well, it's like trying to grow without what you need to do it," Jordan said. "Once he gets old enough no problem, but that's why I'm not free yet. It's only a problem if you grow up as a Djinn, but it still is a thing."

Mal huffed in annoyance. Why were there so many stupid rules with magic anyway? It was really starting to get on her very last nerve. Especially since this was dealing with the life of her best friend. "Whatever, first thing is we got to get rid of the barrier and then heal Jay. You can do that can't you, genie-girl?"

"Yes," Jordan said. "I can definitely do that if we get rid of the barrier."

"Then let's hurry," Evie said as she hurried down the hallway to where the boy's room was. "Carlos!"

"I'm in here," Carlos called back.

Aziz and Mal both were to the point where they were nearly dragging Jay between them. Jordan and Evie were right behind the other three and closed the door behind them. "Carlos, hurry up and make the next wish," Mal said as Jay groaned as he leaned back against the headboard of his bed.

Carlos cringed but nodded and grabbed Jay's lamp from where it was sitting on the side table. "I really don't like using this thing," he said as he held the lamp out. The stone in Carlos' hand glimmered although it was a lot less bright than it had been earlier when Jafar used it. "Just feels wrong."

"Well, we don't have time to go get Jordan's," Mal said.

"I wish the barrier around Auradon was gone," Carlos said in a clear voice.

Jay lifted his head where it had been slumped against his chest even as his hand came up and snapped his fingers. "Wha?" he asked.

"It's alright, Jay, we just wished the barrier away. Get some rest," Mal said as Evie and Carlos hurried to the window. Both of them peered outside at the sky which was starting to dissipate like
water evaporating off of glass. The dark clouds above turned golden before billowing away as if they'd never been and those with magic felt it rush back.

"I'll take him into his lamp to start healing him," Jordan said. "My Aunt and Fairy Godmother should have their power return shortly now that the barrier isn't stopping it."

Mal nodded in understanding before Jordan and Jay disappeared into the lamp. "Do you think she's right, Mal?" Evie asked. "That wishing Jay free right now might hurt him?"

"She has no reason to lie about it," Aziz said.

"Either way, things are a little crazy right now so we should at least wait for everything to settle," Carlos reasoned as he cradled Jay's lamp close. "This rock thing needs to be dealt with too."

"Probably something Fairy Godmother will want when she wakes up," Mal said with a slight scowl. She sort of hated the idea of just handing over something that seemed so terribly useful. It went against every lesson Mal had ever taken to heart back on the Isle. Never give up a potential advantage. "But since she probably knows about it I doubt we'll be able to just... hide it somewhere."

"Would you really want to?" Aziz asked. "I mean, that's a pretty dangerous artifact that has just hurt two innocent people."

Mal rolled her eyes. "I could argue the innocent part of that, but it doesn't seem worth the effort. More important than that... is anyone else hurt?" After everyone confirmed that they were fine Mal all but ordered them to rest. They didn't go very far and ended up spread out around Carlos and Jay's bedroom just waiting for Jordan to finish up what she was doing. None of them knew how much time it would take, but they also weren't too keen on wandering off until the knew that everything was alright.

The chaos that had happened hadn't been as widespread as to disrupt all of the school but since Fairy Godmother had been put out of commission and the barrier had definitely disturbed a good portion of the student body, classes were canceled for two days. That ended up being enough time for Jordan to fix the damage done to Jay during the fight even though she wasn't nearly as good with healing magic as her aunt was.

Jay was glad that he had been fixed up, and his father was back on the Isle, but there was something that had been nagging at him for a while. Not something so important he had time to worry about before but now that things were getting calm again it was something not quite as easy to just wave off. The others had, of course, noticed that he was preoccupied, but he couldn't feel he could explain it to them yet. They probably thought he was worried about his father, but he really wasn't. Jafar might still be trying to get free, but Jay knew the man and knew that he would be looking for some sort of foolproof option, which would take lots of time and effort. No, Jay was sure they were safe on that front for a while yet, if not for the rest of their lives. It was other things that were bothering him.

Iago leaned into Jay's sight from his perch on Jay's shoulder as the teen looked out of the window. "You okay, kid?" he asked. "It's not like you to skip out on lunch." Carlos and Evie had tried to cajole Jay into joining them, and Mal had only just barely resisted ordering it, but he had refused to go down with them.

