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Haunted Siren's Tale

by goodform2011

Summary

Killian's past comes back to haunt him in ways both good and bad. Will he be able to handle the twists in his life? Will he be able to keep his family safe through the twists and turns? Sequel to 'Heat' and 'Frozen'.
Chapter 1

Disclaimer: Nope, I don't own them, I just play with them because it's fun.

This is a sequel to my story entitled 'Frozen'. Killian and Emma are happily married. Henry lives with them on a nearly full-time basis, but still is close with his adopted mother, Regina. He's estranged from his birth father, Neal (alive and annoying in this story). Emma and Killian have two children of their own, a precocious three year old daughter named Fallon and a six month old boy named Bradyn. Many of Storybrooke's citizens will be popping up.

I hope everyone enjoys the journey. Please take a few moments to let me know how I'm doing.

"Papa," Killian felt the bed shaking.

His arms were wrapped tight around Emma while they both slept soundly. His wife was wearing only a cotton gray shirt, one of his favorites she must have pulled from his dresser without him knowing. He wondered where she'd hidden it. He'd been looking for that particular shirt for days.

"Papa," he felt the bed shake a second time.

The sleep clouding his mind began to evaporate. He was suddenly aware they he was not alone in bed with his wife. His early bird daughter was practically draped across his back, fulfilling her morning wakeup call duty.

"Papa," Fallon moaned while she shook him a third time.

"I'm awake," he voice was gruff with sleep.

"Pancake time," she demanded. She punctuated her statement by bouncing on him.

"Pancake time," she demanded. She punctuated her statement by bouncing on him.

Killian released his wife with a groan and rolled to get out of bed, grabbing a pair of flannel bottoms to tug on while Fallon flew down the spiral staircase. Prior experience told him that she'd be back up in the blink of an eye if he didn't join her in thirty seconds. Even so, he took a moment to observe his sleeping wife.

"Fallon's already up?" Emma mumbled when he bent down to kiss her hairline.

"Our human alarm clock," he chuckled while brushing the hair away from her face, "Go back to sleep. I'll send her up to wake you before the start of your shift."

"Is Bradyn awake?" she asked.

"Doesn't sound like it," he looked towards the baby monitor next to her side of the bed. She must have moved it to her side of the bed when she arrived home after her late night shift.

There were soothing gurgles coming through the monitor that let them know that though Bradyn was sleeping, he was soon to wake. "Get some sleep."

Emma didn't need to be told twice as she drifted off. Between her job as sheriff and keeping up with a teenager, a three year old and an infant, she was lucky to get five hours of sleep a night. Not to mention, she'd been picking up extra shifts at the station.

Her second deputy was on an extended honeymoon with the town's mayor, and her first deputy wasn't able to pick up many of the shifts as he had a child of his own with a cold that just wouldn't
go away. The extra money was welcomed, but the part it was playing with her sanity was not.

Killian was more than sensitive to her plight. He'd nearly taken over all the household chores, even learning how to do laundry after a few colorful missteps. Fortunately they had a daughter that loved to wear pink.

"Pancakes, Papa," Fallon cheered when Killian made his way down the stairs while shrugging into his shirt.

"You certainly love your pancakes," Killian took a moment to kiss her forehead before making his way to the kitchen to begin breakfast.

Henry stumbled out of his room minutes later and announced, "Fallon needs a snooze button."

Killian chuckled at the comment.

"It's Sunday, Fallon," Henry gave her a good natured scolding, "We sleep in on Sunday."

Fallon shrugged her shoulders and went about coloring. She didn't know or care what day it was. She simply knew that the sun was up which meant it was time for breakfast.

"Will you check on Bradyn, Lad?" Killian requested of his stepson, "I'm trying to let your mum sleep in as long as possible, but I only have two hands."

"Maybe Mom can give you a couple more," Henry quipped before making his way to his youngest sibling's nursery.

"Where's Mama?" Fallon danced about in the kitchen in anxious anticipation of breakfast.

It always amused Killian to see how eager she was for pancakes when she had them at least twice a week.

"Mama is sleeping," Killian expertly flipped the first cake in the pan.

"I go wake her," she spun towards the stairs.

Killian quickly put down the pan and darted after his daughter, tossing her over his shoulder before she could take her first step up the staircase, "Mama needs to sleep. She's been very busy."

"But I no see her anymore," Fallon pouted as Killian set her gently on the sofa where the family dog had been happily napping. "She always busy."

"Leo is sick, remember," Killian tapped her nose before returning to the stove, "Poppy has to take care of him, so Mama has to work."

"Why can't Uncle Robin do it?" she petted her pooch's head.

"Because Robin and Regina are away," Killian responded.

"Away where?" she asked.

"They took a trip to the Enchanted Forest," Killian replied.

"Where's that?" she asked.

"That's where Grammy and Poppy are from, remember," Killian prompted her, "It's a long ways
"From here."

"Where you met Mama," she proclaimed with glee.

"Correct," he continued the cooking process.

"Can we go there?" Fallon hopped off the sofa with Max nipping at her heels, "We can take the Jolly Roger."

"It's a bit more complicated than just sailing the seas, Little Love," Killian told her.

Henry came in with Bradyn in his arms, giggling happily while they played tug of war with Bradyn's favorite toy. It had been meant as a chew toy for Max, but Bradyn had claimed it for his own. It would keep him occupied in his playpen when Henry set him in it.

"Good morning, Little Lad," Killian took a few moments from his pancake process to greet his youngest, "How did you sleep last night?"

Fallon tugged on her father's pant leg to get his attention. She didn't like not being the center of attention. She tolerated her younger brother because her parents seemed to not be giving her any option, but she refused to give up the spotlight without a lot of effort. "Papa, I'm hungry."

"Will you put him in his playpen?" Killian transferred Bradyn back to Henry's arms. Trying not to encourage Fallon's obvious play for attention, he simply continued to make breakfast. It was something that Emma had said that needed to be worked on.

With the last of the batter in the pan, Killian asked Fallon to wake Emma. There was a flash of brunette hair as Fallon sprinted up the staircase. It took only seconds for Fallon's giggle and Emma's groan to filter down to the main living area.

Killian had a cup of coffee waiting when Emma made her way down the staircase.

"Morning, Love," he kissed her temple before guiding her to the table where Fallon and Henry had already started eating, "I let you sleep as long as I could."

"I know," she stumbled towards the table, "I'll need a week off to catch up on all the sleep I've missed."

"Robin and Regina are due back any day," Killian pointed out.

"And Dad said that Leo is finally starting to feel better," Emma sighed in relief after taking a healthy gulp of her caffeine laced drink, "So he's going to take the extra shift tonight."

"Does that mean we'll be able to have a family meal tonight?" Killian's face brightened at the possibility.

"Absolutely," she smiled when Fallon cheered.

Henry and Killian filled most of the conversation about their plans for sailing that day, with Fallon chiming in with her own two cents. Emma was too tired to contribute much to the conversation.

Bradyn sat happily in his playpen with his toy. It would squeak at random intervals which would cause the tyke a great deal of surprise in that he'd drop the toy and stare at it for a few moments before deeming it safe to pick up again. He would then repeat the process over and over.

"Most useful three dollars we've ever spent," Emma motioned Killian's attention towards the playpen
where Bradyn was giggling. His pacifier had been discarded in the corner.

Killian snorted in amusement.

Emma glanced towards the clock and frowned. "I'd better get ready for work."

"I help," Fallon offered.

"How about you eat your breakfast while I shower," Emma suggested, "Then you can help me pick out what I'll wear today. Okay?"

Fallon stuffed a rather large bite of pancakes into her mouth as she nodded.

"Take smaller bites, Princess," Emma kissed the top of her head before disappearing up the staircase.

David found Emma at the station when he arrived for his shift. She was asleep at her desk. His guilt was immediate. She'd had to work far too much over the past two weeks Robin had been away.

He put in a quick call to his wife to come drive Emma home. He was worried his daughter would wrap her car around a tree on the short drive home, and his son-in-law still hadn't mastered the art of motor vehicle operation despite the few lessons Emma had given him on the subject.

"You should have told your father how exhausted you were," Mary Margaret stated on the drive to her daughter's cottage. Leo was sound asleep in his car seat in the back.

"Then who would have taken care of Leo?" Emma released a deep yawn. It was everything she could do to stay awake on the short drive home. She hadn't felt this exhausted since she was in the first trimester of her pregnancy with Bradyn, though she was fairly certain that she wasn't pregnant with Killian's third child.

"We would have figured it out," Mary Margaret assured her, "You have your own young family to take care of. Sometimes your father and I forget that because of how well you and Killian can juggle it all."

"It's easier for us to juggle because Killian's job allows him to take Fallon and Bradyn with him," Emma replied, "It's not like you could bring Leo into the classroom with you."

"We would have figured it out," Mary Margaret reiterated.

"I'm fine," Emma waved off the obvious concern her mother was displaying, "I'm sure a good night's sleep will have me feeling alright."

"Well, you're getting it tonight," Mary Margaret replied, "Your father was calling your husband as soon as we left the office. If Killian does anything other that wait on you hand and foot for the evening, tell him I still have my bow, and I'd be happy to demonstrate my skills."

"I'll mention it," Emma snorted. They pulled into the Jones' driveway. Killian was waiting just a step from the vehicle.

"Welcome home, Love," Killian pulled open the door and offered her his hand.

Despite her exhaustion, the butterflies stirred in her stomach when he pulled her from the vehicle.

"Did you enjoy your afternoon nap?" Killian's eyes mirrored the concern her mother had displayed on the short drive over.
"Could have lasted longer," Emma wrapped one arm around his neck, pulling herself flush against him to whisper in his ear, "How about a nap, Pirate?"

"There's my Swan," he chuckled before extending his gratitude to his mother-in-law for returning his wife safe and sound.

"Robin and Regina are due home any day," Mary Margaret spoke up, "Robin is taking your next shift."

"Yeah, you swing that with the mayor," Emma snorted.

"Don't worry, I will," Mary Margaret threw her car in reverse and drove the very short distance to her own home.

"Will I need to be chivalrous and carry you inside?" Killian raised a flirtatious brow.

"Only if you carry me to the bedroom so we can nap together."

"We both know neither of us would nap," he chuckled.

"How is that bad?" she touched his chin, "I think I've just found my second wind."

"So tempting," he groaned. He fought with his baser instinct and guided her inside. Fallon promptly wrapped her arms around Emma's legs, overjoyed to see her mother.

"Hi, there, Princess," Emma lifted her up. Fallon's arms wrapped tight around Emma's shoulders. "Did you miss me?"

"Yep," Fallon's head bobbed immediately.

"I missed you too," Emma kissed her cheek before returning Fallon to her feet, "Did you have fun fishing with Papa today?"

"Yep," Fallon took Emma's hand and yanked her towards the sofa, "Henry and Papa caught lots of fishies. We have fishies for dinner."

"Sounds yummy," Emma pulled Fallon into her lap and hugged her, "Where is Bradyn?"

"Nappie time," Fallon announced.

"Didn't he have nappie time on the ship?" Emma brushed a lock of Fallon's brunette hair away from her face.

"Yep," Fallon bobbed her head and hopped to her feet so she could play with the family dog.

Emma motioned to get up, but Killian's hand closed in on her shoulder before she could move. "Rest up, Love."

"Why is Bradyn sleeping?" Emma asked, "He won't sleep tonight."

"He's not sleeping," Killian assured her, "He's happily playing with his toys in the nursery."

"Why did Fallon say he was sleeping?" she pressed.

"Because she likes to be the center of attention, and it's easier when her brother is sleeping," he
replied.

"She's so much like you," Emma snickered,

"I don't need to be the center of attention for everyone, just my beautiful wife," he sat himself down next to her and wrapped an arm around her shoulder, pulling her close.

"You can be the center of attention right now if we go upstairs," she winked.

"Tempting," he nuzzled into her neck, "But I have fish to clean and cook."

Emma frowned when Killian rose to his feet. Left alone she promptly fell asleep until Fallon was shaking her awake to join the family at the dinner table.

The family dinner was quick, and Emma was tucked in by her daughter rather than the usual other way around.

"Nite-nite, Mommy," Fallon pecked at her mother's cheek, "Sleep tight, don't let the bed bugs bite."

"Thank you, Princess," Emma tapped at her nose before snuggling under the covers.

"And I'll be super quiet so you can sleep," Fallon buttoned up her lips.

"Thank you," Emma chuckled.

"Sleep, Love," Killian picked up Fallon from the bed and tossed her over his shoulder.

"That's the plan," she mumbled as she lifted off.

TBC...
Chapter 2

Disclaimer: Nope, I don't own them, I just play with them because it's fun.

Emma came flying down the staircase the next morning with a franticness that had their dog barking.

"I overslept," Emma went towards the coffee pot to grab a mug of coffee to take with her to the station. "Why didn't you wake me?"

"Your father called," Killian took the mug out of her hand, "Robin and Regina arrived home last night. Robin is taking his first shift today, and you in turn are being given the day off."

"Are you serious?" Emma gasped.

"And you, Love, will be celebrating by sailing the high seas with your family," he replaced the travel mug of coffee with a cup he'd poured for her.

"There is no better way to spend the day," she smiled. Fallon bounced over to wrap her arms around Emma's legs. "What do you say, Princess? Can I sail with you, Bradyn and Papa?"

"And Max," Fallon's head bobbed with excitement.

"Of course," Emma laughed, "We can't forget about Max."

"Too bad it's a school day," Henry frowned, "Unless maybe you would want to bend the rules?"

"Sorry, Kid," Emma snorted, "This weekend, we'll take a full family cruise, but you need to go to school."

"Worth a shot," Henry shrugged.

"Get your bag," Emma suggested, "I'll drive you to the bus stop. Dad brought my car home like he promised, didn't he?"

"Aye," Killian confirmed.

"Fallon, do you want to ride along in the yellow bug?"

"No," Fallon gave a curt response.

"You used to love riding along in the yellow bug," Emma frowned.

"Before it started breaking down," Henry quipped.

"It has been spending more time in the shop than the driveway lately," Killian added.

"No ganging up on me today," Emma motioned between the two, "I'm running on very little sleep and am in no position to defend my car, which has been with me for a very long time."

"My apologies, Love," Killian wrapped his arms around, "I'll wait until you've had your first cup of coffee to have this discussion.

"Don't start with me, Pirate," she turned to scowl at him.

Killian knew better than to press her. Her car was a sensitive subject for her, just as his ship was for
him. In his defense, his vessel didn't breakdown like hers had an affinity to do recently.

Henry quickly searched out his backpack and waited for his mother at the front door.

"I'll be back shortly, and then we can set sail," Emma snatched her keys from the bowl by the front door.

"We'll be waiting with bated breath," Killian pecked at her cheek.

"I'll meet you at the docks," she gave an amused smirk before following Henry to her car.

"Nappie time for Mommy," Fallon told her father after finding Emma sound asleep at the bow of the ship shortly after they'd set sail.

Killian tied off the wheel before he carried Emma below deck. He knew she's be more comfortable and able to sleep longer as Fallon wouldn't be able to keep herself quiet enough to allow Emma the sleep she clearly needed.

Killian threw out the anchor once they arrived at their fishing spot. He and Fallon fished until they caught their limit while Bradyn kept himself occupied with his squeaky toy.

"Papa, can we sail always?" Fallon jerked her line out of the water. She hadn't yet developed complete patience when it came to fishing, but she was getting better.

"Always," Killian kissed her forehead.

"Good," she proclaimed, "I like sailing."

"It's in your blood, Little Love," Killian chuckled.

"It is?" Fallon looked at her wrist where a blue vein was most prominently displayed. She had already learned that blood was in her veins.

"Yep, your Papa was a sailor. Your Uncle Liam was a sailor. Even Poppy Jones was a sailor. I've been sailing since I was a wee lad, younger than Henry," Killian explained.

"That was a long time," Fallon looked towards him with a serious expression.

"A very, very long time," Killian snorted. Fallon hadn't fully grasped that her father was over three hundred years old because he looked the same age as her mother and grandparents. She only knew that the adults were far older and wiser than she was.

"Where is Poppy Jones?" Fallon asked.

"I don't know, Little Love," he looked out along the horizon with longing. "When I was a young lad, we were going to sail all the lands together. I woke up one morning, and he was gone."

"Where'd he go?" Fallon asked.

"I wish I knew," Killian replied. He felt Emma's arms wrapped around his shoulders just when he needed her comfort the most. Killian's hand closed around Emma's forearm. "Thought you were asleep, Love."

"Caught my second wind," she announced to both her husband and Fallon before adding a whispered, "You okay?" in his ear.
"Better now," Killian gave her a look of gratitude when she kissed his cheek.

Emma went to free Bradyn of the hammock device that Killian had fashioned to keep him safe aboard his father's ship. It was the same device he'd used with Fallon years earlier.

"How's the fishing going?" Emma plopped herself down next to Fallon with Bradyn in her lap.

"I caught fishies," Fallon proclaimed with her arms stretched as wide as she could to emphasize the size, "Big ones."

"Really," Emma managed to keep a straight face when Killian held out his hands to the actual size of the fish his daughter had caught without Fallon knowing, "I bet Papa will get top dollar for those fishies. Did you catch any for us to have for dinner tonight?"

"Nope," Fallon shook her head from side to side, her hair whipping her in the face with each motion.

"No," Emma gave an exaggerated frown, "Then what are we eating tonight?"

Fallon shrugged in reply. She wasn't privy to Killian's plans for the evening. All she'd been told was that she was going to be spending the night with her grandparents.

"What's that look about, Hook?" Emma eyed her husband curiously.

Killian only responded with a laugh. She only used he alternate moniker when she was mildly irritated with him.

"What's Papa up to, Princess?" Emma tried a different tactic. She knew her daughter couldn't keep a secret to save her life.

Fallon immediately opened her mouth to tell Emma that she was going to Poppy and Grammy's for the night, but Killian silenced her with a hand over her mouth. "All will be revealed later, Love."

Killian's line jerked. After a mighty struggle, Killian had the last of his limit caught for the day.

"Prepare to come about," Fallon barked out when Killian went to the wheel after pulling up the anchor. She had such a proud posture about her.

Emma hid a laugh behind a coincidentally timed cough.

They made good time in their return trip to Storybrooke pulling in within minutes of Henry's school bus arriving to drop off the students at the end of the day.

"Hi, Henry," Fallon greeted her older brother with a hug around his middle.

"Hi, Fallon," Henry picked her up to give her a proper hug, "Did you catch lots of fish today?"

"Yep, I caught a fish this big," Fallon boasted while opening her arms as wide as she could.

"Wow," Henry humored her, "I bet it's a record. It must have outweighed you."

"It did," Fallon's head bobbed.

"You are so cute," Henry pecked at her forehead before returning her to her feet.

"Bye, Henry," Paige waved to him when her father arrived to pick her up, "See you tomorrow."
"Bu...bu...bye, Paige," Henry stammered out, much to the amusement of his stepfather.

"Say hi to your parents for us, Paige," Emma waved to the young girl and then the resident hat maker who had stepped out of his vehicle.

"I will, Sheriff," Paige nodded before darting off.

"Very nice, Lad," Killian admired the deep crimson blush on his stepson's cheeks, "Courting must start earlier in this realm."

"It's dating, Pirate," Emma corrected him, "And it's not as permanent as it was in your day. Teenagers go through many people before settling on the right one."

"That's how it usually worked in my realm too, at least for pirates," he gave her a leering glance.

"So you and Paige," Emma slung her arm around Henry's shoulder, "Is that a new development, or am I that out of the loop?"

"It's not like that," Henry blushed further in embarrassment, "We're friends."

"Sure you are," Emma chuckled, "I've heard that before."

"Henry and Paige, sitting in a tree, k-i-s-s-i-n-g," Fallon began to sing out.

"Fallon," Henry groaned, his cheeks flaming an impossible shade of red while several of his classmates filed past him.

Fallon proceeded to sing it through a second time and would have gone for a third, if Emma hadn't halted her with a hand over her mouth, "Twice is plenty, Princess."

"Oh, god," Henry groaned.

Fallon giggled as she skipped along, holding Henry's hand, completely unaware of the humiliation that she'd caused her brother. To Henry's credit, he wasn't mad at her for the song. He'd actually taught her the song weeks earlier.

"Do you have a lot of homework tonight?" Emma followed along.

"Yeah," Henry replied, "Hopefully Roland will let me do it."

"Are you going to Regina's tonight?" Emma was taken aback by the revelation.

"They've been gone for over two weeks," Henry pointed out. "I'll want to hear about their adventures in the Enchanted Forest."

"I guess I didn't think about that," Emma shrugged, "Okay, then it will be me, Fallon, Bradyn and Killian tonight."

"Nuh-uh," Fallon sung out. Killian quickly reached out to silence her before she revealed anymore.

"What isn't Papa letting you say, Princess?" Emma baited her daughter.

Fallon's head turned from side to side as she looked between her parents, not knowing how to respond.

"All will be revealed later," Killian shifted Bradyn in his arms.
"What's with all the secrecy?" Emma eyed her husband.

"You shall see," Killian refused to provide any further details.

Emma huffed in response.

Henry went to his room and immediately packed an overnight bag, so he'd have clean clothes for the next day of school. Emma was sitting on the sofa, reading a book to Bradyn, when Fallon emerged from her bedroom with her own backpack slung over her shoulders.

"Where do you think you're going, Princess?" Emma looked to her daughter in amusement. "Are you going to stay at Regina's too?"

"No," Fallon erupted in a fit of giggles.

"Then where..." Emma trailed off when Killian emerged from the nursery with a bag packed for Bradyn and treats for Max.

"Bradyn, Fallon and Max will be staying with your parents," Killian explained, "The lad has offered to take them over before Regina picks him up for his night at her place."

"But Bradyn and I are bonding," Emma held up the book she was in the middle of reading to the little boy.

"You can pick up where you left off," Killian pecked at her forehead before lifting Bradyn in his arms, "Say goodbye to Mama, Little Lad."

Emma gave Bradyn a sloppy kiss, which drew out her little boy's laugh. Fallon offered a tight hug before she followed her brother to her grandparents' cottage, chatting animatedly about how much fun she was going to have.

"You have me all to yourself," Emma turned towards Killian the instant their door was closed, "What is it that you're planning?"

Killian reacted by sweeping her into his arms and carrying her up to the bedroom. Emma didn't get out much more than a squeak of surprise.

"Feels like it's been forever since we did that," Emma traced patterns along Killian's bared torso and then the tattoo of her name he'd added as a wedding gift.

"Why do you think I whisked you up here the instant we were alone?" he nipped at her neck.

"I've missed you," she responded breathlessly when he found one of her sensitive spots, "I've missed us."

"It hasn't been that long, Love," he chuckled.

"Long enough," she tugged at the chain of his necklace, bringing his lips back to hers.

"Shall I draw you a bath?" he offered.

"Why?" she smiled, "We'll just get all sweaty again."

"Perhaps, but we'll need sustenance first," he replied, "I want you nice and relaxed."

"Does that mean you have plans for us?" she gave him a sly smile.
"For the rest of our lives," he left her with a breathless kiss before going into the bathroom to start the water.

"I can't eat another bite," Emma pushed her plate away, "I wish I had a sliver of the talent you did in the kitchen."

"Fallon still wouldn't eat your pancakes," he laughed.

"She's daddy's little girl," Emma allowed herself to be pulled into his lap.

"I hope you don't question your place in her life, Love. She adores her mum, as do I."

"I've been so out of touch these past few weeks," Emma's head came to rest against his shoulder, "This isn't what I want for our daughter. I want her parents to be fully present in her life. I want to give her everything I never had."

"As do I," Killian nodded. "It was several lifetimes ago, but that doesn't mean it hurts any less. We both want to give our daughter the childhood we couldn't have. She will know that her parents love her and will give her everything they never had, which is two parents that will always be there for her."

"She's a lucky little girl," Emma tangled her fingers in with his, "She has such an amazing father."

"And an equally amazing mother," Killian replied, "You may have been a little busy these past few weeks, but our routine will resume now that Robin and Regina have returned."

The telephone interrupted their moment.

"Don't answer it," Emma groaned when she felt his muscles tense, "Nothing good can come from answering that phone."

"And if our offspring are in peril?" he offered.

Emma rose off his lap and allowed him to reach for the phone. It still humored her to see him use such a device when he'd only first learned its purpose a few years earlier. She wondered if she'd be able to adjust as well to his realm as well as he had hers.

"Duty calls," Killian informed her when he returned to the table.

"You or me?" she inquired.

"Both of us, I'm afraid," he replied.

"Something wrong?" Emma caught the seriousness of his tone.

"Your mum was calling from the hospital. Fallon fell and injured her wrist. She needs her mum and papa," Killian explained, "We'd best get dressed."

Emma and Killian rushed into the waiting room of the hospital.

"She's alright," Mary Margaret was quick to assure the parents while bouncing Bradyn about. Leo was sound asleep in one of the chairs. "It's just a sprain, a pretty severe sprain, but she'll be as good as new in short order. She's trying to convince Whale that her injuries need a band-aid."

"Where?" Emma eyes darted around the emergency room.
Mary Margaret pointed. The parents took off immediately in that direction.

"Mama!" Fallon raised her arms up when Emma burst into the room.

"There's my princess," Emma picked her up immediately, "Grammy says you got a boo-boo."

"It's ouchy," Fallon held up her heavily wrapped wrist with a princess band-aid adding mostly as decoration.

"It looks like it," Emma brought Fallon's arm to her lips and kissed it before turning to address Whale. "Is she alright?"

"It's a grade two sprain," Victor informed her while he pocketed his pen in his lab coat's breast pocket, "There is some ligament damage but not a full tear. She won't require surgery, just rest and ice for now. Keep the wrist wrapped for at least two days. She'll experience some discomfort, so children's Tylenol can be used when necessary, but be sure to follow the dosing instructions."

"And add bam-aids," Fallon added while pointing to the additional accessory on her wrist.

"She's rather persuasive," Victor recalled the conversation he'd had with the three year old only minutes earlier.

"She's a girl that knows what she wants alright," Emma kissed the tip of Fallon's nose, "Can we take her home?"

"I have a few forms that need to be filled out," Victor replied, "But after that, absolutely."

"I'll take the duty," Killian kissed Fallon's forehead before following the doctor to the desk.

"Now, how did you hurt your wrist, Princess?" Emma sat herself on the hospital bed and set Fallon in her lap.

"Leo and I were jumping," Fallon kept the answer short. Emma could tell there was more to the story, but the little girl was intentionally leaving it out so she wouldn't get in trouble.

"Jumping where?" Emma prodded her.

"At Grammy's," Fallon replied.

"And on what?" Emma brushed strands of hair behind Fallon's ear.

"The bed," Fallon spoke quietly.

"And what have Papa and I told you about jumping on the bed?" Emma's eyes narrowed as she used her scolding voice.

"I'm not apposed to because I can get hurt," Fallon frowned.

"And what happened when you didn't listen to us?" Emma prompted her.

"I got an ouchie," Fallon held up her wrist.

"So you won't jump on the bed anymore, will you," Emma added.

"Nope," Fallon shook her head vigorously from side to side.
"Good," Emma tapped at her nose, "I think you've learned your lesson."

"Not mad at me, Mama?" Fallon's glance was averted.

"I'm just glad you're okay," Emma kissed her cheek softly, "Promise me you won't jump on the bed anymore."

"I promise," Fallon vowed.

"Good girl," Emma replied.

Killian returned to the room with several pieces of paper, "Whale says we are free to leave."

"We'll take Bradyn back home with us," Emma told her mother when they returned to the waiting room with Fallon in Killian's arms.

"I can take him home with me," Mary Margaret offered, "And Fallon too. You two deserve a night to yourselves."

"I want Fallon at home with us," Emma replied when the family walked out to their vehicles. It was only then that Mary Margaret handed over Bradyn.

True to form, Fallon milked her injury for all she was worth. Usually the harder nut to crack, Emma was the one to cave to her daughter's manipulations.

"What color popsicle do you want?" Emma asked her daughter when they returned home. Killian immediately went to lay Bradyn in his crib as he was down for the night.

"Purple," Fallon proclaimed with glee.

Emma pulled out two popsicles, one for her daughter and another for herself. They sat at the table talking over the mysteries of Fallon's young life. Killian watched the pair with great fascination. There were certain mannerisms that Emma had that Fallon did too. Listening to two of his greatest loves warmed his heart in a way nothing else could.

"Time for bed," Emma lifted Fallon out of her chair after discarding the popsicle sticks, "Do you want Papa to read to you?"

"No," Fallon shook her head and tossed her arms around Emma's neck, "Want Mama."

"Deal," Emma kissed her cheek. The parents traded curious glimmers while Emma carried Fallon into the bedroom.

Two stories later, Emma emerged with a tired sigh.

"Bedtime, Love?" Killian raised a brow.

When Emma nodded, Killian swept her into his arms and carried her to bed.

TBC...
Chapter 3

Disclaimer: Nope, I don’t own them, I just play with them because it's fun.

"Did you get the invitation to Ashley and Sean's wedding?" Mary Margaret asked her daughter when she stopped by the next day to deliver the family's dog, despite her son's protest.

"I don't know," Emma turned towards her husband, who was bonding with his youngest, "Did we?"

"In the pile," Killian motioned towards the stack of papers Emma needed to sort through that day.

"It's about time those two were able to find time to make it legal," Emma smiled while flipping through the letters until she found the ornate envelop.

"I've always loved weddings," Mary Margaret's eyes lit up in excitement, "The weddings in the Enchanted Forest were so elaborate. I hope Ashley treats herself. She deserves a proper wedding."

"You mean unlike the one in which Killian and I got married in a simple ceremony on board his ship with only close friends and family," Emma stated defensively. Her wedding choice was still a touchy subject with her mother, even three years later. Mary Margaret had wanted an elaborate affair fit for the princess that Emma was. Emma had wanted a simple ceremony. She would have eloped if she thought she could have gotten away with it.

"You did what worked for you," Mary Margaret responded calmly, "Ashley has always had a bit of a flourish to her. I hope she does the wedding how she wants rather than what she can afford."

"Mama, do I get a new princess dress?" Fallon jumped up from her place on the floor where she was rubbing down her dog.

"You can pick out any dress that you like," Emma promised her daughter with a tap to her nose.

Fallon cheered with excitement. Max added his own soundtrack in response to Fallon's outburst.

"You are truly a little princess," Emma kissed the top of Fallon's head

"Leo and I had best get back to the cottage," Mary Margaret grasped her son's hand, "Fallon, take care of that wrist of yours."

Fallon bobbed her head and waved at her grandmother and uncle until they were no longer in view. She then darted back into the house and towards her table to color to her heart's content.

"It's nap time, Little Lad," Emma lifted Bradyn into her arms. The tiny tot pouted in reply yet his head came to rest against her chest. He was asleep before Emma had a chance to lay him in his crib. Emma watched him sleep for a few minutes, gently stroking his hair, "Sleep well, my sweet boy."

"Come, Love," Killian pulled her from the room.

"We make cute kids," Emma willingly fell into his embrace.

"Spectacular kids," Killian amended.

"You want more of those spectacular kids?" she asked.

"I think we have our hands full with the three we have," Killian chuckled, "Let's concentrate on
them for a while before we make any decisions on adding to our brood."

"That's a good answer," she nuzzled into his neck.

"How about you, Love?" he caressed her back softly, "Is there any itch to carry another Jones baby in your womb?"

"My womb," she laughed, "God, I forget how old you are sometimes."

"I'm a spry chicken," he chuckled, "And I'll happily prove so."

"I believe you've proven such over and over," she continued to laugh.

"And I'll continue to do so," he raised a brow, "How about I prove it again right now?"

"You're insatiable," she leaned into him.

"You love it," he nudged her with his hip.

"And I love you," she corrected him.

"Mama, I want ice cream," Fallon came running in and wrapped her arms around Emma's legs.

"It's too early for ice cream," Emma bent over and picked her up, "But it is almost lunch time. How about you help me make it?"

"Okay," Fallon nodded her head, "What are we making?"

"I don't know, Princess. What would you like?" Emma asked her picky daughter.

"Roni and cheese," Fallon announced jubilantly.

"As long as you eat a vegetable too," Emma countered.

"No," Fallon released a long moan.

"Hey," Emma quickly covered her mouth before the sound woke her son, "You need to start eating more than just pancakes, roni and cheese, and ice cream."

Her daughter grunted and tried to squirm free of her mother's embrace, but Emma's hold was too strong.

"You can squirm and protest all you want, but you're going to eat your vegetables today or you won't leave the table."

Fallon pouted and moped behind her mother.

Killian admired his wife's resolve. He would have caved to his daughter's request with the first peep of protest. He continued to admire Emma's resolve as she kept Fallon in her chair until every last bite of broccoli was chewed and swallowed.

Emma slumped in her chair when Fallon ran off to play with her dolls.

"You deserve a reward, Love," Killian pulled his wife to her feet and engulfed her in a hug.

"You need to start standing up to her a bit too," Emma relaxed into his embrace, "These stare downs would not be nearly as dramatic if she wasn't programmed to hold out until we cave."
"I know," he nodded, "And I will try."

"You need to do more than try," Emma held firm, "You need to pull out that Hook spine you used to have. You used to strike fear in the hearts of everyone."

"I can't be Hook for our daughter anymore than I can be for you," he replied, "I told you once that I couldn't be Hook for you, and you should want nothing to do with him. That still holds true."

"There has to be a shred of your Hookness in there that will allow you to stand up to our daughter without fully giving over to the darkness," she frowned, "You just don't want to be the bad guy, and that's just too darn bad. It's not fair that I always have to do that."

"You're right."

"Is this just you caving in to me because you want to avoid an argument, or are you really going to start trying to disciple our daughter better?" Emma asked.

"I will try," he responded.

"Good," she kissed his cheek while tightening her hold around his neck, "She loves you no matter what."

Killian nodded.

"And I love you," Emma smirked.

"I should hope so," he caressed her back when she pulled herself tighter against him.

Their eyes locked for several moments. Both were enjoying the simpleness of being together. Quiet in Storybrooke was rare, even rarer in the Swan-Jones household with three children and a dog running about.

"Regrettably we were interrupted last evening," Killian frowned.

"We hit the highlights," Emma swayed in his arms, "I'm sure we can convince my parents to have another slumber party with the children some night soon, but we don't need to send the children away to find time together."

"Is that an offer, Love?" he gave her his most charming grin.

"For tonight," she nodded, "When the children are tucked in."

"That thought should keep," he replied.

"It always does," she laughed while running her fingers through the hair at the nape of his neck.

Bradyn suddenly announced that he was awake from his nap, and Fallon and Max ran in with demands for attention. Reluctantly they separated to tend to their children.

"Ready to shop, Princess?" Emma asked her daughter when they arrived at nearest mall a few towns over. Emma had arranged with her mother to have a girls' day while Killian took Leo aboard his ship while David held things down at the station.

"Yep," Fallon bobbed her head vigorously. She always enjoyed these trips with her mother and grandmother. Along with shopping they always treated Fallon to a bit of pampering by getting her fingernails and toes painted.
"What color are those fingers and toes going to be today, Miss Fallon?" Mary Margaret asked her granddaughter as each adult took a hand of the precocious child.

Fallon shrugged her shoulders. She wouldn't know what color to paint her fingernails and toes until she picked out her dress for the wedding the following weekend.

They walked into Fallon's favorite store, and the little girl began pointing to all the pretty dresses that she wanted to try on.

"She loves her pink," Emma chuckled when Fallon stepped into the dressing room to begin trying on clothes. Each dress she brought with her was a various shade of pink. "Times like this I wonder if she's my daughter. I wasn't all that fond of the girly colors as a child."

"She's yours all right," Mary Margaret laughed.

"She's certainly Killian's," Emma laughed when Fallon popped out of the dressing room to strut her stuff. She continued the process several times until she'd tried on every dress. It took a bit of time, but Fallon finally picked out. Ironically, it was an ice blue dress that Fallon had liked the most.

"I'm gonna look like Cinderella," Fallon told the sales lady that rang up her purchase.

"Should we examine the irony here?" Mary Margaret whispered to her daughter while Emma signed the credit card receipt.

Emma snorted in reply, but let the comment go. She too had seen the irony in Fallon picking out a dress that looked a lot like the animated film character based on the woman who was getting married.

Fallon continued on her fairytale theme when she picked out the clear shoes to go along with her dress later that day.

"Does she know Ashley's Enchanted Forest backstory?" Mary Margaret asked Emma when they had coffee while Fallon burned off some excess energy in the play area.

"I don't think so," Emma shook her head, "It could be a complete coincidence. Although now that you bring it up, she has been on a 'Cinderella' kick as of late. She's had Killian and I watch that movie nearly everyday for the past two weeks."

"Do we tell her?" Mary Margaret asked, "I mean she does know my story, so it wouldn't be much of a stretch for her."

"Tricky," Emma frowned, "Fairytale encourage a person's creativity. I don't want to take that away from her."

"I don't think her creativity will be hurt one bit," Mary Margaret replied, "She's the most creative child I've ever seen. Keep in mind, I'm a teacher."

"I just want to give her the childhood I never had," Emma released a heavy sigh, "I know it's difficult for you to hear, but reality hit me pretty early in life. I didn't get time to appreciate fairytale."

Mary Margaret put her arm around Emma's shoulders.

"Fallon is a lucky little girl," Mary Margaret replied, "She has two parents that love her very much and work hard to give her everything they didn't have. I wish your father and I could have given that to you."
"I know," Emma nodded.

"Think she'll sit still enough for that manicure and pedicure yet?" Mary Margaret glanced at her watch. She wanted to get back before Killian and Bradyn returned from their day at sea.

"One way to find out," Emma called her daughter over.

Fallon was more than ready for her pampering. She naturally picked a color for her nails that would match her dress.

"Papa," Fallon ran towards her father as soon as Emma helped her from the vehicle. He was coming up from the docks with Bradyn occupying one arm and the line of fish in the other, yet Fallon was undeterred as she hugged him around the middle. Leo was a step behind him, looking all rosy from the sun beating down on him for much of the day.

Emma relieved Killian of their son so that he could properly greet his daughter. "Hello, Little Love," he bent down to scoop her up, "Did you have fun with Mama and Grammy?"

"Yep," Fallon's head bobbed while she showed off her painted fingernails.

"Very pretty," he kissed her cheek.

Emma stepped in and kissed his cheek.

"'Ello, Love," he gave her his most charming smile, "How was your day?"

"We had fun," Emma replied while poking Fallon in the ribs, "Didn't we, Princess?"

"Yep," Fallon nodded.

"How was fishing?" Mary Margaret asked as she picked up her son.

"I caught fish this big," Leo held his arms open as wide as he could, just like Fallon usually did.

"Wow," Mary Margaret played along, "Sounds like a fun day with Killian. Did you have fun?"

Leo nodded his head vigorously. It was as animated as anyone had ever seen the little boy.

"Did you thank Killian for taking you fishing?" Mary Margaret asked.

"Thank you, Killian," the boy dutifully spoke.

"You're very welcome, Lad," Killian smiled, "Fallon, will you go with Mama so I can sell these fishies?"

"No," Fallon's arms tightened around his neck, "I go with you."

"We'll meet you at home," Emma kissed Killian and Fallon's cheeks, "I think Fallon needs her papa time."

"This won't take long," Killian vowed.

"Take your time," Emma replied, "I haven't even thought about what to have for dinner."

"Granny's is always a popular choice," Killian responded as he carried Fallon away.

Emma could hear Fallon chatting away, seeming to ramble on and on without so much as taking a
breath. She could hear her husband's laughter mix in. She loved hearing that sound.

TBC...
Chapter 4

Disclaimer: Nope, I don't own them, I just play with them because it's fun.

"You look very pretty," Fallon told a radiant Ashley as the Jones family offered their congratulations to the happy couple on the day of her wedding.

"Thank you," Ashley smiled, "So do you."

"You look like Cinderella," Fallon preened before she spun around on her toe to show off her brand new dress.

"Wanna know a secret, Princess," Ashley bent down to speak only to the little girl.

Fallon bobbed her head vigorously.

"I am Cinderella," Ashley whispered in her ear.

"Really!" Fallon's eyes went wide in excitement.

Ashley nodded her head as the adults laughed in amusement.

Even knowing her grandparents were Snow White and Prince Charming, Fallon still was flabbergasted by Ashley's news.

"Do you know Gus-Gus?" Fallon asked as she rocked on her heels.

"Come on, Princess," Emma took her daughter's hand before the bride had a chance to provide an answer, "We're holding up the line."

Fallon was nearly beside herself as they took their chairs and waited for the meal service to begin.

"I liked your wedding better," Henry pulled at his tie as he felt it was beginning to choke him.

"You don't have to wear that," Emma repeated her offer to her son from earlier that he didn't have to wear the dress tie.

"I don't believe its for our benefit, Love," Killian's eyes glanced towards Fallon and then promptly waved.

"I'm not ready for this hormonal teenager stuff," Emma spoke quietly into her husband's ear.

"It's only going to get worse, Love," Killian's eyes glanced towards Fallon and then Bradyn sitting in his lap.

"Poppy!" Fallon exclaimed as her grandparents approached their table with Leo.

"Hello, Fallon," Mary Margaret smiled at her adorably dressed granddaughter, "You look so pretty today. Did Mama do your hair?"

Fallon bobbed her head as she extended her arms to David for a hug. The doting grandfather immediately granted her request.

"Hi, Leo," Emma hugged her brother in an effort to make the trade off fair. Fallon was such a
consuming presence that poor Leo would often get lost in her wake.

"I'm hungry," Leo replied as he made himself comfortable in Emma's lap.

"Well, you're in luck because the food is coming out in a couple of minutes," Emma told her brother, "Are you going to dance with me when the music starts?"

Leo shook his head from side to side vigorously.

"Will you dance with me after Henry dances with me?" Emma asked.

Leo's head continued to shake.

"Will you dance with me after you dance with Momma?" Emma tried.

Leo's head continued to rattle. There wasn't anything Emma could say that could get her brother to dance with her as far as the little boy was concerned.

With a resigned sigh, Emma let the topic change as the food began to appear.

"Ashley and Sean couldn't have picked a better day to get married, weather wise," Mary Margaret noted the sunny skies overhead.

"I don't know," Killian chimed in, "It would be quite amusing to see the entire town dripping wet."

Emma rolled her eyes as she sent him an unamused glare.

The traditional bride and groom dance began as everyone's meal had been consumed and then couples began to join in.

"Will you dance with me, Love?" Killian inquired as Mary Margaret had taken Bradyn for a little grandson - grandmother bonding time.

"As long as you promise not to step on my toes," Emma responded.

"Believe it or not, as an officer in the King's Navy, dancing was considered a required course of study," Killian pulled her onto the dance floor, "Those dances taught back then are much more complicated than those of your realm. They had steps and lifts and bows. All your dances have are couples swaying back and forth in time to the beat."

"I like our dances better," she stated as he pulled her in close against his body.

"When your body is swaying against mine, I agree," he whispered in her ear, "But if you ever attend a proper ball, you, my love, are going to have difficulty."

"I just need to pick a partner that knows what he's doing," Emma's eyes twinkled in amusement.

"Always happy to be of service," he replied.

"You're pretty confident I'd pick you," Emma laughed.

"I am your husband," Killian reminded her, "Who else could you choose?"

"I think I'd be in better hands with my father," Emma glanced towards her father who had taken to dancing with Granny since Mary Margaret's attentions were otherwise occupied.
"Pretty sure Granny is leading that one," Killian's eyes followed Emma's.

"That may be, but I have a feeling that he has much more experience with formal ballroom dances than my sail the high seas pirate husband," Emma stated, "You know because he's a prince and all."

"Keep teasing, Love, and you'll be dancing by yourself," Killian challenged her.

They danced in silence for several beats before Emma dared to speak again. They didn't dance together often, and she'd hate to give him a reason to pull away. She loved having his arms around her, "I would like to see your skills in a more formal dance."

"And I would love to see you in a formal ball gown," Killian replied, "With those tight corsets and plunging necklines."

Emma smacked his shoulder in scolding for his mind turning their conversation dirty.

Killian chuckled in reply and tightened his hold around her waist.

"I believe it's my turn," David stepped forward and tapped Killian's shoulder as the song changed rather abruptly.

"Really, you'd like to dance with me, Mate," Killian raised his arms towards David, "I'm game if you are, but I'd rather lead."

Emma couldn't suppress the laugh as she stepped into her father's arms. Killian's face fell in mock disappointment.

"Maybe later, Mate," David chuckled as he spun Emma away from her husband before Killian had any ideas to reclaim her hand.

"I'll hold you to that," Killian grinned as he went to retrieve his daughter. If David was going to dance with his wife, Killian figured he'd dance with his own daughter. He knew Fallon was eager to take a spin by the fact she'd been sway with the music as she stood next to her grandmother.

Fallon's eyes lit up in excitement as Killian offered her his hand and pulled her onto the dance floor. He situated her on top of his feet as they sway back and forth in time to the music. Fallon's adoring eyes never once left her father's as they went.

"We should have had that," David nodded his head towards Killian and Fallon.

Emma turned her attention briefly towards her husband and daughter, "We do have that, right now."