"Just not hungry," Jay answered as he leaned against the windowsill.

"Alright, what's eating you?" Iago demanded.
Jay sighed. "I'm not sure I can explain it... something just feels... off."

"Something like what?" Iago asked.

"I don't know..." Jay said before turning to sit on the edge of the window. "Maybe I'm just anxious to be wished free." Mal had said she would do it the second she could but that she wanted to double check with Scheherazade who was still in the nurse's office before she did it. Jay appreciated that she cared enough about him to do that but he also really really just wanted to not have such anxiety in his life anymore.

Iago let out a noise something approximating a hum. "Well, you could go to Scheherazade and ask her if what Jordan said about having to wait was true or not. She's bound to be awake by now, and she has no reason to lie to you," Iago said. "Even if I do find her annoying."

"You find everyone annoy-" Jay cut himself off as what Iago said finally registered.

"Kid?" Iago asked, leaning forward again. "You okay?"

Jay was silent for a moment. "She has no reason to lie to me..." Jay muttered. "But she did."

"What? When?" Iago demanded.

"In my lamp," Jay answered although his brain was already replaying the story that she had told him. Something about it hadn't sat quite right, but he hadn't had the time nor inclination to really think about it at the time. He had just wanted to get free of the lamp and hadn't worried about her story. But what she had told him just seemed... wrong. Jay got to his feet, startling Iago off of his shoulder with how abruptly he moved. "I have to go talk to her."

Iago flapped over to the footboard and settled. "What makes you think she'll tell you the truth when she didn't before?"

"Because this time I'm going to be paying attention and will call her on her bullshit," Jay said. "Stay here, Iago. I'll be back, and I'll bring you some nuts or something."

"You shouldn't go alone if you think she's hiding something!" Iago squawked.

"It's fine. I don't think she's hiding anything dangerous. Just... that she is," Jay tried to explain, although he was pretty certain he failed. He didn't give Iago a chance to follow him, though and left the room quickly before all but running down the stairs and out of the dorms.

Jay made his way across the lawn even as he tried to figure out how best to confront the fact that he knew that Scheherazade had lied to him. Probably would be best to just come right out and tell her right? Beating around the bush would draw things out, and Jay really didn't feel able to deal with something like that right then. Jay shoved his hands in his pockets as he walked. Iago might be right, and Jay should take someone with him. Carlos could keep a secret if need be... unless it was from Mal. None of them were terribly good at keeping secrets from Mal, although Jay had to admit he was probably best at it.

Jay didn't really want to bring any of his three closest friends into this little meeting though. Chances were they'd get all overprotective on him and then he'd never actually get to the bottom of everything. Jay had almost reached the front door to the main building of the school when he saw someone he did trust enough to keep his mouth shut if needed and hopefully wouldn't go all dragon guarding treasure on him. "Aziz! Yo, hold up a minute!" Jay called as he jogged over to where Aziz had been walking along while looking at his cell phone.
Aziz looked up in surprise. "Oh, hey, Jay. I didn't realize you were up and about yet. I thought Jordan was still patching you up," he said.

"Nah, she finished a few hours ago," Jay said. "Look, um, can I ask you a favor?" Aziz looked surprised but nodded. "I need to ask Scheherazade some questions, and I really think it would be better to have you there then Mal and the others."

"Uh, sure, Jay. But, why?" Aziz asked.

"Because the chances of you going dragon rage on someone is a lot less than Mal," Jay said. "I'd ask one of the others, but they would just tell Mal immediately and well, that sort of defeats the purpose of not having Mal there in the first place."

Aziz still looked confused but shrugged. "Yeah, okay. I think I've figured out by this point to just go with whatever you guys think is best when dealing with each other," he said as he hit a few more buttons on his phone and then pocketed it. "So what's this about?"

"Scheherazade lied to me about something earlier, but I can't figure out why she'd do that," Jay said as they headed into the building. "I want to get to the bottom of it before she takes off or something."

"What'd she lie about?" Aziz asked.

Jay frowned. "She said my Aunt brought me to her as a baby, but that doesn't make sense," he explained. "At least, not for the reason she claimed. Plus I have a few other questions she needs to answer. Like if I really have to wait before I can be wished free."

"Well, alright," Aziz said. "I'm not quite sure what all is going on, but if it's important to you, I'm right here."

Jay nodded a little and gave Aziz a brief smile. "Thanks."
Chapter 65

Chapter Notes

Here it is, the last chapter. I'm sure the reveal in this chapter isn't that surprising as I've foreshadowed the heck out of it. I hope that the explanation of the situation is something everyone likes and finds reasonable (considering magic and all messes with reasonable sometimes). For those of you wanting Harry and Jay to get back together, I'm not done with this verse yet, so they still have a chance.

When Jay and Aziz reached the nurse's office, Scheherazade was up and moving around. Judging from how she was patting her hair dry she had just recently showered, which Jay figured meant she was getting ready to leave. The school nurse was nowhere to be found, but if her patient didn't need her, that wasn't too surprising since the school wasn't technically in session again just yet. Scheherazade looked a little surprised to see them. "Jabir, Aziz. This is an unexpected visit. What can I do for you?" she asked.

Jay made a face at his full name but instead focused on why he had come here. "Is it true that wishing me free right now would be bad?" he asked. That seemed the most straightforward of the information he needed.

Scheherazade hummed in thought. "I wouldn't advise it," she said after a moment of thought. "Already your magic will be coming to you in faster spurts than normal due to how long you spent without it on the Isle... to remove the binding to the lamp on top of that might make things even more volatile. Even Jordan I advised to wait until she was eighteen to be wished free and she grew up receiving her magic at a normal rate."

"I'd rather take the risk and be free now," Jay said.

"Believe me, I understand, but everyone else would rather you be safe and healthy," Scheherazade replied. "And it isn't that far away."

Jay scowled. "Seems pretty far away when I was just kidnapped."

"Perhaps, but it will pass by very quickly," Scheherazade said. "However, I suppose you could always attempt to convince Maleficent's daughter to do it ahead of my recommendation." She said it casually enough, but Jay realized she probably was aware of how unlikely it was that Mal would agree to do anything that might even possibly risk one of her friends.

"Fine," Jay grumbled, knowing that he wouldn't win that argument. At least not right that minute. "But that wasn't all I wanted to ask you about."

Scheherazade's eyebrow went up. "Oh? What else did you want to ask me?"

"Why did Aunt Nasira bring me to you?" Jay asked. "And don't give me some lie about a cough again. I know that wasn't the reason."

"What makes you say that wasn't the reason?" Scheherazade asked although her face was very guarded. Jay was pretty used to judging facial expressions, and she was definitely trying to not
show anything, which always meant she was hiding the truth.

Jay folded his arms. "Because Aunt Nasira is a powerful sorceress. There's not much that'll baffle her and even if there was some mystery cough that wouldn't go away her first stop would not be to a Djinn since she knows perfectly well wishes are limited. It just doesn't make any sense," he said.

"Did it occur to you that perhaps it was not because I was a Djinn that she came to visit me?" Scheherazade asked.

"It did... but it was because you were a Djinn wasn't it?" Jay guessed. "Otherwise you wouldn't have tried to make some stupid excuse about helping with a cough."

Scheherazade was quiet for a long few moments. "I was sworn to secrecy, Jay."

"Scheherazade, if this is information about Jay doesn't he deserve to know it?" Aziz asked. "It's not like he's five years old or something."

The female Djinn still didn't look convinced. Jay narrowed his eyes. There wasn't much reason he could think of that made keeping a secret so important. In fact, the only thing he could figure was the question he'd first asked her. "This is about who my mother is isn't it?" he guessed. "You know who she is and she doesn't want anyone to know she had Jafar's kid."

"It's not like that," Scheherazade denied.

"Oh really? Then what's it like?" Jay asked, starting to get a bit angrier at the continued dodges. He just wanted to know already. The more she tried to avoid the question the more infuriating it was.

Scheherazade sighed and looked between the two teens to gauge how determined they were. "Your Aunt brought you to me because she wanted to make Jafar forget you existed. Unfortunately, he was also a Djinn, and I couldn't affect his memory of the fact that you had been born," she explained.