"But it should have been back then, back when you were three and looked to me with stars in your eyes like Fallon does with Killian," David explained.

"I wished we'd had that too, but we can't go back," Emma frowned for a moment, "I'd rather just be in this moment."

David nodded as he swallowed the lump in his throat.

"We have a great family," Emma added, "I wouldn't trade one dance back then for anything that I have now. I love my husband and three children more than anything, and there are no guarantees that I would have had any of it if we didn't go through it all."

"It would be hard to imagine a life without any of them," David agreed.
"Twenty-eight years of separation sucked, but these five years have made up of a lot of it," Emma stated.

David nodded again as the song ended.

"I'll watch Leo and Bradyn if you want to dance with Mom," Emma offered.

"I would," David nodded as he followed Emma back to their table.

Emma sat and entertained her brother and youngest son as the rest of the family danced. Ruby suddenly plopped herself down in the seat next to Emma with a sigh of disappointment.

"Everything alright, Red?" Emma inquired as Bradyn squirmed in her arms. He was tired and wanted his nap. Emma recognized his fussiness and shifted him so that he was against her shoulder.

"Whale got called into the hospital and left me here by myself," Ruby sighed, "Being at a wedding alone is just depressing. It feels like the happy couples are flaunting their love in the faces of those of us who choose to remain single."

"You could always get married," Emma rubbed circles into Bradyn's back to lull him to sleep, "I'm sure Whale would be game for that."

Ruby scoffed at the idea of marriage, "It was pulling teeth for me to convince him to come with me and then he 'conveniently' got called into the hospital when the music started."

"That might be more about having to dance," Emma offered.

"Yeah, maybe," Ruby conceded. Victor had stayed through the ceremony and meal without complaint.

"Are you wanting to get married?" Emma inquired, "You've always been a bit cagey on the subject."

"I don't know," Ruby groaned, "I keep thinking and rethinking my stance on it."

"What are Whale's thoughts? Have you ever discussed it?" Emma prodded.

"I get the feeling that if I ever make up my mind, he's got a ring already waiting for me," Ruby replied.

"You've been dating for awhile," Emma pointed out.

"Since that little beauty was still in diapers," Ruby's head motioned towards Fallon, "How cute is she dancing with Killian like that?"

Emma's eyes shifted to the pair. They did make the cute couple.

"I never got that," Ruby responded, "I've never had that positive male role model. It seems like it's been me and Gran forever."

"Are you worried about leaving Granny alone?" Emma asked.

"No," Ruby responded quickly, perhaps too quickly, "Yes...well maybe a little. She'd not as young as she used to be, and I've added most of those grey hairs to her head. I owe her so much."

"You don't owe her your happiness," Emma replied, "Of course she'll want you to be happy."
"I guess I just don't feel like I deserve happiness after what happened," Ruby spoke quietly. Her thoughts were clearly with her dead first love.

"You do," Emma stated, "If anyone does, it's you."

"Ruby, dance with me?" Leo pulled on her sleeve suddenly.

"Of course I will," Ruby gave him a jubilant smile as she took his hand and lead him onto the dance floor to dance in the same fashion as Fallon danced with her father.

"Sure, he won't dance with me, but he'll dance with Ruby," Emma snorted to herself. Truthfully, she was okay with her current viewing. Watching her husband prance around with Fallon on his toes was the remedy for any foul mood she might be in. Her attention suddenly diverted to Henry, creeping towards Paige's table, working up the nerve to ask her to dance.

"Hi, Emma," Neal approached her hesitantly.

"Hi, Neal," Emma responded dutifully as she did her best to suppress how startled she was at seeing him. Their interactions had been extremely limited in the past year. He had left Storybrooke for a time. What he'd done with his time away was still a mystery to most, but upon his return there had been a difference in his attitude and behavior. As much as she hoped he'd finally changed his tune, she approached all conversations she had with him skeptically.

"Not dancing?" he shifted nervously on his feet.

"On baby duty," Emma patted Bradyn's back softly to make her point. The infant was sound asleep with his head rested comfortably on her shoulder. "Henry is at Jefferson's table if you're interested."

"Yeah, I just wanted to say something to you first," Neal stammered his way through the words.

"Just say it Neal," Emma responded, "I won't bite your head off with Bradyn sound asleep. It takes too much effort to get him back to sleep."

"I'm...ah...I'm sorry," Neal stuttered through the apology, only gaining confidence once the hardest two words were out, "You're right. I did everything you said I did. I have no excuses. I'm glad you found happiness...even if it is with the pirate."

"Careful," Emma warned him when she heard the bitterness entered his voice.

"I wish I could have been the man you wanted when you wanted me to be," Neal swallowed hard, "I would like to earn my way back into Henry's life."

"That's up to Henry," Emma responded quickly, "You can apologize to me until you're blue in the face, but it's Henry's trust that you need to re-earn. As I told you, Killian and I are neither encouraging nor discouraging of your relationship with him. He's old enough to figure out if he wants to see you, and so far he hasn't."

"What do I have to do?" Neal was nearly begging.

"I can't help you," Emma replied.

"Can't or won't," Neal barked.

"You're done here," Killian spoke up as he came to Emma's rescue, as unnecessary as it may be.

Neal sulked away from their table, and Killian took his place at Emma's side.
"Our little sailor still asleep?" Killian inquired as he caressed Bradyn's back softly.

"Yeah," Emma bobbed her head slightly.

"I can take him if you want to take a couple of turns around the dance floor," Killian offered.

"I'd rather just sit here with two of my favorite five men," she responded.

"I'm only in the top five?" Killian gave her a teasing frown, "I was hoping to at least make it into the top three."

"Sorry, Pirate, but I have to add my father and brother to that list," Emma teased.

"It's just me and you, and an infant with no verbal skills," he gave her a flirtatious grin, "You can admit that I'm your favorite man."

"Never going to happen," she snickered, "Just know that I love you."

"As I love you," Killian leaned in to capture her lips in a soft kiss.

"Mom, I'll take Bradyn if you and Killian want to dance," Henry offered up his babysitting services with Paige at his side with her hand laced into his.

"That's very sweet of you, Henry," Emma smiled with recognition that there was an ulterior motive in her son's offer. He was looking to score points with his crush, and she appeared quite eager to see Henry interact with his youngest sibling. Emma shifted Bradyn in her arms so that she could easily transfer him to Henry. "Don't wake him. You know how he fussy he gets if he's woken before he's ready."

"I won't," Henry cradled his brother in his arms.

Emma watched Henry and Paige coo over the sleeping infant for a few moments before she allowed her husband to pull her to the dance floor for a proper waltz. Emma fumbled through the steps, but Killian's gentle leading carried her through with only a few bruises to their toes. "Maybe someday I'll get a hang of this."

"I'd be happy to teach you," he whispered in her ear as he caressed the bare slope of her neck.

"I love being in your arms," Emma released a happy sigh as the hustle and bustle all around them began to stir up the memories of their own special day in which they vowed to be together until death do they part.

"And I love having you here," Killian's hold tightened slightly.

"I never knew how safe I could feel in something so simple as an embrace," tears began to well in Emma's eyes, "Through everything that we've faced separately and together, I would do it all again if that was the only way to end up in this moment."

"Aye, so would I," he agreed, "I will give up everything in this realm and every other one for you and our family."

"God, I wish you wouldn't say things like that to me when we are in public," Emma's eyes clouded over in lust, "You make keeping my hands off you extremely difficult."

"That's my plan," he laughed.
Emma's lips descended upon his, pouring as much emotion as was appropriate for public viewing.

"Mama and Papa sitting in a tree..." Fallon's voice filtered into their consciousness.

The parents erupted into laughter.

"Come here, Princess," Emma motioned for her daughter to approach.

Fallon dutifully darted over and was swept up in Emma's arms as both parents began to tickle her mercilessly.

A flash of motion caught Killian's attention. The color drained from his face like he'd seen a ghost.

"What's wrong?" Emma immediately noticed a change in her husband as Fallon darted off to Ruby to put on a little show, "Did you see something?"

"I couldn't," Killian shook his head slightly, "It's impossible."

"What is?" Emma pressed.

"I thought I saw..." Killian's voice trailed off.

"Killian, what did you see?" Emma forced his eyes to connect with hers.

"I don't know how, but I swear I saw someone from my past," Killian replied, "Someone I know couldn't possibly be alive."

"Killian," Emma's eyes locked with his even when he tried to avert them, her pleading with him to let her in on his sudden turmoil.

"It was Wendy," Killian whispered as he pressed his forehead to hers, "I met her in Neverland."

"Wendy Darling?" Emma gasped.

"I only knew her as Wendy," he responded, "It was so long ago. She'd have to be near a hundred by now."

"But if it was in Neverland," Emma stated, "She'd never have aged. It could have been her."

"I returned her and her brothers to their family. They weren't in Neverland for long. They weren't happy with me for it as Pan had his time to really work them over, but it was a promise I'd made to their parents. They'd been looking desperately for them for several years, offered up a sizeable reward for their safe return. I couldn't resist such a pay day. I tricked Pan into letting them go.

"I'd always thought Pan had been sweet on Wendy...all the boys were really. She was the only girl amongst all of them, and she was a sweet, innocent little girl. Pan especially was taken with her. He treated her different than the rest on the island. He built her a tree house with bedding that was modern for the time. He requested I pick up trinkets and new clothing items he could give her. He'd probably have made her his queen if she'd stayed longer on the island."

"Why did he let her and her brothers leave?"

"Because I lied to them. I told the children their mother was gravely ill. They went to Pan to ask for their release so they could see their mother one last time. With his infatuation as deep as it ran, he immediately granted Wendy's request, and I sailed them home. It was only after we had crossed into their realm and were sailing into the port of their home that they realized I'd lied to them. They
wanted me to take them back to Neverland immediately, but I kept the Jolly Roger on the same heading. They swore they'd never forgive me and return to Neverland without my help," he added.

"Did they ever get back?" Emma asked.

"Not to my knowledge," Killian replied, "We didn't see them during our adventure in the woods to rescue Henry. If they'd been on the island when I came to rescue you, they would have perished as Pan did."

"But you thought you saw her," Emma stated, "You're not one to hallucinate, Killian. If you thought you saw her, I believe you did."

"It's not possible," Killian responded, "Every way I figure it, she'd have passed long ago."

"We'll figure it out," Emma responded with a comforting caress to his chin, "Whether it's her or a ghost, we'll get to the bottom of things."

"Papa, dance with me," Fallon came running over and pulled on his hand to get his attention.

Killian forced himself to smile as he lifted Fallon into his arms, and danced about with both Emma and Fallon.

"Let's go home," Emma suggested when the song concluded. She could see his spirits hadn't yet improved. "You'll feel better in familiar surroundings."

"I'd hate to get in the way of this little one's fun," Killian tickled his daughter under the chin to draw out a laugh.

"Do you want to go home, Princess?" Emma asked as she pecked at Fallon's cheek.

"Yes," Fallon's head bobbed eagerly.

"I'll get your brothers. Go say goodbye to Grammy and Poppy," Emma encouraged her as Killian returned her to her feet.

Fallon scrambled over to make her farewells.

"Still asleep?" Emma asked Henry as she lifted Bradyn into her arms.

"I think the music is keeping him asleep," Henry noted, "He usually never sleeps this well."

"We'll have to test that theory," Emma replied, "It would be nice if he didn't wake at every little sound... We're heading home. Are you coming with us or staying?"

"I'll stay for awhile, if you don't mind," Henry looked towards Paige.

"No, I don't mind," Emma replied, "But when your grandparents are ready to leave, I want you to come home with them, okay?"

"Okay," Henry bobbed his head.

TBC...
Chapter 5

Disclaimer: Nope, I don't own them, I just play with them because it's fun.

In the security of their home, Killian was able to relax. He snuggled in with Fallon as they watched Cinderella that evening with the family dog keeping them both warm. Bradyn wouldn't sit enough to allow Emma to enjoy the movie along with them. Instead she paced around the living room to entertain the infant and waited for Henry to come home.

Fallon was chattering away about Ashley being Cinderella and making mental notes of things to ask Ashley the next time she could speak with her.

Killian listened intently to her words, laughing at regular intervals.

"You're never going to be able to get a word in," Emma told Bradyn, "Your sister is always going to dominate the conversation.

"Mama, when will Henry come home?" Fallon appeared before her suddenly with her dog in tow.

"I'm sure he'll be home soon," Emma patted her head.

"Will he read me a story?" she swayed back and forth sweetly.

"I bet he will," Emma smiled, "But you'll have to ask him nicely. Is your movie over?"

Fallon's head bobbed, "I go play in my tower."

"Playroom," Emma corrected her, but Fallon took off all the same. Max was nipping at her heels and barked his way up the stairs much to Fallon's amusement. Emma didn't feel the need to scold the pup as long as Bradyn was awake. "She doesn't know what a tower is, does she?"

"Probably not," Killian chuckled while Bradyn reached towards him. He quickly took his son into his arms. The little boy gave his father's necklace a healthy yank. "One day, he's going to yank my necklace right off."

"He likes the way it sparkles," Emma freed Bradyn's fingers from the tight hold he had on the chain and kissed them, "Leave Papa's necklace alone, Little Sailor."

Bradyn laughed in reply to which both parents couldn't help joining in.

Henry came in with his grandfather. Bradyn greeted them both with an excited squeal.

"Must have been a great party. We've been home for a few hours," Emma ruffled her oldest son's hair in greeting.

"The lad has quite a few moves," David chuckled, "He and Paige were dancing up a storm. Mary Margaret and I couldn't force ourselves to make him leave."

"Gotten over your nerves around the lasses, have you?" Killian beamed with pride, "Perhaps I've rubbed off on you a bit."

"Bite your tongue, Pirate," Emma scolded her husband, "I want none of your pirate charms rubbing off on Henry. He will treat a woman properly."
"I have always treated you properly, Love," he sent her a flirtatious wink.

"And the others?" Emma was not to be ignored.

"Fair point, Love," he chuckled softly.

Bradyn squirmed and did his best to make it known he wanted attention from another, namely his brother.

"Want me to read you a story?" Henry inquired while Bradyn poked at his face and laughed.

"Read me too!" Fallon came flying down the stairs upon hearing extra voices.

"There's my princess," David greeted Fallon with a giant hug as he caught her as her feet hit the landing.

"Hi, Poppy," Fallon gave him cute little smile.

"Henry and I brought you some cake. Ashley insisted on us bringing you a piece," David stated as Max barked at his feet.

Any excuse for a sugar rush caused the little brunette's eyes to go wide in excitement.

"She has this town wired when it comes to sweet treats," Emma muttered in her husband's ear, "Thank goodness she has so much energy to work off all those calories."

"Be thankful she only has her baby teeth," Killian chuckled, "Even if those rot, she'll have new teeth to replace them."

"We really need to start limiting her sweets," Emma sighed as Fallon sat at the table and dug into the rather large piece of cake.

"You two left in a hurry earlier," David spoke to his daughter and son-in-law. "Everything alright?"

"Yeah," Emma nodded, "Bradyn was tired, and we didn't want him to wake during the festivities."

"Looks wide awake now," David noted the wide eyes of the youngest Jones as he patted Max with Henry's help. When Fallon's attentions were elsewhere, Max usually sought out attention wherever he could.

"Naps do wonders," Emma replied.

"I'd best be on my way," David stated, "Mary Margaret has lesson plans to work on, and Leo is on a sugar high of his own. Are we on for breakfast tomorrow?"

"We'll be there," Killian confirmed.

"Enjoy the sugar, Princess," David kissed the top of Fallon's head. "Bye, Bradyn, bye, Henry."

"Bye, Grandpa," Henry took Bradyn's hand and raised it to wave in David's direction.

"You could have told your father what I saw," Killian told Emma softly once David was out the door.

"Why worry anyone unnecessarily?" Emma shrugged.
"Because he's your deputy," Killian stated the obvious.

"You don't even know what you saw," Emma replied, "It could have been a girl that simply looked like Wendy.

"I know what I saw," he sulked up to the roof to get fresh air. He wasn't on the roof for more than a few minutes when he felt Emma's arms wrap around his waist from behind. He took a few moments to soak in her comfort.

"I believe you, Killian," she whispered into his ear, "I'm just not ready to admit there's another something out there that we need to face. We've finally settled into a normal family life after Sabella and all the trouble she caused. I cannot bare to have our life turned upside down yet again."

"I'm not either," he agreed, "I wish I never saw Wendy in Neverland or this afternoon because I know no good can come from her being here, especially if she's never aged. There's only one way for that to have happened, which means that Pan had far too many years to poison her mind."

"I know you think you saw her, but is it possible you saw someone that looks like her?" Emma asked.

"We know everyone who lives in this town, Love," Killian reminded her, "There isn't anyone who looks like remotely like her. It was her."

"Okay," was her simply reply, "Then we flush her out and figure out what her agenda is. Maybe we start with Neal."

"What does Bae have to do with any of this?" Killian looked to her in confusion.

"Yeah, he spent time with the Darling family, didn't he?" Emma replied, "Maybe he knows something."

"Could we trust anything he says?" Killian asked, "We don't have the best track record with him. He still blames me for the nonexistent relationship he has with Henry. You heard him earlier at the wedding."

"He does have a point," Emma replied, "We could help him reestablish his relationship with Henry, but we choose not to."

"We did try. I lost count of the number of times I told Henry to give Baelfire a chance," Killian responded, "It was his actions who caused us to have to go this route."

"I know," she smiled, " Believe me, I'm still madder than heck at him for all the pain he's caused or tried to cause, but are we being selfish here?"

"Selfish?" Killian snorted, "Compared to that..."

"Neal is Henry's father," Emma cut him off, her hand landing against Killian's chest to silence him. Killian wanted to jump in to correct her, but Emma continued on, "You're his dad. There's a difference. When Henry has a problem or wants to talk, you're who he goes to for help, but biologically Neal is his father. We can't change that no matter how much I might want to jump into a time machine and do so, and not letting him be a part of his son's life is wrong."

"We aren't making that choice," Killian reminded her, "We're supporting Henry in the choice he's making."
"If we were a bit more encouraging, would he make a different choice?" Emma challenged her husband's logic.

"Emma, he nearly got you killed. He was willing to trade my life to Pan for a chance with you. He tried to convince you that you'd had an affair when you lost your memories," Killian replied, "The list goes on and on. When is enough going to be enough? He's not the boy I first found floating at sea and ferried to Neverland. He's not the young man you met in Oregon."

"There's goodness in him, Killian," she insisted, "There was a time when many believed there was none in you, and I found it."

"Since when are you the hopeless optimist like your mother?" he ran his fingers through her hair.

"When I fell in love with Captain Hook and discovered the man beneath that was Killian Jones," she smiled.

Killian swallowed hard.

"I'm not ever going to be able to give up on Neal, not completely," Emma replied, "I'm not saying there are residual feelings of love for him, but there is good in him. I saw it once upon a time."

"There's also evil in him," Killian responded.

"Love makes a person do crazy things," Emma caressed his tattooed wrist softly, "You of all people should know that."

"What do you propose we do?" Killian asked after several moments of thought and reflection.

"Invite him to dinner," Emma replied.

"You want to invite him into our home?" he groaned with dread.

"Yes," she nodded, "I want to show him what an amazing man you are now, and what a good influence you are on Henry."

"And when he brings up the past?" Killian asked, "Because he will."

"We remind him it's the past for a reason, and you aren't the same man as you used to be," Emma replied.

"You're going to invite him whether I agree or not," he replied.

"That's not true," she responded, "If you were truly uncomfortable bringing Neal into our home, I wouldn't do it."

Killian gave the prospect a moment of thought before nodding, "Okay."

"God, I love you," she brought her hands to the back of his neck to guide his lips towards hers, "You are such an amazing man."

"If you say so," he smiled against her lips.

"Let's check on the children and then go to bed," she suggested, "I think I can show you just how amazing you are."

"You know how much I love a challenge," he swatted her backside playfully before following her
down to the main living area to put their children to bed.

"Hey, Neal, do you have a minute?" Emma strolled into Mister Gold's shop the next day.

"Ms. Swan, what can we do for you?" Gold inquired.

"You can start by addressing me properly," Emma responded.

"My apologies, Sheriff Swan," he gave a slight bow of condescension.

"Jones," Emma scowled at him.

"Awe, yes," Gold replied, "How is the pirate?"

"I'm going to assume the question is rhetorical," Emma rolled her eyes, "Neal, can I speak with you for a moment in private?"

"Uh, sure," Neal escorted Emma out of the shop to talk, "What's up?"

"Killian and I had a talk last night about what was said at the wedding," Emma fidgeted nervously, "We'd like to invite you to dinner...tonight if you're available."

"Uh, yeah," Neal was noticeably startled by the offer, "Why the sudden change of heart?"

"There are a few reasons," Emma replied, "One is for Henry. You're his father. There was a time in which you two were very close. Maybe you can find your way back to that, but you have to accept that Killian is a part of Henry's life and mine."

"I get it," Neal nodded, "I'm not going to lie, it hurts, but you're obviously very happy together. I have to move on."

"Yeah," Emma agreed.

"What is the other reason?" Neal asked.

"What?" Emma asked.

"You said there were other reasons for the change of heart," Neal replied.

"I don't want to get into that right now," Emma shifted nervously from one foot to another, "We'll talk tonight. Dinner at six?"

"I'll be there," Neal nodded.

"See you then," Emma replied before walking off.

TBC…
Chapter 6

Disclaimer: Nope, I don't own them, I just play with them because it's fun.

Henry had been moaning and groaning since arriving home from school to the news they were having Neal over for dinner.

Fallon, reacting to her brother's mood, wore a sour expression when Neal arrived with a bottle of wine for the adults, sweet treats for Fallon and Henry, and a stuffed animal for Bradyn.

"Come in," Emma encouraged Neal when she stepped back to allow him into her home, "Killian took Bradyn to the market. He should be back shortly."

Max barked at their visitor, as he did to all strangers who entered the Jones home.

"It's okay, boy," Emma bent down to pat the dog's head, "Neal's an old friend."

"My papa be back soon," Fallon told the man, almost in a tattling voice, like she expected Killian to toss Neal out of the cottage the instant he arrived home.

"Hey, Dad," Henry shuffled from one foot to another, making the minimum amount of eye contact.

"Hi, Henry," Neal gave him a smile of longing. He was used to Henry hugging him every time they met up. Those times passed by a while ago, and he knew it was his fault.

"Have a seat," Emma ushered him towards the living room, "I have to keep an eye on dinner until Killian gets back."

"You're cooking?" Neal looked to her nervously.

"Killian's cooking," Emma smiled, "I'm watching the food until he gets back. There's a spice for the fish he's out of, which he likes to use. Apparently it's his secret ingredient, so I couldn't run to the store for him."

"Didn't know you two had secrets from each other," Neal replied.

"Just when it comes to fish. He takes cooking them very seriously," Emma's eyes lit up just talking about her husband. The sight turned Neal's stomach. If he hadn't been such an idiot, it might have been him to cause her current glow.

Fallon stayed close to her mother while Henry made small talk with Neal. The young girl was almost marking her father's territory. Emma wouldn't admit it, but she found it adorable.

Killian returned from his quick errand. Bradyn was giggling away at something Killian was telling him.

Neal had to look away when Emma greeted Killian with a kiss before claiming Bradyn, despite the infant's grunt of protest.

Killian went into the living room to give Neal a polite handshake before entering the kitchen to keep dinner going.

Fallon pouted on her way to her drawing table. She'd been eager to watch her father usher Neal out of the home, but sadly her father appeared to be tolerating Neal's presence.
"How have things been at Gold's shop?" Emma chimed in to take over the small talk from her son, much to his apparent relief. Henry went into the kitchen to help Killian.

"It's never too exciting," Neal replied, "People only come in looking for their misplaced possessions from time to time."

"Is it weird being back in Storybrooke?" Emma tried to keep the conversation going while Bradyn appeared enamored with the new toy Emma had handed him. She knew within a few hours he'd tire of it and return to his favorite, but it would be appreciated for a long as Neal was in their home.

"Not weird," Neal shook his head, "Different."

"Where'd you go with your time away?" Emma inquired.

"I did some traveling," Neal replied, "Tried to find myself again. Been a bit lost."

"Did you succeed?" Emma asked.

"Partly," Neal replied, "I realized a large part of myself missing was a relationship I messed up...with Henry."

Emma glanced towards the kitchen. Henry and Killian were working side by side. There was an ease between the pair she knew Neal coveted.

"Thank you for inviting me to dinner," Neal swallowed hard, "I haven't done much to deserve another chance."

"No, you haven't," Emma agreed, "I'm not doing this for you. I'm doing this for Henry. He doesn't say it, but it hurts you're not in his life. It hurt you left for a year without a word, a phone call or even a postcard. He didn't deserve that, Neal."

"I know," he sighed.

"You need to start earning that chance you want to have with him, and it starts with you making nice with Killian," Emma replied, "For all the anger you have for him, Killian isn't the man he once was. You can't hold it against him that I chose him over you."

"I know," Neal repeated.

"You need to start being the type of man Henry can be proud to call his father," Emma added.

"Are you done?" Neal glared at her.

"Depends on if any of this has sunk in," Emma replied, "You keep saying you know things have to change, yet we haven't seen it...Henry hasn't seen it."

There was a pause in the conversation. Bradyn took it upon himself to fill in by tossing his toy to the floor. His eyes went wide with hopefulness that someone would pick it up for him.

Neal bent over to grab the toy and then hand it back. Bradyn repeated the process again and again with a mischievous grin and giggle.

"That's enough, Little Lad," Emma grasped the toy before he could throw it again.

Bradyn released a huff.
"He looks like Henry," Neal commented.

"Well, he is half mine," Emma ran her hand along Bradyn's back. The little boy curled into her.

"He has Hook's eyes," Neal added.

"So does Fallon," Emma smiled while glancing towards her daughter, still coloring away furiously. "Makes it nearly impossible to say no to either of them."

With his mother's focus elsewhere, Bradyn tossed his toy again and then released a giggle. Rather than scold the tot, she simply kissed the top of his head.

"Dinner is ready," Killian spoke up.

The meal started awkwardly. Fallon appeared to stare Neal down, who in turn seemed to shrink in his seat.

"Eat your fishies, Princess," Emma encouraged her daughter upon seeing that her plate hadn't been touched. "You don't like them cold."

Fallon scrunched her nose at her mother and then dove into her meal.

"How was school today, Lad?" Killian asked Henry.

"Okay," Henry shrugged, "Paige and I got assigned a school project together, so I have to stay after tomorrow."

"Paige?" Killian raised a curious brow, "The same Paige you have been sweet on and danced up a storm with at the wedding?"

"I am not sweet on her. We're friends," Henry responded defensively.

Fallon began singing the kissing song Henry had taught her much to the amusement of Emma and Killian.

Neal felt like it was intruding on a regular family meal. He had a feeling this was a typical night in the Jones household.

"Killian, are we still sailing this weekend?" Henry asked.

"Aye," he nodded, "Supposed to be perfect weather. Maybe your mum will be able to join us."

"Mama, please," Fallon's eyes lit up in excitement.

"Depends on which day," Emma smiled at her daughter, "I'm taking part of Robin's weekend shift this weekend. He and Regina wanted to have some time together this weekend. Roland will be spending the night. Henry, make sure your top bunk is clear of your clothing so he has somewhere to sleep."

"You watch Roland?" Neal chimed in.

"Not often," Emma replied, "He's only spent a handful of nights at the cottage, but when Robin's working the late shift and Regina has work, he'll spend time here. He's Henry's stepbrother."

"I didn't know you and Regina were on such good terms," Neal cleared his throat.
"She's different than the woman she was in the Enchanted Forest," Emma replied, "Even my mother says so... Things don't have to be difficult. It's only circumstances that makes things challenging. Regina has changed. Maybe you have too."

"You still giving sailing lessons to Henry?" Neal tried to pick up the conversation.

"It's not really lessons anymore," Killian replied, "The lad doesn't need much in the way of direction anymore. He picked it up right quick."

"It's fun," Henry smiled.

"Yeah, I liked it too," Neal agreed.

Killian thought for a minute Neal was angling for his son to invite him aboard his ship, but Henry didn't seem to take the hint. He continued to talk about their weekend plans.

"Can I wear my princess dress?" Fallon chimed in.

"Which princess dress?" Emma laughed at the hopefulness in her daughter's eyes.

"My Cinderella one," Fallon explained.

"You can wear whatever you want," Emma bit her lip to hold back a laugh. Her daughter was such a girly girl.

When dinner was finished, Fallon asked to be dismissed. She wanted to play in her tower until it was time for bed.

"Henry, will you take Bradyn upstairs?" Emma asked her son.

"Sure," Henry lifted his brother out of the highchair after Emma wiped his hands clean.

"Did you want some coffee, Neal?" Emma asked while Killian cleared the table.

"Sure," he nodded.

"I'll bring it into the living room in a moment. Cream or sugar?" she asked.

"Black is good."

Emma helped Killian clean up while the coffee was brewing.

"Thank you for doing this?" Emma hugged Killian around the middle.

"Anything for you and Henry, Love," Killian wrapped his arms around her waist, giving in to her calming abilities.

"Do you want to ask Neal about Wendy?" she asked.

Killian nodded in agreement.

Emma turned to pour the coffee. Killian couldn't resist a nibble at the nape of her neck. Emma felt her eyes roll back. She had to work hard to suppress a moan of pleasure.

"Don't start something you can't finish, Hook," Emma whispered.

"I'll finish it if you indulge me," he grinned into her neck.
"Later," she nudged him away and carried the coffee over to their guest. "Killian and I have to talk to you about something kind of personal, something from your past."

"My past?" Neal looked to her in confusion.

"Your shared past," Emma clarified, "Your time leading up to and while you lived in Neverland. You lived with the Darling family before Neverland, correct?"

"For a while," Neal nodded, "It was probably the happiest time I spent as a child until Pan's shadow took me away."

"Pan brought the children to Neverland, didn't he?" she asked.

"Yes," Neal confirmed, "Though I didn't know for several years."

"Killian said Peter Pan was sweet on Wendy. Was that true?" Emma asked.

Neal's hand clinched into a fist before he nodded. There was something in his eyes she recognized, jealousy.

"Killian said he was able to get the Darling family back to their parents using a bit of trickery."

"He knows all about trickery, doesn't he?" Neal responded bitterly.

"Do you know if the children found their way back to Neverland?" Emma chose to ignore Neal's statement.

"What's this all about?" Neal asked.

"At Ashley and Sean's wedding, Killian thought he saw the girl, Wendy," Emma responded, "He said she looked as she did back in Neverland, which shouldn't be possible."

"Pan found her and returned her to Neverland," Neal swallowed hard.

"How long did she stay there?" Killian asked.

"I don't know," Neal shrugged, "I tried to get her to leave with me once, but she refused. She'd been under Pan's influence for too long."

"So it's possible she really could be in Storybrooke," Emma concluded.

"Yes," Neal looked towards his feet.

"What aren't you telling us?" Emma realized there was more going on than he was telling her.

"My year away...I was in London," he admitted, "I was with the Darling children."

"You brought them to Storybrooke," Killian concluded.

"No," Neal responded quickly, "I didn't bring them, but I did tell them where to find you."

"Of course you did," Killian scoffed, rising to his feet with the anger evident in his voice and posture. "What are they planning?"

"I don't know," Neal responded defensively.

"If you knew, would you tell us?" Emma asked.
"I don't know," Neal stated tentatively.

"You're telling us you were with them for a year, and you don't know what they are planning," Emma challenged him.

"I wasn't with them for the entire year," he admitted, "At first, I went to London to pay my respects. I fully expected them to have passed away. I'd found the Darling tomb, but the children weren't there. I did some research. The Darling home was still in the family, given to the grandchildren, only there couldn't have been any grandchildren. It was Wendy, John and Michael. They'd only aged about a year since I'd last seen them. They told me the story about how they'd returned to Neverland for nearly a century. When Peter realized the island was dying, he told the children they had to return for their own safety. Wendy refused. She told him she was with him until the end. The boys refused to leave their sister behind, so they stayed. When you bargained to send all the children back to the lands from where they came, you sent Wendy, Michael and John back to London, only it was present day London."

"Why present day London?" Emma asked.

"No one knows," Neal shrugged.

"That has to be such a culture shock for them," Emma realized.

"They've managed very well," Neal replied, "But Wendy especially isn't happy with Pan's demise. She was extremely attached. She blames you, Hook, for his death."

"He kidnapped my wife," Killian charged towards Neal, "What was I supposed to do?"

"Hey, look at me," Emma stepped in between the two men before punches could be thrown, bringing Killian's gaze to hers. "That's in the past."

"You could have died," Killian's forehead came to rest against hers, "I wouldn't have you or Fallon or Bradyn."

"You rescued me," she reminded him, "You were willing to sacrifice yourself for me. We do have Fallon and Bradyn because of you."

"Us," he corrected her.

"Are they coming after Killian?" Emma turned towards Neal.

"Most likely," Neal responded. "Wendy is not the same girl I knew. She uses her innocence as a weapon. She's manipulative and cunning. She's everything Pan was, perhaps worse."

"Does she have magic?" Emma asked.

"I don't think so," Neal shook his head, "I didn't see any signs of it, but she's manipulative. It was like she could read my mind. She used my thoughts against me. She tricked me into finding you, Killian. She told me I could have Emma if I told her where she could find you. I didn't intend to tell her. It just came out."

"Siren's song," Killian realized.

"What?" Emma spun towards her husband in an attempt to make sense of what he said.

"Sailor's lore," Killian replied, "A siren was a beautiful creature who would use song to hypnotize
you into spilling your deepest, darkest secrets. Some thought the sirens were mermaids, and others thought they were birdlike creatures. There was a man on my crew who swore he had encountered a siren. He said they were not mermaids or birdlike creatures, but young girls who would gain sympathy with anyone they met by claiming they were lost. Their tears would hypnotize their prey. They would use the sailor however they saw fit and then discard them, most by death."

"That's why Pan was so taken with her," Neal realized.

"Perhaps," Killian nodded, "Or perhaps Pan taught her the ways of the sirens."

"Is that a skill which can be taught?" Emma asked.

"Depends on which lore is true," Killian replied.

"If it's true she's a siren, how do we stop her?" Emma asked.

"Sirens aren't irresistible to everyone," Killian replied, "We'll need to find a way to counteract her charms."

"How do we do that?" Emma asked.

"Time to study up at the library," Killian frowned.

"Papa, stars are out," Fallon came barreling down the stairs, "Come see, come see."

Fallon grasped Killian's hand and tugged.

"In a few minutes, Princess," Emma replied, "Mama and Papa need to talk to Henry's father first."

"No," Fallon moaned, sticking her lip to pout.

"Two minutes, Little Love," Killian knelt before her with sincere eyes.

"Okay," Fallon tossed her arms around his neck.

"I'll meet you on the roof. Take your brothers with you. We'll resume our lessons on star navigation," he promised her.

"Okay," Fallon's head bobbed. With a kiss to his cheek, she called out for her brothers and was off.

"If you can help us in any way, you'd better do it," Killian looked Neal dead in the eyes. "If any harm comes to my family, you will pay."

"I'll help you any way I can," Neal assured him. "I'll talk to Belle first thing in the morning. She can help with our research."

"I'll meet you in the library tomorrow afternoon," Killian stated before climbing the stairs to spend time with his children.

"Neal, if you double cross us," Emma began.

"I know this is my last chance with Henry," Neal swallowed hard, "He loves his siblings...and his stepfather. I know I haven't earned anything with you, but I mean it when I say I'll help in any way I can."

"I hope you do," Emma walked him to the door, "Henry wants a father he can be proud of."
"Thanks for dinner," Neal swallowed hard, "It was an eye opening evening."

"What does that mean?" Emma challenged him.

"You're happy," Neal replied. "Somewhere inside me I guess I figured you stayed because you had to, because of Fallon and Bradyn, but I can see that's not the case. You love him."

"Yes, I do," Emma nodded.

"He's a good father," Neal added, "He treats Henry like his own."

"He sees him that way," Emma replied, "He's tried very hard to be the role model Henry needs."

"The role model I haven't been," Neal stated.

"There is still time, Neal," Emma responded, "Henry still sees everything. He can see you do good."

"I'd better go," Neal replied.

"Neal, you deserve to be happy," Emma stated, "I do hope you find someone that can be for you what Killian is for me."

"Yeah, me too," he nodded, "Night, Emma."

"Good night, Neal," Emma shut the door and then made her way up the stairs to join her family.

As usual, Fallon was chatting away, asking dozens of questions about the lessons Killian was trying to teach her.

TBC…
Chapter 7

Disclaimer: Nope, I don't own them, I just play with them because it's fun.

"Hello, Miss Fallon," Belle greeted the tiny brunette the next afternoon with a wide smile and a playful tap to her nose, "How was your day of fishing?"

"I caught fishies this big," Fallon stretched her arms wide like she always did.

Killian chuckled.

"Neal is waiting for you in the back," Belle told Killian, "I'll entertain Fallon. What do you say, Miss Fallon? Will you help me in the library?"

Fallon's head bobbed eagerly.

"Thank you, Belle," Killian watched his daughter for a few moments to make sure she was entertained before he made his way to the back room where Neal already had his head buried in the books.

"I've found some references of sirens in a few of these books," Neal pointed towards the short stack on the table, "None of them talk about how to neutralize their effects though, but a couple of them explain what happens. It's almost word for word what happened to me."

"It's a start," Killian shed his coat and reached for a book.

"Where are Fallon and Bradyn?" Neal asked.

"Fallon is helping Belle, and Bradyn is with Emma and David at the station," Killian began flipping through the first book.

"You could have brought Bradyn along," Neal responded.

"Didn't want the disturbance," Killian replied, "He's mild mannered most of the time, but he's not patient enough for sitting around for hours."

"Uh, thanks for dinner last night," Neal fumbled to keep the conversation going.

"Thank my wife," Killian kept his focus on the book, "I wanted nothing to do with last night's dinner."

"I deserve that," Neal nodded.

"You're damn right you do," Killian hissed, "You have been given chance after chance, and what have you done? You've thrown them all away. Do you take responsibility? No, you throw blame on anyone else. Your son looked to you with stars in his eyes, but that wasn't enough for you."

"You took Emma from me," Neal growled.

"You haven't changed," Killian shook his head in distain, "You're still that selfish jerk who traded me to Pan for a chance with Emma. You are using this entire scenario with Wendy to your advantage. She's not a siren, is she? You willfully told her I was in Storybrooke and how best to get back at me."
"Yes, I'm still that selfish jerk who traded you to Pan for a chance with Emma, but this thing with Wendy, Michael and John is different. They're dangerous, and they are going to try to get revenge. They may use Henry to get what they want, and I refuse to let that happen," Neal explained.

"Let's find a way out of this newest mess you dragged us into and then never speak again," Killian suggested.

"This is my fault?" Neal asked.

"It was you who told the Darling family where to find me, wasn't it?"

"You're the reason they're looking in the first place," Neal responded, "You screwed them over."

"I took them home," Killian replied, "I brought them to a place where they were missed, where they were loved, where they belonged. Their parents had been beside themselves with pain and worry for the wellbeing of their children."

"And how much did you make in reward money?" Neal challenged him, "Captain Hook never does anything without something for himself."

"I covered expenses," Killian responded, "Nothing more, nothing less."

"A ruthless pirate helping a family reunite, yeah right," Neal scoffed.

"You're not the only one who grew up without a family," Killian scowled at him.

"You tore apart my family," Neal hissed.

"Keep believing that same tired crap your father has been feeding you for centuries," Killian responded, "Whatever helps you sleep at night. You mother left of her own free will. If it hadn't been with me, it would have been with someone else, perhaps someone who treated her like dirt. I loved your mother. Believe that or not, it's the truth."

Neal began muttering under his breath, but said no more to Killian for the rest of the afternoon.

After marking his page to return to the next afternoon, Killian decided he'd done enough for the first afternoon. Without a word to Neal, he grabbed his coat and went in search of his daughter.

"Did you and Ms. Belle have fun this afternoon?" Killian lifted Fallon into his arms.

"Yep," Fallon bobbed her head eagerly, "We stacked all kinds of books, and she read me a couple of stories. I colored pictures for Mama and Poppy and Henry."

"Thank you for your assistance," Killian told Belle.

"I was happy for the company," Belle smiled, "She's such a little cutie."

"And you were on your bestest behavior for Ms. Belle, weren't you?" Killian nodded his head so Fallon would mimic him.

"Yep," Fallon's head bobbed as she was coached.

"See you again tomorrow?" Belle inquired.

"Regrettably yes," Killian replied.
"I'll continue my search as well," Belle vowed.

"Thank you," he smiled, "How about we give Mama and Poppy those pictures you drew them?"


"Bye, Fallon," the cheerful librarian waved while father and daughter left the library.

"Hi, Mama," Fallon burst into the station and jumped into Emma's lap.

"Hi, Princess," Emma hugged her daughter, "Did you have fun with Papa at the library?"

"Yep," Fallon nodded.

Emma turned to see her husband. He clearly hadn't had as much fun as her daughter.

"I draw you a picture, Mama," Fallon produced one of her drawings.

"That's very pretty, Princess," Emma kissed her daughter's cheek.

"Where's Poppy?" Fallon asked, "I draw him picture too."

"He'll be back in a few minutes," Emma assured her daughter while she watched Killian walk over to the playpen where Bradyn was currently napping. Killian picked him up and cradled him against his chest. There was a solemn expression on his face which had Emma worried.

"There's my princess," David came into the station and immediately took Fallon from her mother, "How was the library?"

"I draw you a picture, Poppy," Fallon held up the drawing for him to view.

Emma went to her husband's side while her father and daughter conversed.

"You okay, Sailor?" Emma rubbed circles into Killian's back.

"Better now," he wrapped an arm around her shoulders and brought her in close.

"What did Neal say that got to you?" she caressed his cheek.

"Nothing more than he usually says," he guided his lips to hers.

"I'll cheer you up when we get home," Emma assured him.

"I look forward to it," he gave her a brief smile. "Did you fill your father in yet?"

"Yes," Emma nodded slightly, "We're in agreement that this needs to stay quiet for awhile, at least until we get some sort of idea what is going on. No surprise, he wants to help. I suspect when he tells Mom, she'll be offering her help too."

"I expect nothing less from Snow White and her Prince Charming," he chuckled.

"I had a name in the Enchanted Forest, you know," David chimed up, "Prince David."

"We like Charming better," Emma smiled.

"Me too, Poppy," Fallon chimed in.
"Never going to live that down," David released a good-natured sigh.

"It could have been worse," Emma smiled over towards her father.

"I suppose so," David conceded, "At least she kept it clean for innocent little ears to hear."

Fallon giggled in reply.

"We should get home," Emma glanced at the clock, "Henry is going to be home soon, and he's going to be hungrier than usual, having to stay after school for his project with Paige."

Fallon began singing her kissing song again.

"We need to find you a new tune," Emma told her daughter.

"It could be worse, Love," Killian chuckled when Emma lifted Fallon from her father's arms. "She does love belting out that song from F-R-O-Z-E-N."

Fallon did not fall for her father's trick. Thanks to her grandmother, she knew how to spell certain words, and 'frozen' was one of them. She began singing an off key version of "Let it Go" and sprinkling in "Do You Want To Build A Snowman" for good measure the entire drive from the station to the cottage.

"Thanks for that entertaining reminder, Papa," Emma scowled at her husband after putting the car in park upon arriving home.

Killian chuckled while pulling Bradyn from his car seat. Fallon continued to sing all the way to the front door.

"At least she seems to be over the 'Cinderella' kick she'd been on," Emma shrugged, "I was ready to bury that DVD in some 'Cave of Wonders'."

Fallon immediately darted over to the DVD player and searched until she found "Frozen".

"How about we wait until after dinner to start the movie," Emma halted her daughter from loading the disk into the DVD player.

"No," Fallon moaned.

"I know that feels like forever, but it's only a little while," Emma patted her daughter's head, "When Henry gets home, we're going to Granny's for dinner."

"Roni and Cheese," Fallon proclaimed with glee.

"Start thinking about what kind of vegetable you want to eat along with your roni and cheese," Emma advised her daughter. She earned a pout in response. Fortunately Henry arrived causing a complete u-turn in the little girl's mood.

"Hi, Henry," Fallon wrapped her arms around Henry's waist.

Ever the dotting brother, he lifted her into his arms for a big hug before returning her to her feet.

"How's the project with Paige coming?" Emma asked.

"Pretty good," Henry responded, "I'm hungry. What's for dinner?"
"How does a burger at Granny's sound?" Emma asked.

"Good," Henry nodded.

"Put your school bag in your room," Emma suggested, "As soon as Roland gets here, we're heading out."

A knock to the cottage door came several minutes later. Fallon hoped off the chair at her craft table and ran to open the door. "Hi, Uncle Robin," Fallon waved.

"Hello, Princess Fallon," Robin gave her an exaggerated bow of respect.

"Hi, Roland," Fallon smiled at boy with adorable dimples.

"Hey, Roland," Emma greeted the young boy with a smile.

"Thank you for watching him tonight so Regina and I can gave dinner together," Robin smiled.

"It's no trouble at all," Emma assured her deputy, "I remember how those first few weeks of marriage are. Regina helped us out plenty with Henry."

"It's just dinner tonight," Robin replied, "This Saturday we're celebrating our one month anniversary. Thank you for taking my shift that day. You've been more than accommodating with my schedule. I will make it up to you."

"It will all wash out eventually," Emma assured him, "Roland, are you hungry? We're going to Granny's for dinner."

Roland bobbed his head eagerly.

"I'd better get going," Robin glanced at the clock on the wall, "I'd hate to stand my queen up."

"Yes, that's a very bad idea," Emma smiled.

"I'll see you tomorrow morning at shift change," Robin replied.

"Bye, Uncle Robin," Fallon waved him off.

"Alright, let's pile in the bug," Emma suggested.

"Uh, Mom, we're not all going to fit," Henry was quick to point out.

"Yes, you're beloved bug does offer cramped quarters," Killian agreed with his stepson while coming down the staircase, "Hello, Roland."

"Hi, Captain Jones," Roland greeted the man.

"Ganging up on me again," Emma sighed, "I guess we're all hoofing it on foot."

"Aw," Fallon moaned.

"You can ride on my back," Henry knelt down and allowed his sister to climb on board.

"Let's go, Little Lad," Killian lifted Bradyn out of the playpen.

"Do you have any homework tonight, Roland?" Emma asked the young boy on the short walk to the diner.
"Some," Roland responded.

"Let me know if you need any help," Emma told the boy.

"I will," Roland nodded.

"Aunt Granny!" Fallon exclaimed as they entered the diner.

"There's a bit of redundancy if I've ever heard it," Killian spoke softly to his wife in reference to Fallon's greeting of the diner's owner.

Emma snorted in reply.

"Hello there, Sweetheart," Granny pecked at the young girl's cheek, "Looks like you found yourself a handy steed."

"This is Henry," Fallon giggled at the silly statement Granny had made, "Where's Aunt Ruby?"

"Ruby has the night off," Granny replied before turning towards Emma and Killian, "Out with Whale again. He took her somewhere fancy. You should have seen the way she dressed for him."

"Maybe tonight is finally the night," Emma teased the proprietor.

"Lord, I hope so," Granny replied, "I'd like to know my Ruby is well taken care of when I'm gone, and that Whale fellow is mighty easy on the eyes."

"He fixed my ouchie," Fallon chimed in, proving yet again that everything was about her.

"Man alive, she's definitely your daughter," Emma laughed while looking towards her husband.

"Never a doubt in my mind," Killian chuckled.

"What are you hungry for tonight, Pumpkin?" Granny asked the little girl.

"Do you really have to ask?" Emma lifted Fallon off Henry's back and into their regular booth.

"Roni and cheese," Fallon threw up her hands dramatically.

"And," Emma prompted her.

"And ice cream," Fallon added after a moment of thought.

"No ice cream without vegetables," Killian chimed in, taking both his wife and daughter by surprise.

"But, Papa," Fallon tried the crocodile tear tactic, but Killian shut her down immediately with a scolding stare. "And green beans."

"You're getting such a good reward tonight after the children are all tucked into bed," Emma whispered in his ear when she leaned in to kiss his cheek.

Fallon began mumbling under her breath while coloring a picture with the crayons and paper on the table. There was something about "no fair" that Emma couldn't resist snickering at.

Dinner passed by uneventfully until the trio of children began their desserts.

The chiming of the bell didn't disturb the family's conversation until it became apparent that there was another person wanting to join the conversation.
"Picked up another kid along the way," Neal observed Roland sitting between Henry and Fallon.

"Doing a favor for my deputy," Emma responded calmly.

"Belle pulled some books from my father's library. She said she would bring them tomorrow," Neal stated.

Killian nodded his thanks, but his hands and attention were occupied by his youngest son.

"Can I talk to you for a moment?" Emma motioned Neal to follow her. Away from the ears of her children, she spoke again, "We aren't telling the children yet there might be a new evil in Storybrooke. Fallon's still having nightmares about the green witch from a year ago. We don't want to alarm them unnecessarily."

"They need to know what's out there. You can't hide this from them," Neal insisted.

"And they will when they need to know," Emma replied, "All we have right now are suspicions. When something happens, we'll tell them."

"What you do for your children is your business, but I have a say in my son's life," Neal stated.

"You have zero say in his life," Emma snapped at him, "It's up to him how much influence you have, and right now he wants none."

"This isn't fair," Neal groaned.

"Maybe not," Emma shrugged, "It must be genetic."

"What does that mean?" Neal snapped at her.

"You cut your father out of your life when you were Henry's age because you didn't like the man he'd become," Emma reminded him, "You crossed realms. Henry's not taken such drastic steps yet."

"It was never my intent to leave my father behind," Neal hissed.

"The past is the past," Emma responded, "You have an opportunity with Henry that I don't want you to waste. He has to see you making an effort."

"How is he going to see any effort I may or may not be making when I'm stuck in the back room of a library with your husband, playing find that spell?" Neal challenged her.

"You'd be surprised," Emma stated. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Granny had arrived with the check. "We'll talk more later. It's getting late, and it's a school night."

"Count on it," Neal nodded. "Night, Henry."

Henry gave a slight, awkward wave in his father's direction before returning his focus to his sister and stepbrother.

Neal sulked away without another word.

"Hey, Mom, can we talk?" Henry asked in the middle of the movie, picked by Roland despite Fallon's extremely vocal protest to watch 'Frozen'.

"Sure," Emma glanced towards her husband and attempted to hand off their son who was asleep in her arms, "Will you take Bradyn?"
"To both of you," Henry amended.

"Sure," Emma replied, "Let me lay Bradyn down first. Meet you on the roof in a few minutes."

Henry nodded and continued to watch the movie for a few minutes.

After making sure Roland and Fallon were okay for a few moments, Killian followed his stepson up to the roof.

"What's up, Henry?" Emma asked.

"Why is Killian spending time in the library with Neal?" Henry asked. It stuck both adults as odd that Henry was using Neal's given name rather than calling him 'Dad' like he'd done in the past.

Emma released a heavy sigh. She should have known her oldest would have picked up on Neal's cue from earlier.

"Remember Ashley and Sean's wedding?" Emma asked, "Killian believes he saw someone in the shadows he shouldn't have, someone from his past."

"It's not Pan, is it?" Henry's voice quivered nervously.

"No," Emma assured him, "His life force was tied to the island. When the island died, so did Pan."

"Then what?" Henry began.

"Did Pan ever talk about any one else on the island?" Killian asked.

"There were others on the island?" Henry asked, "I thought it was just Peter and his lost boys."

"During my time there," Killian began, "There was a trio of children from the Darling family. The children were named..."

"Wendy, John and Michael," Henry replied, "They were in the movie I used to watch...there were two lost boys with the name of John and Michael. I didn't put together that they might be the Darling siblings."

"You never saw a girl?" Emma asked.

"No," Henry shook his head, "Some of the boys talked about one, said to stay away from her and that Pan didn't like anyone talking to her."

"Do you know where she lived...on the island?" Emma prodded gently.

"No," Henry shook his head, "But Peter would leave at odd hours and return later with a weird smile."

"Peter was at the right age," Emma gave the idea a bit of thought before locking eyes with her husband, "Maybe he really was sweet on Wendy."

"Maybe he was under her spell," Killian added.

"Spell, what spell?" Henry asked.

"Your father knew the Darling children when he was young. When he left last year, he went to pay his respects, only they weren't dead. They were still alive and still young. He was manipulated into
telling the children where Killian was living. We believe Wendy could have been a siren. Do you know what that is?" Emma asked.

"Yeah, we read about them in English class," Henry nodded, "I guess I shouldn't be surprised they are real. I mean Captain Hook is my stepfather."

Killian snorted in amusement.

"Killian and Neal are trying to find out as much as they can and if necessary get rid of her," Emma added.

"We don't know yet if Wendy or her brothers are of any danger," Killian added.

"Did you do anything to her which would make her want to get revenge?" Henry asked.

"Aye," Killian nodded, "I took her home against her will. Her family had been searching for years. During one of my voyages, I happened upon them. When their parents found out I knew where they were, they begged and pleaded with me to return them home."

"How did they get back to Neverland?" Henry asked.

"Possibly the same way they got there the first time," Killian responded.

"If you see a young girl in Storybrooke who looks like she doesn't belong, tell me or Killian immediately," Emma advised him.

"I will," Henry's head bobbed.

"I'm sorry we didn't tell you sooner," Emma hugged her son around the shoulders, "We didn't want to alarm you until we knew what we were up against."

"It's okay," Henry assured her, "I won't tell Fallon either. It might scare her."

"You're such a terrific big brother," Emma beamed with pride, "How did I get so lucky?"

"It's the good genes on my mother's side," Henry replied.

"Let's go back to the movie," Emma shook her head in amusement.

When the trio returned to the living room, Fallon climbed into her father's lap and promptly fell asleep.

The knock at the front door signaled the end of movie night. Regina had arrived to take Roland home.

"Are we still on for next weekend?" Regina asked Henry when he went to give her a hug.

"Yeah, we're camping in the woods right?" Henry nodded.

"That's the plan," Regina smiled, "Robin's very excited to take you."

Emma could see the happiness radiate from her one time nemesis, and Emma was thrilled for her. Regina's romance with Robin had made a world of difference when it came to co-parenting with her. Henry still spent a majority of his time at the Jones cottage, but Regina no longer saw herself as the outsider looking in.
"What time should Killian expect Roland on Saturday?" Emma asked.

"What time does the Jolly Roger usually depart for a Saturday cruise?" Regina held Roland by the shoulders.

"Fallon's wakeup call is usually around five, so about an hour after that," Emma stated.

"We'll have him here by six, fed and dressed," Regina vowed.

"Sounds like a plan," Emma nodded.

"Thanks for watching him this evening," Regina smiled.

"No problem," Emma replied, "He's welcome any time."

"Thank you, Sheriff Jones," Roland stated.

"You can call me, Emma," she bit her lip to fight the laugh she wanted let loose, "Good night, Roland."

TBC…
Chapter 8

Disclaimer: Nope, not mine, darn it. I just write for them because it's fun.

"Greetings, Sheriff," Regina gave a smile as Emma came in with Bradyn in her arms, "Hello, Little Bradyn…Not sure how I feel about the town's lawman pulling double duty as a babysitter."

"I'm off duty," Emma bounced Bradyn about in her arms as the little boy cooed and waved, "I promised Robin and David that I'd talk to you about the new…"

"A new cruiser is not in this town's budget," Regina quickly halted the conversation.

"When is it ever going to be in the budget?" Emma gave a resigned sigh, "We need a new car."

"You're welcome to find something in this town's budget to cut," Regina held up a folder containing spreadsheets and various receipts. She was fairly confident Emma couldn't do what she'd been unable to do for several years. "Graham didn't have any trouble with the current cruiser."

"That was five years ago," Emma responded indignantly, "There is five years of additional wear and tear and no budget for even the simplest of things like routine maintenance. David has been playing mechanic, and as much as I love my father, he is most definitely not qualified."

"I'll take your request under advisement, but really the only way I see the police department gaining a new cruiser would be to either eliminate a salary or raise taxes," Regina replied.

"I'm not firing my father, and I'm pretty certain you won't be terminating your new hubby," Emma responded, her voice laced with sarcasm.

"I guess we are at an impasse," Regina responded calmly, "Is there anything else I can do for you?"

"No," Emma shook her head, "Have a good night."

"She is the most frustratingly obtuse woman in this town," Emma complained to her husband as they had dinner with two of their three children, "You'd think I'd asked for her kidney."

"What does obtuse mean?" Fallon stumbled to repeat the word while mostly pushed her meal around her plate.

"Stubborn," Killian chimed in.

"Like Mama," Fallon responded simply as the food on her plate slowly disappeared, whether it was making its way into her mouth was another story. Emma eyed her daughter's plate curiously, wondering if magic was at work to make the meal disappear.

"She has a point," Killian chuckled as Emma's jaw dropped in response to her daughter's observation.

"All I'm asking for is a new vehicle for the town," Emma recovered from her surprise.

"Speaking of new vehicles," Killian chimed in.

"No," Emma cut off his line of thinking just as Regina had done earlier.

Killian said nothing more. He wasn't going to win this argument. It wasn't his vehicle to replace. He
never drove it. He preferred a much more reliable modes of transportation like his ship and the bicycle he'd become proficient in riding.

"All finished, Little Lad?" Killian watched his son spoon his last bite of dinner with his tiny fingers. Bradyn was still chewing when Killian lifted him out of his chair. "I'll get Bradyn cleaned up and ready for bed."

"Looks like it's you and me, Princess," Emma smiled and tapped her daughter's nose as they finished their meal, "You like the Yellow Bug, don't you?"

Fallon shrugged and kept eating. She wasn't too thrilled with the vehicle either, especially recently since it had started breaking down with her inside.

Emma and Fallon brought the dinner dishes into the kitchen to be washed.

"Go get cleaned up, Princess," Emma tapped at her nose, "We can watch a movie until bedtime."

Fallon darted off to get changed into her pajamas in eager anticipation.

"I'm sorry for my suggestions, Love," Killian wrapped his arms around her waist while she proceeded to do the dishes after setting a cleaned up Bradyn in his playpen a few steps away.

"You're concerned about me," Emma sighed, "It's a touching thought, but that car has seen me through a lot of tough times. I'm not ready to be rid of it."

"Not ready to be rid of it or the memories it stirs?" Killian nipped at her earlobe.

"This isn't about Neal," Emma was quick to assure him.

"That vehicle is how the two of you met," he reminded her.

"This isn't about Neal," Emma reiterated, "This is about all the other memories. It was waiting for me when I left prison. It was the one constant in my life for so many years. It brought me to Storybrooke. It brought me back to my family and in a roundabout way, brought me to you."

"For which I am most grateful," he kissed the juncture of her neck and shoulder.

"I guess despite all the happiness in my life, I'm not ready to let go of the past that brought me here," she sighed, "It would be like you giving up the Jolly Roger. If the Jolly Roger was falling apart, would you be able to let it go so easily?"

"You know I wouldn't," he responded, "I would do whatever was in my power to make her right again."

"I know I'm being silly about this. It's just a vehicle, and in this realm we replace them almost as quickly as we replace our shoes," Emma frowned.

"When you're ready," Killian massaged her shoulders while she was finishing up.

"Movie time," Fallon came running into the kitchen in her nightgown.

"How about you and Papa pick the movie while I finish up," Emma suggested, "I'll be there in a few moments. I'll bring Bradyn in with me."

Killian gently tilted her head to the side so he could capture her lips to signal the end of their minor disagreement while Fallon tried to pull him into the living room. Killian resisted for a few moments.
"We can make up more after the children are in bed," Emma assured him with a smile. Killian nodded and allowed his daughter to pull him away.

After drying the last of the dishes, Emma lifted Bradyn into her arms and brought them into the living room where the movie was being cued up. Like usual, Killian was struggling with the modern piece of electronics, so Fallon was the one pushing all the buttons.

"She's only three and more technologically savvy than you'll ever be," Emma curled up with Bradyn in her lap. The little boy's eye were already heavy, and he would be asleep in no time at all. "What are we watching?"

"Snow White," Fallon climbed onto the sofa with the remote in her hands and pushed the buttons to start the movie.

"You sure like Grammy's movie," Emma snickered as Fallon cuddled up with her father as the story started. Killian had been more protective of his daughter since the business with Wendy first started, and the little girl soaked up the attention like a sponge.

"The dwarves are funny," Fallon giggled.

As the movie played along, Emma spotted Fallon's eyes growing heavier and heavier until she was asleep. Bradyn had been out since the opening credits. Emma reached over to tap Killian's shoulder to draw his attention to the sleeping princess in his arms.

Killian lifted Fallon into his arms and brought her to bed. Emma did the same with Bradyn. They met in their bedroom.

"Come on, Princess, hop in," Emma urged her daughter into the backseat of her vehicle, "We need groceries before Papa gets home with Bradyn."

"No," Fallon refused her mother's request.

"This isn't a debate," Emma responded, "Hop in."

"No," Fallon refused for a second time.

Emma released a frustrated sigh and knelt before her daughter, "Why not?"

"No," was the only response Fallon would give.

"How else are we supposed to get groceries?" Emma tried to rationalize things with her stubborn three year old.

Fallon didn't care. She wasn't getting into the vehicle.

"Having some trouble, Sister?" Leroy happened upon the pair.

"She won't get in the car," Emma explained her frustrations.

"That doesn't sound like Princess Fallon," Leroy tried to offer some assistance to Emma, "A princess always does as she's told by her parents."

"No," Fallon held firm.

"Clearly she hasn't taken to royal training," Emma sighed, "We need groceries."
"I can watch her," Leroy offered, "Groceries can't take too long."

"Are you sure?" Emma winced at the suggestion, "She's a handful when she's in a good mood."

"We'll be fine, right, Princess Fallon?" Leroy replied.

"Yep," Fallon nodded. She would have agreed to nearly anything if it meant she didn't have to get into her mother's vehicle.

"Okay," Emma responded hesitantly, "I'll be gone for an hour at most. If anything happens, you can call my cell."

"Bye, Mama," Fallon waved at her mother and then grasped Leroy's hand to bring him into the cottage where she intended to have a tea party.

Emma got into her vehicle and drove off.

Killian arrived with Bradyn half way through the tea party in which Fallon had gotten Leroy to wear some of the more embarrassing accessories she had in her toy chest. Leroy blushed crimson. Killian tried his hardest not to laugh while lowering Bradyn into his playpen. "Been there, Mate…How did this tea party come about?"

"The sheriff needed groceries and the princess here wouldn't go for a ride in Emma's carriage," Leroy explained, "I happened upon them and offered to look after the girl. The princess wanted a tea party, so we had one."

"And the…accessories?" Killian waved towards the feather boa, flowered hat and sparkly bangles.

"Aren't they pretty?" Fallon chimed in as she ran over and extended her arms to her father so she could give him a proper greeting. "Hi, Papa."

"Hello, Little Love," Killian accepted the repetitive kisses to his cheeks she was giving him, "Thank you for your assistance. I'll buy you a pint next time we see you at Granny's."

"Appreciate that," Leroy quickly removed his accessories on his way to the door, depositing them into Fallon's tiny hands.


"Didn't want to go shopping with your mum?" Killian bounced Fallon to get her attention.

Fallon shook her head and hugged him around the neck. Just as he was about to close the door he heard the screeching of tires not too far away and then a loud bang. Killian looked out the door to see yellow metal wrapped around a light post.

"Emma," Killian gasped as he set Fallon on her feet, "Stay here, Little Love."

Killian took off running towards the wreckage as smoke began billowing from the engine. Emma was conscious but disoriented.

"Emma, Love, are you okay?" Killian tried to pry open the door with no luck.

"I…I think so," Emma stammered out before she took inventory.

"Sheriff Swan, are you alright?" Leroy came running towards them, having heard the noise on his walk back to town.
"Leroy, call for help," Killian noticed the phone in the one time dwarf's pocket. The door wouldn't budge. Emma's head rolled forward. Killian quickly reached in and stabilized her neck. "Stay with me, Love."

Emma came back into consciousness at his urging.

Soon the fire truck rolled onto the scene, and they were able to get Emma out of the vehicle and onto a stretcher just as David and Robin rolled onto the scene in the police cruiser.

"What happened?" David asked while Emma was being loaded into the ambulance.

"I heard tires screech and then a loud bang. I ran out and saw Emma's vehicle wrapped around this pole," Killian explained.

"No questions," the paramedic, Moe, stated, "We need to get the sheriff to the hospital."

"Fallon and Bradyn are in the cottage," Killian told his father-in-law before stepping into ambulance.

"They'll be well looked after," David closed the ambulance doors and pounded on them to let the driver know he could take off.

"Where's Papa?" Fallon asked when David came into the cottage where Fallon was drawing at her little table.

"He had to take Mama to the hospital because she got an ouchie," David picked her up.

Bradyn picked that moment to cry out. Robin crossed the room and lifted him out of his playpen, bouncing around to calm him, putting the lessons he'd learned with raising Roland to good use.

"Mama be okay?" Fallon's head came to rest against David's shoulder when Mary Margaret burst into the cottage nervously, "Leo and I were driving down the street and saw Emma's car is wrapped around a pole."

"That's to be determined," David responded, "They were loading Emma into the ambulance when Robin and I came in. They needed someone to watch the children."

"It's okay, Bradyn," Mary Margaret's motherly instinct kicked in, and she took a crying Bradyn into her arms and tried her hand at soothing him. "I'm sure Mama is going to be just fine."

"Robin, will you stay with Mary Margaret and the children?" David asked, "I'll go to the hospital and get updates."

"Yes," Robin took Fallon from David's arms.

"Mama will be just fine," David assured his granddaughter a second time before he kissed her cheek and then took off.

TBC…
Chapter 9

Disclaimer: Nope, not mine, darn it. I just write for them because it's fun.

Killian was pacing in the waiting room when David came running through the emergency doors.

"How is she?" David asked of his son-in-law.

"She was talking nonsense on the ride over," Killian responded, "Moe said she likely has a concussion, whatever that is, and some bumps and bruises, maybe a fractured wrist. She's in with Doc right now."

"Any ideas what happened?" David asked.

"I didn't see anything," Killian responded, "I only heard the screeching tires and the loud bang. I didn't know it was Emma until I saw the wreckage. I've been trying to get her to replace that vehicle for months."

"She can't ignore you now," David responded, "It looks totaled."

"Totaled how?" Killian frowned in confusion.

"Irreparable," David amended.

"Bloody realm's slang," Killian muttered under his breath while running his fingers through his hair. He usually had a good sense of humor about such things, but not with his wife injured.

It took awhile, longer than Killian's frazzled nerves could handle for Doc to come out with news.

"She's going to be fine," Doc assured the pair, "Mild concussion, lots of bumps and bruises, a sprained wrist. She's going to be sore for a few days, but she can go home right now so long as someone is around to keep an eye on her and make sure when she sleeps she's woken every few hours."

"Aye," Killian nodded, "May I see her?"

"Yes, I'll take you to her room," Doc showed Killian and David the way.

Emma's eyes were closed when the pair entered, but she must have sensed their presence as her eyes opened just when Killian bent down to kiss her forehead.

"How are you feeling, Love?" Killian took her hand and brought it to his lips.

"A little foggy," Emma admitted, "How's my car?"

"It's totaled," David chimed in.

"I figured," Emma sighed heavily, "I don't know what happened. I was driving back from the store, and I just lost control. It started to spin and then somehow hit the pole head on."

"The important thing is you are still intact," Killian's eyes were laced with concern.

"Doc says you can go home right now," David stated.
"But only if you are feeling up to it," Killian amended, "We can stay the night if you need it."

"No," Emma shook her head slowly, "I want to go home."

"I will help you dress," Killian saw the pair of hospital scrubs which had been left for Emma as her clothes had been damaged in the wreck.

"I'll give you some privacy," David turned to follow Doc out of the room.

Killian used the knowledge that they were alone to his advantage as he descended upon her lips in the instant the door was closed. The relief that she was going to be perfectly fine flowed from his lips into hers.

"I'm not complaining, but what was that for?" Emma smiled against his lips.

"Thank the gods you are alright," Killian whispered against her lips.

"You get your wish," Emma frowned when he pulled away, "I need to replace my vehicle."

"That's unimportant right now," Killian reached for the cloth pants to help her into them.

"Thank heavens Fallon refused to get in the vehicle earlier," Emma responded, "She should have been in the car with me. She could have been hurt too."

"I think we owe Leroy much more than a pint for looking after her," Killian agreed.

"I'm sorry," Emma's eyes began to tear, "I should have listened to you. I could have seriously injured our children with my arrogance."

"You're blaming yourself for things which didn't happen," Killian brought a finger to her lips to silence her unneeded apology, "The children are safe at home with their grandmother and this town's second deputy. You need to focus on yourself."

"I'm a mom, Killian…a mom and a wife. I'm never focused on myself. I'm focused on my children and my husband nearly one hundred percent of every day," she replied.

"If you're putting together a coherent sentence, it's time to exit this hospital," Killian replied when she was dressed and ready to leave.

"My boots are scuffed," Emma looked at her feet while he was bent over tying her boots.

"You have a birthday soon," Killian reminded her, "Perhaps the birthday fairy will bring you a new pair."

"There is no birthday fairy…is there?" Emma gave him a befuddled look while he helped her off the bed. In her cloudy state, he probably could have convinced her there was indeed a birthday fairy.

"Let's go, Love," Killian urged her out of the room.

"Ready to go?" David inquired from the nurses' station where he'd been working on his police report for the accident, "I got your vehicle towed to the garage. Michael Tillman will be taking a look at it to see what malfunctioned."

Emma gave a slight nod when David ushered them towards the cruiser out front.

"Mama," Fallon ran towards her mother the moment the front door opened.
"Easy, Princess," David stepped in and caught Fallon before she could do any further damage to Emma's already weary body. The soreness had begun to set in almost as soon as they left the hospital. "Mama is super sore."

"Should you be out of the hospital?" the mother in Mary Margaret came out as Emma slowly took a seat on the sofa.

"Lots of bruises, a sprained wrist and a foggy head," Emma explained, "Wasn't much they could do for me."

Fallon wiggled out of her grandfather's arms so she could sit next to her mother, wanting to cuddle up in her arms. Killian went to hold the little girl back, but Emma waved him off. She wanted to cuddle up with her daughter too.

"Careful with Mama," Killian urged Fallon when she climbed onto the sofa and brought her arms around Emma's neck, giving her the softest of hugs.

"I love my little princess," Emma kissed Fallon's cheek and returned the hug, trying to hide the wince of pain.

"Ouchie, Mama?" Fallon's crystal clear blue eyes pierced her mother's.

"Just a bit, but hugging you is worth it," Emma replied.

Fallon hugged her mother a second time and then planted herself right next to her. "I'm hungry."

"Can't make dinner tonight, Peanut," Emma frowned, "The groceries were in the back seat."

"We'll call in an order at Granny's," Mary Margaret suggested, "Problem solved."

"Roni and cheese," Fallon cheered.

Emma laughed softly and kissed the top of Fallon's head. As her life flashed before her eyes earlier, her greatest fear was that her children would grow up as she had without their mother. Relief washed through her as Fallon giggled.

"Fallon, how about you, Leo and I go to the store to get groceries for Mama and then swing by Granny's to get dinner," Mary Margaret suggested, "I think Mama needs a bit of rest."

"Okay," Fallon's head bobbed.

"Do you want us to take Bradyn too?" Mary Margaret turned towards Killian. Killian's eyes went to the playpen where his son was sound asleep.

"No," Killian's head shook slightly from side to side.

"We'll be back soon," Mary Margaret extended her hand to Fallon and looked towards her husband, "Are you coming with us?"

"I'll keep an eye on Bradyn and Emma," David shook off Mary Margaret's suggestion.

"Good idea," Mary Margaret smile at how protective her husband was being of their daughter, even though she was fully grown with a family of her own, "We'll be back in a bit."

"Take her up to rest," David suggested to Killian with a motion towards Emma after Mary Margaret left, "Bradyn and I are fine. We'll do some bonding. You need your rest."
"I want to argue, but everything hurts too much," Emma rose to her feet slowly.

"Come, Love," Killian pulled at her hand lightly, "I'll tuck you in."

"Is that all?" Emma whined slightly.

"There are some things a father just shouldn't know," David bent down to lift Bradyn into his arms as Killian and Emma ascended the staircase to their bedroom.

"Lay down," Killian pulled the bedcovers down and urged Emma into bed after helping her change into her pajamas.

"Everything hurts," Emma groaned while slowly getting herself into a horizontal position.

"That's what happens when your car merges with a light pole," Killian brushed the hair away from her face, "You're going to be laid up for a few days. Never fear, for I will happily wait on you for as long as needed."

"You'll take care of my every need?" she inquired.

"Every single one of them," he punctuated his statement with kisses across her face with each word.

"Let's test that theory," she gave him a curious little smirk and tapped at her lips.

Killian gave into her silent request without a second thought before joining her on the bed, tucking into her side when she fell asleep. He was relieved she would be on the mend in a few days, but he knew this was only the start. He didn't need to be told that Emma's vehicle had been tampered with. Yes, it had been on the fritz for several months, but the timing was no coincidence.

"Papa," Fallon make a production out of tiptoeing up the staircase after returning from shopping with Mary Margaret. Max was nipping at her heels, "Mama go night-night?"

"Aye, Mama is tired," Killian lifted her into his lap while Max curled up next to Emma's feet.

"I nap too?" Fallon asked.

"Only if you want to," Killian tweaked her nose.

Mary Margaret came up the stairs to see what had been taking everyone so long. She'd sent Fallon up to retrieve her parents for dinner. Fallon had clearly become sidetracked as was typical for her.

"Emma should sleep," Killian spoke softly as the words from Doc repeated in his head that she needed to be woken every few hours, "For a little while anyway."

"Come on, Princess," Mary Margaret extended her hand, "Let Mama sleep. We'll feed that tiny belly of yours."

Fallon's head bobbed, and she followed her grandmother down the stairs.

Killian kissed Emma's forehead and with a whispered breath, made a vow to protect Emma and their family by any means necessary. He motioned Max to follow, but the dog refused to budge. Always protective of the family, he was also mindful of when one of them was sick or injured and refused to leave their side.

"Fine," Killian threw up his hands in resignation, "Keep watch."
Emma woke the next morning and released a deep groan of pain. Every muscle in her body hurt. Even blinking caused her pain. Her stirring alerted her husband, who had been sitting in the armchair in the corner with a good book while keeping watch over his wife.

"Good morning, Love," Killian bent down and kissed her cheek, "Sleep well?"

"An annoying man kept waking me every three hours for no other reason than to wake me," Emma groaned, "The answer is no."

"Following doctor's orders," Killian set his book on the night table and sat next to her on the bed.

"Next time think of a better reason to wake me," she groaned while trying to sit upright.

Killian wagged a suggestive eyebrow in her direction.

"Yes, that's exactly what I meant," Emma smirked briefly while Killian tucked pillows behind her back to keep her upright.

"Suggestion noted," he chuckled.

"Every muscle hurts," she moaned.

"I imagine it does," he nodded.

Emma paused for a few moments when something in their home struck her as odd. "It's so quiet...too quiet. Where's Fallon?"

"Ruby came by to take her and Bradyn to the park," Killian explained, "Sounds like the town has chipped in to entertain our offspring so the sheriff could convalesce in peace."

As the words left his mouth, the doorbell rang.

"Rest," Killian pushed on her shoulder, "I'll be tending to you today. You won't be flexing a muscle."

"Good because it really hurts when I do," Emma pulled the covers up to her chin and relaxed into her bed. "I could get used to this pampering."

After a few moments, Emma heard two familiar male voices climbing the stairs to her bedroom. Both Robin and David stood before her with nervous expressions. Thankfully she was fully clothed in her comfiest flannel pajamas. There weren't many mornings where that was the case.

"You figured out what caused the accident," Emma concluded immediately, "Operator error?"

"Your steering column and brakes were both tampered with," David replied, "I saw the damage myself. Michael said the damage had to have been done since the last time you brought in your vehicle for servicing, but both were rigged to fail gradually."

"I guess I noticed it had been steering hard and breaking was a little suspect, but the car is old. I figured that's just what happens to an older vehicle," Emma shrugged.

"You have insurance, right?" David asked.

"Yeah," Emma responded, "Don't know how much it will help with replacement costs, but something is better than nothing."
"We're talking sabotage," Killian chimed in, "Could we please focus on who would be doing this to my wife?"

"It's a short list, and most of them we can cross off," David replied, "You and Regina have buried the hatchet. You and Neal...he's still in love with you, so I don't think he'd risk it. You and Gold have never really been at odds."

"This could be revenge against me," Killian spoke softly, "Best way to hurt me is to hurt my family, my wife and children."

"That brings us back to Neal and Gold," David replied, "I don't think either of them would risk it. Neal has to answer to Henry, and Gold has to answer to Neal. It would be better for them to target you directly, and it would be a more magical attack."

"Dad's right," Emma nodded, "Tampering with my car isn't Gold's style. Killian, I think it's time the town knows what you saw. If this was the Darling children, this isn't going to be their only attempt at revenge."

"You just rest. Robin and I will handle things at the station until you're back on your feet."

"I'm not made of glass," Emma rolled her eyes, "I'll be fine by tomorrow."

"No rush," David responded, "Take a few days either way."

Emma huffed in response as David and Robin left. She was being treated like a two year old, and she wasn't appreciative.

TBC…
Chapter 10

Disclaimer: Nope, not mine, darn it. I just write for them because it's fun.

Killian was sitting on the sofa in the living room, reading a book. He could hear his wife reading a princess story to Fallon. The little girl was asking all sorts of questions, much to Emma's apparent amusement as laughter regularly filtered out of the bedroom. He glanced up when he heard the soft click on the bedroom door closing.

"Is Fallon asleep?" Killian asked when Emma took a seat on the sofa next to him, her fingers running through the hair at the nape of his neck rhythmically.

"She wouldn't have let me out of her sight if she wasn't," Emma smiled.

"She has been her mum's shadow since we came home from the hospital," Killian set his book aside to focus all his attention on his wife. He lifted her legs into his lap and began gently massaging her calves. "How are you feeling?"

"Sore," Emma admitted, "Nothing like a few days ago, but still not up to snuff."

"You and your expressions," Killian chuckled, "You say such things to torture me."

"It used to be more fun when you'd get all flustered and annoyed," she smirked.

Killian continued to chuckle while manipulating the muscles of her legs, much to Emma's pleasure.

"If you want to take out the Jolly Roger, I think I'm okay to stay home with the kids without your supervision," Emma offered.

"I don't think Fallon would let me go sailing without her," he replied.

"Good point," Emma grasped one of his hands and tangled her fingers with his, "She's a Jones through and through."

"Aye, she certainly is," he agreed.

"Killian," Emma batted her lashes.

Killian recognized immediately she was going to ask for something which might displease him.

"I want to see my vehicle," she swallowed hard.

"For what purpose, Love?" he brought their joined hand to his lips and kissed the inside of her palm.

"Maybe to say goodbye," Emma frowned, "We've been through a lot together."

"It's going to upset you," Killian stated.

"I know," she nodded, "I still want to do it."

"We can visit Tillman's garage tomorrow," he agreed.

"Thank you," she touched his chin, drawing him close so she could kiss him. "Henry's at Regina's, and Fallon and Bradyn are asleep."
"Sounds like an invitation to retire to the bedroom," he chuckled, "Are you sure your weary body can handle such an endeavor?"

"Perhaps if you're gentle," she smiled suggestively.

"Gentle you say," Killian rose to his feet and lifted her into his arms. It was always a trick navigating the circular staircase with her in his arms, but it was a challenge he was up for, especially with prize he earned at the end.

"Wake up, Mama," Fallon shook her mother awake in the early morning hours.

"My human alarm clock," Emma turned slowly onto her back to see her daughter, "You certainly are prompt."

"Want pancakes," Fallon stated.

"And predictable...you'd better tell Papa," Emma could see her husband still sound asleep at her side, "Unless you want to eat my pancakes."

Fallon turned and immediately pounced on her father, "Wake up, Papa!"

Killian released a good-natured groan. "What is it Henry says Fallon needs?"

"A snooze button," Emma laughed and then groaned. She'd found over the past few days of recovery that her muscles were the most sore first thing in the morning.

"Ouchie, Mama?" Fallon turned towards her mother with a frown.

"Just a bit," Emma nodded.

Fallon leaned over and kissed Emma's cheek. "All better?"

"Much better," Emma hugged her daughter.

"Pancakes," Fallon demanded in her most charming way.

"We'll be right down, Little Love," Killian told her.

Fallon rolled over her mother and off the bed. She ran down the stairs and waited...as patiently as she could.

"Good morning, Love," Killian turned onto his side and pressed his lips to hers. "How are you feeling?"

"Sore...still," Emma frowned.

"It's only been a few days," Killian reminded her while getting out of bed to dress.

"I'm not a patient person," Emma replied.

"I'm well aware," he bent down to peck at her lips. "Join us when your dressed, Love."

"I'm going to take a shower to warm up these muscles then I'll join you," she stated.

"We'll be waiting," he smiled.

"With coffee?" she asked hopefully.
"Of course," he pressed one more kiss to her lips.

Emma bypassed donning a robe while she sauntered towards the master bathroom with an extra flare of her hips, toying with him because she knew he couldn't join her.

"Bloody minx," he growled.

Emma tossed him a flirty wink before closing the bathroom door. He waited until he heard the shower running before he made his way down to take care of his daughter's pancake craving.

Fallon was halfway up the stairs to retrieve her father for pancakes.

"Come, Little Love," Killian lifted Fallon into his arms and tossed her over his shoulder. Fallon giggled the entire way to the kitchen where she helped her father in any way she could to make her favorite breakfast.

Emma was greeted by a waiting cup of coffee when she made her way downstairs after a soothing shower.

"Where's your brother, Fallon?" Emma asked when Fallon darted over and hugged her legs while Emma took her first sip of the warm and bitter liquid.

"I don't know," Fallon shrugged.

"I think we should find him, don't you?" Emma snickered.

Fallon responded with a second shrug and then darted back into the kitchen to check on her father's progress.

Emma made her way into the nursery. She was greeted by a wide-aweak son who gave a healthy stretch before reaching for his mother.

"You are such a content little thing," Emma lifted Bradyn into her arms. She released a slight groan as her muscles protested under the weight of her son, but she was determined. She hadn't had any snuggle time with her son since her accident. She refused to be denied any longer. Emma brought Bradyn into the living room and sat with him against her chest while she relaxed on the sofa. Max hopped up next to her and put his head into her lap.

"You three look comfortable," Killian noted the position he found his wife, son and family dog in. Brady had fallen asleep. "Are you going to join Fallon and I for breakfast?"

"Maybe in a bit," Emma kissed her son's forehead, "I'm enjoying cuddle time too much to move."

"I'll keep your breakfast warm," Killian assured her.

Fallon chatted away while she consumed her pancakes floating in syrup.

Once the sugar rush kicked in, Fallon was practically spinning circles around the house. Usually she was on her way to the Jolly Roger, but with Emma's injuries there was no outlet for her energy.

"How about we take you to the park and work off those pancakes?" Emma tapped Fallon's nose when she stopped just long enough to pet her beloved pup.

"Yes, yes, yes," Fallon repeated while bobbing her head up and down like it was on a spring.

"Go get your hairbrush, so I can comb out those tangles first," Emma tugged on a strand of her
Fallon called out for her puppy to follow and then bolted for her bedroom to change clothes and dig out her hairbrush. With her mother out of commission for a few days, her father had been on hair detail, and Fallon didn't appreciate the tug of war Killian played with her hair follicles and hid the brush to avoid further torment.

Killian claimed Bradyn from his wife once Fallon returned. Fallon managed to sit still long enough for Emma to comb her hair into pigtails, the little girl's favorite hairstyle.

"Let's go, Mama," Fallon tugged on Emma's non-braced hand.

"Hold on, Princess," Emma stated, "Papa and I have to get dressed and get Bradyn read for the day."

Fallon huffed in response, crossed her arms in front of her chest and plopped herself down on the floor with her legs crossed, in what Killian and Emma had coined her 'big sister pout' as she only pulled this routine when something regarding her brother interfered with her fun.

Emma and Killian did their best to ignore the behavior. They set about getting themselves ready for the day.

"Are you sure you want to see your vessel today?" Killian buttoned up his checkered cobalt blue flannel shirt while watching Emma brush her hair.

"I have some personal effects I want to claim," Emma nodded.

"I can take Fallon and Bradyn to the park if you want to do this alone," he offered.

"God, I love you," Emma set aside the hairbrush and advanced towards him, her arms wrapping around his shoulders, "You offering means the world to me. The car and I have this history. It almost feels like a breakup."

"Whatever you need from me, Love," Killian kissed her temple.

"I need you at my side, holding my hand," she rested her head against his chest, "Maybe Dad can watch Fallon and Bradyn for a bit. They don't need those images in their heads."

"Aye," he agreed.

Their tender moment was interrupted by their daughter's impatient screech for their attention. Even then they stayed in each other's arms for a few moments more.

"Even in forty degree weather, she has unlimited amounts of energy," Emma laughed to herself while watching her daughter, youngest son and husband wear themselves out at the playground. There were a few other young children and parents who had ventured out in the morning hours. Though Fallon interacted with them, she was more interested in showing off for her parents. Fallon called out at regular intervals to have her parents watch her antics.

"Hey, Sheriff," Ashley took a seat next to Emma while her daughter ran off to play, "I heard about your accident. How are you feeling?"

"Sore," Emma admitted, "I was lucky though. It could have been much worse."

"I bet that husband of yours is taking great care of you," Ashley smiled.

"He is," Emma glanced towards her husband, who happened to be making a fool of himself by
sliding down the slide with Bradyn in his lap. The little boy laughed his way down. "How's married life treating the newlyweds?"

"We're doing well," Ashley laughed, "Honestly it hasn't felt much different than before the ceremony. We were a family before the ceremony. I guess it just formalized what we already had. Was it any different for you?"

"Yeah," Emma nodded, "I guess our relationship was a bit different from yours. We weren't really that family until we got married and had Fallon."

"Sean and I agreed we wouldn't have more children until we were married, but now that we are, it almost feels like we waited too long. Alexandra is almost five already. She's so used to having all of our attention," Ashley spun her rings around her finger.

"We had those fears with Fallon, and she was barely three," Emma admitted, "Yes, she craves our attention, and when she doesn't get it when she wants it, it can be an issue, but if we'd never had Bradyn, our family would have felt incomplete."

"Is it complete now?" Ashley asked.

"We're not sure yet," Emma replied, "We have time. Bradyn just hit six months."

"We've been hearing rumblings of trouble in town," Ashley lowered her voice, "How can we help?"

"We're still figuring it out ourselves," Emma admitted, "When we know more, we'll let you know. Until then, stay vigilant."

"Will do," she nodded. "What are you going to do about your car?"

"Haven't given it much thought as of yet," Emma admitted, "Eventually I'll have to replace it. Fortunately my parents have two cars and have already offered to let us use one whenever we need, and it's only a short walk to their cottage. I suppose eventually I'll have to venture out of Storybrooke to find a new one."

"Mama, watch me," Fallon called out from the playground.

Emma dutifully gave her daughter her full attention. Fallon slid down the slide headfirst complete with a belly flop on the ground at the end. Emma held her breath, thinking Fallon might have injured herself, but Fallon picked herself up, dusted the dirt off her clothes, giggled, waved at her mother and then ran back up to the top of the jungle gym to start the process over again.

"She's fearless, just like her mother," Ashley noted.

"I wouldn't go that far," Emma snorted, "Fallon's adventurous streak is far superior to mine."

"Watch, Mama," Fallon called out again when it was her turn again. Fallon went down a second time, feet first this time. She somehow managed to end up taking a hard fall on her rump and decided she'd had her fill of the slide. She ran over to the swings and starting kicking her feet back and forth in an effort to start the movements.

"Duty calls," Emma gave an apologetic smile to Ashley.

"Feel better, Sheriff," Ashley nodded.

"One of these days we're going to teach you how to swing on your own, Princess," Emma pulled her
daughter's swing back so she'd start swinging properly.

"No," Fallon shook her head from side to side, "I like when you push."

"I like it too," Emma pushed Fallon a bit so she'd swing higher.

Fallon squealed with delight with every swing, asking to fly higher and higher. Killian and Bradyn joined them after a few moments.

"Bradyn's tired," Emma observed her son's heavy eyes.

"Aye," Killian nodded.

Emma stopped Fallon's swing after a few minutes more.

"How about we go see what Poppy is doing at the station?" Emma suggested, knowing if she could make it sound like fun that Fallon would be all for it. She wasn't surprised when the trick worked like a charm.

"Okay, Mama," Fallon hopped off the swing and took her mother's hand, pulling her along as she made her way to the station. She burst into the station with her usual sunshine and exuberance. "Hi, Poppy!"

"There's my favorite granddaughter," David picked her up in a hug. "Are you taking good care of your mama for me?"

"Yep," Fallon's head bobbed.

David sat with Fallon balanced comfortably on his knee before turning to address the rest of the family. "How are you feeling, Emma?"

"Still sore," Emma admitted. "First thing in the morning is the worse, when the muscles are stiff from sleep. I finally got some cuddle time with the handsome little man though."

"Thank you, Love," Killian gave her a flirtatious grin, "Though I wouldn't exactly call it cuddle time."

"I meant with Bradyn, Hook," Emma scowled at him.

"Papa is being silly," Fallon told her grandfather.

"Yes, he is," David sent a scowl of his own towards his son-in-law.

"Dad, can you keep an eye on your grandchildren for a bit?" Emma asked, "Killian and I have something we need to do. It shouldn't take long."

"Go ahead," David reached into his desk to pull out some crayons and paper to entertain Fallon, "We can have ourselves all sorts of fun. Won't we, Fallon?"

"Yep," Fallon climbed into her mother's chair and began coloring.