"Why would she want Dad to forget I existed if she was bringing me to him?" Jay asked. He was now far more confused than he had been, to begin with.

"Because your mother didn't want to hand you over and Nasira was reluctant to make her do so," Scheherazade explained with a heavy sigh.

Jay's confusion made a scowl appear on his face. "Dad always said that my mother didn't want me. And why would Nasira still give me to him if she'd changed her mind? That doesn't make any sense!"

Aziz put a hand to Jay's bicep, and the thief was suddenly aware he had stepped forward. "Maybe you should start from the beginning, Scheherazade. Things aren't exactly adding up," he said. Jay was looking particularly freaked out, but Aziz could also tell the other boy was determined to actually get to the bottom of things.

Scheherazade sighed but then gestured to the somewhat uncomfortable visitor's chairs that were against the wall. Jay reluctantly allowed Aziz to guide him over to one as Scheherazade sat on the edge of the bed. "Nasira got a letter from Jafar while she was on the run from King Beast's little villain hunt. He had only recently been caught himself so knew where his sister was hiding out still. Somehow, probably from others sent to the Isle, he heard that your mother had had you. He told Nasira that your mother didn't want you and to bring you to him. That seemed perfectly reasonable, so Nasira agreed. Plus, I know she thought that you would be good for your Father. Nasira had just become pregnant herself, and well, just the thought of being a mother made her
priorities shift immensely. I don't think it occurred to her that Jafar could want you for any reason other than parental concern and love. Not at the time anyway."

"So what changed?" Jay demanded. Aziz squeezed his shoulder to keep the young Djinn grounded because Jay seemed about ready to leap out of his seat.

"Nasira went to collect you. Your mother practically begged her to not take you judging by what Nasira said," Scheherazade explained. "I know that Nasira spent several days trying to figure out what to do. She wanted Jafar to have his son, but as a mother, she didn't want to separate you from yours either. Eventually, she decided the fact that the Isle was a worse environment was the deciding factor, and you should stay with your mother. But Jafar wanted you, and that was a problem."

"Why's that?" Aziz asked. "If Jafar was already on the Isle he couldn't do anything."

Scheherazade shook her head slightly. "He already had. He'd written to King Beast and told him of your existence. I think Jafar might have realized Nasira was having second thoughts since she was taking so long. And since King Beast was of the opinion that no villain's children should be in Auradon either... he wanted to send you to Jafar as well. I could wipe away King Beast's knowledge of you but not Jafar's so he could simply inform the man again and again and again for the rest of your life, and you'd be at the very least constantly be wiped away from people's memories, which is not any sort of life at all."

"So you just gave in to him," Jay finished with a scoff. "Some heroes you are." It was nice to know his mother had actually wanted him but it was incredibly disappointing knowing that they'd given him to Jafar anyway.

"We did not just give into him," Scheherazade denied. "We did the only thing that made any sense, and Nasira was still absolutely certain that Jafar would be a good father... not that that comforted your mother much. I don't think she ever believed it."

"She was right," Jay muttered.

"Well, now that Jay's back in Auradon surely his mother would want him back," Aziz said. "If she was strong-armed into giving him away in the first place by King Beast and Jafar I'd think she'd be ecstatic to have him back."

There was an awkward silence then. "... but I was raised with him, and she'd probably have the same opinion of that as everyone else has," Jay muttered. "Why welcome a villain into your house? Even if you did give birth to him." There were still plenty of people who considered Jay and the others to be little better than their parents.

"You're not a villain," Aziz denied. "And she might not have realized you're here. Not everyone in Agrabah has things like televisions and internet. And she probably doesn't have a reason to pay attention to the business of a school in Auradon either."

"You'd have to live under a rock to not know about me and the others," Jay argued.

"It isn't for any reason like lack of want that your mother hasn't come forward, Jay," Scheherazade told him although her voice had taken a slightly more cautious tone. "It is because of what I did end up doing for her."

Aziz frowned. "What did you do?"