David claimed his grandson before shooing his daughter and son-in-law away.

"Are you ready for this, Love?" Killian asked on the short walk from the car garage from the station.

"Not really," Emma shook her head, "But it's something I need to do."
"Greetings, Sheriff, Captain Jones," Michael greeted them outside his shop, "Is there something I can do for you?"

"Do you still have my vehicle?" Emma asked.

"It's out back," Michael nodded, "I was going to stop by in a few days. I boxed up your personal effects."

"I'd like to take a look at the damage for myself," Emma stated.

"Sure thing, Sheriff," Michael fidgeted.

"And there is no hope of salvaging it?" Emma asked.

"Not exactly cost effective, but I suppose a possibility," Michael wiped a bit of sweat from his brow, "With the engine in the rear of the vehicle, it may still function after a bit of repair, but I've already reported to the insurance company that it's a total loss."

"No sense putting it off," Emma frowned.

Killian gave her a squeeze and guided her in direction of the backyard lot.

Emma took a deep breath at the gate before pushing her way through. She was visibly startled by what she saw. The front end of the vehicle had completely folded like an accordion upon impact. It became immediately apparent that Emma was lucky to have survived with as few injuries as she had sustained.

"Are you okay, Love?" Killian felt Emma's hesitation in their joined hands.

Emma swallowed a lump in her throat and then advanced towards the vehicle. A rogue tear escaped when her hand ran along the twisted yellow metal.

"Swan," Killian prompted her to say something.

"I'm okay," Emma swallowed again.

"It's okay not to be," he caressed her cheek.

"It's just a car," tears began to fall, "It's an inanimate object. It's silly to be feeling this way."

"As you said it's been with you for many a year. It was there for you when you left prison. It brought you to Storybrooke and to your family..."

"It brought me to happiness," Emma allowed herself to be engulfed in his arms, "It brought me to you."

Killian held her, allowing her to crumble in his arms.

Once Emma regained a hold on her emotions, Michael approached. "I'll hold the car here until you decide what you want to do with it."

"Thank you," Emma dried her eyes. "You said you had the box of my belongings."

"It's in my office," Michael guided them back inside.

Emma rifled through the belongings. "There's a picture of Henry missing. It was above the visor."
"I didn't think to look there," Michael admitted.

"I'll get it, Love," Killian responded.

"No, I'll get it. There might be something else I remember," Emma left the office. She quickly found the picture. She felt herself choking up. She could sense Killian's approach before she heard him. "I couldn't hold Henry when I gave birth to him. I knew if I held him I couldn't give him up, which I knew would give him his best chance for a good upbringing, but I kept a picture taken by the prison nurse. I tucked it in the visor so it would be there I was ready to look at it. Today is the first day I looked."

"May I, Love?" Killian held out his hand for the picture.

"He was a cute baby, wasn't he?" Emma handed him the picture.

"Aye, looks a lot like Bradyn when he was first born," Killian noted.

"Yeah," Emma agreed.

Killian handed back the picture. Emma pocketed it and rifled through all the nooks and crannies of her vehicle to find any belonging, which might have been overlooked.

"Anything else, Love?" Killian asked.

"I think that's it," Emma sighed.

They returned to Michael's office to gather the rest of her belongings.

"We'll let you know what to do with the vehicle after we hear from the insurance agency," Emma told the mechanic.

"Take your time," he assured her, "It isn't going anywhere."

Emma and Killian left the garage. Killian could see Emma needed a few minutes to collect herself before returning to the station to collect their offspring.

"How about a few minutes aboard the Roger?" Killian guided her towards the marina, "I've been meaning to show you something onboard."

"Is this some cheesy suggestive comment meant to cheer me up?" Emma fought to suppress a smile. She really wasn't in the mood for a laugh.

"Is it working?" he gave her his Cheshire grin.

"Try a bit more," she started the trek up the gangplank to the deck.

Killian guided her down to the Captain's quarters so she could vent in any way she needed.

"This is so stupid," Emma pushed tears out of her eyes, "It's a stupid car. We've been talking about replacing it for months."

"Emma, you never forget your first love," Killian rolled up his right sleeve to reveal the tattoo he'd gotten in Milah's honor, "It's okay to mourn that. I mourned for centuries."

"This isn't about Neal. I made my peace with what happened long ago," Emma insisted.
"I know you love me, Emma," Killian caressed her face, "Just as you know I love you despite the piece of my heart which will always belong to Milah."

"This isn't about Neal," Emma repeated, "This is about my past. I had twenty-eight years of a miserable existence, with only a few moments of happiness sprinkled in. The time I spent with Neal reminded me that I wasn't a lost cause. I could find happiness. I just needed to know where to look. It took several years, but I finally found it here in Storybrooke with my parents and son...and then with you and our children."

"The pain made us who we are," he brushed a strand of hair behind her ears, "I know the appeal in hanging on to it, to embrace it even, but life is infinitely more pleasurable when I found a way to let go of the pain. I was able to replace it with happiness."

"How did you let it go?" Emma tugged at his necklace.

"Remember the ring I wore around my neck...the one Milah gave me?" he asked.

"Her first bit of pirate bootie," Emma nodded.

"It was symbolic when I threw it overboard, but it helped," he replied.

"I can't exactly throw my car into the ocean," Emma stated.

"You'll find what works for you," he kissed her forehead, "Ready to return to our offspring or should I show what is aboard my ship?"

"Rain check?" Emma snorted, "I'm feeling like a burger at Granny's, and I'm sure a certain little brunette we're both enamored with is craving some roni and cheese."

"Aye," he nodded, "If you ever want to talk..."

"I know exactly where to find you," she hugged him. "I love you, Killian."

"And I you, my beautiful Swan."

TBC…
Chapter 11

Disclaimer: Nope, not mine, darn it. I just write because it's fun.

Reluctantly Emma took several more days to heal. The impact of the crash took more of a toll on her body than she cared to admit. Killian waited on her hand and foot. She hadn't needed to lift a finger. Fallon and Bradyn enjoyed having Emma home for an extended period. Naptime involved all three curled up on the king bed in Emma and Killian's bedroom as the trio slept soundly. Fallon wanted to be near her mother at all times and offered no protest to taking a nap for nearly a week straight.

Killian hovered. The knowledge someone had deliberately tampered with his wife's vehicle twisted him into knots he hadn't felt since their last tangle with evil, over a year ago. He had been virtually helpless against the frozen witch, and it still irritated him that he hadn't been able to protect his family.

"You're quiet," Emma wrapped her arms around his waist while he did dishes after their dinner. "You okay, Pirate?"

Killian chuckled as he dried his hands and turned towards her.

"I've just enjoyed watching you with our children," he entangled his fingers in her hair and pressed his lips against hers.

"They are mighty cute," Emma smirked.

"Aye, because of their mother," he replied, "Ready for your return to duty in a few days?"

"I suppose," Emma nodded with reluctance, "I've rather liked being home with the children on a daily basis. Could you charge more for your services so I could be a stay at home mom?"

"I think I receive about all I'm going to get for my services," he laughed, "I could go back to pirating."

"No," she shut down his line of thought immediately, "I guess I'll have to go back to sheriff-ing."

"And you look very sexy carrying your badge and weapon," Killian whispered in her ear. Bradyn cried out just as Emma went in for a kiss.

"Bradyn has such a knack for spoiling the mood," Killian sighed as Emma untangled her limbs and went to the little boy.

"You are such a buzz kill, Little Lad, but Papa and I love you anyways," Emma bounced Bradyn on her hip. Bradyn responded with a laugh.

Bradyn poked at his mother's face in reply.

Emma gently gnawed on his tiny little fingers.

Fallon came running over. Upon seeing Bradyn in her mother's arms, she bypassed Emma and went to get attention from her father, latching herself to his leg.

"Are you ready for Savior Day tomorrow, Princess?" Killian asked his daughter.
"Yep," Fallon's head bobbed, "I get candy."

"You get more than candy," Killian chuckled, "Do you know who this day is for?"

"Me!" Fallon proclaimed proudly.

"The world does revolve around you, Little Love," Killian laughed as he kissed her cheek, "But no, this day is for another of my loves. It's for Mama's birthday."

"Birthday party for Mama!" Fallon cheered.

"No parties," Emma threw a cautionary glance towards her husband. He knew better. She didn't want anyone making a fuss over her. She'd had her fill of fussing over the past week while recovering. When Fallon frowned, Emma added, "We're having a picnic in the park after the parade with Grammy and Poppy and Leo."

"No cake?" Fallon's frown still graced her face.

"I bet Grammy is making a cake," Killian bounced her about as Henry burst into the cottage.

"Hi, Henry," Fallon greeted her brother after squirming out of her father's arms.

"Hi," Henry replied as he set his bag of dirty clothes on the floor to hug her properly. He had just enough time to properly bond with her before it was her bedtime.

"I want pancakes," Fallon pouted and stomped her foot while her father prepared breakfast eggs at the stove, instead of the pancakes his daughter always requested.

His youngest child was in his playpen, munching away on the plastic chew toy, which had been meant for their dog but was claimed by the boy.

"No pancakes this morning, Little Love," Killian continued to tend to the eggs, "It's Mama's day, and Mama wants eggs."

"No," Fallon moaned and turned to storm the circular staircase with the intentions of pitting one parent against the other, but her big brother anticipated the move and cut her off by picking her up and throwing her over his shoulder. "Henry, put me down!"

"You need to let Mom sleep," Henry told his sister as he plopped her down on the sofa.

"No," Fallon crossed her arms in front of her chest and huffed. Her pup jumped up on the sofa and planted his head in her lap. For a few moments, the situation was defused.

"Lad, are the presents ready to go?" Killian asked his oldest son.

"Piled high," Henry motioned towards the table and the many gifts stacked up neatly. "She's not going to like us making a fuss for her."

"She never does," Killian chuckled while checking the eggs one final time before transferring them to the waiting plate.

"Any ideas how we're going to get all of this up the stairs?" Henry asked his father.

Henry had a point. There were only two sets of arms to carry three things. Fallon was too young to be trusted with the breakfast dishes, presents or her baby brother.
"I'll come back for the presents while your mum eats," Killian stated after a moment of thought.

"Maybe Fallon could poof the presents upstairs," Henry offered up the only suggestion he could come up with.

"You know your mum's feelings on Fallon using her magic," Killian frowned.

If Emma had her way, she would have taken Fallon's magic away until she was old enough to understand what it was she was doing. Fortunate for all, Fallon was mostly content with changing things into different colors, but there had been moment where she'd barricaded herself inside various rooms. Emma wasn't always around to poof her out.

"Breakfast or brother?" Killian asked while adding the coffee to the tray he'd prepared.

"Brother," Henry replied, "Less breakable."

"But much more valuable," Killian laughed as Henry crossed the room to lift Bradyn out of the playpen. The young boy eagerly threw his toy across the playpen and lifted his arms to Henry.

"Come, Little Love," Killian urged his daughter up the stairs, "Time to wake your mum."

Fallon darted towards the staircase, wiggling her way around her brothers so she was the first up the stairs. She had no qualms about waking her mother, jumping right up on her parents' bed and shaking her mother until she moaned she was awake.

In retaliation for the abrupt start to her day, Emma began tickling Fallon mercilessly.

"Happy Birthday, Mama!" Fallon exclaimed when Emma finally relented. The little girl's arms wrapped tight around her mother's neck and added a slobbery kiss to her cheek.

"Thank you, Princess," Emma returned her hug and kiss.

"We made you breakfast," Fallon proclaimed.

"You did?" Emma's eyes shifted towards the tray Killian was carrying.

"It's not pancakes," Fallon frowned.

"That's okay," Emma chuckled while shifting Fallon to her side so Killian could put the tray in her lap, "Do you want some of these yummy looking eggs?"

Fallon buttoned up her lips nice and tight. She wanted nothing to do with the eggs on Emma's plate.

"Looks like a no," Killian observed as he kissed his wife's forehead, "Eat up, Love. We have gifts for you."

"I didn't need gifts," Emma replied, "I have three wonderful children and an equally wonderful husband. That's enough."

"I've been informed that isn't the way things work in this realm," Killian smirked, "It been explained to me each year we've been together that bodily harm might come to me if I simply overlooked this day. I've had the impression these past few years that you'd not opposed to the gifts I've given you."

Emma stared him down for several moments.

"Eat, Love," Killian coached her as he went to the staircase, "I'll be right back."
"Bring Bradyn's chew toy, or he's going to gnaw my finger off," Henry requested as Killian caught his youngest munch away on one of Henry's fingers.

"For only having a few teeth, the ones he has are particularly sharp," Killian agreed.

Emma tried to pry open Fallon's lips to taste the cheesy scrambled eggs Killian had prepared. Fallon was having none of it. On the days they flat out refused to make her often requested 'pancakes' she would only allow to have them replaced with cereal, but no milk. She didn't like her cereal to get soggy.

"Are you excited for today's festivities?" Emma asked her oldest.

"Yeah, it's kinda cool this all started because I brought my mom to Storybrooke," Henry replied, "It's way more fun than the old town celebrations we used to have."

"Are you excited for the parade, Princess?" Emma asked.

Fallon bobbed her head. She had been promised a plethora of candy to feed her sweet tooth. She'd been a bit young the previous year and hadn't fully understood what was happening.

Killian returned with a handful of presents and a slobbering chew toy for Bradyn. Max was hot on his tail in hopes Killian was going to the roof. The Jones puppy loved to bark and chase any bird daring to land on his roof, but he settled for jumping on the bed next to Fallon. Even Killian's scowl at the dog couldn't discourage him from making himself comfortable on the bed.

"You've been letting Max onto our bed after I've left for my days at sea, haven't you," Killian turned his scowl towards his wife.

"I plead the fifth," Emma responded with a mouthful of food.

"She declines to answer on the grounds she might incriminate herself," Henry translated her answer for his confused looking stepfather.

"Traitor," Emma muttered in Henry's direction. She'd been counting on Killian not understanding what she meant.

"Open presents, Mama," Fallon eagerly demanded of her mother.

"I'll open my presents if you finish my eggs," Emma tried to hand over her fork.

Fallon made a showing of buttoning up her lips a second time. She sat silently stroking Max's head and waited for Emma to finish her breakfast.

Killian chuckled at his daughter's motions. This was by far the longest she had sat quietly while awake since she'd learned to talk. She was definitely the resident chatterbox in the family, easily overtaking the number one spot from him as her vocabulary increased seemingly by the day.

After Emma devoured her meal and traded the tray for the presents, Fallon unbuttoned her lips and began talking a mile a minute to make up for her lost few minutes.

"Take a breath," Emma covered Fallon's mouth with her hand to silence her with an amused roll of her eyes, "Goodness, Princess." Her eyes went towards her husband, "This is definitely your child."

"Was that ever in dispute?" Killian chuckled and took Bradyn from Henry and sat himself in the available space next to his wife with Bradyn in his lap.
Bradyn reached out his chew toy to Emma.

"You hang onto that for me, Little Lad," Emma kissed the top of Bradyn's head. While Fallon took after her father with the dark hair and deep blue eyes, Bradyn had inherited her blonde hair but still his father's blue eyes. David liked to claim Bradyn had his eyes, but the crystal blues of her baby boy most definitely mimicked his father.

The chew toy went back into Bradyn's mouth as Fallon forced a present into her mother's hand to get the show on the road.

"This is mine," Fallon stated proudly.

"It's from all three of us," Henry added. Mostly the gift was from his allowance, but Killian had chipped in a bit for Fallon and Bradyn.

Emma opened the small package and smiled at the necklace inside with birthstones for each of her children.

"Do you like it, Mama?" Fallon asked.

"Very much," Emma nodded as she kissed Fallon's cheek and then Bradyn's and then motioned for Henry to come closer so she could give him equal treatment, "It's beautiful. Thank you."

The rest of the presents were from Killian.

"Do I dare open these with children present?" Emma eyed her husband curiously as she worked the clasp of her new necklace to wrap it around her neck.

"Family friendly," Killian assured her.

"Where should I start?" Emma eyed the presents.

"Start with the biggest one and work your way back," Killian suggested.

The first three gifts were various clothing items to replenish her wardrobe in preparation for the coming winter weather: a new sweater, a pair of leather boots and a matching knit hat and gloves.

"Apparently I needed new clothes," Emma chuckled.

"You were the one who has been hinting at that fact," Killian replied, "Ruby was the stylist, so if you don't like anything, blame her."

"One more," Henry handed her the final present.

"What is this?" Emma shook the package slightly. It was too small to be any sort of clothing item, unless he'd packaged several pairs of socks into a small box, yet it was too large to be a piece of jewelry. "Did you buy me earmuffs?"

"Earmuffs?" Killian repeated in confusion.

"Never mind," she waved off the need for an explanation as she peeled away the paper and opened the top of the box. She gasped at what was inside. "Are these...?"

Killian nodded in confirmation as he pulled out one of the two cuffs inside the box.

"Bracelets," Fallon proclaimed eagerly as she snatched the other and put it around her wrist. It
refused to stay on as it was too big for her tiny wrists.

"These aren't just bracelets," Emma told her daughter as she wrapped the cuff around her own wrist, "These cuffs allow the person wearing it to climb beanstalks to magical lands. Papa gave me one once to climb a beanstalk to find a compass to get me and Grammy back to Storybrooke."

"Is that where you met Tiny?" Henry asked.

"He wasn't so tiny then," Emma confirmed as she turned towards Killian with an amused glance, "Where did you find these? I lost mine as soon as I came down the beanstalk."

"You mean after you left me to fend for myself against the man hungry giant," Killian's eyes shined with mischief as Bradyn grabbed for the cuff in his father's hand in an attempt to pop it into his mouth. Killian had to continually move it around to keep it out of Bradyn's reach.

"You managed," she replied, "Are these the same ones?"

"Indeed they are," Killian confirmed, "After I made my way down, I followed your trail with the intention of honoring our deal, but someone covered your tracks. The cuff was the last clue I had."

"Must have been Mulan," Emma thought for a moment. She knew she hadn't taken the time to cover her tracked, but as she thought back on it, Mulan always seemed to be several steps behind the rest.

"Just made me work a bit harder," Killian smiled.

"Are they still magical?" she asked as the cuff rolled around her wrist. It had been a perfect fit last time.

"Near a beanstalk, yes," Killian replied, "You never know when you might need to climb another. These are so you can be prepared."

"And perhaps a reminder of how annoying I found you," Emma mused.

"That's not how I remember it, Love," her husband grinned as he leaned in and captured her lips.

"We should let Mama get dressed," Henry took Bradyn from Killian's arms and motioned for Fallon to follow.

"Parade time?" Fallon asked her brother.

"Almost," Henry confirmed.

"Yay!" Fallon cheered as she ran down the staircase.

"Happy Birthday, Love," Killian leaned in to kiss her lips softly.

"Thank you," Emma smiled as she burrowed her head into his neck, "Let's just stay home today and send the kids with my parents."

"You know the savior is expected at her celebration," he stroked her hair.

"Henry is the real savior, not me," Emma replied, "He found me. He brought me to Storybrooke. He ate the tart. I just said goodbye to the son I had just found."

"It was your kiss to brake the curse," Killian told her softly.
Emma let out a resigned sigh as she kicked away the bedcovers.

"We'll have our private celebration tonight," Killian added, "Your parents are taking the children for the evening."

"Good," she gave him a mischievous smile.

TBC...
Chapter 12

Disclaimer: Nope, not mine, darn it. I just write for them because it's fun.

Nearing parade time, Fallon was practically dragging her parents towards the designated route in order to stake out the best spot to load up on candy.

"Just what your sister needs, more sugar," Emma mumbled under her breath as she bounced Bradyn on her hip. The little boy threw his head back to laugh.

As they walked along, residents greeted Emma eagerly, all thanking her yet again for breaking the curse. Emma accepted their thanks with humility, but she wished people would quit idolizing her. She wasn't the hero they made her out to be. She was just a girl who finally found a home.

"Happy Birthday, Daughter," Mary Margaret spoke softly as hugged her tight.

"Thanks," Emma began to blush as her father took his turn in hugging her.

Savior's Day had never been associated with Emma's birthday. In the three years the town's residents had been celebrating it, it had always been more about Emma's arrival in town and starting the countdown to breaking the curse. Emma had gone out of her way to separate the two celebrations. Only the few people in town closest to her knew the double significance of the day.

"Your mother baked you a cake," David added.

"We're having our picnic lunch today, aren't we?" Mary Margaret asked as she bundled up tight against the chill of the day.

"That's the plan," Emma nodded.

Fallon and Leo stood shoulder to shoulder as floats passed them by. Nearly every business was represented, and every float threw out fist full after fist full of candy towards the town's children.

Between Emma's birthday and then Halloween later in the month, Fallon was going to be swimming in candy well into the next year. She was going to be on a permanent sugar high.

"If it snows though, we might have to think about moving everything indoors," Emma added moments later after zipping her jacket up a bit tighter.

"Snow!" Fallon exclaimed with excitement as she darted over to unload her pockets of the candy she had collected so far so she had room to refill. The little girl loved snow. Even after their tangle with the snow loving witch the previous year, Fallon's love of making snowmen and sledding hadn't diminished. It was the enthusiasm she shared with her grandmother.

"To be a kid again," Emma laughed at the little girl who quickly returned to her spot to catch more candy.

Mary Margaret wrapped her arm around Emma's waist while they watched the rest of the parade. Emma's head came to rest against her shoulder.

This day was mixed emotions for Mary Margaret. It was the day she'd given birth to her first child, but had also been the day she'd had to give Emma up. It tore at her in a way Emma couldn't fully grasp. Yes, they had both given up children at birth, but Mary Margaret had done so against her will.
She was supposed to cross into this realm pregnant, give birth and likely be a single mother, but she'd gone into labor too soon. She had never meant for Emma to become an orphan. She'd missed so many of her daughter's birthdays as a result.

"Do you think you have enough candy?" Emma asked her daughter as she dumped the last load into the bag they'd brought as the parade ended. The bag was nearly overflowing.

Fallon shook her head from side to side to indicate it wouldn't be enough.

"Glad she's staying with you tonight, Mate," Killian patted David's shoulder, "She won't sleep a wink."

"I'm sure we'll be just fine," David laughed before lifting Fallon up onto his shoulders as the family walked towards the park and the agreed upon picnic spot.

Several other families had the same idea as they set up their own picnics, yet everyone gave the Charming family their privacy.

"Enjoy the sunshine while you can," Mary Margaret looked towards the sky and the sun peeking through the clouds. The sunshine would likely last through their meal but no longer.

Bradyn sat in his mother's lap, eating spoonful after spoonful of the homemade pear sauce Mary Margaret had made special just for him.

As the adults chatted about the various news around town, Fallon used the fact everyone's attention was elsewhere to stuff a few pieces of candy into her mouth.

"Hey, no more," Henry scolded his sister.

Fallon stuck out her tongue at him.

"Fallon Eva Jones, that is not how a young lady responds," Emma admonished her daughter, "We use words in this family."

"Henry isn't the boss of me," Fallon scowled at her brother.

"No, he's not," Emma replied, "He shouldn't be scolding you, but you don't stick your tongue out at him."

Fallon began muttering under her breath.

Emma stared the little girl down until she apologized to Henry for sticking her tongue out at him.

"You owe your sister an apology too," Killian prodded his stepson.

"Sorry, Fallon," Henry dutifully apologized.

"It's okay, Henry," Fallon shifted towards him and put her arm around his waist.

"You're such a cutie," Henry kissed the top of her head.

Fallon beamed in response. She adored her big brother most of the time when he wasn't telling her what she could or couldn't do.

"Are you coming, Swan?" Killian paced their living room anxiously as he waited for Emma to descend the staircase, "The restaurant will only be open so long."
His anxious plea was met with silence.

Killian fidgeted nervously with the tie he was wearing. He'd only worn a tie on a few other occasions. He'd had to ask Henry to show him how to tie the knot before he'd taken his younger siblings and dog to their grandparents for the evening.

"Emma, Love, I'm a patient man, but it's wearing thin," he responded after checking the clock. They would be late for their reservation if they didn't leave within the next two minutes.

"You waited three hundred years to avenge a man still drawing breath. You could wait a few more minutes," Emma came down the stairs in a deep red halter dress and matching shoes. Her hair was loose and full of curls. When she stepped closer he could detect the vanilla scent of her perfume.

Killian was stunned into silence while she spun to give him a view of the low cut of the dress at her back.

"Worth the wait?" Emma smirked as she spun towards him again to see that his mouth was agape.

Killian stepped in and devoured her lips. He was very tempted to let their reservation go and stay in, but he resisted. It was her birthday. She deserved a special night out. Their evenings out had been few and far in between especially since welcoming Bradyn into their family.

"Dinner," Killian mumbled against her lips.

"After dinner," she tangled her hand in his.

Killian snatched her shawl and put it around her shoulders.

"Are we walking?" Emma asked.

"Your father offered his truck if you're up for it," Killian told her, "Or we can always bike over."

"Walking works just fine," Emma snickered, "I miss my car."

"We can take a voyage to find you a new one," Killian offered as she took his arm as they walked along.

"Soon," she agreed.

"This reminds me of another night we spent together," Emma noted the checkered pattern tablecloth and drippy candles.

"That was a marvelous night," Killian recalled their first evening together in their home when they'd eaten under the stairs and then retired to their bedroom and made love for the first time.

"Too bad we're in such a public place," Emma's hand slid under the table to caress his thigh.

"Keep those thoughts for later, Love."

"Oh, they'll keep," she grinned, "All night if necessary."

"One of the many, many things I love about you," he brought her hand from his thigh to his lips, "Shall I list them?"

"We could be here for awhile," she replied, "You've started your list before and have yet to finish it."
"Because I get interrupted."

"You're easily distracted," she rolled her eyes.

"You're simply too tempting," his charms oozed out, "I love you."

"I love you too," she responded.

Their meal arrived and they traded lively banter about their children and other happenings about town. When the music began to play, Killian held out his hand. "I promised you dancing, didn't I?"

"You did," Emma blotted her lips with her napkins before accepting his hand.

He led her towards the dance floor and instantly wrapped her in his arms, his hands itching towards inappropriate places while they swayed to the music.

"We should do this more often," Emma spoke softly as her head came to rest against his chest.

"Dancing or special evenings out?" he inquired.

"Both," Emma smiled, "Yes, we're parents and our children deserve a large chunk of our attention, but these nights out are important for the two of us. We need adult time."

"And we cannot accomplish that with our nightly recreation?" he grinned.

"Not a lot of talking goes on during such recreation," she laughed softly.

"Perhaps not, but it's still enjoyable," he responded with a Cheshire grin, "Tell me I'm wrong."

"You're not," she conceded.

"I understand what you're saying," he responded, "You want more adult conversation out of our marriage."

"It would be nice," her head nodded.

"Consider your wish granted," he pressed his lips to her temple.

"We have an empty cottage," Emma reminded him, "How about some nightly recreation?"

"How about dessert first?" Killian guided her back to their table when the song ended.

"We had cake earlier. That's more than enough. I don't have Fallon's sweet tooth," Emma stated.

"Perhaps I do," he replied as the dessert plate was set before them. Added to the top of the dessert were two sparkly charms.

"What did you do?" a smile lit Emma's face while she pulled the charms from the whipped cream and cleaned them.

"It's a memento to add to the necklace the children gave you this morning. It has stones for the month we met, as it was here in Storybrooke, and the month we were married," he explained.

"They're beautiful," Emma worked the clasp of her necklace open so she could add the charms.

"Pales in comparison to my wife," he took the necklace from her once the charms had been added and helped her put it on, pausing long enough to inhale her tantalizing scent. "Eat your dessert,
"Only if you help," Emma lifted her spoon to his lips when he returned to his seat.

Killian made cleaning the spoon as seductive a task as possible.

"I can't eat another bite," Emma announced as the spoon rattled on the plate when she lost her grip.

Killian quickly called for the check. Emma watched his movements with amusement. It had been such an odd concept to him just a few years ago but was now almost natural.

Their walk back to the cottage was quicker than it had been on their way to the restaurant. Once safely inside, their clothes disappeared rapidly. Neither could wait to get up the stairs as they made love on sofa.

"That's a wonderful way to end my birthday," Emma tangled her fingers with Killian's as they laid together on the sofa to catch their breath. Killian reached for a blanket to protect them against any chill in the air.

"You believe that's the end of the evening?" he lifted an amused brow in her direction, "I think we still have a bit of energy left in us."

Emma nodded in agreement, "I insist we move to our bed. The quarters here are a bit cramped."

"Aye, they are," he agreed.

"I'll race you," Emma rose from the sofa abruptly and tore up the stairs.

TBC…
"Your worried, aren't you?" Emma studied her husband as he stood at the wheel during their family voyage aboard the Jolly Roger. Emma had finally returned to work. Not too much excitement occurred while she was on medical leave, but her deputies were happy to have her back taking shifts again. The cruise was the first day her day off synced with her father's. As a result, the entire family had decided on a cruise.

"What is there to be worried about, Love?" Killian tried to cover by concentrating on the open water.

"You tell me," Emma leaned into his side and wrapped her arms around his waist, "You've been hovering over me and the children more than usual. You're not sailing as far...Talk to me, Jones."

"I am worried," Killian finally admitted, "I'm worried about you and the children. I made many enemies over my three hundred years. I have two very prominent ones in Storybrooke alone."

"You're still carrying on about my brakes getting tampered with," Emma realized.

"How can I not be?" Killian asked, "You seem to have brushed aside the fact someone tampered with your vehicle. You nearly met a dead end."

"I'm fine," Emma reminded him as a chorus of laughter from the family and a happy bark from their dog rang out. Leo and Fallon were running away from Max who was giving chase. "Fallon, Henry and Bradyn are fine."

"For now," Killian muttered.

"Hey, look at me," Emma forced his eyes to connect with hers, "If the Darling children are responsible, we will figure things out together just as we have since I found you in the forest."

"Not exactly how it happened," he snorted in mild amusement.

"You were on our side when we were fighting at the lake. You proved it twice; when you caught Aurora's heart and gave it to Mulan and when you let me knock you out after getting my hands on the compass," Emma replied.

"I was so taken with your footwork," he grinned.

"I haven't once bought any explanation you've given regarding your actions of that day," she told him, "You wanted to do what was right, and you did. I'm most grateful because I got home to my son."

"I would have done whatever it took to get you home," Killian caressed her face, "Even if it meant ending my alliance with Cora and never getting my vengeance."

"You still haven't gotten that," Emma pointed out.

"One day I will," Killian glanced away from her, his eyes looking out over the horizon again. "Gold can't live forever, and he has other enemies. Someday one he crossed will come for him. One day someone will succeed, but it won't be me. I have too much in my life to lose. I can't say on the day someone succeeds I won't smile a bit victoriously."
"I guess I couldn't blame you for it," Emma sighed, "He has done a lot of horrible things to a lot of people, some of the worst to your Milah."

"She did love him once," Killian spoke softly, "She spoke about what her husband had been like before they married, just after they were married, and before he left to fight in battle. He was far different from the man he is today. He was more like how he is with Belle, but he was also afraid...afraid she would not love him, afraid she would leave him, afraid she would take away his happiness. That fear crippled him, made him do questionable things he couldn't take back."

"Fear is a powerful adversary," Emma replied, "Don't let your own fear cripple you. We have so much joy and happiness ahead of us."

"Aye, we do," Killian's eyes went towards the laughter on the deck, courtesy of Fallon and Leo. "Henry, lad, how about you take the wheel for a bit?"

Henry immediately claimed the wheel and kept their course steady. He still had the love of sailing. He fleetingly talked about a career as a professional sailor or perhaps joining the Navy or Coast Guard, but he still had a few years yet before such a decision had to be officially made.

"Keep us off the rocks," was Killian's usual warning before he went to help David with a bit of the rigging he'd become tangled in.

"I do love the open breeze," Mary Margaret bounced Bradyn about as a means of entertainment for the young lad, "I dare say this little one loves it about as much as his father and siblings."

"The open waters run through their veins," Emma agreed, "It does weave quite a spell. When Bradyn's a bit older, Killian wants to take an extended trip across the oceans, longer even than the one we took the summer I was pregnant with Bradyn."

"Goodness, what will Storybrooke do without it's sheriff for that long?" Mary Margaret inquired.

"That's up to the voters in a few weeks," Emma replied, "I think our mayor is hoping the townspeople will trust her husband with the duty."

"No one with any sense is going to vote for the husband of the woman who cursed us into living here," Mary Margaret replied.

"Do you ever think about going back?" Emma asked, "If it was possible, I mean."

"To the Enchanted Forest?" Mary Margaret asked, "I don't know. It was home for most of our lives, but after living here for so many years it would be difficult adjusting. Just turning on a switch to have lights is a luxury we didn't have in the Enchanted Forest, and plumbing, goodness, I would miss that."

"If we could have all the creature comforts?" Emma asked.

"If we could have all the creature comforts and my entire family would be there, then yes, I would like to return the Enchanted Forest back to what it was under my father's rule," Mary Margaret replied, "Since there doesn't appear to be any way back seeing as how our mayor likely used the last of the magic beans for her honeymoon, we might as well keep moving forward. I'm happy with my life here. I have my true love and my children. I've gained grandchildren. There isn't much better."

"I think Killian would like to go back," Emma sighed, "This world isn't his."

"But it's yours," Mary Margaret stated, "It's where your home and family are. I don't think his pull to
our land is as strong as you think. You have to remember he didn't just sail in my realm. He crossed realms frequently. The technology might be an adjustment, but it's one he happily made."

"He's done everything for me," Emma replied, "Maybe I want to finally do something for him."

"You gave him your heart and two adorable children," Mary Margaret replied, "I think that's more than enough."

Emma gave a thoughtful nod.

Fallon suddenly appeared before her mother with a curious twinkle in her eyes she'd inherited from her father. "Yes, Princess," Emma prompted her.

"Papa says you're being too serious," Fallon relayed the message from her father.

"Well, you go tell your papa to mind his own beeswax," Emma smirked, knowing Fallon would mess up the translation.

Both Killian and David began to howl with laughter when Fallon ran over to deliver her mother's reply. Neither knew quite what the message was Fallon had intended to relay. Playing telephone with Fallon was an interesting game as her innocent thoughts would twist the words nonsensically.

"Papa, put me down!" Fallon shrieked when Killian tossed her over his shoulder and carried her across the deck until he was standing before his wife.

"Tell your mum what you said to me," Killian swung her upside down until she was eye level with her mother.

Fallon hesitated for a few moments, mostly because she couldn't remember what she'd said. "Oh, yeah," Fallon's eyes lit in remembrance, "Mama has bees in her pants."

Emma and Mary Margaret burst out in laughter.

"Oh, Fallon, you are such a cutie," Emma snickered as she maneuvered around her husband to get to her daughter's cheeks to kiss each one in turn.

"What was it you really said?" Killian inquired after returning his daughter safely to her feet. She immediately scrambled off to resume playing with her uncle and puppy.

"I told her to tell you to mind your own beeswax," Emma replied when his arms snared her around the waist. His face was awash with further confusion as he couldn't translate her modern day slang. "It's a nice way of saying to mind your own business."

"Everything about you is my business," Killian responded instantly, "Every smile, every frown."

Emma's insides melted in reply. He'd always been good with the one-liners and being flirtatious, but never in her wildest dreams could she have thought he would be as attentive and concerned with her happiness when he became her husband. He bordered on being the perfect husband, except for his irritating habits she somehow found charming.

Killian stared her down until she relented.

"Do you want to go back to the Enchanted Forest?" she asked.

"Do you think I'm unhappy here?" he frowned in confusion. Mary Margaret stepped away from the conversation she felt like she was intruding upon.
"This isn't your world," Emma sighed, "If the roles were reversed, I'd have thoughts of coming back here."

"What is in the Enchanted Forest for me?" he asked, "What is supposed to be pulling me back?"

"I don't know, but it's your time, your world," she threw up her hands in exasperation.

"This is my world," Killian told her.

"Don't you miss sailing the high seas, going from port to port, pillaging vessels along the way?" she asked.

"When the alternative is what I currently have, no, I don't miss it," Killian replied, "It's the same for you. Do you miss your life as a bail bonds person?"

"No, but that's different," Emma scoffed.

"The only difference is the amount of time I spent being a pirate versus how long you were a bail bonds person," Killian stated, "I would have happily lived my life as the first mate of my brother's ship, sailing the colors of an honorable king, but that didn't happen."

"Do sailors of the line have wives?" Emma asked, "Would you have had that?"

"Perhaps," he replied, "It wasn't in my immediate future."

"Was it in Liam's?"

Killian swallowed hard as a memory stirred inside of him, "Aye."

"He left someone behind," Emma concluded, "A wife? A family?"

"He had a special lady," Killian stated, "He intended to marry her when we returned from Neverland."

"What happened to her?" Emma asked softly.

"She was inconsolable when she learned of his fate," Killian spoke softly. He was lost in the memory now, the memory of telling his brother's fiancée of Liam's demise. "She blamed me for his loss, blamed me for her inevitable fate as a spinster..."

"It wasn't your fault," Emma caressed his cheek to get his eyes to focus on her.

"It still feels like it is," Killian admitted, "He infected himself to prove a point to me."

"Did you ever think he did it to prove a point to himself?" she asked, "Maybe Liam infected himself to prove the king he was sailing for was the honorable man he thought him to be."

"Perhaps," Killian pressed his forehead to hers.

"I'm sorry I brought these painful memories back," she thread her fingers through the hair at the nape of his neck.

"I'd only suffer through them for you," he smiled slightly.

"Papa, I'm hungry," Fallon came running over.
"We can't have that now can we," Killian took her hand and led her to the box of food they'd brought along for their voyage. After picking out a small bag of nuts, Killian returned to Emma's side.

"We'll talk more later," Emma gave him a reassuring smile.

Killian gave a slight nod and returned to the helm to take control of the wheel again. "Thank you, Lad."

"Anytime," Henry gave his stepfather a bright smile.

"So the Enchanted Forest," Killian picked up on the conversation they'd had aboard the Jolly Roger. The children were tucked in for the evening. Bradyn's baby monitor was on the railing. Killian's arms were around Emma's waist while they enjoyed the night air on their cottage roof.

"Do you ever think about going back to it?" Emma asked.

"Going back means leaving here, leaving the first true home I've ever had," Killian replied.

"What's keeping us in Storybrooke?" Emma asked, "It's just one evil after another here."

"Will it be any different in the Enchanted Forest?" he inquired, "Whatever is out there looking for us will find us no matter the realm we are in. You're still the Savior. I'm still Captain Hook. We don't know yet who our children might be, but they are most definitely important to our story."

"Maybe I want to give Bradyn, Fallon and Henry the childhood I should have had," Emma thought out loud.

"And what childhood is that, Love?"

"The life of a princess and princes," she replied, "Whatever that really means."

"Whatever life we give them, it will be full of love," Killian replied, "That's all any child could ask for."

"We've had several years together in my world," Emma stated, "Maybe it's time we experience your world."

"You're my world," Killian told her, "Wherever we are, as long as we're together is enough for me. This is our home. It's enough for me."

"What if my parents decide to go back?" Emma asked, "We'd have to make this decision then."

"When the time comes, we will make the decision together," he replied.

"I wish you talked about your brother more," Emma conceded to his compromise, "He was so important to you, but I know nothing about him."

"It's a painful part of my past," he swallowed the lump that formed.

"It can't be any harder than when you lost Milah," she was walking a fine line, but she hated how much losing his brother still pained him.

"In some ways it is," Killian admitted, "I owe everything to my brother. He took me under his wing, gave me a life and a purpose. I don't know what would have come of me if he hadn't looked out for
me. My love of the sea comes from him."

"What was he like?" she asked.

"Honorable, by the book," Killian began, "He had a way of commanding by inspiring his crewmen. We wanted to do our best for our captain."

"Sounds a lot like the captain I know," Emma nudged him in the ribs.

"I should be so lucky to be as skilled in leading a crew as he was," he gave her a half smile.

"Will you talk about him more?" she requested, "When the occasion presents itself."

"I will try," he nodded.

"I want to know everything about the way you tick," Emma caressed his chin, "He's such a part of you."

"You would have liked him," Killian smiled, "Maybe more than me."

"You've said that before," she smirked, "I still don't believe you. You took my breath away the first time I looked into your eyes."

"Was that before or after you tied me to a tree?" he chuckled.

"I haven't tied you to anything in awhile," she snorted, "Maybe we should change that."

Killian raised a brow in curiosity.

"Let's go to bed, Pirate," Emma tugged at the chain around his neck, "Maybe I'll tie you to something tonight."

TBC…
Chapter 14

Disclaimer: In my dreams, maybe. Real life, it's just fun to write.

"Deputy Nolan, may I speak with you," the town's mechanic came in with a nervous twitch.

"What can I do for you, Michael?" David motioned the mechanic to have a seat.

"I know who tampered with the brake lines and steering column of the sheriff's vehicle," he spoke softly with his head down.

"Who?" David's eyes went wide with intrigue.

"Me," Michael admitted, "I'm sorry, David. I didn't realize I'd done anything. Emma...Sheriff Swan had brought the vehicle in for maintenance. I intend only to fix what was wrong, but then this young girl arrived. She said she was lost and needed help. The next thing I remembered was Sheriff Swan arriving the next day to pick up her fixed vehicle. I didn't realize anything bad had happened until you asked me to inspect the vehicle after the accident. I know I should have come to you with the truth sooner, but I couldn't reconcile my guilt in my mind. Deputy Nolan, you have to believe I would never intentionally hurt your daughter."

"I believe you," Emma assured him having just returned from a nuisance call they'd received earlier. "Can you describe this girl?"

"I can do better," Michael pulled a piece of paper out of his pocket and handed it to her. "I drew this last night."

Emma took the drawing for him. It looked very similar to the girl that Killian had described during their discussions of his involvement with Wendy. Slowly, he was opening up more and more about his interactions with her and her brothers.

"I'm so very sorry, Sheriff," Michael was nearly beside himself over his guilt.

"It's not your fault," Emma assured him. "You were under a siren's spell."

"Are Killian and the children sailing?" David's hand twitched towards his phone to call his son-in-law to confirm the identity of this young girl.

"No, they came in before lunch," Emma replied, "Killian was going to the library to find more information on sirens."

David quickly dialed. Killian would be over in a few minutes. He and Neal had found old sailors journals, which had first hand accounts of an encounter with a siren. They were attempting to translate the journals as they were in another language.

"I'm not going to jail?" Michael suddenly realized.

"No," Emma assured him, "Your actions were not your own. I wouldn't dream of making you pay for something like that."

"I appreciate your mercy, Sheriff," Michael release a deep sigh of relief, "I will help with the replacement cost of your new vehicle."

"I appreciate the offer, but it's not necessary," Emma replied, "My insurance is being more than
cooperative. Apparently my vehicle was deemed a classic, so we're getting more money than we originally thought."

"Free maintenance for the life of your next vehicle," Michael countered.

"How about you take a crack at the police cruiser?" Emma requested, "Dave's been playing mechanic with the limited budget we've been given. It's not going to last much longer without proper maintenance."

"You have yourself a deal," Michael quickly agreed.

"We'll let you know what we find out about the picture. I'd stay vigilant. If you see this girl again let myself or one of my deputies know immediately," Emma escorted him to the door.

"I will," Michael nodded, "Again Sheriff, I am so very sorry. I should have known better than to allow the girl into my workshop, but she looked like she could be a friend of my son or daughter."

"It's okay," Emma assured him yet again, "The bumps and bruises I sustained are completely healed. My vehicle had been begging for retirement for months."

"I appreciate your understanding," Michael stated again, "I'll expect the cruiser soon."

"By the end of the week," Emma glanced towards her father. Her statement was more of an instruction to her father than a statement to the mechanic.

Michael left Emma and David to discuss the most recent development.

"What was the nuisance call?" David asked.

"Store owner couldn't remember why he called," Emma shrugged, "He looked completely stunned when I showed up ready to take his report."

"Sounds a bit similar to Michael's report," David noted.

"Frighteningly so," Emma glanced at the clock, hoping Killian would arrive soon. The quicker they got to the bottom of things the better.

"Hi, Poppy," Fallon burst into the station minutes later with her usual sunshine and exuberance, "Papa let me check out a book."

"He did," David immediately picked her up in a hug, "What are you reading now?"

"'The Very Fairy Princess'," Fallon stated, "Papa says he read to me tonight."

"Belle recommended it for our little princess," Killian explained the choice when he entered the station with his youngest son in his arms. Bradyn reached for his mother with a happy squeal.

"How's my prince today?" Emma took Bradyn from Killian, "Did you behave for Papa today?"

Bradyn's head came to rest against Emma's shoulder.

"He didn't nap for long today," Killian explained the tiredness in his son's eyes. "Max and Fallon were a bit more exuberant than usual."

Emma rubbed Bradyn's back to soothe him to sleep.
"You said there was a portrait I needed to examine," Killian reminded his wife and father-in-law of being summoned.

"On my desk," Emma swayed slowly with Bradyn, "Is that Wendy?"

"Where did you get this?" Killian's voice quivered when he picked up the drawing.

"You were right in that Wendy was responsible for my car accident, but she acted through Michael Tillman," Emma explained, "He came here to confess, and he had this drawing. Is that her?"

"Aye," Killian nodded.

"He says he doesn't remember doing anything," Emma responded, "Is that what happens when under her spell?"

"I wouldn't know," Killian shrugged, "I was never under her spell."

"Never?" Emma frowned in confusion.

"I suppose there was never a need," he responded, "My orders came from Pan."

"What about when she discovered you had tricked her into returning to London?" Emma asked, "She wanted you to take her back to Neverland. You refused. Wouldn't she just do whatever she does to get you to take her back?"

"She never did," Killian responded, "I don't have an answer for why."

"I hungry," Fallon disrupted what was too serious a moment for her.

Emma glanced at the clock. "Goodness, it's nearly dinner time."

"Why don't you take off?" David told his daughter, "I'll wait for Robin to arrive."

"Are you sure?" Emma looked towards her father with a slightly guilty expression. It was her turn to wait for their other deputy.

"Go," David responded, "I'll fill him in on these new events."

"Thanks, Dad," Emma gave him a grateful smile.

"Say goodbye to Poppy," Killian instructed his daughter.

"Bye, Poppy," Fallon squeezed him tight around the neck.

David kissed her cheek and returned her to her feet. "Be a good girl, Princess."

"I will," Fallon took her father's hand and turned to wave at her grandfather, "I love you, Poppy."

"Love you too, Princess," he smiled.

The Jones family left.

"Henry staying with Regina tonight?" Killian asked when they returned to the cottage and Henry wasn't waiting for them.

"Yep," Emma confirmed, "It's just the four of us tonight, which means that Fallon gets to pick tonight's movie."
Fallon's eyes lit up in excitement and then began jumping up and down. "Let's make dinner first," Emma suggested, "How about chicken nuggets and French fries?"

Fallon's head bobbed eagerly. "How many do you want?" Emma went to the freezer and pulled out the bag. She'd made something a bit more adult for her and Killian, but Fallon's meal would take more time.

"Five," Fallon held up all the fingers of one hand.

"Count them out," Emma encouraged her to climb onto the stool to help her with dinner. Fallon pulled five nuggets out of the bag, counting each one while setting it on the baking tray. She looked at the tray and decided to add one more for good measure, trying to be sneaky about it, thinking her mother wouldn't notice. Emma added a small handful of French fries to the tray and put it in the oven.

"What vegetable should we have with dinner?" Emma asked.

Fallon released a tiny moan and then went with the vegetable she found least objectionable.

Emma found a few simple tasks to keep Fallon engaged in cooking so Killian could feed Bradyn and get him cleaned and changed.

With dinner successfully completed, minus the one leftover chicken nugget Killian had to finish for Fallon when she announced she was too full for any more, the family cuddled on the sofa together to watch the movie Fallon had chosen. No surprise, it was a princess movie. Emma and Killian rolled their eyes yet silently indulged yet another night of Fallon's princess education.

After tucking in Fallon after reading her new story, Killian and Emma met in their bedroom to discuss the newest event in town.

"Did you make any progress in translating that sailor's journal you found?" Emma was pulling back the covers of their bed.

"Nothing beyond coordinates and wind conditions as of yet," he replied, "This journal feels important. There is no reason for it to be among these magical books we've been looking through."

"What realm is this book from?" Emma asked.

"The markings indicate Avalon," Killian responded.

"That place where King Arthur pulled Excalibur? The place is real?" Emma responded, "Wait, why am I surprised? This is Storybrooke."

"I've only really heard stories about it in my youth," Killian replied.

"You mean in all your realm jumping you never made that leap?" she asked.

"I was tempted," he admitted, "The rumor had it that it was a place where no one seemed to age."

"There are other places like Neverland?" she asked.

"That was how the story was told to me," he explained.
"And who told you the story?" she pressed, "Your brother?"

"My father," he shook his head slowly.

"I always assumed you didn't remember much about your father," she closed the gap between them to offer any comfort she could. As much as thoughts of his brother pained him, his pain of his parents' loss was worse. In all the years they'd been married, he'd never once mentioned his mother or father.

"It's all a bit hazy," Killian admitted, "Sometimes I'm convinced it was only a dream. I was so desperate for any familial connection that I thought him up, and then had him abandon me the way my mother had."

"You said he was a fugitive who left you on board a ship," Emma reminded him, "Do you know what he was a fugitive for?"

"No," he kept his answer brief. The memory of the morning he woke up truly alone wasn't something he ever intended to relive again, even for Emma.

"Killian," Emma stepped into him upon recognizing his pain, "I won't push, but it might help to talk about it."

"I've relived that night so many times," Killian shook his head, "Nothing good has ever come from it."

"Killian, look at me," she guided his eyes to her, "Whether you talk to me or not, this pain is still there. We both know all about burying things. The pain has an ugly way of coming back in the worse moments. You know I would never think any worse of you, no matter what. I love you, faults and all."

Killian's arms wrapped around her shoulders and hugged her close. Her level of faith in him was still astounded to him. "What did I ever do to deserve you?"

"Hey," she poked him in the chest, "All you have to do is believe in me, stand by me, and love me."

Killian caressed her cheek and looked her deep in the eyes, "You have given me so much. I was resigned to the fact I would never find happiness again, never love again, but from the moment I looked into these eyes, I knew I was in love."

Emma rose up on her toes and pressed her lips to his. He quickly reciprocated, devouring her lips while slowly lowering her to the bed. There was so much yet to discuss from the events of the day, but they both needed this moment together.

TBC…
Disclaimer: In my dreams, maybe. Real life, it's just fun to write.

"Hey, Leo," Emma greeted her brother with a hug upon entering the Charmings' cottage after the short walk from her own home, "How are you?"

"Hi, Emma," Leo hugged her around the neck, "Where's Fallon?"

"She's home with her papa and brothers," Emma tweaked his nose, "Where's Mama?"

"Outside in the garden," Leo pointed towards the back door.

"Should we go help her?" Emma asked.

"No," Leo shook his head from side to side, "It's cold outside, brrrr."

"Winter will be here soon," Emma agreed, "Do you have your sled ready?"

"Yep," Leo's head bobbed while pointing towards the corner where his sled awaited. He and their father had just finished prepping it the previous evening in preparation for the first significant snowfall.

Emma returned Leo to his feet. He darted off to play in his room. Emma went out the back door to find her mother.

"Hi, Emma," Mary Margaret paused from her hoeing to greet Emma with a wide smile, "Here to help me winterize the garden?"

"Tempting," Emma snorted, "I was hoping for some advice."

"I could use a break," Mary Margaret set the hoe aside. "How about some hot cocoa?"

"Sounds good," Emma nodded and followed her mother back into the cottage.

"How's the search for information coming?" Mary Margaret put a kettle of water on the stove to start heating.

"Slow," Emma released a heavy sigh, "I think having to sit in a library with Neal day after day is messing with Killian's sanity."

"I'm not surprised," Mary Margaret pulled two cups from the shelves and prepared them for cocoa.

"Killian blames himself for this entire situation," Emma stated, "I want so much to take away the guilt, but I can't...I can't take any of it away. I can't even get him to open up about his father."

"Emma, your husband is a man with three hundred years of heartache," Mary Margaret put a hand on her daughter's shoulder, "You, more than anyone, should understand how painful his past is for him. Not opening up has nothing to do with how much he trusts and loves you."

"I want to be for him what he's always been for me," Emma frowned.

"And you are," Mary Margaret replied, "Be patient. He'll open up when he's ready."
"He's so stubborn," Emma sighed.

"Sounds familiar," Mary Margaret snorted. The teakettle whistled the water was ready.

Leo came darting in with his eager eyes looking towards his mother.

"Do you want hot cocoa too?" Mary Margaret tapped her son's nose.

"Yes, please," Leo bobbed his head vigorously.

"Can you give your sister a hug first?" Mary Margaret requested, "I think she needs one."

Leo darted over to his sister, climbed into her lap and gave her a gigantic hug.

"Thanks, Buddy," Emma reciprocated the hug, "I needed that."

Mary Margaret set the two cups of hot cocoa down for her children. Leo kept himself parked in Emma's lap. Emma helped him cool off the beverage by blowing on it for him. The boy giggled in response. Leo dipped his finger into the whipped cream and tapped Emma's nose with it.

"Hey," Emma quickly reciprocated, much to the little boy's delight.

Mary Margaret smiled at the scene. Nothing made her happier than the sight of her two children together and smiling.

Once Leo's hot cocoa consumed, he hopped off Emma's lap and went back to his bedroom to continue playing leaving mother and daughter to chat without little ears overhearing.

"He's becoming much more social," Emma watched Leo amble off.

"He'll never be the chatterbox Fallon is, but he's conversing more now that he's older," Mary Margaret agreed.

"No one could be the chatterbox Fallon is because she'd never allow it," Emma chuckled before taking a drink from her mug. "You ever think about adding another sibling to our mix?"

"Every now and then David and I talk about it," Mary Margaret admitted.

"What are the results of these conversations?" Emma asked.

"We've been trying but have been unsuccessful," Mary Margaret confessed.

"Oh," Emma responded after a slightly awkward pause, "I'm sorry."

"We've been blessed twice," Mary Margaret reached for her daughter's hand. "There was a time in which we thought we'd never be able to conceive. Whether we are blessed with a third child or not, we love the two we have very much."

"Makes me feel a little guilty," Emma admitted, "I've never actually tried to get pregnant, and have ended up that way three times. I swear Killian blinks at me a certain way, and I pop out a kid nine months later. You and Dad have been trying and nothing."

"Has Killian blinked that way recently?" Mary Margaret asked curiously.

"No," Emma shook her head, "I'm not pregnant."
"Have the two of you discussed such things?" Mary Margaret asked.

"No," Emma's head shook again, "I think we'll wait until Bradyn is out of diapers before we even consider going down baby making road."

"Are you wanting to go down that road again?" Mary Margaret pressed.

"Honestly, our family feels complete," Emma admitted, "I love all my children, and I will enjoy every moment of watching them grown up."

"What if Killian feels differently?" Mary Margaret asked.

"I don't know," Emma sighed, "He's such an amazing father. I would never want to deny him the opportunity if it's something he truly wants. I guess we'll have to cross the bridge when the time is right...What do you know about Avalon?"

"Avalon?" Mary Margaret repeated in surprise, "I haven't heard of Avalon in decades."

"But you've heard of it," Emma concluded.

"Only in bedtime stories," Mary Margaret repeated, "According to the narrations my mother used to read to me, it was where the sword Excalibur was forged. It was said to be a land of magic, but none of the stories ever explained how or why it was magical."

"Killian said it's supposed to be a land like Neverland, a place where no one seemed to age," Emma explained.

"Has he ever been there?" Mary Margaret asked.

"No," Emma shook her head, "He said he'd only ever heard about it in stories...from his father."

"So that is where all this is coming from," Mary Margaret found the missing piece of the puzzle of today's conversation.

Emma glanced at the clock, "I should get back to the cottage. Bradyn was asleep when I left. I'm sure Princess Fallon has woken him by now."

"She is an exuberant child," Mary Margaret laughed.

"Gets it from her papa," Emma stood and offered her mother a hug, "Thanks for listening."

"Always," Mary Margaret returned her hug.

"Have fun winterizing your garden," Emma replied.

"Next year we're going to get you into gardening," Mary Margaret stated.

"Yeah, that's not going to happen," Emma snorted.

Leo came into the entryway to see his big sister off.

"I've gotten more hugs from you today than I've gotten all month," Emma hugged her brother one last time, "I like it."

"Hi, Mama," Fallon greeted her mother upon Emma's return to the cottage.
"Hello, Princess," Emma picked her up in a hug before glancing around the living area, "Where's Henry?"

"At Regina's. He be home to eat though," Fallon replied.

"Where are Bradyn and Papa?"

"It's quiet time," Fallon pressed a finger to her lips and then pointed towards the nursery.

"Really," Emma chuckled, "You've kept quiet the entire time I was gone?"

"Yep," Fallon's head bobbed proudly, "Papa say I have ice cream if I quiet."

"You can have ice cream after dinner," Emma laughed before she kissed her daughter's forehead.

"Do you have a pleasant conversation with your mother?" Killian emerged from the nursery just as Emma was returning Fallon to her feet. Fallon immediately darted over to her little table to create her newest masterpiece.

"Yep," Emma nodded, "It's always good having a little mother daughter bonding time."

"You were missed, Love," Killian advantaged towards her and put his arms around her waist.

"I talked to my mom about Avalon. She'd only ever heard of it in stories her mother used to tell her," Emma replied.

"I suspected as much," Killian nodded.

"I guess it's back to the library we go," Emma frowned.

"What is this 'we' you speak of, Love?" he chuckled.

"We, as in you and me," she replied, "It will do Neal some good to see us as a package deal."

"Is that what we are?" he continued to chuckled.

"Absolutely," she nodded, "If he's tormenting you, he's tormenting me, and he won't torment you if I'm around. It's a win-win."

"Except for having to spend time in Baelfire's company," Killian amended.

"Yes, I suppose the plan does have a few drawbacks, but it also has a few positives," she touched his cheek, "I get to spend more time with you."

"Which is most definitely a positive," he agreed.

"And with three people researching, we're bound to find a solution that much sooner," Emma added.

"Another positive," he replied.

"The sooner this is over, the safer our family will be," she stated.

"Until the next villain arrives anyways," he amended.

"Hey, we're only looking at positives here, Pirate," Emma poked him in the chest sternly.

"My apologies, Love," he chuckled.
"Next afternoon at the library, you and I are study buddies," she replied.

"I look forward to it," he nodded.

"How about we start thinking about dinner?" Emma suggested.

"Aye, and our princess has earned herself a tasty treat," Killian glanced towards their daughter who was thoroughly engrossed in her latest project.

"She did mention something about ice cream," Emma replied, "Bribing her with sugar, again, Hook?"

"It's either that or we have a fussy infant for the rest of the evening," Killian responded, "I chose the lesser of two evils."

"Fair point," Emma smiled, "You want the cooking duty tonight?"

"Aye," he nodded. He reluctantly released his wife and went to the kitchen while Emma went to check on Bradyn. They were just about ready to sit down to dinner, when Henry arrived, hungry and ready to dive into the meal.

"Emma, what are you doing here?" Neal asked when Emma, Killian and Fallon arrived for an afternoon of research a few days later.

"Pitching in," Emma grasped a book from the pile on the table while Killian set up Fallon at a table several steps away with a fresh box of crayons, a brand new coloring book, and several blank pages of paper all to feed her creativity. She was done with allowing Neal's negativity to affect her husband.

"Aren't you supposed to be protecting the town?" Neal watched Emma begin flipping through the pages, "There's an election soon."

"I'm here in the interest of protecting the town. As for the election, I have no interest in campaigning for votes. The town will do what is best for them. If they see someone else is more qualified to protect this town, we'll deal with it," Emma continued flipping. The truth of the matter was she was fairly confident she'd win the election in a landslide. She was running unopposed. Neither of her deputies had put their name on the ballot, even though she knew Regina had tried to convince Robin to do so.

"Where's Bradyn?" Neal asked.

Emma released a slight groan. She was trying to give Neal the hint she had no interest in a discussion with him. She should have known better. Her presence seemed to have the opposite effect.

"With his poppy," Emma replied, "They're having an afternoon of grandfather - grandson bonding time."

"Why are you here?" Neal asked again.

"I'm helping my husband find clues about how to keep this town and our family safe from this new threat," Emma explained.

"Best way to keep this town safe is for him to vacate," Neal muttered.

"You're the reason this threat is here," Emma scowled at him, "You just couldn't keep your mouth
shut. You saw yet another way in which you might be able to get rid of any competition, and you took it."

"That's not what happened," he responded defensively, "I didn't even know Wendy, Michael or John would be alive. I just wanted to go someplace with good memories to be reminded that my life hasn't always been one disappointment after another."

"You're barking up the wrong tree if you're trying to gain sympathy. You lost any chances with me a long time ago," Emma rolled her eyes.

Killian's chuckle at something Fallon said reminded Emma of the task at hand.

"This will go smoother if we don't speak," Emma glared at Neal.

"What have you told Henry about all of this?" Neal asked.

"The truth," Emma replied, "Nothing more, nothing less."

"Every step I take towards earning another chance with him, it always seems like something happens to set me back two steps," Neal grumbled.

"All of which are of your making," Emma snapped at him, "Grow up, Neal, and start taking responsibility for your own actions. While you're at it, stop tormenting my husband at every turn. His past is torment enough."

Neal snorted in reply but said nothing when Killian joined them at the table and began his own task of the day, translating the text from the captain's journal he felt had useful clues.

TBC…
Chapter 16

Disclaimer: In my dreams, maybe. Real life, it's just fun to write.

"I think I have something," Killian spoke out of the blue. He'd been working on translating the journals for days on end. So far all he'd come across were the daily ramblings of a very bored ship captain and the new bride he'd taken aboard. Her adjustments to sea life, though amusing, hadn't offered up any clues until now.

Emma glanced towards him with eager eyes.

Killian glanced down at the words he'd written on the page. "Just when I was afraid my crew and I would allow our sanities to float away like the drift wood in the water, we happened upon the wreckage of another ship. Floating in the water were two young girls. They appeared to be no more than twelve years of age. They were the only survivors of the destroyed ship. Neither have memories of how the ship perished.

"My bride has taken to tending to these two poor souls, shooing away those of my crew who have had impure thoughts. I could not be more in love with my bride at the moment. She has given selflessly her time and possessions of which she has so few to begin with. My hope is to make port one day soon to replenish her wardrobe. She is so deserving."

Killian glanced over a bit more of the ramblings of the captain to more pertinent details.

"Our two new additions to the ship have livened up this downtrodden crew. I've never seen my men smile so much as they have since the girls came on board. It's almost as if they have been put under some sort of spell."

Killian glanced towards Emma. Their eyes locked. Killian scanned down until he got to the next relevant journal entry.

"Some sort of evil appears to have taken over my ship. My usually well-behaved crew have begun turning on each other. Fights are breaking out with a frequency, which is hard to count. Even my first mate as spent time in the brig. What is more curious is when they are brought before me to explain their actions, they have none. They cannot explain what started the disagreements.

"The only bright spot in all of this appears these little showings of force are amusing our two young guests. My lovely wife has been a most gracious host to them, doting on them in a way which makes me yearn to get her with child. Perhaps the gods will grace us soon."

"These two girls..." Emma began.

"Aye, sirens," Killian agreed, "His crew has fallen under their spell."

"How did he resist?" Emma thought out loud.

Rather than answer, Killian read another passage.

"Clara's patience knows no limits. She's kept me from flogging my entire crew for their insubordination. There is no measure for the love I feel for this woman.

"Land has finally been spotted on the horizon. We hope to be in port within the next day. The gods are on our side as our supplies have held. I hope to find these two girls a good home while in port. I
can't help feeling they are somehow responsible for the turbulence within my crew."

"Did everything go back to normal after they left port?" Neal inquired.

"No," Killian shook his head, "Back out to sea. My crew was able to get a much needed few days of liberty. Those days seem to have lifted their spirits.

"Clara and I found no suitable homes for the girls in port. We did however get a lead on suitable housing. It's a few weeks' sail. My men are sailing with an urgency I didn't know they possessed. Perhaps they are eager to be rid of our two passengers...perhaps our two passengers are eager to be rid of us. Their influence on my men grows more curious by the day.

"Clara teases they have bewitched the crew. I suspect her teasing has some sort of truth behind it. The waters in which we found them in were known to be inhabited by mermaids. I don't believe them to be mermaids, but I wonder if they might be sirens. If they are sirens, I wonder further why I have not fallen under their spell."

"Jig is up," Emma found herself spellbound by Killian's narration, perhaps more so by the soothing sound of his voice. She'd lost count of the nights she'd stood at the doorway while he read to both Fallon and Bradyn. "Does he figure out why he's immune?"

"No," Killian shook his head, "Here is his final entry."

"Final entry!" Emma gasped, "What happens?"

"We are sailing towards a mighty storm. I have repeatedly ordered my crew to lower the sails and navigate around it, but my crew refuses to follow my commands. I have sent Clara and the girls below deck. I no longer doubt these girls to be sirens, but they still deserve my protection despite their foolish insistence on convincing my men to sail into the storm. My one wish is for Clara to not be a part of all this foolishness. She is the wind in my sail, the air that I breath. I love her more than life itself."

"That's it!" Emma cried out when Killian ended his story, "Those girls sail a ship into a storm, and they all perished."

"Not all, Love," Killian laid a hand on her shoulder, "Someone must have survived if this book did."

"I hope it was Clara," Emma muttered under her breath.

"It's true love," Killian grasped her hand and rubbed his thumb over her knuckles in hopes of soothing her clearly frazzled thoughts, "The reason he never fell under the sirens' spell. It's written all throughout the pages. He talks all throughout his voyages about his wife and their hopes and dream for the future. Just taking her aboard his ships shows the level of his devotion to her. Most sailors won't risk such an endeavor, choosing to sail home to their bride rather than take her on board."

"You did with Milah," Emma pointed out.

"Aye," Killian glanced towards Neal, "It was her choice...It also explains why I never fell under Wendy's spell in Neverland or on the voyage to return her home."

"And why I did," Neal added reluctantly.

"Is our love going to be tested again?" Emma tangled her fingers with her husband's, "We've already proven we have true love. Only true love would allow the spell to work that restored your hand. It
was your true love for me which made you Pan’s target to save Neverland. I woke you from a
sleeping curse cast by the snow queen."

"I don't think our love will be tested," Killian brought her hand to his lips. Neal looked away from
the pair in disgust.

"If you're immune from Wendy's siren song, what's her play?" Emma asked.

"She's already shown her hand, Love," he replied, "She's aiming for my family. It's time to take the
fight to her."

"How do we do that?" Emma asked.

"Her brothers," Neal chimed in, "They are the only people she has left. Maybe she will listen to them
if I get them on our side."

"Wouldn't they be here with her?" Emma asked.

"Depends on how she got here in the first place," Neal shrugged, "They had adjusted to present day
London far better than Wendy. When I was in London, she was desperate to find a way back to
Neverland. She was convinced Peter had found a way to survive and would get back to him by any
means necessary."

"I watched the island crumble around me," Killian responded, "Pan was stunned by squid ink and
aged beyond recognition. There was no way he could have survived the island's collapse."

"You knew Pan," Neal reminded Killian, "He always had a few screws loose. If she was with him
for that long, he was bound to rub off on her in the worst of ways."

"Would you be willing to help us locate her brothers and try to convince them to help us?" Emma
asked.

"I guess I can try," Neal's head bobbed.

"Mama, I'm hungry," Fallon skipped over and tugged on her mother's shirt.

Emma glanced at her watch. She couldn't believe the time had gotten away from her quite so much.
What was more surprising is her father hadn't called with the need to hand off Bradyn. It was past his
meal time, and he became more than a little grumpy when he was hungry.

"We'd better get going," Emma flipped closed the book she'd been reading.

"I'll reach out to Wendy's brothers and see if they would be willing to help us," Neal offered, "I
should have an answer within a few days."

"In the meantime, the Jones family needs to be extra careful," Emma nudged her husband in the ribs,
"No pre-teen siren is going to hurt our family."

"Aye," Killian lifted Fallon into his arms, "Let's go get your brothers and have dinner."

Fallon bobbed her head.

"I'll stop by the station tomorrow if I have any news," Neal walked with them out of the library.

"Thank you," Emma nodded before they went their separate ways.
"Are we sure we can trust Baelfire with this?" Killian asked on their way to the station to retrieve Bradyn.

"Do we have much of a choice?" Emma countered.

"I was starting to wonder if you'd been abducted," David greeted the trio when they arrived at the station, "Bradyn and I were planning our rescue strategy, weren't we, Bradyn?"

The little boy wanted no more of his grandfather, reaching towards his mother with his arms extended with a pout.

"I'm sorry, Sweetheart," Emma lifted him into her arms, "It's past your mealtime, and I know you're hungry. We should have brought a snack along for him."

"I fed him cheerios about an hour ago," David stated.

"Which only delayed his fussiness," Emma kissed her son's forehead, "Time got away from us today. I'll fill you in on our find when you arrive for your shift tomorrow. Thanks again for watching Bradyn."

"Always happy to spend time with my grandchildren," David pecked at Fallon's cheek before the family left.

"We know how to combat someone from falling under a siren's spell, but what good does it do us?" Emma asked her husband on the rooftop of their home later that evening.

"I honestly don't know," Killian frowned, "It's not like we can cast some sort of spell on the townspeople to find true love so they won't turn on us."

"At least we know you and my dad are safe," Emma turned to peck at his cheek.

"Aye," he nodded, "It could be an interesting anthropologic study of the townspeople's relationships. True love or not true love..."

"That is the question," Emma giggled at her paraphrase of one of Shakespeare's most famous lines, "I wonder what the outcome will be for Robin and Regina."

"Ruby and Victor," Killian added.

"I hope this test doesn't ruin that relationship," Emma frowned, "Ruby's finally gotten to a place where she's thinking of a relationship with a future. She deserves that...We need to draw this little siren out."

"Easier said than done," Killian frowned, "She's only going to appear when she thinks it's to her advantage. For her to think she has an advantage, she's going to have to spot a vulnerability of mine to exploit, which is you and the children. I refuse to put you or the children in harms way."

"The only way to keep them safe is to take them away from Storybrooke, and that's not a solution. We are not going to start a precedence where were going to run when our family is in danger," Emma replied.

"Perhaps it's best for me to run," Killian thought out loud, "Or at least draw her away from Storybrooke."

"These aren't your thoughts, they're Neal's," Emma scowled at him, "Running is not the solution"
either. We're a package deal, you and me. Someone messes with you, they're messing with me."

"What if she thought we weren't a package deal?" Killian offered.

"Where are you going with this?" she asked.

"Perhaps put out the appearance we're having troubles," he replied, "Perhaps even make her think her threats to our family have put a question in your mind as to whether or not I'm a good influence on our children."

"No," Emma shook her head, "I will not do something like that, not to you, not to our children. That's not something Fallon will understand. Even worse it could traumatize her."

"I don't want that either, but I also don't want to see her hurt or possibly worse," Killian countered.

"No," Emma held firm, "She still has nightmares about her encounter with the stupid snow queen, Sabella, and me losing my memory."

"I don't know what else we can do," Killian replied.

"There has to be something," Emma responded, "Regina's dad was in love with a siren. That even resulted in Sabella. Cora neutralized her by taking out her vocal cords. Maybe we could do that."

"You mean when she ripped out the siren's vocal cords," Killian amended. "If you'd made that suggestion four years ago, I probably wouldn't have thought twice about doing it, but my life has changed...I've changed. I don't know if I have that in me."

"I'm not saying we go the gruesome route," Emma replied, "There has to be a spell we could cast or something to neutralize her. Maybe we can talk to Regina."

"We'll discuss the situation with Regina in the morning," Killian agreed.

"We're going to figure this out, and we're going to do it together like we've always done since that first climb up the beanstalk," Emma tugged on his jacket.

"What I wouldn't give for a beanstalk to climb right now," Killian theorized.

"What? Why?" she sputtered in response.

"To watch you climb," Killian smirked, "You were quite sexy with all simmering anger inside you."

"You were quite irritating," she shook her head in amusement, "You could always see right through me."

"You're an open book to me, Love," he pecked at her neck, inhaling the faint scent of the perfume she applied that morning.

"I'm glad you enjoy reading so much," she sighed.

"Shall we retire for the evening?" he asked, "I could do with story time this evening."

"So could I," Emma tugged on his jacket, "I'll race you to bed."

"I wish you'd come to me sooner," Regina stated at the end of Emma's tale about the new threat to the town. She quickly crossed the room to pursue her collection of books.
"Does that mean you know how to handle this?" Emma asked hopefully.

"I haven't a clue," Regina responded, "If you'd come to me sooner, I could have already started my research."

"With all due respect, Regina, we just figured out what was happening," Emma replied.

"You should have come to me when Mister Tillman confessed to his crime," Regina held firm.

"Well, I'm coming now," Emma stated, "We need your help. Your mother was able to eliminate a siren, so there must be some sort of record or research or something."

"My mother never kept anything but hearts from her kills," Regina explained.

"Like mother, like daughter," Emma muttered under her breath before clearing her throat, "Look, I'm asking for your help. My family appears to be in danger. I've already ended up in the hospital once. I'd like to keep my children from ending up there as well. One of those children is your son, so if you won't help me, help Henry."

"I intend to," Regina responded calmly, "The pirate isn't exactly my favorite person, but he's Henry's stepfather and a very important person to our son."

"Thank you," Emma sighed in relief.

"So true love is the anecdote to a siren's song," Regina flipped open her book, "I must say I'm not surprised my father fell under the siren's spell then. My parents' marriage was one of convenience."

"I'm sorry," Emma responded, not knowing what else she could say.

"At least you and your parents don't need to worry about being tested," Regina frowned while flipping through the book.

"Regina, if you're worried about you and Robin, I wouldn't be. I see it in the way you look at each other. It's the real deal," Emma stated.

"I appreciate your vote of confidence," Regina gave her a brief smile, "I'll let you know how my research goes."

"The election is next week," Emma fidgeted nervously, "I know you were hoping Robin would run."

"It wouldn't have made much of a difference," Regina replied, "You would still win in a landslide. The town is very happy with how you handle the law enforcement, and Robin says you are more than fair in how you handle the managerial aspects of the job."

"I guess for better or worse, we'll be stuck with each other for another four years," she smiled, "At least you and I are on better terms now than when I first was named sheriff."

"We have come a long ways," Regina snorted.

"Good luck on Tuesday," Emma responded.

"Sheriff Jones, I believe I'll finally be able to afford that new police cruiser in next year's budget," Regina called out when Emma turned to leave.

"I would greatly appreciate it. It's much needed," Emma smiled, "We'll talk soon."
TBC...
Chapter 17

Disclaimer: In my dreams, maybe. Real life, it's just fun to write.

Reports of curious activity began popping up all over town in the days leading up to the town's election. Emma, David and Robin were busier than ever trying to keep up with the calls.

At the end of each visit, the citizens would voice their support for Emma and her leadership.

"Tomorrow's election is going to be a slam dunk," Henry proclaimed at dinner the night before the election.

"Slam dunk?" Killian raised a confused brow. Still a few years later, the Storybrooke slang continued to bewilder him with a frequency which amused his wife.

"She's going to win by a lot," Henry explained.

"Awe, yes," Killian agreed.

"I hope so," Emma gave her family a jittery smile, "I'm a bit nervous. If the town votes someone else into office, both me and Dad could be out of a job, perhaps even Robin."

"We'd manage, Love," Killian assured her.

"Perhaps I should have campaigned a bit," Emma sighed.

"I don't know what you're worried about," Henry replied, "You're running unopposed. Even if someone started a write in campaign it wouldn't be coordinated enough to gain the votes needed."

"I appreciate your vote of confidence," Emma gave her son a smile.

After dinner, Emma and Fallon had a mother-daughter evening of pampering. Emma painted her daughter's fingers and toes, and Fallon returned the favor with crazy colors for Emma's fingernails.

"Such a little artist," Emma kissed her daughter's forehead after inspecting her daughter's work.

"Do you like it, Mama?" Fallon looked to her mother with stars in her eyes, clearly eager for her mother's approval.

"Of course," Emma beamed with pride, "I love it, almost as much as I love you."

"That's a lot," Fallon smiled proudly.

"A whole lot," Emma laughed, "How about you get your pajamas on, and I'll read you a bedtime story?"

"Okay," Fallon darted towards her bedroom to change.

"Let's see those fingers," Killian grasped his wife's hand to inspect their daughter's work.

"She does good work," Emma wiggled her fingers a bit, "She managed to keep color only on the nails."

"Interesting colors for you," Killian snickered at the multicolored fingernails his wife was sporting.
"I like it," Emma inspected her nails again.

"Then so do I," Killian replied.

Fallon called out for her mother.

"Henry is finishing his homework and then vows to turn in. I'll see to it that Bradyn is tucked in. I'll meet you in the bedroom."

"Deal," Emma smiled.

In the bedroom after everyone was tucked into bed, Killian did his best to distract his wife from the election the next day.

Emma sat by the phone after the polls closed. She tried to distract herself with a magazine. Every time the phone rang, she leapt for it. She rejected every call, wanting to keep the lines open for when Regina called with the final results. Killian watched each leap with amusement.

"It's going to take a bit of time, Love," Killian glanced up from his book. "Regina vowed she'd call with news the minute the results are available."

"It's just taking a long time," Emma gave up on her magazine. She couldn't focus anyways. "How long can it take to count out the votes?"

"Shall I provide a method of distraction?" he raised a suggestive brow.

"Tempting," Emma snorted, "I want to be available when the phone rings."

"If you change your mind, you know where to find me," he wagged his brow a bit and returned his focus to his book.

Max must have sensed Emma uneasiness and came over with his leash in his mouth. Emma often wondered who trained the dog to do this, but it was his routine whenever he wanted to go for a walk.

"Good idea, Boy," Emma took the leash from him and hooked it to his collar, "Max and I are going to stretch our legs."

"And if the mayor happens to call?" Killian asked.

"That's where cellphones come in handy," Emma pocketed her phone and then went to the front door to grab her jacket. "If Regina calls the house number, tell her to call my cell."

"Aye," Killian rose from his seat to offer her a kiss before she left.

"I'll be back soon," Emma vowed, "I just need to walk off some of this nervousness."

"I shall hold down the fort," he caressed her chin.

"I love you," she felt herself getting choked up for some reason.

"And I you," he pecked at her lips a second time before she left with Max tugging on his leash.

"Where'd Mom go?" Henry emerged from his bedroom having just finished his homework. He always put his bag next to the front door so he wouldn't forget it in the usual morning rush.

"She was a big anxious for the election results and felt she needed a spot of exercise to calm her
nerves," Killian explained. "Max is always up for a walk."

"I don't know why she's so nervous," Henry frowned. "Everyone in town was voting for her."

"You know your mum is a bit of a pessimist, Lad," Killian patted his stepson's shoulder.

"She's saved this town from danger so many times," Henry added, "No way they would vote her out of office now."

"I hope so," Killian gave his son a reassuring smile, "I'm going to make some chamomile tea for when your mum returns. Did you want some?"

"Nah," Henry shook his head, "Do you mind if I watch some television until its bedtime?"

"As long as you keep the volume low so you don't wake your sister," Killian replied.

"I won't," Henry vowed while locating the remote.

Killian went to the kitchen and put the teakettle on the stove to heat. With any luck, the water would be boiled by the time Emma returned with their dog.

Emma wandered the sidewalks close to her cottage for nearly twenty minutes. Max seemed content to wander along side her, stopping occasionally to sniff out various spots along the way. Emma's original hesitation to have a dog had vanished. The dog had wormed his way into her heart.

Just when the pair where about to return from the cottage, Emma's phone rang. The caller ID told her it was Regina. She quickly answered. "It's about time."

"There is no easy way to say this, Ms. Jones, but…" Regina began.

"I lost!" Emma gasped, "How is that possible? I ran unopposed."

"We are reviewing matters and looking into our options," Regina replied. "There is the potential of filing an injunction to get the results thrown out and then hold a new election."

"What?" Emma asked, "Who won the election?"

"Mister Cassidy, I'm afraid," Regina replied.

"Neal!" Emma exclaimed, "Are you serious?"

"In a rather convincing fashion. The pattern is extremely suspicious."

"Magically suspicious," Emma asked.

"Like I said, we're looking into the matter," Regina replied, "Until all issues are settled, you will continue to hold office."

"What about the mayoral results?" Emma asked, "Did the voters vote Gold to that position?"

"Thankfully no," Regina replied, "Surprisingly the results there swung in my favor…I truly am sorry, Emma. Know you have my full support in this matter."

"Is it even legal for Neal to be named sheriff?" Emma asked, "He's a convicted felon."

"It is one of the avenues we will be pursuing," Regina assured her. "We can talk more tomorrow. I
am working on getting legal representation for the city on this matter. If this matter goes to the courts, we'll need to make sure we are adequately represented."

"Who is our usual legal representative?" Emma asked. As far as she knew, they didn't have a city attorney nor a town prosecutor. Neal's case had never gotten to the trial phase as he'd signed a confession to all charges Emma and David had charged him with. The state attorney presided over the sentencing.

"I don't believe we can use our usual legal representative due to conflicts of interest," Regina began.

"It's Gold, isn't it?" Emma concluded.

"It has been in the past," Regina confirmed.

"Maybe we should push Henry towards law school," Emma thought out loud, "At least then we'd have fair representation in city matters."

"You bring that option up with him," Regina sighed, "He's so damn set on joining the Navy or Coast Guard or some sort of sailing pursuit. It's nearly all he talks about."

"That's Killian's influence," Emma replied. She could practically hear Regina's eye roll over the phone.

"I will call when I have more news. In the meantime, we will carry on as usual. I have more calls to make."

"Thanks for the call, Regina."

Reality hit Emma when she disconnected. She dissolved into tears after finding a nearby bench. Max must have realized her need for comfort and hopped up on the bench and made himself comfortable in her lap. Emma hugged the sheepdog like her life depended on him to keep her afloat. She refused to believe the town could think Neal Cassidy was better equipped to protect the town than she was, but if the results were legitimate that's exactly what they told her.

"Emma, Love," Killian found her a short while later. David had called only minutes earlier with the news. He immediately set out to find her, leaving Henry to watch his siblings. Killian's heart broke for the sight he found.

Max jumped off the bench to make room for his master, allowing Killian to hold Emma, offering what comfort he could.

"What are we going to do, Killian?" Emma asked with her first composed breath, "We need both incomes to support our family."

"We will manage," he assured her, "I still have a bit of hidden treasure we can sell to support ourselves if needed."

"You do?" she wiped at her eyes to remove her tears.

"I was a pirate for three centuries, Love," he reminded her, "I amassed quite a fortune. I simply would need to locate it and dig it up."

"Why is this just coming up now?" she asked.

"Our needs are fairly simple, Love," he brushed hair away from her face, "Had I truly thought we
needed it, I would have retrieved it, but we've always been able to make ends meet."

"So you're saying we'll be okay?" Emma felt the despair lift just a bit.

"Aye," he nodded, "I will support you and our family."

"Thank you," she touched his chin, her fingers savoring the stubble.

"Come, Love," Killian rose to his feet and pulled her up, "I was making tea for your return, but I believe hot cocoa would be more favorable for this predicament."

"With whip cream and cinnamon?" she asked, swaying sweetly like their daughter would.

"Is there any other way to serve it, Love?" he smiled. He claimed Max's leash from her hands and pulled his wife along.

"Henry already knows?" Emma asked.

"Aye," he nodded.

"Let's not tell Fallon just yet," Emma replied, "Regina's working on getting the results overturned and holding another election. I don't want Fallon to have to worry about things changing if they won't."

"As you wish," he brought her hand to his lips.

"So how much fortune do you really have?" Emma asked curiously, looking for anything else to focus on at the moment than her crushing defeat at the polls.

"Do you want a dollar figure?" he chuckled, "That might take a bit of time and search."

"How about we start with the kinds of treasure you have," she suggested, "Is any of it here in Storybrooke?"

"No," he shook his head, "We would need to jump realms first."

"That's going to be a bit of a challenge," Emma frowned, "There aren't any magic beans in town. Regina used the last of them for her round trip honeymoon."

"We don't need beans, Love," he smiled, "We just need a bit of pixie dust."

"What else are you keeping from me, Killian?" she caught his cryptic response.

"It's not exactly something I've kept a secret," Killian confessed, "Well, I take that back. I have kept it a secret, but it's not exactly my secret."

"Then who's is it?" Emma scowled at her husband.

"Henry's," Killian replied, "It's best to let him explain."

"And explain it he will," Emma pressed her lips together.

"Mom, I'm sorry," Henry's arms came around her waist immediately upon her entering the cottage.

"Thanks, Kid, but we need to talk about something else right now. Apparently you and your stepfather are keeping secrets from me. What's this about not needing beans to jump realms?" Emma
"Oh, he told you about that," Henry glanced down at his feet and shifted nervously.

"He told me all we need is pixie dust," Emma replied, "Tell me you didn't take the ash from Jefferson's hat we used to get to Neverland and back."

"I didn't take all of it," he replied.

"Henry Daniel Mills, what did you do?" Emma stared him down.

"I didn't do anything really," he stated, "It just got on me."

"Give me a straight answer, Henry, or your grounded for five years," Emma demanded.

"When you guys got back from Neverland, the second time, I hugged Neal...before he got arrested. The dust used to get to Neverland was somehow on his clothes. When we hugged, it transferred to me. It's not much, but I kept it."

"Is that small amount even enough to be useful?" Emma asked.

"I think so," Henry nodded, "It's not enough to send a lot of people through a portal, but it should be enough for a couple of people. I'm not totally sure. Mom's books at the manor don't really give a lot of detail about portal travel."

"Why didn't you tell me you had this dust?" Emma crossed her arms in front of her.

"I didn't want you telling me to give it back," he frowned, "I'm not planning to use it now, but maybe someday I'll want to see Grandpa and Grandma's world. I couldn't go with Mom and Robin when they took Roland because of school, but someday I want to see it."

"I get that," Emma replied, "One day maybe we'll all go back, but I hope we can all go as a family."

"Yeah, I'd want that too," Henry bobbed his head.

"How about you give me the dust, and I'll lock it up in the safe upstairs. If we decide to return to the Enchanted Forest, we'll decide as a family," Emma suggested.

"Yeah, okay, I'll go get it," Henry nodded.

Emma watched him go with his head down.

"And you, Captain Jones, need to learn which secrets to keep with Henry and which you need to share with his mother," Emma poked at Killian's chest.

"My apologies, Love," Killian gave her his best puppy dog expression, "I'm only trying to keep the lad's trust."

"I know," Emma sighed, "I'll smooth things over with him in the morning."

"I appreciate it," Killian nodded.

Henry returned with the small vial of dust. There was barely enough to fill the vial a quarter of the way. She wondered how much dust it truly would take to return them all to Storybrooke, but she was pretty sure this wouldn't be enough. She wondered how Killian planned to retrieve treasure with such a small amount.
"What's my punishment?" Henry asked.

"Only to relinquish control of the dust to me and Killian," Emma ruffled his hair.

"Okay," Henry nodded, "May I watch television some more? I still have an hour or so until lights out."

"Sure," she nodded, "Anything good on?"

"The Christmas movies are starting already," Henry responded, "The Santa Clause is on. I always liked that one."

"Yeah, me too," Emma nodded, "Mind if I join you?"

"Sure," Henry nodded.

"I'll make the hot cocoa," Killian offered.

"Thanks, Babe," she offered him a smile before settling on the sofa with her arm around her son.

"So what happens if you have to give up the sheriff's job?" Henry asked.

"We're still working on that," Emma replied.

"Are we going to be okay, you know moneywise if you're out of a job?" he pressed.

"That's nothing for you to worry about," Emma assured him, "Even if I'm out of work, we'll manage. We may have to cut back on meals at Granny's, but we'll be just fine."

"Okay," Henry nodded, "Do you think Neal did this on purpose?"

"I don't know," Emma frowned, "I don't want to believe he did. He's been trying so hard to win back your trust. I have to believe he'd know sabotaging an election wouldn't be the way to go about it."

"If he was involved, I don't want anything to do with him anymore," Henry stated.

"Henry, I know you're still mad at Neal for all the bad things he's done, but…" Emma began.

"No," Henry cut her off, "I'm tired of you making excuses for him. You had it rough too, but you never blamed someone else for your mistakes. You never set anyone else up to take the fall for you. He's done that more than once. If he hadn't left you in Portland to pay for his crime, you and I might have always been a family. You wouldn't have felt like you had to give me up. If that wasn't enough, then he has to go set up Killian just to get him out of the way."

"And he's paid for his crimes," Emma replied.

"Has he?" Henry challenged him, "He spent eleven months in jail, so what? You and me lost eleven years."

"Henry, I don't know what I would have done back then. I want to believe so much that I would have done what is right by you, but I was just a kid. I was only a few years older than you are now," Emma reminded him.

"Are you saying you would have given me up for adoption even if you hadn't been in jail?" he asked.
"I don't know," she frowned, "What I do know is when I gave you up, I did so because I wanted you to have your best chance at a happy family."

"I have that now," Henry reminded her.

"Yes, you do," Emma smiled, "But it took us going through everything to get here."

"Yeah, I guess," he nodded.

"You know I love you, right?" Emma ran her fingers through Henry's unruly mob of hair. It was clearly time for him to get a haircut.

"Yeah, I know," his head continued to bob.

"And I've always loved you," she added, "From the moment I found out about you, I loved you."

Henry fell silent, his head coming to rest against Emma's shoulder. Killian stepped in to offer the prepared hot cocoa.

Emma and Killian traded looks. She knew he'd heard the entire conversation.

TBC…
Chapter 18

Disclaimer: If I owned them, I'd be living in a much larger home, so nope, not mine.

"Oh, Emma," Mary Margaret greeted her daughter with a consoling hug when the Jones family arrived at Granny's for breakfast, "I'm so sorry."