Scheherazade visibly hesitated. "Jafar didn't have any information on you when he sent Nasira or
even when he wrote to King Beast. Jafar only knew that your mother had given birth not what your name was or your gender or even how many of you there were." Jay felt something inside his chest freeze over. He would have demanded answers from that but now that Scheherazade was talking she seemed to be in a rush to finish. "I couldn't make Jafar forget you were born and existed but he didn't know about your twin so I could make it so he wouldn't learn of him in the first place. And King Beast's knowledge of the letter could be wiped entirely so he wouldn't know either. Nasira swore to not tell Jafar about your brother so that your mother wouldn't have to worry about him being taken away as well and as far as I can tell she kept that promise."

The more words he heard, the more nauseous Jay began to feel. He didn't like the leaps that his brain was making and was really hoping that he imagined things. A quick glance to the side told Jay that Aziz was also looking a bit uneasy. Scheherazade must have noticed their expressions as well, and she attempted a smile that didn't do a thing to help comfort Jay. "I've only ever met Jasmine that one time and I have no idea if she ever told Aladdin the truth about what happened. I just know she was given an impossible choice and I can't imagine what that cost her."

"Me," Jay said although he hated how strangled his voice sounded. "It cost her me." Jay quickly got to his feet and was already halfway to the door.

"This is why I didn't want to tell you about this," Scheherazade said. "She should have had the chance to tell you herself."

Jay whipped around. "She never would have!" he snapped. "She wouldn't have risked her perfect family that she had without me!"

Aziz was up on his feet immediately. "That's not true!"

"Of course it is!" Jay nearly shouted. His eyes were flashing with how tumultuous his emotions were currently. "Why would she want me when she has a better version already?"

"That's not what I am," Aziz said. "I'm not a 'better version' of you, and you're not a 'copy' if that's what you're going to say next. We're... we're brothers," he said, going somewhat soft and uncertain at the last word. Jay couldn't help but feel that the word sounded so very wrong. It was one thing for people to say they looked like brothers. It was another to use 'brothers' as an excuse on the Isle. But it was a completely different planet than hearing that word as something that was real.

Jay could only stare for a moment as his brain struggled to process everything he'd just heard. No matter how he tried though it kept tripping over different parts that clashed with everything he'd ever believed. "Oh, fuck this," Jay said before, for the first time in his life, turning into smoke willingly to escape the situation.

What Jay hadn't realized was that, because Aziz had still a firm grip on his arm, when he reappeared in Mal and Evie's empty room, Aziz was there too. Aziz stumbled a little as they both finished reforming. "Whoa... okay that felt really strange..."

"I'm surprised you could even come with," Jay muttered as he went to Mal and Evie's bathroom.

"Me too... why did you come here?" Aziz asked as he looked around at the pink frilly room that really didn't suit the two Isle girls much at all. Mal had darkened her bedding, but even that didn't detract much from the cheerful atmosphere.

Jay opened the tank of the toilet and pulled out the bottle he knew would be hidden there. Really, his friends should know by now that even their best hiding spots weren't effective against him. "Because Mal took away all my stash and I don't care what they say, I need a little liquid therapy
right now," he called as he reached behind the vanity and found another bottle that had been wedged back there. He knew there were a few more hidden away, but for now, two would probably be enough.

As Jay came out with a bottle in each hand, he got a disapproving look from Aziz. "What?"

"You're underage," Aziz said.

"So?" Jay asked. "Listen, I just heard I was sent to the Isle to live with Jafar, and my twin was able to stay here with a rich, loving family. I need a drink... and something you might not have thought of yet but if we're twins that means that your dad is Jafar too."

Aziz was silent for a moment as that sunk in. Then he reached out and took one of the bottles. "Fair point," he muttered as he opened the bottle he'd taken and took a swig. Jay was only a moment behind him. "We'll get so in trouble if they catch us at this though."

"Come with me," Jay said as he went to the window and pushed it open.

After a little bit of difficulty, the two boys were able to climb up onto the roof with their bottles and found a mostly comfortable seat on the hard tiles. "Nice view," Aziz said as he played with the bottle in his hands. Jay was already beating Aziz in diminishing the level of the amber liquid.

Jay lowered his bottle but didn't say anything. He wasn't sure what he could say. He hadn't put much thought into who his mother was since during his entire childhood he'd only heard she was a whore that didn't want him. The very different picture he'd just been painted by Scheherazade just didn't register next to that. And that wasn't even getting into the deeper and far more disturbing implications of how someone like Princess Jasmine would have gotten pregnant by someone she despised like Jafar. Jay pushed that thought far far away and took another long drink.