"It's okay," Emma assured her, "Killian and I talked last night. We'll be okay."

"Still, I can't believe anyone would truly vote for Neal," Mary Margaret replied.

"Regina's looking into what we can do to correct things," Emma replied, "Until then it's business as usual."

The diner fell silent when Neal entered the café. No one ventured over to congratulate or even acknowledge him when he took a seat at the counter and flipped over the coffee cup in front of him.

"Do you think Neal had anything to do with the fix?" Mary Margaret spoke softly in her daughter's ear.

"We're assuming there is a fix," Emma replied, "Maybe that isn't the case."

"Oh, be real," Mary Margaret rolled her eyes, "Who in their right mind is going to vote for a felon to keep us safe?"

"I'm a felon," Emma reminded her.

"That's completely different," Mary Margaret waved off Emma's reply, "You were young and set up to take the fall for his crime."

"I wasn't making excellent choices, Mom," Emma replied, "I could just as easily gone to prison for a crime I did commit."

"It's still different," Mary Margaret replied, "You've proven to have turned your life around. Neal hasn't."

"I won't argue with you there," Emma sighed.

Granny came over to take the family's breakfast order, taking a few moments from the busy breakfast rush to chat with the always entertaining Fallon.

"Sheriff, I hope you know I voting for you," Granny replied.

"I appreciate your confidence in me," Emma took a drink from her coffee cup.

"Anyone who didn't has taken a leave of their senses?" Granny added, loud enough for the entire diner to hear.

If Neal heard, he made no indications of it. Emma almost felt bad for him. This latest twist was another dagger in Neal's attempt to rehabilitate his image.

As the townspeople finished up their morning meals, nearly every one of them stopped by to assure Emma they voted for her. The attention she was receiving was almost embarrassing, but she was also touched by their words of support.
"I think Regina's going to have a good case for overturning the election results," Mary Margaret stated while the family gathered their coats and gloves to brave the chilly temperatures outdoors. "That's at least thirty of the registered voters in town to vocalize their support."

"I guess we'll see how things go," Emma bent down to help Fallon with her mittens and stocking hat. "If you get cold onboard the Jolly Roger, you tell Papa right away. I don't want you getting a cold before the holidays."

"Okay, Mama," Fallon's head bobbed.

"I'll see you later at the library," Emma pecked at her cheeks, drawing a laugh from the little girl.

"I love you, Mama," Fallon hugged her tight around the neck.

"I love you too, Princess," Emma tapped at her nose and then rose to her feet to address her husband, "Make sure Bradyn keeps his mittens on. You know how he likes to pull them off. He doesn't need frostbitten fingers."

"I'll be most diligent," Killian replied.

"I know you will," she kissed Bradyn's cheeks, "Be a good little lad for Papa."

"We'll be in around lunchtime," Killian stated, "We'll meet at the library."

"Yep, I'll be there, unless we get bombarded with calls at the station," Emma nodded, "We still need to figure out how to counteract a siren's charms."

Fallon was pulling at her father's hand. She was most anxious for her day at sea.

"I love you, Swan," he bent in for a kiss of his own.

"I love you too," she flashed him a wide smile, "Keep your ship off the rocks."

"I'll do my best," he chuckled.

Emma walked with her father to the station where Robin was eagerly waiting to be relieved from his overnight shift.

"More nuisance calls?" Emma eyed the stack of paperwork, which had grown overnight.

"Seven since you left last night," Robin nodded, "All nuisance calls, all with puzzled eyewitnesses."

"This little siren has been a busy bee," Emma shed her jacket and took her seat.

"I'll say," Robin agreed, "Several dozen nuisance calls throughout the past few weeks and now a fixed election."

"I wonder if these nuisance calls have any relationship to yesterday's election," David thought out loud, "Siren's charms work mostly by hypnotizing their prey. Maybe she left subliminal messages to change these citizens' votes."

"Interesting theory," Emma looked through the stack of files, "Don't know how we're going to prove it though. I don't know if it's ethical to go back to all these people and ask if they voted incorrectly because a pesky little girl told them to. Votes are supposed to be confidential."

"It's worth a shot," David replied, "With the sheriff's budget already tight, one of us will be out of a
job if the election results are upheld. You and I have mortgages which the banks require us to pay each month."

"If it comes down to it, I'll relinquish my shield," Robin spoke up, "I'm the newest to the position, and Regina and I do not depend on my income the way your families do."

"That's very generous of you, Robin, but no one is falling on their swords just yet," Emma replied, "We'll just let everything play out before we decide the next steps to take."

"Emma's right," David nodded his head. 

Robin left a short while later. The phone rang immediately with yet another nuisance call. 

"Someone needs to teach this little girl a lesson," Emma groaned when she picked up a radio and the keys for the squad car.

"Be careful," David warned her, "No wrapping the squad car around another power pole."

"It might be a way to get the blasted car replaced," Emma replied.

"Don't even think about it," David scowled at her, "One trip to the hospital is enough."

"I'll be back in a bit," Emma stated, "Radio if you get any more calls."

"Will do," David picked up the report he'd been working on the previous day before she left.

"Morning…Sheriff?" Aurora looked puzzled by Emma's presence in the dress shop she worked in.

"We received a call of a disturbance," Emma explained her seemingly sudden appearance. She'd become quite accustom to these perplexed conversations over the past few weeks.

"No disturbance here," Aurora replied, "Are you sure you have the right address?"

"Yeah," Emma nodded, "Have you seen anything unusual lately? Anyone hanging around who is new to town?"

"No one I can remember," Aurora shook her head.

"If you see anyone out of the ordinary, let me or one of my deputies know," Emma requested.

"I'm sorry you came down here for nothing," Aurora gave her a sympathetic smile.

"It's the job," Emma replied.

"I heard about the election results. I hope you know you had the support of both Phillip and myself," Aurora added.

"Thank you," Emma replied, "I appreciate your support."

Emma returned to the station only to be called out again and again. Each caller was as puzzled as the last. Each person she encountered assured her they had voted for her.

"She's taunting us," David proclaimed on the walk back to the station.

"I wish she'd just get on with her master plan," Emma replied.

"It would help if we were prepared," David responded.
"Maybe we're focusing on the wrong thing," Emma thought out loud. "Okay, she's a siren, but she's also just a little girl. Unless she's hypnotizing an army of followers, she's on her own."

"What about her brothers?" David asked, "Has Neal been able to get in touch with them?"

"He hasn't said one way or the other," Emma shrugged, "Honestly with everything going on, I've completely forgotten to ask."

"Are you expecting an honest answer when you do ask?" David inquired.

"I wish I could answer that," Emma sighed heavily, "I guess part of me wants to believe the person I knew in Oregon was real and what we had was real. He claims it was, claims to have been pining away for me from the day we were separated, but reality tells a completely different story.

"Even if we skim over the fact he could have sprung me from jail just by telling the truth, look at how I found him. He knew I was in Storybrooke. August told him as much. He could have found me, but he didn't. When I found him in New York, he wasn't happy to see me. He'd moved on. He was engaged to a sociopath. It wasn't until her true colors were revealed that suddenly he was interested in me.

"In the interim, I found Killian. He weaseled his way into my affections and suddenly I couldn't imagine a life without him. I felt bad for hurting Neal, but what was I supposed to do? Was I supposed to stay miserable for the rest of my life just so I didn't hurt his feelings?"

"No one blames you for following your heart," David put his arm around her shoulders, "You simply followed in your parents' footsteps."

"Honestly, it's kind of intimidating following in the footsteps of your legacy. You two have beaten the odds so many times and found each other every time life separated you. I didn't expect it was possible to find the kind of love you have with Mom, and then suddenly it's staring back at me with these impossibly blue eyes and swashbuckling charm," Emma replied, "I never stood a chance, did I?"

"It's no secret how unimpressed I was with Hook at first," David reminded her, "However, I was about as wrong as I could be about him. He does have a…colorful past, but despite his past or perhaps because of it, he treated you with the love, respect and adoration every father dreams his daughter will find."

"Prince Charming is such a sap," Emma bumped him with her hip.

"Blame your mother," he released a hearty chuckle.

"Do you think there will ever come a time when we've faced all the villains from the past and are able to just live our lives?" Emma asked.

"I doubt it," David gave a resigned sigh, "One thing I do know, with true love on our side, we're always going to have an advantage."

"Do you still get butterflies when you see Mom after time apart?" Emma asked.

"Every day," David confirmed.

"Mom told me the two of you are trying for another sibling," Emma broached the subject carefully, "I hope you're successful because you two are the type of parents I always wished I'd have while growing up in the awful foster care system. I'm lucky to have finally found you both."
"We're lucky to have you," David kissed the crown of her head.

"I kind of hope you have another boy," Emma admitted.

"You're putting the cart before the horse, Emma," David chuckled, "But why another boy?"

"I like being Daddy's little girl," she replied, "It's something Fallon and I share."

David hooted with laughter.

"Seriously, Dad, if having another baby, even if it ends up being a girl, is what you want, I hope you get it," Emma stated, "You're the best parents. Leo and I are very lucky."

"It's your mother and I who are lucky," David planted another kiss to her forehead before they entered the station. Unsurprisingly several more nuisance calls awaited them.

"New rule," Emma announced, "The only way we investigate these calls if is something is reported missing or vandalized. We're just spinning ourselves in circles."

"Good rule," David glanced at the clock on the wall, "I'll make sure to tell Robin. Shouldn't you be heading to the library?"

"Yes," Emma confirmed, "If you need me, you know where to find me."

Emma took a deep breath to prepare herself for her library stint. She was going to have to sit across the table from the man voted to replace her as sheriff. If Regina couldn't find a way to overturn the results, he could either be her boss or fire her outright. It would be a tricky dance.

"Hello, Love," Killian greeted her just before entering the library.

"Perfect timing," Emma leaned in for a kiss, "Where's Bradyn and Fallon?"

"Ruby is watching them. She was very excited by the prospect as was Fallon," Killian explained, "She took them to the cottage."

"Are you ready for this?" Emma took a deep breath while reaching for the doorknob.

"I had a thought of retrieving my sword," Killian admitted.

"If you can't handle this, perhaps it's best for you to go home," Emma stopped herself from opening the door, "We don't need to be escalating things with Neal right now."

"I'll do my best to keep things civil, provided the incentive is adequate," he raised a suggestive brow.

"You have such a one track mind sometimes," she rolled her eyes.

"Can you blame me?" he chuckled, "I have quite the seductive wife."

"Behave," Emma touched her hand to his chest, "We'll discuss terms after."

"A bit backwards, Love," he followed her into the library.

Belle greeted them with a slightly unsettled smile.

"Is everything alright, Belle?" Emma tried to translate the uneasy greeting from a usually cheerful librarian.
"It's been an interesting morning," Belle gave a cryptic response. "I'll leave Baelfire to provide the details. He's in the back."

"Okay," Emma tugged on her husband's hand.

"Hey, Emma," Neal greeted her with a tense smile.

"Everything alright?" Emma asked, "Belle gave us the impression something is going on."

"My father and I had a disagreement this morning," Neal confessed.

"How does that concern me, Killian or our current predicament?" Emma pressed.

"I told my father of my intention to decline the sheriff's office if the election results are not able to be overturned," Neal explained, "My father disagreed."

"Of course he did," Killian rolled his eyes, only to be silenced by Emma's stern look.

"Why this sudden offer of goodwill?" Emma remained skeptical of his motives.

"I don't want any part of Wendy's trickery. I'm trying to show Henry I am capable of doing the honorable thing. Perhaps this is a good first step. Besides you're a much better sheriff than I could ever be," Neal explained.

Killian snorted in reply.

"I appreciate your offer," Emma replied, "If this town truly did vote me from office, I will step down."

"We all know those results are forged," Neal stated, "You heard Granny at the diner. No one in their right mind would have voted for me to be sheriff. You have a family and a home, which needs your income to support. All I have is a tab at Granny's. I'll be fine."

"You'll have to forgive me for thinking there might be ulterior motives here," Emma gave him a skeptical look.

"I know it's a gesture unlike me, but I really am trying," Neal responded.

"Okay," Emma nodded, "I'll tell Regina. She'll probably need you to write a formal statement to decline the position."

"I'll do whatever is needed," Neal nodded, "I've reached out to Michael and Peter. They've attempting to get in touch with their sister. She apparently disappeared one night. They thought perhaps she found her way to Neverland, but knowing she's here, they're worried. They're on their way."

"When should we be expecting them?" Emma asked.

"Any day," Neal shrugged.

"Should we expect them to be friends or foes?"

"Friends, I hope," Neal replied, "I honestly don't know. I know they were concerned about their sister's disappearance and were relieve when I told them of her whereabouts. I don't know if they support Wendy's apparent mission to get revenge on Jones."
Emma released a heavy sigh. This town didn't need any additional troublemakers. "Let's continue looking for a solution to this problem."

Neal nodded and returned to his seat. He picked up where he left off when Emma and Killian arrived earlier.

Killian picked up the sailor's journal he'd been translating. Something told him he hadn't unlocked all the details he was meant to uncover in this book.

Emma tangled the fingers of her free hand with her husband's while flipping through her book. She was deep in concentration when Killian's gasp and flexing of his fingers caught her attention.

"Everything okay, Killian?" Emma turned her attention towards her husband.

"There are markings in the back pages of this journal…familiar markings," Killian replied.

"Familiar how?" Emma glanced at the pages. She too recognized the marking. The only memento Killian had ever shown her of his brother's had the identical marking. "What is that, Killian?"

"It's the Jones family crest," Killian's fingers traced the mark.

"Are you saying this book has some connection to your family?" Emma asked.

"That actually explains how the book became mixed into the pile," Neal chimed in. "My father sent out similar items for me to find in all the realms as a way to contact me. He put spells on them so no matter where I was, they would find their way to me. Maybe this book was sent to you."

"All these pages after the mark are blank," Killian frowned, "I've translated every other entry."

"Read through it again," Emma encouraged him. "Now that we know the captain encounter sirens, maybe there is something you missed earlier which could be of use to us."

Killian gave her a slight nod and then returned to the book. He couldn't shake the feeling he was onto something. The blank pages had some significance.

"I'm going cross-eyed," Emma stated after several hours of research, "Same time tomorrow?"

"Yeah," Neal nodded.

"I'm going to take this book with me," Killian stated.

"Since it found you, it's yours," Neal agreed.

"I want to check in at the station before going home," Emma told her husband after making their farewells to Belle. "Did you want to come with me or meet at the cottage?"

"How long do you think it will take?" Killian asked.

"Five minutes," Emma shrugged, "Unless Robin and my dad need something."

"I'll go with you," Killian grasped her hand and brought it to his lips.

"I don't know what to think of Neal's offer to recuse himself from the sheriff's position," Emma confessed. "I can't help feeling there are strings attached."

"Aye, because Baelfire is more like his father than he'll ever admit," Killian agreed, "I have my
hesitations as well."

Emma and Killian stepped into the station. Robin and David were huddled together, obviously discussing something important.

"What's going on?" Emma asked.

"Oh, we didn't know you would be swing by after you were done at the library," David's head snapped towards the sound of her voice.

"I repeat, what's going on?" Emma asked again.

"Robin and I were just discussing the election results," David cleared his throat.

"What are these discussions you're having?" Emma inquired.

"If Neal takes office, David and I both intend to resign," Robin spoke up.

"Guys, seriously, you don't need to fall on your swords for me," Emma was touched by the unnecessary offer, "I spoke to Neal, and…"

"Emma, it would never feel right working for someone else," her father cut her off.

"Dad, stop," Emma halted him from going further, "Neal is going to decline the sheriff's office. He told me so this afternoon."

"I'll believe that when I see it," Robin snorted in disbelief.

"If he thinks it will make a favorable impression on Henry, he'll do it," Emma replied, "He can be a self serving pain in the ass, but he cares about Henry. He's desperate to have a relationship with him."

"Still going to take a wait and see approach," Robin replied.

"Fair enough," Emma nodded. "Any more nuisance calls?"

"About a dozen," David replied, "Per your new directions, we haven't gone out on any of the calls because there is no property damage or possessions missing."

"What happens when this begins to escalate and the citizens believe we aren't doing anything to stop this girl?" Robin asked.

"We're doing everything we can," Emma replied, "Until we figure out a way to slow her down or stop her altogether, we're only chasing our tails if we go out on every call. Neal was able to get in touch with Wendy's brothers. They are on their way to Storybrooke."

"Great. Now we'll have three spoiled pawns of Pan to deal with," Robin scoffed, "Regina filled me in on your encounters with Pan."

"Fun for the entire family," Killian deadpanned.

"Alright, sounds like everything is under control," Emma sighed, "If you need anything tonight, Robin, I'm only a phone call away."

"I know the drill," Robin assured her.
"Night, guys," Emma grasped Killian's hand and pulled him out the door.

"What are you thinking you're going to find in that book you brought home with you?" Emma asked on the short walk.

"I'm not entirely certain," Killian flipped over the book to inspect it.

"Could this Captain and his Clara be ancestors of yours?" Emma asked.

"I don't know," he admitted, "I know nothing of my heritage beyond the names of my parents. I couldn't even tell you what realm they were from."

"Any idea how you might find this out?" Emma inquired.

"I have one," he responded just as they entered the cottage, "It will have to keep until after the children are asleep."

"Hi, Papa," Fallon darted to the door to greet her parents.

"Hello, Little Love," Killian picked her up for a hug, "Did you and Bradyn have fun with Aunt Ruby?"

"Yep," Fallon bobbed her head and reached for her mother to offer up another hug.

"Did you behave for Aunt Ruby?" Emma asked.

"Yep," Fallon's head bobbed a second time while offering her mother repeated kisses to her cheeks.

"I'd better get going," Ruby quickly gathered her belongings, "I'm already a little late for the dinner rush."

"Sorry, Red, we didn't mean to make you late," Emma replied.

"Don't worry about it," Ruby was quick to put her at ease, "Granny gives me a pass when it has anything to do with Princess Fallon. Isn't that right, Pumpkin?"

"Yep," Fallon repeated for a third time, this time adding a sweet little laugh as Ruby prodded her in the tummy.

"I'll see you guys later," Ruby left quickly.

"Is this book for me?" Fallon reached towards the book in her father's hand. Even the stories Killian checked out for himself had the alternate purpose of entertaining her daughter, so she was conditioned to think all books in their home were for her. She gave her father a pathetic pout when he held the book away from her grabby hands.

"Not this time, Little Love," Killian tabbed her nose, "This is a book just for Papa, but I promise to read to you tonight from any book of your choice."

"Okay, Papa," Fallon agreed.

"Come on, Princess, let's make dinner," Emma carried her daughter into the kitchen to decide on what to cook while Killian bonded with Bradyn.

After dinner, a movie and three bedtime stories, Fallon and Bradyn were tucked into bed, and Emma and Killian sat at the table staring at the book which may or may not have ties to Killian, perhaps
even unlock the keys to his family's past.

"What's this idea you have?" Emma caught sight of the dagger sitting beside the book. She swallowed nervously.

"This sounds ridiculous, but I think I need to prove I'm a descendant of the captain who kept this journal," Killian picked up the dagger and began twirling it by the tip of the blade.

"Are you positive the crest in this book is from your family?" Emma asked.

"I've shown you the leather patch before of my brother's," Killian pulled the memento from his pocket. "Even as a young boy, I was fascinated by the markings. It took Liam years to tell me what they meant. He said it was part of our heritage, a reminder to him of what not to aspire to. To him it was simply a reminder of the man who left us alone in the world. To me, it was a symbol of where we came from. I came from somewhere, hopefully somewhere good, where someone was loved and wanted...someplace similar to where I am now."

Emma leaned over and kissed his lips.

"Blood is thicker than water," Killian stated, "It was the one thing Liam said he learned from our father which he believed in. He said it was something of a family motto. It didn't make sense until now."

"Are you saying Jones blood could unlock clues in these blank pages?" Emma asked.

"I doubt it will help us with Wendy, but it might unlock clues to my ancestry," Killian fingers traced the crest on the last page with any markings, "Perhaps it could tell me what happened to my father after he left us aboard the ship."

"Then do it," Emma gave him the necessary encouragement.

Killian grasped the dagger firmly with his right hand and ran it swiftly across his left palm. Blood immediately began flowing from the wound, several drops spilled onto the book. The book abruptly snapped shut, stunning both of them.

"Did it not work?" Emma frowned, getting up to grab a towel to wrap around his hand to stop the flow of blood.

"I was certain this was the key to unlocking the mystery," Killian frowned while Emma worked the cloth around his hand, pulling it tight. She threw in a familiar flare from their past when she formed the knot with the aid of her teeth. Despite his disappointment, he couldn't help a small smile at the reminder.

"Are you sure it didn't work?" Emma asked while his finger traced the leather binding, "It did close the book."

Killian took a deep breath and opened the book again. He flipped to the last marked page, which contain his family crest. There were additional markings not there before.

"More translations required," Killian sighed heavily.

"I know you can do it," Emma rose to her feet and stepped in behind him to begin massaging his shoulders.

"This handwriting is different from who wrote in the journal pages I first read," Killian noted.
"You're right," Emma agreed. She wasn't any sort of expert in the Avalon language he was translating but the flow of the pen appeared to be made by a woman, and she told Killian her thought. "Maybe Clara really did survive? Maybe more than just Clara survived, perhaps a child in her belly."

"It is certainly plausible," Killian agreed, "Someone had to have saved the book."

"Out of all the items onboard the ship, why would she save her husband's journal? How would she even know it might be important enough to save?" Emma continued to massage his shoulders.

"A captain's journal is one of his most valuable possessions. They put all their thoughts and feelings and knowledge into the book," Killian explained, "If Clara knew she was pregnant and the ship was going down, she would want to save a piece of her husband to carry with her."

"You're assuming she knew she was pregnant," Emma pointed out.

"How soon did you know you were pregnant with Fallon?" Killian asked.

"Almost immediately," Emma replied.

"You would have known you were pregnant with Bradyn just as quickly if the snow witch hadn't taken your memories," Killian added, "Clara knew."

"I'm not trying to change the subject, but do you ever think about adding to our family?" Emma broached the subject she'd wanted to bring up for weeks.

"I love our children more than I thought I would ever be capable of loving anything," Killian began after several moments of reflection.

"Why am I sensing a 'but'?" Emma asked.

"Wendy coming to Storybrooke has reminded me of what is out there, what will always be out there lurking…I've made enemies, Swan. There is always going to be evil waiting to exact their revenge against me. How can I, in good conscience, want to bring another child into this danger?" Killian frowned. "I have been selfish with the family I do have, making them targets for my foes."

"It's not selfish to want to be happy," Emma stated, "Killian, you are an amazing father, and I know you will do whatever it takes to protect our children from any danger we may face. We can't stop living our lives because of the danger out there, or we'd never live at all."

Killian slid his chair back and pulled Emma into his lap. "You showed me how to truly live, how to love again…"

"Ditto," Emma caressed his stubbled chin.

"Which means?" Killian raised one of his expressive brows.

"It's a shorter way to say I did for you what you did for me," Emma replied, "Actually it means I want to repeat everything you say without actually saying it. Seemed like a shorter way to say it until you reminded me your three hundred years old and don't know what it means."

Killian's hand began sliding along her thigh, but she reached out to still it. She still wanted to have a serious conversation about their family.

"Killian, if we lived in a world with no magic, no villains, no enemies out for revenge, would you
"want more children?" Emma pressed.

"What are your feelings, Love?" Killian inquired.

"I want to know your feelings first," she replied.

"Why are my feelings the only ones to be considered?" he pressed.

"Remember when we had this talk after we had Fallon?" Emma asked, "Remember how reluctant I was to have another child?"

"Aye, I told you to think about it and let me know what you decided," Killian nodded.

"I went over to my parents' cottage a few weeks ago and talked things through with my mom," Emma confessed, "I said I thought our family felt complete, but I also didn't want to deny you another child if it was something you truly wanted."

"Sounds as though you have already made your decision," Killian's eyes flashed a moment of sadness before he was able to mask it.

"No," Emma shook her head, "I want to hear your feelings, your true feelings. When you and I said our vows, we became a team...a team which makes decisions together."

"I wouldn't want to force another child on you," he glanced away.

"You never have," Emma guided his eyes back to her, "I love our children more than anything, and I love you more because you gave them to me."

"It was an equal partnership," he smiled, "Although once my contribution is made, you're the one to do most of the work...if you're not up to it..."

"There is more than just me carrying the baby," Emma replied, "How would another baby fit into our family? Henry is a fantastic big brother, and I know he'd embrace another sibling. Fallon is an entirely different story. At best, she tolerates her baby brother. Then there's Bradyn. He's not even a year old."

"I know all the factors in bringing another child into our family," Killian assured her, "All the points you raised are valid."

"What are your thoughts?" Emma demanded he answer her question, "Do you want another child?"

Killian paused to make sure his words were appropriate. "I don't want another child right at this moment, but I don't want to rule out the possibility of us never having another one."

"Then you could see us having another child," Emma concluded.

"Perhaps," he nodded.

"Okay," Emma's head bobbed, "Then we'll table this discussion for now."

"Aye," Killian agreed.

Emma rose to her feet and held out her hand, "Are you going to spend your night translating or do you want to keep me warm in our bed?" There was a twinkle in her eyes as she spoke it.

"Perhaps I can do both," he wagged his brow and took her hand. The book stayed on the table,
forgotten for the moment.

TBC…
Disclaimer: If I owned them, I'd be living in a much larger home, so nope, not mine.

"How much time did you spend translating your book?" Emma asked her husband when she found him at the dining room table the next morning, yawning over his coffee.

Fallon was already awake and making her usual commotion. Henry was getting ready for school, and Bradyn was sleeping.

"Lost track of time," he admitted.

"Make any progress?" she asked.

"Some," he nodded, "It was definitely Clara who survived the sinking of the doomed vessel, and she was indeed pregnant. She kept the journal to give to her child. That's as far as I've gotten."

"You look exhausted," Emma felt the need to point out, "Are you still going sailing with Fallon and Bradyn?"

"And risk docking my ship on the rocks, no," he shook his head, "We'll need my vessel to procure one of your own. Have you found one yet worthy of a voyage?"

"With everything going on, my internet searches for transportation have fallen to the wayside," Emma admitted.

"I think I'm rubbing off on you," Killian smirked.

"How's that?" Emma challenged him.

"Fallen by the wayside," he repeated, "I believe that's more my speech pattern than yours."

"Bloody pirate," Emma muttered under her breath.

"I'd be happy to rub off on you more later," he chuckled.

Emma refused to dignify his suggestive comment with a response. "I'm going to walk Henry to the bus and then go to the station. What are your plans for today if you aren't sailing?"

"Hopefully a long nap for Fallon and Bradyn," Killian responded.

"Good luck with that," Emma snorted before bending over to give him a departing kiss.

"I love you, Swan," he caressed her shoulder softly when she lingered.

"I love you, Killian," Emma smiled.

"Mama and Papa sitting in a tree..." Fallon sang out from her arts table.

"Be a good girl for Papa," Emma bent down and kissed her daughter's forehead.

"Okay, Mama," Fallon bobbed her head, her ponytail flipping up with each motion.

"You're so cute," Emma couldn't resist kissing her again.
When Emma left the house, there was a slight dusting of snow on the ground. She knew the moment her daughter spotted the white powder, she would be most excited. Emma suspected to come home to find the biggest snowman her daughter could muster out of the snow in the front yard.

Killian was allowed to nap in the morning, somehow talking his daughter into allowing his respite, but he knew his rest would be short lived.

"Papa, snow!" Fallon exclaimed while tugging on her father's shirt. "Make snowman."

It took Killian several moments to fully wake, despite Fallon's persistent shakes and proclamations.

"Papa," Fallon groaned, "Wake up. It's snowing."

"I'm awake," Killian finally mustered up a response. He glanced up and down at his daughter. She was fully dressed in her warmest snow apparel. All she needed was parental supervision to go outside.

"Let's go outside," Fallon hopped up and down.

"Give me a moment, Little Love," Killian shook away his lingering exhaustion and pulled a sleeping Bradyn from his crib and began the task of suiting him up to brave the outdoors as well.

Fallon's eagerness was on abundant display. She kept running to the picture window to ensure the snow hadn't disappeared. She was afraid the snow would vanish without her ability to enjoy it.

"Okay, Little Love, we're ready," Killian finished pulling on his boots after donning his warmest coat.

Fallon didn't waste a moment. She immediately pushed her way out of the front door and flopped herself down on the frozen lawn covered in a light layer of snow to make the first snow angel of the season. Killian made sure to capture the moment to show his wife later.

"Will you enjoy the snow as much as your sister?" Killian sat on the front stoop to watch his daughter while making a one sided conversation with his youngest son. "I bet you'll be right next to her, making your own snow angels, building a snowman, and throwing snow at me."

Bradyn's eyes fluttered open. His eyes locked with those of his father's and smiled, melting his father's heart as he did everyday. Killian wondered if he'd ever had such a connection with his own father.

Killian grabbed a glove full of the white powder and held it for Bradyn to see. The little boy immediately reached with his mitten covered hand.

In the interim, Fallon had picked herself up out of the snow and began formulating balls as large as she could to make her snowman. By the end of the winter, it was likely she would have an entire snow village, complete with names and stories behind them all. His daughter's imagination was unparalleled, and he and Emma took a great deal of pride in it.

With her bundle of energy exhausted, at least temporarily, Fallon consented to going in the house, but only after the promise her father would make hot cocoa.

"Papa, are we going to the library?" Fallon blew on her hot beverage to cool it down like her mother taught her.

"Not today, Little Love," Killian resumed his translations, "Do you want to play in your tower
today?"

"Yes," she bobbed her head eagerly.

Once her beverage was consumed, Fallon sprinted up the circular staircase to her playroom with her dog a step behind. Killian was lucky his son was content in his playpen. He was able to work on his translations with minimal interruptions.

"Killian, is everything alright?" Emma was startled when Killian arrived at the station looking as white as a ghost sans any of their children. She was alone at the station. Robin was working the evening shift and wasn't due to arrive until later, and it was her father's day off. "Where are Fallon and Bradyn?"

"With your father," Killian replied.

"You translated more of the journal," Emma concluded.

"My father is alive," Killian stated.

"What?" Emma gasped, "How is that even possible?"

"I don't know particulars," Killian produced the journal and flipped to the family tree. "Look at this chart. All the branches on the tree are complete except for mine and my father's."

Emma looked at the journal. It had not only Killian's name, but also hers and their children. Only a magical family tree could explain their appearance.

"Your father's name was Brennan?" Emma asked, "I don't know if you've ever mentioned it before."

"I didn't even know my mother's name until now," he confessed.

"Siban…Sio…Sib…" Emma stuttered over the name, "How do you pronounce that?"

"Siobhan," Killian responded.

"Che-von," Emma repeated, "I'll trust you, but I don't even know how do you get to that pronunciation."

"I might have looked it up myself earlier," he confessed.

"Good thing we've kept the baby book of names then, isn't it," Emma snorted, "Sounds Irish…just like Killian and Liam."

"And Fallon and Bradyn," Killian replied.

"Back to your father," Emma stated, "If he's alive, how are we going to find him? He could be in any realm."

"I don't know if I want to look," Killian took a seat in her chair and pulled her into his lap, "He left me and my brother when we were wee lads to fend for ourselves. Why would I want anything to do with him?"

"He's your father, Killian," Emma caressed his cheek.

Killian swallowed the emotions of her statement.
"I know you had a rough life," Emma began, "You have so many questions which have been left unanswered. I spent nearly three decades of my life wondering why I was abandoned. I know now not only why I was abandoned, but it wasn't my parents' choice. Maybe there is a valid reason your father left...maybe it wasn't his choice."

"He was a criminal," Killian responded bitterly.

"Which was a story you were told by someone else," Emma replied, "You should get the story from him."

"Why would I trust anything he has to say?" Killian asked.

"We have one annoyance to be rid of before we even have to make the decision to go looking for your father, but I want you to keep an open mind," Emma stated.

Killian was about to response when Regina burst into the station.

"We need to find a way to Avalon," Regina responded with her first available breath.

"What for?" Emma asked.

"The way to silence a siren is with the fruit of Avalon," Regina produced the book from which she'd made her discovery. "There are several magically properties of this fruit, one of which takes away the song of a siren."

"Fantastic, but how do we get to Avalon?" Emma asked, "Last I checked, you used the last of the town's magical beans for your honeymoon."

"They wouldn't help anyways," Regina replied, "You can only get to Avalon by climbing a beanstalk."

"A beanstalk," Emma gave Regina a skeptic look, "Aren't magical beans used to produce a beanstalk?"

"Perhaps there is another way to grow a beanstalk," Killian chimed in.

"How are we going to figure that out?" Emma asked, "I don't exactly have a green thumb, and it's winter outside. Last I checked, plants don't grow in winter."

"Tiny," Killian suggested, "He would know."

"It's worth a shot," Emma shrugged.

"I'm coming with you," Regina followed the pair.

The trio went looking for Tiny at the Rabbit Hole where he was known to frequent, especially in the winter. He wasn't there, nor was he in any of his usual haunts or anywhere they could think to look in the woods.

"I'm not playing hide and seek with a giant. I'll be right back," Regina suddenly disappeared in a cloud of her usual smoke.

"She's never been one for patience," Emma sighed. Just as the words left her mouth, Regina returned in another cloud of smoke, along with their elusive former giant. He looked startled.

"What am I doing here?" Tiny words were slurred.
"Whoa," Emma recoiled along with her husband, "Tiny, how much have you had to drink?"

Tiny's eyes simply rolled back, and he slumped to the ground.

"That settles that," Emma sighed, "Can you poof him to the station? We'll keep him in one of the cells until he sobers up."

Regina placed a hand on Tiny's limp form, and they both disappeared.

"I hope this smoke of hers isn't toxic," Emma waved to clear the air around her.

Killian grasped her hand, and they walked back towards Storybrooke.

"Fallon made her first snowman today," Killian wanted desperately to talk about anything other than what he'd uncovered earlier.

"And what did she name her snowman?" Emma smirked.

"Frosty," he replied.

"Didn't she name her first snowman from last year 'Frosty'?" Emma asked.

"Sounds right," Killian nodded, "Bradyn seemed to enjoy the snow. Tried to put the handful I held for him in his mouth. He was right cross when I knocked it away."

"Bradyn cross?" Emma raised a brow, "That's a first."

"Didn't last more than a moment," Killian added.

"You're avoiding the issue of your father," Emma pointed out, "Killian, if he's out there…"

"Ships work both ways, Love," Killian reminded her, "If he's out there, perhaps he knows I am too. He hasn't come looking for me either."

"It's been over three hundred years, Killian," Emma pointed out, "Perhaps he doesn't know you're alive."

Killian said nothing more.

Emma let the conversation drop. She wrapped her arm around his waist and continued walking.

He needed to make his own decision. She could give him encouragement, but in the end, he had to live with whatever he decided. No matter what, she would support him.

"Tiny's still three sheets to the wind," Emma sighed when she joined her husband, mother and the rest of the family for dinner after her shift. She expected her husband to ask for an explanation for her slang expression but was disappointed when he didn't.

"I'm sure he'll be plenty sober tomorrow," Mary Margaret replied.

"With a monstrous hangover," Emma plopped herself in the booth next to her husband. "Not exactly the best time to get information from an informant."

"What exactly do you want to ask Tiny anyways?" Mary Margaret asked.

"We need to know if there is a way to get ahold of some magic beans to grow a beanstalk," Emma
replied.

"Feeling nostalgic?" Mary Margaret inquired, "Wanting to climb a beanstalk together for your anniversary?"

"As much fun as climbing a beanstalk with an annoying pirate it wasn't..." Emma began.

"Come, Love, I knew you were hooked when I cuffed you," he chuckled.

"You have worn that pun down to the bone, but whatever helps you sleep at night, Buddy," Emma patted his thigh.

Though he was laughing, Emma could see the feelings weren't reaching his eyes. He was still working through the revelation of his father being alive...still trying to figure out what he was going to do about it.

"You okay?" Emma turned his gaze towards her when the rest of the family's attention was diverted towards something Fallon and Leo were doing.

"I'm okay," he assured her.

"You sure?" she pressed, "Because you're eyes are saying something entirely different. You didn't even ask me to clarify my three sheets expression."

"I didn't ask for clarification because I already know what it means," he nuzzled into her neck, "Where do you think the expression came from in the first place? With three sheets in or against the wind, the ship will swagger, just like a drunken sailor. It's when you get to four sheets you need to start worrying."

"Is that where the expression came from?" Emma laughed, "I never knew. Here I was speaking pirate all this time and didn't know it."

"I've always known there was pirate in you," he laughed with her.

Emma leaned in and pressed her lips to his. "I love you, Killian."

"And I you," he touched her cheek.

"And you can talk to me about anything," Emma added, "I will listen without judgment or opinion if that is what you need."

"I need time to reconcile everything I learned today," he replied.

"Take what you need," Emma gave him a reassuring smile, "We have a siren to deal with."

"Aye, ridding ourselves of this current foe will have my full attention," he replied.

"I hope not your full attention," Emma motioned towards their children.

"Point taken," Killian turned to glance towards his children, fatherly pride written on his face.

Fallon's chatter carried threw the meal, entertaining everyone in the restaurant. After the family had finished, she eagerly donned her winter wear and trudged through the building snow. She balled up a fist full and threw it at her father, hitting him squarely in the chest, which caught him completely off guard.
Killian's somber mood was quickly pushed aside. He advanced towards his daughter, catching her quickly despite Fallon's attempt to sprint away. He found a soft pile of snow and dumped her in it.

Emma and Mary Margaret watched on in amusement.

"Is Killian okay?" Mary Margaret spoke softly to her daughter, "He was awfully quiet at dinner."

"He found a family tree in the book he’s been translating," Emma replied, "It shows his father is alive. He's torn as how best to proceed."

"Goodness gracious, how is that even possible?" Mary Margaret gasped, "He'd be well over three hundred by now."

"So is Killian," Emma snorted, "Killian says there are more lands like Neverland. It's possible his father has been in one of them since he left Killian and Liam aboard that ship."

"Oh my," Mary Margaret replied. "I couldn't even imagine what he must be going through."

"When his father left him on board that ship, it was one of the defining moments of his life," Emma stated, "I can't even begin to understand..."

"Yes, you can," Mary Margaret stated, "For twenty-eight years of your life, you believed you were abandoned. It was one of the defining moments of your life. One of the things which bonds you and Killian is your common experience, thinking how everyone in your life had abandoned you."

Emma nodded.

"Killian," Emma emerged from the bathroom to find her husband laying in their bed already. She'd expected he'd be staying up another night translating the journal.

"I need a night away from it," Killian explained his action while patting at the vacant space on their bed.

Emma was quick to join him, molding her body against him. "I know you don’t want to talk, so I just want you to listen."

"Emma," he began.

"Listen," Emma pressed her fingers to his lips, "From the very beginning, you and I understood each other in a way most couldn't. We'd both been abandoned by family. Spending years passed around from one foster family to another, I felt unwanted and it affects me to this day. It affects how I parent our children. After twenty-eight years, I got an explanation as to why I'd been abandoned. I'm not saying yours will have the happy ending mine did, but any explanation is better than no explanation."

"You don't know that," Killian choked out, "What if it was me? What if I'm the reason he abandoned us?"

"What could you have done to explain why he left?" Emma asked, "You were just a little boy... Killian, you're an amazing man. I love you so much."

"When does my past stop haunting me?" he asked, "When does the pain of losing my father stop hurting?"

"It won't," Emma caressed his chest, "Even reconciling with my parents, the pain of those years is
still inside me. You have to face it if you ever hope to truly find a way past it."

"I don't know if I can," he admitted.

"Yes, you can," she caressed his chin with her fingers, "You found a way to make peace with Milah's death. You can do the same here."

"That was completely different. She didn't just up and leave me on a whim," he countered.

"Don't you want answers?" Emma asked, "Could they be any worse than you imagine?"

"Why are you pressing me on this?" he asked, "Why can't you just let me deal with this on my own?"

"Because I love you," she replied, "I can see you're hurting, and I want to help you in any way I can."

"Love me," he kissed her temple, "All I need is your love. I think I can get through anything with you by my side."

"Then you'll get through this because I'm not going anywhere…ever," she caressed his chin.

TBC…
Chapter 20

Disclaimer: If I owned them, I'd be living in a much larger home, so nope, not mine.

The new day brought about an opportunity to talk to Tiny. He was in clear pain but able to form a coherent sentence.

"You wouldn't happen to have any starter beans handy for a beanstalk would you?" Emma asked Tiny when he explained the process.

Tiny seemed reluctant to respond, especially with Regina giving him an icy stare.

"Tiny, it's important," Emma tried to steer his attention away from the intimidating mayor, "The town is being manipulated by a pint sized siren. Regina says the fruit of Avalon can help us neutralize her, but the only way to get to Avalon is by climbing a beanstalk."

"You don't want to go to Avalon," Tiny replied, "Bad things happen to people who go to Avalon."

"Avalon, really?" Regina chimed in, "Isn't it some sort of paradise full of flowers and forbidden fruit?"

"Are you talking about Avalon or the land of Adam and Eve?" Emma asked the town's mayor.

Regina responded with an annoyed stare.

"What kind of things happen to people in Avalon, Tiny?" Emma refocused her questions.

"Everyone walks around in some sort of trance," Tiny replied, "They go about their lives, but no one really lives. They just go through the motions."

"Sounds like a Stepford kind of life," Emma suggested.

Killian gave her a perplexed look.

"I'll explain later," Emma replied, "Do you know if there is a way to counteract this zombie like existence?"

"Not going," Tiny replied.

"How about if we do go?" Emma asked.

"None I know of," Tiny stated.

"Back to the library, we go," Killian sighed, "There were more books about Avalon."

"We won't ask Neal for help this time," Emma gave his shoulder a sympathetic caress.

"Aye," Killian nodded.

"How do we get to Avalon, Tiny?" Emma turned towards the giant, "We need a beanstalk. Any way for us to grow one rapidly?"

"You need magic beans," Tiny replied, "They grow quickly."

"Great, and the mayor used the last of them a few months ago," Emma sighed, "Is there any other
"I may have a few beans of my own I kept," Tiny gave a hesitant reply, "They won't come cheap."

"We'll name you King of Storybrooke for the day if you'll give us one of your damn beans," Regina crossed her arms and stared the man down.

"Not what I want," Tiny responded.

"Name your damn price already," Regina challenged him.

"I want to think about it," Tiny stated after a moment of thought.

"Think quickly," Regina vanished into a cloud of purple smoke.

"I really wish she'd just use a door like a regular person," Emma waved a hand to clear the smoke.

"Am I free to leave?" Tiny asked.

"Yes, so long as you promise not to leave town," Emma responded, "This is really important."

"I won't leave," Tiny vowed.

Emma unlocked the cell and stepped back to allow him out.

"How important is this really?" Tiny asked.

"Very," Emma nodded, "Wendy is dangerous. She's already manipulated the election. We don't know what her next move is, but it can't be anything good."

Tiny nodded and left the station.

"This all could be an incredible waste of time," Emma sighed before stepping into Killian's arms, "What are the odds of us needing to go to Avalon for a piece of fruit which just so happens to be the same place your family is apparently from?"

"Right now it is simply a way to neutralize our newest foe," Killian replied, "The rest can be sorted when our family is no longer in danger."

"Agreed," Emma nodded while soaking in the love and support of her husband.

"I'll take Bradyn and Fallon to the library to begin the research. You stay here and protect our fair town from scoundrels like me," he smiled.

"Scoundrel like who you used to be," Emma amended with a kiss to his lips.

"You were my first incentive to be a better man," he rubbed circles into her back with his hand, "Certainly one of the best."

"I love you," Emma smiled at him.

"I love you too," he pecked at her lips, "I'll meet you at Granny's for lunch, yeah?"

"Definitely," Emma nodded, "Be careful out there, Captain. There's a siren on the loose."

"There's a siren in here, one I'm not immune to," he dove in for a more passionate kiss. They were interrupted by a clearing of the throat.
"Don't mind me. I'm just the dad around here," David passed them by on the way to his desk.

"I thought you were watching Fallon and Bradyn until Killian came to retrieve them," Emma replied.

"Ruby swung by. She wanted to take Fallon to the park," David replied, "When she offered to take them both, I decided to get an earlier start on my shift. With the way you were making out when I arrived, perhaps I should have knocked first."

"Dad, we're married. We have two children together. The jig is up," Emma laughed.

"Those children are the result of a very kind stork visiting your home twice," David responded calmly.

"Keep telling yourself that, Mate," Killian chuckled. He pecked at Emma's lips one final time before leaving the station to retrieve his children and then spend some quality time in the library.

"Did you get any information from Tiny?" David motioned towards the empty cell.

"He was still hung over but coherent. Apparently he has his own little private stash of beans. He's willing to part with one for us, but he's currently thinking up his rate to charge. He knows we're in sort of a hurry, so hopefully he'll think quickly," Emma took her seat at her desk.

"Any word from Neal on when to expect Wendy's brothers?" David asked, "Perhaps they can reason with her which could make any trips to Avalon unnecessary."

"Which would be assuming they are willing to side with us," Emma replied, "I'm not ready to put my trust in a couple of kids who share a bloodline with a spoiled siren and were brought here by a man who's loyalties seem to change with the wind."

"Has Neal signed his statement to reject the sheriff's office yet?" David asked.

"I don't know," Emma shrugged, "Regina hasn't said anything."

"Do we think Neal is going to do something else when doing so will drive his son further away from him?" David pressed.

"I want to believe he isn't that selfish, but this is Neal we're talking about," Emma replied, "If he ever truly does something truly selfless, I'll eat my leather jacket."

David gave a hearty chuckle just as the station phone rang. It was another nuisance call.

"Hi, Mama," Fallon greeted her mother upon her arrival at the cottage after her shift.

"Hi, Princess," Emma lifts her up into a hug, "Where's Papa?"

"Bradyn was stinky," Fallon plugged her nose after giving her mother a kiss to the cheek.

"Awe," Emma chuckled, "Did you behave at the library today?"

"Yep, I was good girl," Fallon's head bobbed.

"You're always a good girl," Emma kissed her daughter's cheek. "Are you hungry? Has Papa planned dinner for us?"

Fallon shrugged her shoulders just as Killian emerged from the nursery.
"There's my handsome husband," Emma set Fallon on her feet so she could fully embrace her husband.

"Ello, Love," Killian pecked at her lips.

"How was your afternoon at the library?" Emma caressed his chin, her smile was as adoring as usual.

"Pretty much like they all have been, unproductive," he admitted.

"I'm sorry," she replied, "Have you given dinner any thought?"

Killian shook his head from side to side.

"Granny's it is," Emma stated, which inspired a happy little dance by their daughter. "Where's Bradyn?"

"Napping," Killian replied, "He seems to be developing a bit of a cold. He was uncharacteristically fussy at the library. He has a bit of a fever."

"Maybe he's teething," Emma offered.

"It is a definite possibility," Killian agreed.

"Maybe Granny's isn't the way to go if he's fussy," Emma frowned.

"No," Fallon moaned, "I want roni and cheese."

"How about you and Papa go to Granny's, order us all dinner and bring it back here," Emma tugged at a strand of her daughter's hair, "You can still have your roni and cheese."

"Okay," Fallon agreed immediately.

"Will Henry be joining us for dinner tonight?" Killian grabbed for his coat while Emma helped Fallon dress for the cold.

"Yes," Emma nodded, "He was staying after school. Apparently he's volunteered to work scenery for school's next drama production."

"Sounds like something influenced by the young lass he's attempting to impress," Killian smiled.

"Order him a burger and fries," Emma replied, "He should be home soon."

"And my lovely wife, what would she like for dinner?" he advanced towards her with a raised brow.

"Surprise me," she wrapped her arms around his shoulders and pulled him close.

"What's gotten into you, Love?" Killian resisted the pull of his daughter tugging his hand.

"Hopefully you," Emma whispered in his ear, "Later."

Killian released a grumble in the back of his throat in reply.

"Roni and cheese, Papa," Fallon refused to be ignored any longer.

"We'll be back soon," Killian replied, "We're going to fulfill your request when everyone is tucked in for the evening."
"Deal," her eyes twinkled with mischief.

"Papa," Fallon moaned and tugged as hard as she could on his hand.

"She's going to pull your hand right off if you don't go," Emma stated.

"Good thing I know a lass who can replace it," Killian moved swiftly to pick Fallon up. Fallon was caught off guard and yelped in surprise. Her shriek woke Bradyn.

"Does that mean I don't get ice cream tonight?" Fallon pouted when Bradyn's cry cut through the moment.

"It was time for Bradyn to wake up," Emma assured her daughter, "Make sure Papa behaves, okay, Princess."

"Okay, Mama," Fallon took her mother's words as a legitimate task to accomplish.

"How are the translations coming?" Emma found her husband at the dining room table several hours after she thought he'd gone to bed.

"It's slow going," Killian admitted, "At times the lass's emotions appear so overwhelming, her penmanship becomes a bit hard to comprehend, let alone translate."

Emma stepped in behind him to work out the kinks in his neck.

"That feels good," Killian's head fell forward while he savored the feel of her hands on his neck and shoulders.

"Learn anything new?" Emma asked.

"A bit," Killian replied, "Clara was new to Avalon. She wrote of the trance Tiny spoke of. She found it...creepy is the word I believe you would use, but she appeared to be immune to it."

"Because she wasn't from there?" Emma thought out loud.

"Could be," Killian nodded.

"If it only effects those from Avalon, we should be okay," Emma replied.

"Assuming I'm not from Avalon myself," Killian replied.

"Oh," Emma's eyes went wide, "You're right. We can't rule that out, can we?"

Killian shook his head.

"Come back to bed," Emma suggested, "You're tired. Tackle this tomorrow with fresh eyes."

"How can I turn down such tempting offer?" he extended his hand to her.

"You can't," she tugged on his hand, "Come on, Sailor. Let's make your profession proud."

"Always ready for a challenge," he chuckled and followed her up.

"Congratulations, Sheriff," Regina strolled into the precinct, "It's a bit belated, but you have been certified as the winner of the election."

"Then Neal did come through with his offer of relinquishing his office," Emma replied, "I was
beginning to wonder if he was all talk. He certainly is when it comes to Wendy's siblings. I don't even know how long ago he said he'd contacted her brothers and they were on their way. Haven't seen hide nor hare of them."

"Unless they've aligned themselves with Wendy," Regina thought out loud, "Aside from the nuisance calls, she hasn't shown herself either."

"Fair point," Emma sighed.

"Are we sure the captain saw her?" Regina replied.

"I'm positive," Emma replied, "Killian is not one to make things up. It's also the only way to explain all the disturbances around town."

"Touché," Regina stated, "In any event, with Neal withdrawing from consideration, the town bylaws state the person with the second most votes is declared the winner. Thankfully we don't have to go through another election."

"Guess you had the foresight when you wrote them," Emma shrugged.

"Has Tiny decided what he's like in exchange for the beans?" Regina asked, "Or must we go a more aggressive route and just take them while he's passed out."

"I'll see if I can track him down," Emma snatched her jacket from the back of her chair, "If he's sober, I'll demand he settle on payment."

"If he's not?" Regina asked.

"We'll throw him into the cell until he's sober and makes up his mind," Emma slipped into her coat.

"Perhaps I'll go with you," Regina turned to follow her sheriff.

"No offense, Madam Mayor, but I think your presence is a bit too intimidating for Tiny," Emma replied. "It was your mother who cursed him into this land and shrunk him."

"Don't forget he was transported to Storybrooke in your hubby's ship," Regina added.

"Okay, fine, we both carry baggage into the conversation," Emma stated, "I still think your presence would slow the process down."

"Fine," Regina huffed, "When you have an answer, let me know. If I don't hear from you within twenty-four hours, I'm going to get the bean for myself."

"I'll let Tiny know," Emma responded before leaving the station.

Emma had to search for nearly an hour before she finally found the one time giant.

"You're surprisingly hard to find," Emma approached him sitting by the docks.

"Hello, Sheriff," Tiny gave her a half attempt at a smile.

Emma was surprised to find he was stone cold sober.

"I'm not going to beat around the bush. Have you given our offer any thought?" Emma took a seat on the bench next to him.
"Yes, I have," he nodded.

"And," Emma prompted him, "I don't mean to sound impatient, but the quicker we can settle the transaction the better. Time is of the essence here."

"I want people to call me by my name," he responded.

"Don't people already call you by your name?" Emma frowned in confusion.

"No," he snapped, "They call me Tiny. My brothers called me Tiny because I was smaller than them. The name stuck. I don't like it or want it."

"Don't take this the wrong way, but what is your name then?" Emma asked.

"Anton," he replied, "I want people to call me Anton."

"I'll spread the word," Emma replied, "Is that all?"

"And I want a harp," he added.

"A harp," she repeated slowly, "What are you going to do with a harp? I didn't know you could play."

"I had one in the Enchanted Forest. It played itself. That's what I want," Tiny responded.

"A self playing harp and to have people call you Anton," Emma replied, "Is there anything else you want?"

"No," he shook his head.

"I'll get to work then," Emma responded, "You'll have your harp as soon as I can figure out how to get one, and I'll start spreading the word, Anton, on my walk back to the station."

"Thank you, Sheriff," Anton responded.

"We'll talk soon," Emma assured him.

"He wants a what?" Regina asked.

"He wants a self playing harp and for people to call him by his given name," Emma responded, "Seems fairly benign as far as payments go."

"To put it mildly," Regina rolled her eyes and waved her hand. A harp appeared and began playing.

"One item down, one to go," Emma replied, "If we're going to Avalon, I'd better get child care arrangements made."

"We both do," Regina replied, "Robin is insisting on going with us."

"I'll cross you and Robin off my list of options to watch Henry," Emma replied.

"I'll make sure Tiny...I mean Anton, get's his harp," Regina replied, "How long will you need to be ready to leave?"

"I'll get back to you on that," Emma turned away from Regina. She had a sudden thought and then turned back, "Last time Killian and I climbed a beanstalk, we need enchanted bracelets to even touch
it. Ironically, Killian and I still have ours, but won't you and Robin and anyone else coming with us need them as well?"

"Only if the beanstalk is enchanted," Regina replied, "Even if it is, it's a simple spell to enchant an object to allow us to climb."

"I'll let you know when we're ready to leave," Emma stated before leaving the mayor's office.

"You're not leaving us behind again," Mary Margaret announced to her daughter when Emma arrived at her classroom asking if she could watch Henry, Fallon and Bradyn while Emma and Killian were gone.

"Someone has to stay behind to protect the town while we're gone," Emma replied.

"Then you and Killian stay, and your father and I will go in your place," Mary Margaret suggested.

"It's Killian's neck on the line," Emma insisted, "We have to go."

"Then Regina and Robin can stay behind," Mary Margaret responded, "I am not letting you face another unknown danger without me."

"Mom," Emma began.

"Don't you 'Mom' me," Mary Margaret chimed in, "You can try to rationalize why we should stay until you're blue in the face, but if you're going, so are your father and I."

"Who will watch Leo?" Emma asked.

"We'll figure it out," Mary Margaret responded calmly.

"Mom," Emma tried again.

"You're wasting your breath," Mary Margaret replied, "If you're going, so are we."

"Fine," Emma finally threw up her hands. She recognized the same stubbornness she knew she possessed.

"And don't you dare think about trying to leave without us," Mary Margaret warned her.

"I won't," Emma assured her.

"Now that we understand each other," Mary Margaret stated, "We'd best come up with a list of people who can watch our children."

"My first thought is Ruby, but what if we're gone during the full moon," Emma replied. "She likes to stretch her wolfie legs. I don't want to take that away from her, and we can't leave the kids unsupervised for a night."

"Granny could be an option," Mary Margaret chimed in.

"Then who is going to open Granny's every morning," Emma replied.

"Belle," Mary Margaret tossed out another suggestion.

"A few hours here and there is fine, but no, not an option for long periods of time," Emma shook off the thought.
"Are you worried about Gold?" Mary Margaret asked.

"Yes," Emma replied, "Belle on her own is a perfectly suitable option, but her and Gold are a package deal. I'd never force Killian into something I know would make him supremely uncomfortable."

"Ashley and Sean," Mary Margaret offered.

"They have their hands full with their daughter, and if the rumors are true, Ashley is in the early stages of her second pregnancy," Emma replied.

"Boy, this is tougher than I thought it would be," Mary Margaret admitted.

"Maybe I can convince you and Dad to stay after all," Emma countered.

"Not going to happen," Mary Margaret glared at her daughter, "We'll come up with a perfectly acceptable option for all parties."

"I'd better let you get back to your students," Emma noted the children filing into the classroom.

"How about dinner tonight?" Mary Margaret offered, "Granny's at six?"

"We'll meet you there," Emma's head bobbed.

Emma was greeted by many of the children as they filed in from recess.

Emma waved and returned their greetings before making her way back to the station.

"I don't suppose I could convince you to stay behind," Killian spoke with his wife later in the evening after hearing of Emma and her mother's predicament regarding child care in their absence all throughout their family meal.

"Nice try, Buddy," Emma rolled her eyes, "If you're going, then so am I."

"Swan, we're parents. Our children should be our first priority," Killian offered.

"Our family is our first priority," Emma amended, "You're a part of this family, aren't you?"

"Aye," he nodded.

"We protect each other," Emma reminded him, "When the beanstalk is ready to climb, you and I are going to climb it side by side. If you go without me, you and I are going to have a serious problem."

"You're quite sexy when you get all red and angry," Killian noted the redness of her cheeks and nose.

"Don't even try those pirate charms on me right now," Emma took a step when he advanced towards her.

"I have no intentions of making such a climb without you, Love," Killian assured her, "I was merely offering a suggestion."

Emma noted something in his eyes, something akin to guilt. "What is it?" she caressed his chin.

"This mess is of my making," he tried to glance away, "I tricked Wendy into leaving Neverland the first time. If I'd just let her be, she wouldn't be coming after us now."
"Killian," Emma forced his eyes to lock with hers, "What's wrong?"

"My family is in danger because of the man I became…because I was too consumed by my grief to only see vengeance with every breath I took," he bit out.

"The man who returned Wendy to her family was not the Captain Hook I first knew. Her family wanted her, missed her. You thought you were doing the right thing, the honorable thing in returning her to her home," she tried to reassure him, "You've made mistakes…a lot of mistakes, and you're conscience will always haunt you for them, but it doesn't mean you can't be happy, that you don't deserve to be happy."

"Happiness was never supposed to be in the cards for me, not after Milah," he swallowed hard.

"Are you happy, Killian? Do the children and I make you happy?" she asked.

"More than I ever thought I'd be capable of being…ever," he nodded as much as she'd allow.

"We're going to figure things out. Wendy's threat will be neutralized, and then you and I will continue to raise our children and wring every ounce of happiness we can out of our time together," she told him, "Do you hear me, Pirate?"

"Aye," he nodded.

"Now, let's go to bed. We have plans to make first thing in the morning. This beanstalk is going to be ready to climb before we're ready as it is," Emma replied.

"What did I do in my life to deserve you?" he caressed her shoulders, his unending love for her evident in his eyes.

"All I needed was your love," she smiled.

TBC…
Chapter 21

Disclaimer: I own only the ideas of this story, not the characters who portray them. (darn it).

"Now you're going to be a good girl for Aunt Ruby, right?" Emma knelt before her daughter. The imposing beanstalk was only a few steps behind her. She didn't relish the climb, but she knew it had to be done. Her parents and Regina and Robin were having similar conversations with their young offspring.

"Yes," Fallon bobbed her head, her ponytail swinging wildly with each motion.

"And you won't use your magic while we're gone," Emma added.

"No," Fallon shook her head this time, again her ponytail whipped around.

"Papa and I will be gone only as long as it takes to find what we need. Until then, I want you to do exactly what Aunt Ruby tells you to. Can you do that, Princess?" Emma asked.

"Yes," Fallon bobbed her head again.

"I love you," Emma hugged her daughter tight.

"I love you too, Mama," Fallon hugged her tight around the neck.

Emma and Killian traded children. The conversation was much more one sided with Bradyn. He merely looked at her with his sparkling blue eyes and munched away on his favorite toy.

"I love you, Little Lad," Emma rained kisses along his face, "You be a good boy for Aunt Ruby."

Henry stepped in and took Bradyn from his mother, "Don't worry, Mom. I'll help Ruby."

"I know you will," Emma kissed his cheek.

"Be safe," Henry added.

"We will," Emma replied, "If there is any problems, use the magic mirror Regina gave you. She says it should still allow us to communicate while we're in Avalon. We'll check it often."

"We'll be fine," Henry reassured her.

"I love you, Henry," Emma hugged him as tight as she dared.

"I love you too, Mom," Henry added.

"I'm sorry this will interfere with your wolf time, Red," Emma apologized to Ruby.

"Don't worry about it a bit," Ruby stepped behind Henry and put her hand on his shoulder, "One month without is worth it if it means the siren's charms finally wear off."

"We'll be back as quick as we can," Emma assured her.

"I know," Ruby nodded.

"Come, Swan," Killian's hand settled at the small of her back, "We'd best get going. We'll want to climb in as much daylight as we can."
Emma nodded and offered final kisses to her brother and children before she approached the beanstalk. The adults looked at each other, exhaled deeply and then began their climb.

"So this is Avalon," Regina took in their surroundings once everyone was clear of the beanstalk.

The climbers were exhausted, huffing and puffing, while trying to collect their breath. It felt as if they'd been climbing for days.

"It has kind of a biblical feel to it," Regina looked around, "Throw in the enchanted apples, we might as well be looking for Adam and Eve."

"Adam and who?" Robin inquired.

"It's not important," Regina waved away her husband's question.

"It reminds me of the Enchanted Forest," Mary Margaret looked around, "Although it's a bit more well kept than the wild wilderness we last encountered."

"Seems like forever ago," Emma traded glances with her husband, "So much as changed."

"Swan, you're hurt," Killian caught the blood on her hand.

"It seems I can't climb a beanstalk without injuring myself," Emma offered her hand to him to inspect. "It's not bad."

Mary Margaret produced a first aid kit from her husband's backpack and handed it to her son-in-law.

"Not as sensuous as the last time you treated me," Emma noted while her husband applied antiseptic to her cut and then a proper bandage.

David cleared his throat to remind the pair they were not alone.

"At least we're not wasting any rum," Emma added. Her husband's eyes were sparkling with mischief.

"Did your book give us any clues on how to find these enchanted apples, Madam Mayor?" Killian looked to Regina for some guidance.

"Do I have to do everything?" Regina inquired, "It's not like I've ever been here before."

"It's not like any of us have been either," Mary Margaret chimed in.

After coming up with a plan of action, they were about to set off when they felt the ground at their feet begin to rumble, sending them all scrambling to keep their footing.

"Earthquake?" Emma looked towards her parents.

"No, riders," David knelt down to feel the ground, "Feels like they are coming fast."

"Nowhere to hide," Emma looked around just as the troupe road into view.

In no time at all they were surrounded by a heavily armed group of soldiers on pristine white horses. Their metal was polished to a gleaming shine. The colors they carried were a brilliant green.

The travel party quickly drew their weapons in preparation to go on the offense.
"Lower your weapons," one of the men commanded them while dismounting, "We mean you no harm."

"We'll lower our weapons once your soldiers do the same," David spoke up.

The dismounted soldier barked out a command in a language foreign to the travelers. In unison, his men all holstered their weapons.

"I apologize if we came on a bit strong," the man approached David, "I have been sent to welcome you to Avalon."

"At least we know we climbed to the right realm," Regina snuffed out her ball of fire.

"How did you know we were here?" Mary Margaret inquired, "We literally just arrived."

"The answer to your question is one I cannot give," the man replied, "Who's acquaintance do I have the pleasure of making?"

"Prince David of the Enchanted Forest," David chimed in, "This is my wife, Snow White and our daughter Emma."

"Your reputation precedes you," the man bowed in respect, "I come with an invitation to bring you all before our king and queen."


"And you would be?" the man stopped to stare at her.

"This is my stepmother," Mary Margaret inserted before Regina had a chance to respond. She was afraid of the reception they might receive if their hosts knew they were traveling with the one time Evil Queen. "Beside her is her husband, Robin."

The man gave a bow, "It is a pleasure to meet you all. I am Captain Brennan Jones of the Avalon Royal Guard."

"Brennan Jones," Emma's voice came out in nothing more than a whisper. She turned towards her husband to see the tears welling in his eyes. He obviously recognized the man before them. "Killian, is this..."

"Killian," the man heard Emma's voice and stepped around Regina and Robin and stood before Emma and Killian. His eyes went wide when he recognized the sparkling blue eyes of his deceased wife. "Killian, is that really you?"

"Aye, Papa, it's me," Killian nodded slightly.

"How?" the man went to embrace his son, "You're fully grown. It hasn't been ten years since I last saw you."

"Ten years!" Emma gasped.

"Where's your brother? Where's Liam?" the elder Jones began to search the party with eager eyes, hoping to see his elder son.

"Lost, long ago," Killian swallowed hard. He felt Emma squeeze his hand to give him her support. He turned his gaze towards her. "This is my wife, Emma Swan-Jones. Emma, this is my father, Brennan Jones."
"You married a princess?" Brennan looked between the pair and then towards Emma's parents, "You've done very well for yourself. How is it you've grown so much?"

"It's a story which must wait for another moment," Mary Margaret chimed in. "We are most weary from our climb. If your king and queen have invited us to be their guests, we'd be honored to accept."

"Aye," Brennan nodded and then commanded several of his soldiers to dismount so the exhausted travelers could ride towards to the palace.

Emma eyed her designated horse with apprehension. She'd never ridden a horse before. She felt Killian's hand at her back, giving her the necessary courage to climb aboard the powerful steed. Relief poured off her when Killian climbed up behind her and took the reigns.

"In need of some assistance, Swan?" he whispered in her ear.

"I've never ridden a horse before," she admitted, settling in his embrace.

"I figured as much," he nudged the horse forward, "Since you've become proficient with a sword, perhaps we should move along to horsemanship."

"Only if you'll teach me," she turned to offer him a smile, "I rather enjoyed our sparing lessons."

"I did too," he offered a brief chuckle.

"Are you okay?" Emma asked in a whispered tone.

"No," his tone matched hers.

"Is that man really your father?" Emma nodded towards the commanding officer several strides behind.

"Aye," Killian nodded, "He looks the same he did the night he abandoned us aboard the ship."

"Did you know he was in the royal guard?" she asked.

"No," he shook his head slightly.

"Do you think this king and queen will help us?" Emma asked.

"I don't know," Killian replied, "No matter what happens, we'll face it together."

"Always," Emma turned to peck at his cheek.

Captain Jones rode up to ride along side Emma and Killian, intent to get the story he'd been denied earlier.

"Killian, my boy, how is it you have grown so much from when I last saw you?" Brennan asked his son.

"You mean when you sold me and Liam to Captain Silver to be indentured servants," Killian barked out.

"Indentured servants," Brennan stammered out, "I paid Captain Silver to take you and Liam to the next available port and set you up with suitable housing."
"Not the story the captain told us," Killian countered, "He claimed you sold me and Liam to him to work off your debt. You had abandoned us because you were a criminal."

"I'm so sorry, Killian. Had I known Captain Silver had double-crossed me, I would have sought you out and made things right. I had been recalled to service here in Avalon after my king became ill."

"We were supposed to sail the realms together, you, me and Liam," Killian growled, "Instead you abandoned us. No matter your purpose, your actions speak volumes."

"I've been looking for you," Brennan countered, "I knew Captain Silver had crossed realms many times over, so I sent word out to every realm I could think of to locate you."

"The journal," Emma chimed up, "That was you?"

"Aye, my father's journal," Brennan nodded, "Did it find you?"

"It did," Emma confirmed when her husband's words began to falter, "Clara was your mother."

"Aye," Brennan agreed, "She'd read to me from the journal since before I could remember. It spoke to me of the adventures I longed to have, but since my father perished in a storm we didn't have the money to finance such trips. I joined the Avalon Royal Guard the moment I came of age to give my mother a comfortable living and to one day save enough money to explore the realms."

"All my plans were changed when I met my Siobhan. She was a seamstress in the palace. As I was one of my king's most trusted advisors, I was frequently in the castle and able to make her acquaintance. We fell in love and were blessed with you and Liam, but she died a few years after you were born.

"I did my best to balance my duties as a father and soldier, but I knew I had to choose. I chose you and Liam. I resigned my commission with the Royal Guard and decided to take you and Liam on all the adventures I'd dreamt of as a boy."

"Sadly, my king became incapacitated by a stroke only a few months after we set sail. He had not the opportunity to fill my post, and I was summoned back to Avalon. I swear, Killian, I tried to do right by you and Liam," Brennan's words became more of a plea for his son to believe him as he spoke. Killian didn't know what to make of his father's tale. The story certainly sounded plausible. He'd always been ashamed to have been the offspring of a criminal, but if Brennan's story were true, he was the offspring of a king's most trusted confidantes. The latter was certainly the more appealing option.

Riding through the village, Emma and Killian were immediately taken aback by the lack of acknowledgement by the villagers as they passed. People simply went out their business and didn't spare a glance in their direction.

"We're not invisible, are we?" Emma whispered to her husband.

"You could never be invisible, Love," Killian replied, "You're far too lovely not to shine through any level of cloaking spell."

Emma rolled her eyes, but she felt her insides turn to mush all the same. Her husband never failed to make her feel like the most beautiful woman in any realm.

"I think Anton and Clara's observations are legitimate," Killian added.
"At least you're not in the trance," Emma replied, "You're still with me, right?"

"Always," he pecked at her cheek.

Arriving at the palace, the travel party was quickly ushered into guest quarters to clean up and be made presentable for their royal hosts.

Killian paced the floor while waiting for Emma to emerge from the dressing room.

He knew she was less than pleased with being poked and prodded by the palace attendants, but their efforts took his breath away.

"You look stunning, Love," Killian's jaw dropped when she emerged in an emerald green gown, which accentuated her green eyes.

"I feel like a pin cushion," Emma smoothed out the skirt of her dress.

"The loveliest pin cushion I've ever seen," he stepped in and gave her a passionate kiss.

"Are you doing okay?" Emma stoked his cheek, "It must have been quite a shock to encounter your father after all this time."

"Aye, it was," he nodded.

"Do you believe his story about his abrupt disappearance? He did seem genuinely devastated by your years as an indentured servant aboard the ship he left you on," Emma offered.

"He was," Killian agreed, "I don't know what to make of his story."

"It almost sounds too good to be true," Emma ran her fingers through the hair at the nape of his neck. "Regina checked in with Henry on the ride to the palace. We've only been gone about an hour in Storybrooke time. Fallon wants us to bring her something pretty from our trip."

"How about I bring her you in this dress?" Killian suggested, his hands trailing down her back to her hips.

"Easy boy," Emma stepped away, "We have a king and queen to address, and my attendants worked hard to make me look presentable."

"More than presentable," he dipped in for another kiss, "You look tempting enough to eat."

"Save it for when we get home," Emma smiled.

"Which for everyone's sake, especially our children, needs to be soon," Killian responded.

"We should keep their existence a secret for the time being," Emma stated, "Until we figure out your father's true intentions..."

"Aye," Killian agreed without her having to provide a full explanation.

There was a knock at the door. The king and queen were apparently ready to receive them.

Emma entwined her fingers with her husband's and followed their page to where the rest of their travel party was waiting for them.

"You look lovely, Emma," David kissed her forehead.
"My first official gown," Emma smoothed down the skirt, "Do you think our hosts will throw a ball in our honor so I can check it off my bucket list?"

Killian raised a curious brow as her reference to a 'bucket list' had thrown him.

"I'll explain later," she assured him.

"I think we should feel fortunate our hosts haven't thrown us into the dungeon," Regina replied, "It's what I would have done to unexplained visitors of my land."

"Yet another reason I never want to experience the Enchanted Forest during Queen Regina's reign," Emma replied.

"Wasn't my finest moments," Regina conceded.

"If it's only been a few years since Killian and his father were separated, would they even have heard of Queen Regina, Prince David and Princess Snow White?" Emma asked.

"Time moves differently in all realms," David replied, "It's not out of the realm of possibilities they've heard of us. Let your mother and I do the talking."

"Not a problem," Emma agreed instantly. "We don't want Killian's father to know about our children for the time being...at least until we know if we can trust him."

"We agree," Mary Margaret nodded.

"We'd best not keep our hosts waiting," David's hand fell to his wife's back to usher her into the throne room.

TBC…
Chapter 22

Disclaimer: I own only the ideas of this story, not the characters who portray them. (darn it).

The travel party took a collective deep breath as the doors to the hall were opened and they were ushered inside in throne room where a room full of people awaited. Two at the front were dressed regally, no doubt the rulers of the kingdom. The six all knelt in respect as they took in their hosts. They were stunned by how young the pair appeared to be.

"Our captain informs us we are hosting royalty," the man rose from his chair to address them.

"I am Crown Princess Snow White from the Enchanted Forest," Mary Margaret spoke first. As the ranking royal of their group, she knew it was best to establish herself as such, "I'm traveling with my husband, Prince David, my stepmother Regina and her husband, Robin, my daughter, Princess Emma and her husband, Captain Jones."

"It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Princess Snow. I am King Daniel, and this is my wife, Queen Katarina," their host motioned for his wife to join him.

The young queen rose from her seat in a huff and went to her husband's side rather reluctantly. She had the look of a petulant child. Had Emma not been so unnerved by her surroundings, she would have laughed outright.

"And Captain Jones, you say," the king looked towards Killian and then to his left where Brennan was standing at attention as was his duty, "Any relation, Captain?"

"Aye, your highness," Brennan spoke up, "He is my youngest son."

"Son?" Daniel snorted, "You look nearly the same age."

"It's a long story," Mary Margaret chimed in.

"What brings you to my...our kingdom?" Daniel inquired after Queen Katarina stomped back to her throne and took a seat.

"Your highness, we have come to ask for your assistance," David spoke up. He thought it important to show he and his wife operating as a united front. "A siren has settled in our land and is raising havoc in our small town. Through our research, we have discovered the enchanted fruits of your land have the ability to silence a siren's song. We ask you to provide us with an apple to restore order to our community."

"You cannot have one!" Katarina rose and stomped her foot, "Those are our apples."

Emma and Killian exchanged a slightly amused look at the tantrum on display. Their daughter behaved better than the queen before them.

"Calm yourself, Darling," Daniel turned towards her, "These people simply do not know the dangers of our fruit."

"Dangers, your highness?" Mary Margaret inquired, "Our research tells us they silence a siren's song. Is that not true?"

"There are valid uses for our apples," Daniel conceded, "However for those not of our land, the
handling of the fruit would be deadly."

"Our research did not mention those dangers," Mary Margaret looked towards her stepmother for confirmation.

"There is no reason for us help you. Your problems are your own," Katarina's temper went on full display yet again.

"Silence, Kittie," Daniel approached her and placed a gentle hand on her shoulder, "I will handle this. Run along to your solarium."

Katarina stormed off, muttering in her native language and generally making as much of a scene as she could. Daniel squared his shoulders and turned towards the travel party, refusing to acknowledge the scene his queen had just made nor apologize for it.

"I'm afraid we cannot help you," Daniel replied.

"Your Majesty, if I may speak," Brennan broke through the silence which threatened to engulf the room.

"Of course, Captain Jones," Daniel turned towards his advisor. "I always value your opinion, as my father did until the day he was incapacitated."

"I have served this kingdom selflessly for several decades," Brennan began after taking a moment to collect his thoughts. "I have sacrificed much to the detriment of my family. I believe it is time to offer my full resignation, however I ask you allow me one final task, to escort my son and his travel companions home with the fruit they need to restore order to their kingdom."

Daniel began to turn red in the face though it was unclear if it was in anger or embarrassment. "Captain Jones, we shall discuss this matter in private."

"Of course, your highness," Captain Jones gave a nod of respect.

"You must all join us this evening for the feast held in your honor. This is not a request," Daniel straightened his spine, trying to appear as though he was the man in charge before he dashed from the room.

"Captain, we hope not to put you in a difficult position," Mary Margaret approached Brennan once they were alone.

"Your majesty, my decisions are my own," Brennan assured her, "I had always planned to resign my commission the moment I found my sons. Sadly Liam is no longer alive, but my Killian has returned to me. It took me nearly forty years to realize it, but my allegiance should first and foremost be to him."

"Thank you, Papa," Killian nodded.

"I must speak with my king," Brennan stated, "I will meet you in the palace garden."

Just as Brennan passed his son, he whispered something in his ear, something which made Killian go white with fear.

"What's wrong?" Emma was at his side in an instant.

Killian tried to sound as normal as possible when he spoke, "We shall go to the gardens."
"Killian," Emma tried to extract from her husband what bothered him. He merely repeated himself, imploring with his eyes for Emma to follow him without another word. "Yes, let's go to the gardens."

"What is going on?" Emma spoke once Killian was certain the six of them were alone.

"We need to retrieve our belongings and leave the palace grounds immediately," Killian explained, "My father said we are not to trust the king."

"No offense, Captain, but is it perhaps your father we shouldn't trust?" Regina stated.

"The king had the beanstalk eliminated," Killian offered further proof of their host's duplicitous nature.

"How the hell are we going to get home then?" Regina snapped.

"My father said he'd arrange it, but we must leave immediately," Killian replied.

"Does he have access to magical beans?" Regina pulled her mirror from her pocket.

After a brief conversation with a worried Henry, she was able to confirm the beanstalk had disappeared from Storybrooke. She did her best to reassure Henry they would find their way home as soon as possible.

"I think we have to take a leap of faith with Killian's father," Emma grasped her husband's hand.

"As of right now, it's the only plan we have, but the first time this goes sideways, I'm fireballing him," Regina replied.

"If he double crosses us, I'll be cheering you on," Killian grumbled in reply.

"We'd best gather our belongings," Robin suggested.

"Meet at the stables as soon as possible," Killian replied, "My father will meet us there."

"Let's get going," Mary Margaret suggested.

Brennan emerged from the shadows once the entire travel party arrived in the stables.

"I bought us a bit of time, but we must move quickly," Brennan motioned towards a secret passageway hidden in a stable stall.

"Where does this take us?" Killian hesitated.

"Out of the castle towards the docks," Brennan replied, "You were a ship captain, were you not?"

"Is a ship captain," Emma amended.

"Then you can get us out of the harbor before anyone suspects something is wrong," Brennan stated.

"We're stealing a ship?" Mary Margaret gasped.

"It's the only way I know of to get you back to the Enchanted Forest," Brennan replied.

"Um, about that..." Emma began.

"Save it for when we're out to sea," Brennan ushered them all for a second time towards the secret passageway.
"If you double cross us, Papa," Killian began.

"You have my permission to toss me overboard. I can't swim," Brennan stated, "It would be a fitting end."

"Let's go," Emma tugged on Killian's sleeve, "We can do the father-son chat when we're away from here."

Killian nodded and followed his wife. They were at the docks in mere moments.

Just like when they'd first arrived in the village, no one gave them the slightest glance.

"What's with these people?" Regina waved a hand in front of one of the passing villagers, which went completely unnoticed.

"It's been like this since our previous king became ill," Brennan admitted, "There is talk amongst the ranks of some sort of witchcraft. It doesn't effect everyone. I'm at a loss to explain it."

"Let's get the hell out of here before it sucks us in," Regina stated.

"The ship is right over here," Brennan motioned them towards the naval ship gleaming in the sunlight.

"The Haunted Siren, how appropriate," Killian read the ship's name while surveying the security surrounding the ship they were about to commandeer.

"I should be able to distract the guards long enough for you to get the ship ready to sail," Brennan stated, "How long will you need?"

"Looks to be a standard naval vessel," Killian surveyed their get away ship, "I can get the Jolly Roger ready by myself in under ten minutes, so five minutes should be sufficient."

"Are you sure we can do this?" Emma asked.

"You doubt my nautical abilities?" he raised a brow to challenge her.

"Not yours," Emma's eyes motioned towards the rest of their crew. Emma sailed enough to know she could help, but her parents rarely sailed with them. Regina and Robin had been aboard the Jolly Roger only a couple of times and were of no help during their voyage.

"We can do this," Killian assured her.

"Let's do it then," Emma nodded.

Brennan nodded before stepping out of their hiding place to approach the crewmen left on watch. It was mere moments before Brennan had their backs turned and they were far enough to not hear the usual noises made while the travelers got the ship ready to sail.

The final step was to untie the ship. Killian assigned himself the task, leaving Emma to man the wheel. He's instructed her to keep the ship as close to the dock as she could until they reached the end. He hoped it would give him and his father enough time to get on board and out to sea before anyone could raise an alarm.

"Go ahead," Killian heard his father say, "I know how it was back in my day having to keep watch when the rest of the men are tying one on at the tavern. I won't tell anyone if you want."
"Thanks, Captain," one of the sailors replied, "We'll buy you a pint the next time we're in the tavern."

The trio of sailors scurried off, having been relieved for an hour by one of the king's most trusted advisors.

"I see where Killian gets his cunning," David noted while Emma concentrated on not pitching the boat against the docks.

Brennan and Killian grasped the ship's ladder at the last possible moment and began climbing just as the ship came free of the docks.

"Raise the sails," Killian commanded the moment he and his father stepped foot on the ship's deck.

David and Robin worked in tandem to get the sails raised. Killian took hold of the wheel and maneuvered the sail to catch as much wind as possible.

They were a good three minutes out to sea when they heard the commotion on the docks.

"Jig is up," Robin grasped the glass and looked towards the docks.

"They're a good ten minutes away from following us," Killian responded calmly, "We took the fastest ship in their fleet. They won't catch us."

"That was almost too easy," Regina looked suspiciously towards Brennan. "Doesn't this count as an act of treason?"

"Most likely," Brennan nodded, "However the alternative is something I could not bear."

"We're out to sea. How the hell do we get home?" Regina challenged him, "Unless you have some magic beans in that satchel of yours we're just going to sail these seas to nowhere."

"Before the king ordered the beanstalk to be removed, I managed to save a piece. It's not much, but it should allow us to open a portal, if we're able to get ahold of some magic," Brennan stated, "I know of a land not far from Avalon which should be able to assist us."

"What kind of magic are we talking?" Regina produced a ball of fire from her hand. "Perhaps I may be of some assistance."

"There's an enchantment which needs to be spoken," Brennan handed her a rolled parchment of paper.

Regina glanced towards Emma and Killian to gauge their level of trust of this new allie they'd acquired.

"It's worth a shot," Emma shrugged her shoulders. Killian nodded in agreement.

Regina took a deep breath and then spoke the enchantment with the slice of beanstalk in her hands. The stalk shook and glowed and then fell to the deck without opening the portal.

"Did you say it wrong?" Emma asked.

"No, I don't have enough magic," Regina frowned while picking the stalk up off the ship's deck.

Emma stepped forward. "Maybe I can help?"
"Your wife is magical?" Brennan turned towards his son.

"Aye," Killian nodded, "She's still in the discovery phase of powers, but she's bloody brilliant."

"Are you ready?" Regina joined hands with Emma.

Emma exhaled deeply and then nodded her head.

Killian gave her an encouraging smile.

"Just concentrate," Regina instructed her, "I'll do all the work."

"Just do it," Emma stated.

Mary Margaret and David gave their daughter an encouraging nod, and then Regina repeated the incantation.

The magic poured out of Emma and Regina and into the remnants of the beanstalk. A force grew around it and swallowed the ship, sending it tumbling into darkness.

Emma stammered towards her husband, wrapping her arms around his neck when she was close enough to do so.

Mary Margaret and David embraced as did Robin and Regina.

Just when they thought they might fall forever, the ship splashed into a body of water. The ship's occupants all struggled to keep their footing while the ship toggled to and fro.

"Oh god, what was that?" Emma continued to hold her husband tight.

"We fell through a portal," Regina explained.

"Does that mean we've left Avalon?" Emma asked.

Regina nodded in confirmation, "But there is no way of telling what realm we fell into."

"Actually, we can," Emma pulled the compass out of her coat she'd acquired during her adventure in the Enchanted Forest with her mother and Killian. "This compass brought Mom and I back to Storybrooke. All we had to do is think about where we wanted to go, and it took us there."

"Hopefully you thought about returning to Storybrooke as we fell into the abyss," Regina replied.

"Is everyone alright? Captain Jones?" Emma asked.

"Fully intact," Brennan confirmed, "What is this Storybrooke you speak of?"

"It's our home," Emma explained, "It's a long and complicated story, but we left the Enchanted Forest many years ago. If we're in the right realm, you'll see it soon enough."

Everyone glanced towards Killian, who was looking to the sky, trying to read the stars as best he could without his maps.

"Awe, there it is," Killian smiled, "We're in the right realm, not far off I imagine."

"How can you be so sure?" David advanced towards him.

"The North Star," Killian motioned to the sky.
"There's Orion," Emma added eagerly.

"And Cassiopeia," Mary Margaret chimed in.

"We're home," Emma hugged her husband eagerly.

"Almost," Killian nodded, "If my calculations are correct, it's merely a few hours sail from here."

"Then let's get going," Emma replied.

"Aye," Killian spun the wheel until the sail caught the wind, "I'd like to tuck my daughter in to bed this evening."

"Daughter?" Brennan repeated.

"Yes, our daughter," Emma shared a comforting look with her husband, who was looking most guilty for his inadvertent slip.

"Killian and I have a daughter," Emma pulled a picture from her pocket, "She's three. Her name is Fallon. We also have a son. He's nearly eight months old, and his name is Bradyn. I also have a son from a previously relationship. He's nearly fifteen. His name is Henry."

"May I?" Brennan motioned towards the picture in Emma's hand.

"Of course," Emma offered it up. "Fallon is a bit of a ham. She'll suck up as much attention as anyone can give her...just like her papa."

Killian felt himself blush at her statement.

"She'll be thrilled to meet you," Emma felt herself choking up when a tear spilled down Brennan's cheek.

"This must be an invention from a very powerful wizard," Brennan noted the photograph in his hand, "They look so lifelike."

"Oh, right, you've never seen a photograph before," Emma realized, "We went through this with Killian too."

"It's best to take it as it comes," Killian offered, "Emma hasn't walked me into any dangers yet I wasn't equipped to defend."

"Far be it for me to break up this moment, but it's been a long day. We had to climb for hours, and then do a little show and tell for your bratty king and queen. I'd like a warm bath and a stiff drink. Take us home, Captain," Regina demanded.

"Yes, Madame Mayor, of course," Killian snickered.

"One of these days, Pirate," Regina scowled at him playfully.

"Pirate?" Brennan picked up.

"Another story for another day," Emma spoke for her husband, "Let's just get home."

TBC…
Chapter 23

Disclaimer: In my dreams, maybe. Real life, it's just fun to write.

Fallon was nearly asleep on the sofa with her head rested against Henry's shoulder, when Max suddenly moved from his place as her footrest. Ruby reacted in nearly the same moment, following Max to the door to peer out the window.

"I don't believe it," Ruby mumbled mostly to herself, but Henry overheard her.

"What's wrong, Ruby?" Henry was on his feet ready to spring into action to protect his siblings, "Is it Wendy?"

"No," Ruby shook her head and stepped back from the window, "See for yourself."

"They're back," Henry proclaimed and immediately threw open the door and launched himself at his mother.

"Whoa, Kid," Emma was thrown off balance by her son's movements. She took quick inventory. "You're not any taller than when we left, so we haven't been gone all that long, have we?"

"Just a day," Ruby responded when Fallon streaked towards her father in her nightgown and bare feet, throwing herself into her father's arms, her arms tight around his neck. A step behind was Leo, who promptly hugged his mother around the legs.

"Did we miss anything?" Emma ushered everyone into their cottage where it was much warmer.

"Only more people appearing to fall under Wendy's spell," Ruby replied, "Other than that, you didn't miss much...Who's this?" Ruby motioned towards Brennan, who had kept his distance during the happy reunion.

"This is Brennan Jones," Emma took Fallon from her husband to make the introduction, "Fallon, this is Poppy Jones. This is Papa's papa."

"Hi, Poppy," Fallon waved eagerly with a charming smile on her face.

"Brennan," Fallon waved eagerly with a charming smile on her face.

"Brennan, this is your granddaughter, Fallon," Emma added.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Princess," Brennan bowed in respect of the little girl's lineage.

Fallon found the action funny and giggled in reply.

"You don't need to bow in Storybrooke," Emma told her father-in-law, "Things are much less formal here." She motioned Henry over. "This is my oldest son, Henry."

"Good to meet you," Henry extended his hand.

"Likewise," Brennan replied.

Emma set Fallon down and took Bradyn from Ruby who had retrieved their son from the nursery. "And this is Bradyn, your grandson."

"He looks like Killian as a babe," Brennan's eyes welled with tears.
"He does have the same mischievous glimmer in his eyes," Emma helped Bradyn wave to his grandfather before kissing the top of her son's head, which immediately came to rest against her chest. He was moments away from conking out for the night as it was well past his bedtime.

"Since you're home, I should gather my belongings and head out," Ruby announced.

"Did you want me to walk you home?" David inquired.

"Not necessary," Ruby shook off the offer, "I think I'll surprise Victor with a visit rather than wake Granny. I'll see you guys tomorrow. We can discuss your adventures then."

"When this is all over, Red, I'm buying at the Rabbit Hole when we have another girls' night," Emma offered.


"Bye, Aunt Ruby," Fallon pouted. She'd been looking forward to the sleep over with one of her favorite people.

"We'll do a sleepover soon, and it will be way more fun because it will be just you and me," Ruby kissed her cheek.

Fallon perked right up and nodded her head vigorously.

"Thanks for watching them, Ruby," Emma walked her friend to the door with Bradyn settled against her hip.

"Easiest gig in town," Ruby smiled, "You know how much I love those kids."

"I do," Emma nodded.

"Let me know what I can do to help rid this town of that siren. She's really out of control," Ruby's smile faded, "I keep waiting for Victor or myself to get sucked in."

"Maybe you're immune like my parents, Killian and I are," Emma offered.