They sat in silence for a while longer until Aziz looked over at Jay. "You should come home with me," he said.

Jay let out a single incredulous laugh. "Hell no."

"Why not?" Aziz demanded. "Mom would want to see you again!"

"Uh, no, I really think she won't," Jay denied. "She gave me up, why would she want me around again to remind her of that?"

"You heard what Scheherazade said. She didn't want to," Aziz argued.

Jay scowled. "Well, maybe I don't want to see her. You ever think of that?" he asked aggressively. "Maybe being the one, she didn't choose to keep really sucks, and I don't want to deal with that yet!"

Aziz was quiet for a moment but then reached over and put a tentative hand on Jay's shoulder. "Hey, Mom isn't the kind of person to pick favorites-"

"Says the one that got picked," Jay snapped.

"Jay. She had no idea what would happen. Your own Aunt said that Jafar would be good to you," Aziz tried. It was taking all of his patience to not snap back, but he couldn't even imagine what emotions Jay would be dealing with.

"Our Aunt," Jay grumbled before lifting his bottle again.
Aziz sighed and lifted his own. He wasn't as much of a drinker as Jay seemed to be. He'd only ever sneaked some booze once or twice, and he doubted he would finish a whole bottle while Jay was already halfway through his own. "Don't blame Mom for this. It's Jafar's fault. Mom would have kept us both without hesitation if it weren't for what he did."

Jay shook his head a little and kept his eyes on the distant horizon line. Aziz wasn't quite sure what else to say, if there was anything at all that he could say. He did want Jay to go back to Agrabah with him but not if Jay was dead set against it. Aziz wanted Jay to want to meet their mother.

The two of them sat on the roof for a while longer before Aziz managed to think of something else to say. "Do you think Iago knows about this?"

"No. He'd have told me," Jay replied immediately and with complete certainty. "Might have guessed, though. Dad probably did too and just couldn't prove it. He did call you 'the other one.'"

"Oh, right," Aziz muttered. "Would rather he not..."

Jay shrugged and took another drink from his bottle. "He always said I should be a prince I just sort of thought that he meant because he was the sultan for about five minutes..." Jay muttered. "I didn't even think he meant anything like... this." Jay didn't want to be any more specific about it than that. He felt bad enough about his life without knowing what he now did.

"You are one," Aziz said.

Jay made a face immediately. "Ugh, rather rip my own hair out, thanks."

Aziz rolled his eyes. "Why do you act like that would be the worst thing in the world?" he asked. "Most people would love to be a prince."

"Most people are air-headed spoiled brats," Jay said. "Like Chad. And I don't want to be like Chad."

"I thought you were getting along better with Chad?"

Jay shrugged. "A bit, I guess. But he still gets on my nerves. He's everything I hate about Auradon. He's an idiot Prince that judges everyone around him without any clue what he's talking about and just gets shit all the time."

"Wow, tell me how you really feel, Jay," Aziz said sarcastically. "And just being a Prince doesn't mean you'll be like Chad. I'm a Prince, and I'm not like Chad. Ben's not like Chad. It wouldn't change who you already are. Besides that, you sort of already are one by birth and all."

"And you won't tell anyone about that," Jay said. "I'm no Prince, and that's not changing."

Aziz sighed. "Is there any way I can get you to at least come to see Mom and Dad with me?" he asked. "And don't correct me about Dad. There's no way I'm calling Jafar 'Dad' when even you don't do it all the time," he added before Jay could do more than open his mouth.

Jay scowled for a brief moment before sighing. "Fair enough," he muttered. "But I really don't want to go and face her right now. Or maybe ever," he said. "And I would like it if you don't start pestered me about it."

"I'll try not to, but I don't think I can promise," Aziz said.

"Don't tell her you know about this either," Jay insisted. "She'll just want to meet me if you tell her,
Aziz scowled. "That, I'm not about to promise," he said. "Mom'll be worried once she finds out Jafar was here in Auradon. I'm not about to lie to her about anything on top of it."

Jay scoffed. "You don't have to lie. Just don't say you know either," he said as if it were the most obvious thing in the world. "Honestly, don't you Auradon kids learn anything useful?" Jay tipped backwards as he lifted his bottle. The last bit of the booze disappeared about the same time Jay ended up lying on his back and staring up at the clouds. "And if you aren't going to finish that hand it over," he added as he gestured for the bottle.

"Yeah, I think I'll keep it," Aziz said. "You downed that bottle scary fast."

"Pfft, that was nothing. You should have seen Tremaine's fourteenth birthday. I think I cleared at least three bottles before midnight. Then again I was dealing with a broken rib at the time," Jay said.

Aziz frowned and leaned over to block Jay's view of the sky. "Jay. I want to make something clear right now, alright?" Jay was a little taken aback but nodded. "Now that I know you're my brother... you're not going to be able to just ignore me. Things like that -drinking because you have broken ribs- that's not a thing that going to be happening anymore."

"It's not like Dad gave me the broken rib," Jay said with a frown. "And it was pain relief."

"It was Isle pain relief, and I don't care how you broke it. The point I'm trying to make here is this: I'm your brother, and I'm here for you," Aziz said firmly.

Jay pushed himself up on his elbows. "Aziz, we just found this out today, don't you think promises like that are a bit early?"

"No. I don't. And I won't tell anyone but Mom about this... but don't expect me to just disappear either. You're stuck with me because I'll tell you this right now: Stubbornness runs in the family," Aziz told him. "And now that I know you're my brother that's going to be how I act."

"I don't need a brother."

"Tough. Because even if you are some crazy powerful Djinn you've got one of those now too," Aziz said. "And I owe you."

Jay blinked in surprise. "Wha?"

"Don't act like you weren't thinking it. If it weren't for all the crap you had to suffer through on the Isle, I couldn't have had the life I have had up until now. I don't know why it was you and not me, but I am never going to take that for granted," Aziz said with so much sincerity that Jay wanted to punch him for it. "I don't have really any practice with being a brother, but you're going to get the absolute best one I can be. So deal with it."

"You can't force brotherhood on someone," Jay argued.

"Watch me."

Jay stared for a moment before scoffing and turning away. He wasn't at all sure how to react to things like declarations of brotherhood and loyalty and all the other stuff Aziz was spouting. It wasn't something Jay had ever heard before, and he would have chalked it up to Auradon stupidity, but somehow Jay didn't think that was quite right. "Brat..." he muttered.
"If I'm one I'm pretty sure that makes you one too," Aziz said.

"It does not," Jay denied.

"Sure it does, bro."

Jay felt something in him seize up because while Jay often used that particular nickname, he couldn't recall a single time where Aziz had. Jay shifted uneasily. The difference was strangely profound and drove everything home in a way that hadn't quite been managed before. "That's a dirty move..." he muttered.

Aziz just grinned widely. "Not even a little sorry."

Jay glanced over at the other teen before sighing. "I guess... there are worse guys around to have to be all... mushy."

"Get used to it," Aziz ordered before sitting upright again. Neither of the two teens made any move to get up, and they lapsed into silence as the sun made its way across the sky. Things were far from fully settled, but for the moment they let all the awkward uncertainty go and just kept each other company while it all sank in. Aziz was still sure their mother would want to see Jay again, but things were far too fresh to broach that topic again anytime soon while Jay wasn't even sure if he'd be able to tell Mal and the others about this. Maybe he would tomorrow, Jay thought as he watched the sun start to set, even though he knew perfectly well that he wouldn't. He would have to take some time to process all of this before even attempting to explain it to the others.

Jay sighed and pushed all of that out of his mind for later and just tried to relish the fact that his father no longer had his lamp and his body wasn't in agony from the separation anymore. True, the secret of being a Djinn was out, but he also knew that he wasn't alone with that vulnerability anymore. Mal, Evie, Carlos, and Ben would all help keep him safe until he could be wished free. Jay cast a slight glance at Aziz beside him. And, he supposed, there was always his brother too although that thought was still oddly unsettling to Jay he couldn't help but be a little warmed by it also.

Works inspired by this one: :One Owe Us by Ragnarog, Harry's Dream by DarkerThanDisney (Kairyn)

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