"I like to think we'd be smart enough to run the other direction if we saw her," Ruby bit her lip. She didn't want to consider the situation Emma suggested. She wasn't ready to think of her and Victor as true love. After her first love's life was tragically ended at her own hand, she still didn't think she was deserving, even if she hadn't known what she was doing at the time.

"We'll talk soon," Emma replied.

Ruby nodded and disappeared from the front step.

"We'd better get Leo home," Mary Margaret told her daughter as her husband picked up their son who had his teddy bear clutched tight to his chest. He appeared ready to nod off at any moment, "We'll stop by tomorrow to get his things."

"All he needs is Mister Bear to get to sleep," Emma nodded in agreement.

"It's been a long day," Mary Margaret sighed in relief, "Tomorrow we'll figure out our next plan of action. Tonight's agenda is to get a good night's rest."

"I agree," Emma nodded as Mary Margaret leaned in to kiss Bradyn's cheek and then her oldest child's and then with a soft voice added. "We have an extra bedroom if you want Brennan to stay
"I think its best for him to stay here," Emma responded in a soft voice to match, "I think Killian needs him to stay here...to force the issue so to speak. He'll avoid his father and their issues if he can."

"It's a standing offer," Mary Margaret replied.

"Thanks, Mom," Emma nodded.

"Good night, Sweetheart," David leaned in to kiss his daughter's cheek.

"Nite, Dad," Emma smiled.

With her parents and brother gone, an awkward silence threatened to engulf the cottage. Fallon disappeared into her bedroom and returned with a book in her hands, batting her lashes to get her father to read to her. Killian was helpless to resist.

After pulling herself up onto the sofa and settling in next to Killian, she began patting the space available next to her. "Poppy, sit."

He looked a bit startled by the offer, but Brennan took a seat next to her as directed all the same. Just as he was about to get comfortable, Max hopped up and parked himself in his lap, giving the elder Jones quite the fright, believing he was to be the dog's dinner.

"It's okay. He won't hurt you," Emma pulled Max away from her father-in-law, "This is Max. He's our pet."

Brennan stared at the dog in bewilderment.

"He's housebroken and very gentle," Emma petted the dog. Max responded by licking her face. "Hold out your hand."

Brennan did as requested even though it quivered slightly with nerves. Emma urged Max to advance towards him. Ever the curious dog, he sniffed the elder Jones' hand and then licked his fingers.

"It's an invitation to be petted," Emma translated the gesture and then demonstrated how Max liked to be rubbed down.

Fallon hopped off the sofa and helped her mother with the demonstration, deeming this more interesting than her story for the moment.

"How very curious," Brennan watched his granddaughter fearlessly pet and then hug the dog.

"I take it they don't have dogs in Avalon," Emma smiled.

"No," Brennan shook his head and then began petted Max as Emma and Fallon had been demonstrating. "What does a dog do in this world?"

"They're companions for people," Emma explained, "This dog specifically is a companion for Fallon. We bought him a little over a year ago. He follows her nearly everywhere she goes."

"I love my Max," Fallon hugged her dog's neck.

"And he loves you, Princess," Emma replied.
"Let's finish our story, yeah?" Killian patted the space Fallon had just vacated.

Fallon climbed back onto the sofa and snuggled in with her father. His soothing voice lulled her to sleep in short order.

"I'll take her to bed," Emma offered.

"No," Killian shook her off, "I got her." He carefully picked up his daughter and brought her into her bedroom.

"I don't know about you Brennan, but I'm hungry," Emma went to the kitchen with her oldest son.

"I am a bit famished," Brennan followed her.

"Have a seat," Emma motioned towards a bar stool on the other side of the kitchen counter from where she was working, "I'm not much of a cook, but a sandwich should tide us over until the morning."

"If it isn't too much trouble," Brennan nodded and took a seat while Emma pulled out the necessary ingredients.

"Can I have one too?" Henry took a seat next to Brennan.

"Didn't Ruby feed you earlier?" Emma asked.

"Yeah, but that was a couple of hours ago," Henry stated, "I'm hungry."

"You're always hungry," Emma snickered and pulled out four plates to make four sandwiches. She was sure her husband would be just as hungry. They hadn't eaten nearly the entire day.

"So what happened in Avalon?" Henry asked while Emma worked.

"It's a long story," Emma sighed, "One I'm not up to explain right now. Tomorrow?"

"Sure," Henry's head bobbed.

"Thanks, Kid," Emma gave him a grateful smile.

"So you're Killian's father, huh," Henry turned towards their guest.

"Indeed I am," Brennan nodded.

"Seems like my grandparents are all the same age as my parents," Henry saw the irony in the situation.


"Right, except Mister Gold," Henry eagerly bit into his sandwich.

Brennan looked at his own sandwich with a bit of curiosity. He'd never seen such a concoction before.

"It's a turkey sandwich," Emma bit her lip in hopes her explanation was adequate. It had been awhile since she'd had to explain nearly every new little thing her husband happened upon.

"Turkey?" Brennan repeated in confusion.
"It's a large bird," Killian emerged from Fallon's bedroom, "They're raised on farms in this realm to feed people. They are quite tasty, especially in sandwich form." Emma handed him a plate. "Thank you, Love."

"I figured you'd be as hungry as me," Emma replied.

"Indeed I am," Killian kissed her cheek.

It was not lost on Emma how her father-in-law had used the same expression and sounded the same in doing so. There was a striking resemblance between father and son.

"This is quite the living establishment," Brennan glanced around the room. His eyes landing longest on the unfamiliar appliances.

"We'll explain the appliances in the morning," Emma bit her lip, "For tonight, we'll go over the essentials."

"Aye," Brennan nodded in agreement, "It has been a rather long day."

"Yes, it has," Emma ran her fingers through the hair at the nape of her husband before she dug into her sandwich, "What do you think of turkey, Brennan?"

"I agree with Killian's assessment," Brennan responded after he'd taken a few bites, "It is quite tasty. It's different than anything I've ever eaten before. What is in this sandwich I believe you called it."

"Oh right," Emma realized Brennan might not even know what a sandwich was, "The spongy things on the outside are bread. The leafy green stuff is lettuce. The creamy stuff is called mayonnaise."

"I see," Brennan replied, "Altogether it works quite well."

Emma did her best to keep from laughing at the perplexed look on her father-in-law's face.

Henry's plate was finished the fastest.

"Is your homework done?" Emma asked after taking his plate from him and loading it in the dishwasher. It was not lost on her, how curious Brennan was by her actions.

"Yeah, I finished it before we started watching the movie Fallon picked out," Henry replied.

"Let me guess, it was a princess movie," Emma snickered.

"Aren't they always?" Henry rolled his eyes, "She's on an Aladdin kick right now. She wants to be Jasmine, and she thinks of Max as her tiger."

Brennan looked completely bewildered by the conversation.

"More things we'll explain tomorrow," Emma realized Brennan's plight.

Brennan nodded in understanding.

"How about I give you a quick tour and explain the basics as we go?" Emma suggested as she loaded both her plate and Brennan's in the dishwasher. Killian was eating slowly, perhaps as a way to not contribute to the conversation.

"I would be delighted," Brennan smiled and offered Emma his arm to take.
Emma kept things simple. She showed him the bathroom and the living area. The bathroom and the modern plumbing took the most time as Brennan had never seen such inventions, and the concept of plumbing was quite fascinating to him. However the most fascinating item on their tour was the light switch. Emma tried her best to explain the idea to him as he flipped the switch on and off multiple times.

"Quite wonderful inventions your realm has thought up," Brennan replied.

"I'm sure you have some of your own which I would find quite fascinating," Emma assured him as she motioned him towards the sofa, "This is where you'll sleep. It's called a sofa. It's not much to look at, but it's quite comfortable...ask Killian, he sleeps here on occasion."

"Aye, Emma's right," Killian nodded, "It is quite comfortable, not so much as a bed, but it does the job on those evenings Emma does not allow me to sleep with her."

"What he means..." Emma began.

"The inventions of your world may be new to me, but the relationship dynamic between a husband and wife are not," Brennan put her at ease, "I've was banished more times than I can count from my bed, though usually I was banished to the barn to sleep on a bed of hay with the animals, not a...sofa, did you call it?"

"Yes, I did," Emma nodded, "It's good to know there are some things which are universal. I'll get you some bedding to make it more comfortable."

"Thank you, my dear," Brennan watched Emma disappear up the circular staircase.

There was an uncomfortable silence between father and son. Henry searched his brain for something to talk about with Brennan, which wouldn't cause any confusion, but came up empty. The trio was saved when Emma came down the stairs with some sheets and a blanket for Brennan to use.

"Did you need any help making up the bed?" Emma asked.

"I've been preparing my bed for near two decades. I believe I can manage," Brennan replied.

"We're early risers around here," Emma glanced at the clock, "Fallon keeps us on an early schedule, so we should turn in. Did you need anything else from us before we head up to the bedroom?"

"No, thank you," Brennan shook his head while Killian went through his usual routine of locking doors and turning out most of the lights.

"The light switch for the living room is right there," Emma motioned towards the switches he'd need.

"I'm not all that tired," Henry spoke up, "So I'll just read in my bedroom for awhile."

Emma nodded in agreement. "Brennan, if you need anything, we're right upstairs. Killian's a light sleeper, so he'll hear you if you holler, and you might here us going up and down the stairs if Bradyn is having trouble sleeping. Otherwise, we'll see you in the morning."

"Aye, I'll be here," Brennan nodded.

Emma took Killian's hand and pulled him up the staircase.

"Good night, Emma, Killian," Brennan called after them.

"Night, Brennan," Emma spoke at the same time Killian said, "Good night, Papa."
Brennan waited until Killian and Emma were out of sight before he plopped himself down on the sofa with his head in his hands. He still hadn't fully processed the news of his youngest son's return to his life and the heartbreaking news of his oldest son's passing. He'd hoped to one day reconnect with his sons but not under the circumstances he currently found himself in. He'd given his life to a king and kingdom who had nearly killed his remaining family. Nothing made sense to him anymore.

TBC…
Disclaimer: Still not mine. Still dreaming though.

Fallon awoke at her usual time and went about her usual routine, sprinting up the stairs to wake her father. Killian groaned as she attempted to shake him awake but didn't stir.

"Come here, Princess," Emma motioned her daughter over to her side of the bed, "Papa didn't sleep well, so how about you and I get a start on our morning and let Papa sleep."

"Okay," Fallon bobbed her head.

"Did you wake Poppy Jones before you came up here?" Emma tossed away her covers.

Fallon's eyes lit with excitement upon Emma's reminder of her meeting with her grandfather the previous evening. "Poppy Jones," Fallon turned towards the staircase with the intention of waking her grandfather.

"Where do you think you're going, Princess," Emma sprung into action despite the protest in her limbs and caught Fallon before she could set a toe on the stairs. Every muscle in her body was screaming from yesterday's exertion, but she was determined to catch her daughter.

"Wake Poppy," Fallon gave her mother an innocent smile.

"How about we get dressed for the day first and then wake Poppy?" Emma suggested before Fallon could wake her poppy.

"Okay," Fallon gave her mother's hand a tug, "Do my hair?"

"Of course," Emma followed Fallon down the stairs to her bedroom where she went through nearly every dress in her closet to find just the right outfit to present to her Poppy. She then sat as still as a statue so Emma could put two braided ponytails in.

After doing a full three hundred and sixty degree turn to appreciate her outfit from all angles, she deemed herself presentable for the day.

"How about you help me decide what to wear and then you can wake Papa," Emma suggested before Fallon could wake her poppy.

"Okay," Fallon bobbed her head and tugged her mother back up the stairs. Emma did her best to keep the little girl entertained for as long as she could, but in only a few minutes, Fallon was pulling herself onto her parents' bed to jump start her father. "Wake up, Papa."

Killian gave several good natured grunts and then hugged his daughter, "Good morning, Little Love."

"Morning, Papa," Fallon gave him her most charming smile, "We go sailing today?"

"Not today, Princess," Emma spoke up before Killian could. She knew her husband hated to deny their daughter anything, but they had things to do with their day which wouldn't involve his ship.

Fallon tossed a pout in her mother's direction.

"We'll sail soon, Little Love," Killian pecked at her little cheek, "Will you help me make pancakes?"
"Pamcakes!" her eyes lit up with excitement.

Emma laughed as her daughter leapt from the bed and then began tugging on her father's while chanting "Pamcakes" over and over.

Once down the stairs, Fallon made a showing of tiptoeing across the living room so as not to wake her grandfather even though she desperately wanted to.

As quietly as possible, Killian pulled out all the necessary ingredients and equipment for making pancakes while Fallon mostly cheered him on. Emma went about her own task of making coffee before heading to Bradyn's bedroom to check on him.

With her mother out of the room and her father's attentions elsewhere, Fallon finally found the opening to wake her grandfather, "Wake up, Poppy Jones."

"Fallon Ava Jones," Emma came out just in time to scold her daughter.

"It's quite alright," Brennan slowly sat up, "She's quite the beautiful sight to wake up to."

"She certainly is, but she should know better," Emma's eyes narrowed in her daughter's direction.

Fallon gave her mother her most innocent face, then giggled and ran off to help her father.

"I'm sorry, Brennan," Emma gave him an apologetic smile, "How'd you sleep?"

"Quite well," Brennan responded, "This sofa, I think you called it, is quite comfortable."

"Good to hear," Emma smiled while Bradyn waved at his Poppy.

"He's awfully cheery for such an early morning," Brennan observed the smile on his grandson's face.

"He's actually a pretty happy baby," Emma bounced Bradyn a bit. "Fallon was always wanting attention when she was Bradyn's age. Bradyn's happy just sitting in his playpen with his toy so long as he has a clean diaper and a full belly."

"Same with Liam," Brennan stated, "Killian wanted attention."

"I told you she took after you in that way," Emma sent a victorious smile in her husband's direction.

"I don't recall ever disagreeing with your observation, Love," Killian tested the griddle to see if it was ready to cook the pancakes.

"The coffee is ready," Emma stated and then realized her father-in-law might never have heard of such a thing, "That is if you drink such a thing."

"Coffee is a universal beverage, Love," Killian told her.

"Thank god," Emma replied, "Brennan, can I get you a cup before I make up Bradyn's bottle for him."

"Not necessary," Brennan assured her, "Just point me in the right direction, and I can make myself a cup."

"Cups are in the cabinet to Killian's right," Emma replied, "Coffee pot is on the counter just below it."
"This must be another of your realm's inventions," Brennan eyed the device with intrigue.

"It's one of the most handy devices we have in our home," Emma nodded, "With two young children and shifts which change all the time, I practically run on coffee to keep myself going."

"You work outside the home?" Brennan was taken aback by Emma's statement.

"I'm the town's sheriff...er...law person...do they have such people in your realm?" Emma asked.

"Our village has constables," Brennan offered, "They are charged with keeping order and inflicting punishment when called upon."

"Similar concept," Emma replied, "I don't exactly inflict the punishment. I usually lock them up in our town's jail cells until someone else decides their punishment, usually a judge. Our town is fairly tame as far as crime goes. We've only had to dole out serious punishment a few times. Usually it's just someone having too much to drink and causing a little bit of damage. We can't say the same when it comes to magical disturbances. We have more than our fair share of those."

"Aye, you have mentioned a siren," Brennan replied.

"Only the latest in a long line of magical beings to come to town," Emma sighed while preparing Bradyn's bottle despite the little boy's attempts to reach for it.

"But you have your own magic to rely on," Brennan pointed out.

"Hang on there, Little Sailor. I need to fill it up first," Emma smiled at her son before redirecting her attention to her father-in-law, "My magic isn't all that reliable. You saw me aboard the ship yesterday. I can draw upon it in extreme situations, but I don't always know how I'm doing what I am. Truthfully I haven't taken as much time to learn as I probably should."

"There's still time, Love," Killian replied, "I most look forward to seeing you in action."

"Hopefully for something fun and not out of some necessity to save the lives of those I love," Emma replied. "Killian, will you take Bradyn for a minute. If I don't get this bottle ready for him, he's going to melt down."

Killian took Bradyn from his wife and did his best to multitask. He knew his daughter was bound to come over and demand his attention as well as was always the case when he was holding Bradyn. Sure enough she came over and began doing a little dance, insisting her father watch.

Emma finished the bottle as quick as possible and then held it for Bradyn to snatch up before bumping her husband away from the stove. Bradyn promptly jammed the bottle into his mouth, much to both parents' amusement. Once the batter was mixed, Emma could handle the process and her husband clearly had other things to attend to, namely his adoring children.

"Fallon needs a mute button," Henry emerged from his bedroom, groaning because the sun wasn't even out yet.

"Sorry, Kid," Emma laughed, "We tried to keep her as quiet as possible, but you know how she gets in the morning."

Fallon immediately ran over to hug Henry around his legs. Whether it was to get attention she felt she wasn't getting from her father or to apologize for waking her brother, Henry soaked up her affections.
Brennan watched the family dynamic with intrigue. Things were so much different in his realm as far as family dynamics went. Killian and Emma appeared to be equal in every sense of the word. In his world, there were clear roles in the home. The woman was responsible for tending to the children, cooking and maintaining the home. The man was responsible for tending to the animals and ensuring the family had adequate income to keep food on the table.

Emma and Killian appeared to work so well with each other, perhaps even enjoying their equality.

"Papa's making pancakes," Fallon told her brother, "He's making lots, so I hope you're hungry."

"Henry's always hungry," Emma chuckled and claimed her younger son from her husband so he could finish their breakfast. Henry carried Fallon to the table.

"You can sit next to me, Poppy," Fallon motioned towards the chair next to her.

"That's very nice of you, Princess," Emma smiled while setting Bradyn up in his high chair and then cut up one of the smaller pancakes into bit sized pieces he could feed himself. He hadn't yet developed the taste for pancakes his sister had, but he'd eat a piece or two.

Fallon was eager for the pancakes to arrive at the table, helping herself to her usual plateful. Brennan watched in amusement as the little girl drowned the fluffy cakes with the maple syrup.

"Fallon has just a sweet tooth," Emma explained her daughter's actions to Brennan.

"As do I," Brennan replied, "My Siobhan always made sure I had sweet treats in my satchel each morning."

"So it was genetic," Emma sent her husband a victorious look. They'd been arguing about where Fallon's sweet tooth had come from since it first revealed itself when she was a baby.

"Genetic?" Brennan asked for clarification.

"It's a term which means a trait was passed from one generation to the next," Emma replied, "Neither Killian nor I have the sweet tooth Fallon does, so we'd always wondered if it came from a member of our family or if it was just something she'd picked up. I guess we now have our answer."

"I see," Brennan took a sip from his cup of coffee and then helped himself to some pancakes, added nearly as much syrup as Fallon had.

"We're going to need to pick up more syrup at the market," Emma told her husband.

"I'll add it to the list," Killian smirked.

"Killian and I are hoping to take you to get some clothes today, Brennan," Emma spoke to the conversation she'd had with her husband the previous evening before they'd went to sleep. "I can't imagine you were able to bring much with you, especially clothing."

"No, I was not," Brennan confirmed.

"There's a mall a few towns over with several clothing stores Killian frequents. I'm sure we can find you suitable attire," Emma stated.

"What is a mall?" Brennan asked.

"A mall is an indoor marketplace with lots of places to find all sorts of clothing," Emma replied.
"I don't have anything of value to barter," Brennan frowned.

"Don't worry about that," Emma waved away the problem.

"A very generous offer, but I couldn't," Brennan replied.

"We insist," Emma stated, "Right Killian?"

Killian was paying more attention to his son than the conversation, but he'd learned through several years of marriage to always agree when she was asking him a question. "Aye, Love."

"We'll go after we figure out who is lucky enough to watch Fallon and Bradyn," Emma replied.

"I volunteer myself," Henry responded.

"Nice try, Kid, but you have school today," Emma's eyes narrowed in his direction, "Maybe Ruby's available."

Fallon cheered at the possibility and then stuffed her mouth full of more pancakes.

"Aunt Ruby!" Fallon launched herself into Ruby's waiting arms, "We get to spend the day together."

"We certainly do," Ruby laughed and tapped the little girl's nose.

"Thanks for doing this, Ruby," Emma caught up with her daughter who had darted ahead of Emma and her brother.

"Happy to do so," Ruby reassured the town's sheriff. "Granny had already found coverage for my shifts this week, so I'm free as a bird."

"Can we play dress up?" Fallon batted her lashes hopefully.

"Sure, we can," Ruby nodded.

"And you can put red in my hair like yours," Fallon tugged at one of Ruby's stands of red hair.

"As long as it's washable," Emma chimed in before Ruby could answer.

"Of course," Ruby assured both mother and daughter.

"Will you be a good big sister?" Emma asked when Ruby lowered Fallon to her feet.

"I be a good girl," Fallon bobbed her head eagerly.

"We shouldn't be gone for all that long," Emma replied.

"Take your time," Ruby replied. "If it's anything like it when Killian first discovered the clothing of this realm it is bound to be wildly entertaining."

"What am I in for?" Emma asked.

"A lot of bewildered looks," Ruby snickered, "It took a bit of time to even figure out what size he was, and then were was the whole hook and zipper moment. I swear I thought I was going to have to offer my services to zip up his fly. Fortunately he figured it out without my help."

Emma couldn't help the laugh which escaped. "I'll keep that in mind."
True to Ruby's warning, the day did turn out to be quite entertaining.

On the drive back to Storybrooke, Emma found herself repeatedly apologizing for the humor she found at her father-in-law's expense. Brennan turned out to have a pretty good sense of humor about the entire situation.

Killian was mostly a tagalong. He used his experience with Ruby to good use. They were able to figure out Brennan's sizes without much issue. Emma and Brennan had an easy kind of exchange, but conversations involving Killian were forced. He answered the questions asked of him with as few words as possible. His internal struggles were quite apparent.

"I'm going to retrieve our children," Killian spoke once they arrived in Storybrooke, "I'll be back in a bit."

"Killian, Fallon might have talked Ruby into having a sleepover tonight. If she asks, I'm okay with her staying," Emma replied.

Killian nodded in acknowledgement and wondered off.

"Is he always so pensive?" Brennan inquired.

"He's a man who has had a lot of life experience, and not all of them were pleasant," Emma replied, "Maybe in time he'll tell you."

"How do I earn his forgiveness?" Brennan asked.

"I don't know," Emma shrugged. "We're in uncharted waters. He's lived a long life, a hard life. He's had short periods of happiness with many years of darkness in between."

"Is forgiveness even possible?"

"Forgiveness is always possible," Emma replied, "It's one thing I've learned living here in Storybrooke. Take Regina, she's inflicted a lot of pain on this entire town, the worst done to my own family, yet she is still a part of our family because she sought forgiveness...I think it's just going to take time, hopefully time you're willing to spend with him."

"There is nowhere else I'd rather be," Brennan replied, "It is unlikely I'll ever be welcomed back in Avalon once my king has discovered my treachery, so I suppose this realm is my new home."

"If that is the case, we might need to find ways to integrate you into the town," Emma replied, "You were a soldier in Avalon. Is that something you'd like to continue?"

"I was a soldier because it supported my family. It was something I was good at, but it was never something I was passionate about," Brennan admitted.

"Do you have anything you were passionate about?" Emma asked.

Brennan pulled the picture of his beloved wife from his satchel and gazed at it.

"The portrait," Emma realized, "You drew it."


"I'll be sure to get you some supplies when I get to the store," Emma replied. "I don't know of any available jobs which would involve your talent, but I'm certainly willing to look into it."
"Thank you," Brennan smiled.

"He could teach art at the school," Mary Margaret suggested during dinner at Granny's after Emma filled her in on her father-in-law's talent. The family all sat down to dinner together before Fallon would be spending the night with Ruby. The little girl's hair was already streaked red, which she was currently showing off to all the patrons of the restaurant.

"Teach?" Emma asked, "Is there even an opening?"

"Not yet," Mary Margaret replied, "There hasn't been any such classes offered because we've had no one to teach any...Brennan, you have quite a talent."

"Thank you, milady," Brennan felt himself begin to blush while Mary Margaret returned the portrait of his wife. He'd never shared his secret with anyone except his wife.

"Do you really think it's an option?" Emma asked her mother.

"I'll ask the headmaster tomorrow," Mary Margaret responded, "We're always looking for ways to expand the minds of the children of Storybrooke. Art would certainly fit the bill."

"I've never taught anyone before," Brennan spoke up.

"You taught Liam and I to use swords," Killian chimed in, "Granted I was too young to remember the lessons, but Liam was one of the best swordsmen I'd ever seen. He was first in his class at the academy. Obviously his lessons were well received."

"I didn't know you remembered," Brennan replied.

"Bits and pieces come to me," Killian admitted.

Emma smiled at her husband for making he effort.

"Teaching swordsmanship and art are two completely different concepts," Brennan stated.

"The subjects are quite different, but the concept of teaching can be applied across all subjects," Mary Margaret replied, "I have some books on the subject I'd be happy to lend you."

"I suppose it wouldn't hurt to take a look," Brennan replied.

Mary Margaret beamed in reply. "How did the shopping excursion go? You look quite spiffy in your new clothes."

"Spiffy?" Brennan raised a brow.

"Err...look good," Mary Margaret blushed at her chosen expression. It had been awhile since she'd had to choose her words so carefully.

"I've been doing to same thing all day," Emma laughed while absentmindedly running her fingers through the hair at the nape of Killian's neck. Whether it was her intent or not, Killian felt his anxiety ease under her tender caress.

Fallon returned to the table after speaking to the last of the townsfolk and pulled herself up into Brennan's lap. The elder Jones appeared a bit taken aback by the gesture but said nothing. Fallon reached across the table for a paper placemat and crayons she'd been given upon arrival and began drawing herself a picture. Not thinking twice, Brennan gave her an impromptu lesson.
Mary Margaret watched with a gigantic smile on her face. Brennan appeared to have natural instincts where teaching was concerned. He spoke to the little girl's level and exercised great patience with her.

"Here Papa," Fallon slid her completed picture across the table towards her father upon completion.

"It's lovely, Little Love," Killian smiled.

"It's you and Poppy Jones on the Jolly Roger," Fallon climbed over her mother and into his lap and began to point out various features of the picture, "This is you and Poppy and the ship and the waves and the dolphins and the sun."

"Where are you, Little Love?" Killian kissed his daughter's cheek, "I wouldn't sail the Jolly Roger without my first mate."

Fallon appeared to give her father's question a great deal of thought and then reached across her mother for a crayon to add herself at the helm of the ship. The family all laughed in amusement.

"This goes on the fridge when we get home," Killian folded up the picture carefully and put it in the pocket of his flannel shirt.

When dinner arrived, Fallon found her own seat and devoured her favorite macaroni and cheese with her usual gusto.

Brennan eyed his hamburger with apprehension. He'd had Emma order for him as everything on the menu was foreign. She'd ordered him a simple hamburger and fries.

"Do you have cows in Avalon?" Emma asked.

"Aye, they are a good source of milk," Brennan nodded.

"They are here too," Emma replied, "We also use them for their meat when they die. They grind it up to make the hamburger in front of you."

Brennan appeared intrigued. Cows had only served one function in his realm, to provide milk. Once they stopped producing, they were brought to the palace market to be sold. The palace would turn around and ship them off to other realms. What the other realm had done with them had never been his concern. Certainly no one in his kingdom ever thought to eat one.

Emma showed him how she lifted a burger and then took a bite. Brennan copied her.

"Quite tasty," Brennan proclaimed after swallowing his first bite.

Emma gave him a triumphant smile. "The fries come from potatoes. They're a starchy vegetable which grows in the ground. Do you have those in Avalon?"

Brennan shook his head but snatched one up. If the potato was half as tasty as the burger he was certain he'd like it. This realm's food tasted much better than the food of his realm. The food he was used to had the consistency of paste and tasted rather bland. They fed soldiers a special diet which was said to keep them ready for fighting, but he longed for the food his mother and later his wife used to make for him.

After the meal, Ruby appeared having brought Victor dinner at the hospital where he was working the overnight shift. "Ready for our sleepover, Pumpkin?" Ruby asked the ice cream consuming little girl.
Fallon bobbed her head eagerly.

"Don't let Fallon stay up too late," Emma advised Ruby, "We're all going to need to get back into our regular routine tomorrow, which means I'm working at the station, and Killian will be taking the Jolly Roger to go fishing."

"I'm Papa's first mate," Fallon added proudly.

"I promise to have her in bed at a responsible hour," Ruby vowed.

"And no scary stories," Emma added, "I don't want her having nightmares."

"I have babysat your daughter before," Ruby reminded Emma, "You were even trusting me to care for all your children for several consecutive days while you went climbing a beanstalk."

"I know," Emma sighed, "It the mother in me. I can't turn it off."

"Ready to go, Pumpkin?" Ruby tugged gently on Fallon's hair.

"Yep," Fallon dropped her spoon into the dish having just finished her ice cream.

"Hop on my back," Ruby squatted down to allow Fallon to climb aboard. "What movie do you want to watch tonight?"

"Aladdin," Fallon cheered while Emma and Killian groaned.

"Better Ruby than us," Emma muttered under her breath. Fallon continued on with her Aladdin kick. Watching the movie once was just fine, but Fallon didn't stop at one. They had watched the movie nearly every night for two weeks before they left for Avalon. Past history told the parents she was two weeks away from moving to a new movie.

"Wave bye to Mama and Papa," Ruby told Fallon.

"Bye, Mama, bye, Papa," Fallon waved.

"Sleep well, Little Love," Killian rose from his seat to kiss her good night, "Be a good girl for Aunt Ruby."

"Okay, Papa," Fallon bobbed her head.

Emma stood and took her turn kissing her daughter, "When Ruby says its time to go to bed, it's time to go to bed, okay."

"Okay," Fallon bobbed her head.

"Good night, Princess."

Fallon waved to the rest of her family before Ruby took her up to her apartment.

"She's not going to get a wink of sleep," Mary Margaret snickered.

"Ruby or Fallon?" Emma returned to her seat.

"Probably both," Mary Margaret replied.

Privately Emma wondered how much sleep she would get with her daughter not under her roof. She
trusted Ruby, but with everything going on in Storybrooke, she would have felt better with Fallon at home. She only agreed because Fallon was so excited by the prospect.

"Everything alright, Love?" Killian wrapped an arm around her shoulder.

Emma willingly relaxed into his embrace, her head coming to rest against his shoulder.

"Apprehensive," Emma admitted, "We still haven't figured out how to get rid of this siren, and we're letting Fallon attend a sleepover. Seems like we should have waited."

"If we waited for every evil to pass, we'd never live our lives," he kissed her temple.

"Doesn't make missing Fallon any less easy," Emma frowned.

"She's in Ruby's capable hands," Killian reminded her, "The first sniff of trouble, she'll step in."

"I don't doubt Ruby's stills or instincts, but we're Fallon's parents," Emma replied, "It's our job to protect her every day of her life."

"Do you want me to retrieve Fallon?" he offered.

"No," she sighed heavily, "I want her to have a fun and happy childhood which means playing outdoors and having sleepovers. Sometimes I just wish all these Storybrooke complications didn't seem to interfere with giving it to her."

"Despite the Storybrooke complications she is an extremely happy child," Killian reminded her, "There isn't a day which has gone by in which she hasn't given us one of her stunning smiles and musical laughs."

Emma turned and caressed his cheek. For a man who had lived three hundred years searching for a way to get his vengeance on a man who took his first love, he was a surprising optimist when it came to their children. Sometimes Emma wondered if it was through his children he was finding redemption for his passed sins.

TBC…
Chapter 25

Disclaimer: Nope, still not. Maybe if I'm good, Santa will gift them to me next year.

Killian found himself able to sleep in with his alarm clock staying elsewhere for the evening. When he woke he found himself alone in bed, and running a hand along Emma's side of the bed he gathered he'd been alone for quite some time. Making his way down to the main level, Emma wasn't anywhere to be seen in the living room, dining room or kitchen, though she'd already made a pot of coffee. His next stop in searching for his wife was in Bradyn's bedroom, but the little boy was alone in his nursery, sleeping soundly. His next stop was Fallon's bedroom. The door was open. It was also empty. His last thought was the roof.

He poured himself a cup of coffee, grabbed his jacket and made the climb up the staircase. Sure enough Emma was sitting on the bench next to the ledge, wrapped up in a blanket with a cup of her own coffee keeping her hands warm.

"There you are, Love," Killian took a seat next to her on the bench and looked out along the horizon. The clouds looked like snow was coming. "I was beginning to worry."

"Sorry," Emma moved to share her blanket with him, "I couldn't sleep."

"How long have you been out here?" he wrapped an arm around her shoulders to share his warmth.

"Awhile," she snuggled into his embrace, her head coming to rest against his shoulder.

"Have you heard anything from Ruby?" Killian asked.

"Ruby texted me a picture of Fallon curled up in front of her fireplace taken late last night," Emma pulled her phone from her pocket and showed it to him, "Looks like Fallon got at least a little sleep."

"She sleeps like you," Killian noted before handing Emma back her phone, "If you're not cuddled with me, you're curled up in a tight ball."

"Hold over from foster care days," Emma frowned, "I always curled into a ball with the blankets all tucked in around me so the other children wouldn't take them."

Killian kissed her temple in reply.

"Everything alright, Love?" he correctly interrupted her morose mood.

"Is it always going to be like this?" Emma asked, "Is staying in Storybrooke going to mean our children will always be in danger?"

"We ask ourselves this same question every time evil comes to Storybrooke," Killian reminded her.

"Maybe we need to do more than ask," Emma sighed.

"Trouble will always follow us," Killian replied, "I'm Captain Hook, and you're still the savior."

"I'm not saying we should pack up and leave Storybrooke," Emma turned to face him. "I'm just venting. I miss our daughter waking us at the crack of dawn."

"Aye, it's not as pleasurable to wake up when Fallon's not jumping all over me, especially when my beautiful wife decides to leave me with a cold bed," he nuzzled his nose into her neck, "You could
take waken me. I would have done my best to cheer you up."

Emma smiled in reply.

"Come, Love," he nudged her, "Best to get inside before you turn into a...what is it you call those frozen treat things Fallon likes?"

"Popsicles," Emma rose to her feet and then pulled her husband to his feet. "Looks like snow. Fallon's going to add to her snow village by the end of the day."

Killian nodded and carried the blanket into the house.

Brennan was awake and folding his bedding when Emma and Killian came down the stairs.

"Good morning," Brennan smiled at the pair.

"Good morning, Brennan," Emma returned the smile, "How’d you sleep?"

"Very well," Brennan responded, "Your sofa is far more comfortable than the bunk I sleep on in the barracks."

"You lived in barracks?" Emma frowned.

"Aye, all bachelors in our army live in the barracks," Brennan explained.

"It must be quite a change to living with a family of five," Emma replied.

"Quite a welcome one at that, especially when that family is also my family," Brennan replied, "It was an unexpected discovery when I found you and Killian, but a most welcome one."

"Did you ever try to find me before?" Killian inquired.

"Many times," Brennan responded, "With every ship to sail into port, I greeted each sailor to step off the ship in hopes it was you or Liam. I sent letters with every sailor of our kingdom for both you and Liam if they should happen upon you. There was never a reply. Every day I woke with hope of hearing from you."

Emma felt tears welling in her eyes at Brennan's story. She did her best to cover her emotions by asking, "Did you want some coffee? It's relatively fresh."


"We're going to Granny's for breakfast this morning. Brennan, get yourself ready to go," Emma instructed him, "Killian, will you wake Henry and then get Bradyn dressed for the day?"

"Aye, Love," Killian bobbed his head.

"Thank you," Emma kissed his cheek before turning to climb the stairs to her bedroom to dress.

"She's a lovely woman, Killian," Brennan told his son once Emma was out of sight.

"Aye," Killian's eyes continued to look towards the staircase. The love for his wife was evident, "She's one of the best things to ever happen to me."

"You have made a lovely life for yourself," Brennan stated.
"Aye," Killian agreed, "I'd best wake Henry." Killian quickly turned so he wouldn't have to speak with his father any further. He wasn't ready yet to dive into his feelings.

"Papa," Fallon immediately ran to hug her father when the Jones family arrived for breakfast.

"You're looking a bit tired there, Red," Emma noted the bags under the woman's eyes.

"Does she always wake before the sun rises?" Ruby took a drink from her coffee, hoping the jolt would soon kick in. "I'd only gone to sleep a few hours earlier."

"Rookie mistake," Emma snorted, "She's an early bird."

"A heads up would have been nice," Ruby replied.

"You'll know for next time," Emma lifted her daughter into a hug, "Did you have fun with Aunt Ruby?"

"Yep," Fallon bobbed her head, "Ruby did my hair."

"She did a good job," Emma tugged at Fallon's ponytail, "Were you a good girl?"

"Yep, I was a very good girl," Fallon announced. Ruby nodded her head in agreement.

"Did you already order your pancakes?" Emma carried Fallon towards their usual booth and settled in with her daughter on her lap.

"On they're way," Ruby confirmed.

"With chocolate chips," Fallon added with eager eyes.

"Because the syrup she adds isn't enough sugar already," Emma snorted, "How do you still have teeth, Princess?"

Fallon giggled while her mother playfully tickled her.

Killian noticed how much Emma's mood improved in her daughter's presence.

Fallon's pancakes arrived. She went to town on them while everyone else put in their orders.

Ruby caught Emma's attention and motioned for her to follow her into the back.

"Everything okay, Ruby?" Emma asked once they were alone.

"Victor called this morning," Ruby replied, "The townspeople are starting to turn on each other. He's had several serious injuries reported. If you have a trick up your sleeve with this little brat, you'd better use it or this town is going to start coming apart."

"We don't," Emma swallowed hard, "Avalon's rulers wouldn't help us. It was all we could do to get out of Avalon. Killian's dad said our lives were in danger. He got us out before something could happen, but it was also before we could get the fruit we needed to silence her song."

"Then we need to come up with plan B and quickly," Ruby responded, "We need to smoke her out and neutralize her by any means necessary."

"We're talking about a little girl here, Ruby," Emma responded.
"A dangerous little girl," Ruby amended, "It's not something I feel good saying, but what other choice is there to make?"

"You're right. We need to draw her out into the open," Emma agreed, "Maybe we can keep her at the station under security who are immune to her powers."

"You and David," Ruby replied.

"And likely Robin," Emma replied, "He hasn't succumb to her charms yet. He might be immune...Victor too."

"I'm still not ready to accept that," Ruby responded.

"Why is that?" Emma challenged her, "He's clearly head over heels for you. I don't understand why that is such a bad thing."

"I killed my first love," tears began to well in Ruby's eyes.

"That's not you, Ruby," Emma replied, "That was the wolf, the wolf you've been able to tame. The Ruby I know is not capable of such violence."

"Are you sure?" Ruby wiped at the tears, which began to spill over.

"I let you spend the night with my daughter all on your own," Emma replied, "Of course I'm sure."

"The full moon is coming," Ruby wiped away more tears, "Victor wants to meet the wolf me."

"That's a good thing. He wants you to know he accepts all sides of you," Emma explained, "We all have a wolfie side to us, Red. Ours just aren't as apparent as yours. It's nothing to be ashamed of."

"When you two hens are finished gossiping, I need to speak with the town's sheriff," Regina joined them in the back room.

"Regina, that is uncalled for," Emma responded, "Life doesn't stop because the town is under threat."

"The threat is here because your husband was a cad for three centuries," Regina responded.

"Are you really one to throw stones, Madam Mayor?" Emma immediately went on the attack, "You cursed this entire town to seek your own vengeance. Killian has redeemed himself as much, perhaps more, than you have, so chill out."

"I will not chill out while this entire town is about ready to rip each other apart. My phone has not stopped ringing since we returned from Avalon," Regina responded.

"We will figure things out," Emma responded.

"Emma, breakfast is..." Brennan had been sent to retrieve her for breakfast.

"You couldn't keep that bratty king of yours under control. Problems in this town are worse than ever," Regina turned her venom on him.

"Give it a rest, Regina," Emma stepped in to take the pressure off her father-in-law, "We will figure this out."

"You have two days, or I'm going to rip out that siren's vocal cords, child or not," Regina responded before she turned and left.
"Hurricane Regina strikes again," Ruby snorted, "She acts all high and mighty, but her bark is worse than her bite."

"I'm sorry, Brennan," Emma apologized for the mayor's rudeness, "You just got here. Our problems are not yours."

"The problems of my family are most certainly mine," Brennan responded, "I will help in any way I can."

"Unless you know a way to silence a siren," Emma responded, "We're back to square one."

"What was wrong with the way you had planned?" Brennan inquired, "The plan you told my king sounded valid."

"But we didn't get the fruit we needed," Emma responded.

Brennan pulled a few fruits from the satchel he carried with him everywhere, "I thought I told you I had taken a few with us."

"Oh my god!" Emma's eyes went wide while she reached for the fruit before remember the fruit was toxic to her. "Brennan, will this really work?"

"Aye," he nodded.

Breakfast was quickly boxed up. On the way back to the cottage, Emma called Regina with the good news and instructions on what to do with the fruit to be able to use it.

"Can I help?" Fallon pushed a chair towards the kitchen counter so she could see what her parents and grandfather were up to. The legs screeched with the movement as they scraped across the floor. She promptly climbed up and surveyed the countertop.

"Sorry, Princess, not this time," Emma tapped her nose, "This is grownup business."

Fallon's bottom lip protruded into a pout as her father handed Brennan the knife he'd just finished sharpening. "What's that?" Fallon pointed to the oddly shaped item in Brennan's hand.

"This is the fruit of my kingdom," Brennan replied.

"It looks weird," Fallon stated.

"She does have a point," Emma observed the same object, "It doesn't look anything like an apple."

"Because it is not," Brennan made his first cut.

"I thought the fruit of Avalon were apples," Emma took a seat in the chair Fallon had pushed over and set Fallon in her lap.

"This is a manchineella," Brennan replied.

"I've heard of them or something like them," Emma replied, "They had a poisonous type of fruit when I lived in Florida. They were called manzanilla. Translated from Spanish, it means 'little apple'. It was known as the little apple of death. I read about them once. They were nasty."

"In the hands of the wrong people, these are too," Brennan responded, "Soldiers were given pieces of these fruit when they went into battle. As a last resort, they would throw this fruit on their enemy."
"Sounds like what my king wanted with the Dreamshade," Killian chimed in.

"What about for those of your land?" Emma asked.

"For us, they have medicinal properties," Brennan replied. "I can cut my finger, and the juices will instantly heal the wound. They are also quite delicious."

"Can I have some?" Fallon held out her hands expectantly.

"Sorry, Princess, but this is dangerous for you," Brennan smiled at her.

Fallon resumed pouting until Emma tickled her to draw out a smile.

"It is a very slow growing fruit," Brennan continued with his explanation, "We have only one tree left in our land, and it only grows about a bushel a year."

"What happened to the rest of the trees?" Emma asked. Fallon's head came to rest against Emma's shoulder as it usually did during story time. Her grandfather's voice was as soothing as her father's.

"Raiders came into our lands many years before my time, having heard about the wonders of our fruit. They intended to take them back to their lands for their people, which is how our kingdom came to realize the dangers of the fruit to outsiders," Brennan explained.

"How was it discovered it would silence a siren's song?" Killian inquired.

"A bit more curious," Brennan replied, "A lone tree survived the journey to a distant land, a land where sirens ruled the kingdom by enchanting the villagers. The Siren Queen wanted to be the first to taste the mythical fruit. As soon as she bit in, the enchantment she'd cast on her subjects disappeared. So enraged with how she'd ruled, the villagers..."

Brennan stopped his story when he remembered Fallon was listening.

"It didn't end well for the Siren Queen," Emma offered.

"Not at all," Brennan replied.

"The fruit will not kill Wendy, will it?" Emma asked, "She's causing an enormous amount of chaos around town, but she's still a young girl."

"No," Brennan shook his head, "It is a peculiar thing. No one knows why it only silences a siren's abilities to enchant others, but they are able to live relatively normal lives...What is the story with the siren in this town?"

"I first encountered Wendy during years I lived in Neverland," Killian began his tale.

"Neverland, the land you and Liam were sent," Brennan recalled.

"Aye, but this was years later," Killian replied, "I sailed many years in my realm terrorizing my king's ships, trying to exact revenge for the quest he sent me and Liam on which lead to his death. Wendy and her brothers had made their way to Neverland looking for a friend. They got caught up in the fantasy of the island and didn't want to leave. I foolishly aligned myself with the man who controlled the island, Peter Pan, and did his bidding.

"During one of my voyages, I encountered the parents of Wendy and her brothers. They'd been desperately looking for their children. I made a deal to bring Wendy and her brothers home, which I did. However to do so, I had to trick them into leaving Neverland. When they discovered my
deception, they demanded I return them to Neverland, but I refused.

"She eventually found her way back to the island and continued to be influenced by Peter Pan and his poisonous thoughts."

"How is she here?" Brennan asked.

"A few years ago, Emma's son, Henry, was kidnapped by Pan and brought to the island," Killian replied.

"It was our adventure to save my son which started us on the path to true love," Emma eyed him adoringly.

Fallon giggled when Killian reached out to kiss Emma's hand.

"We rescued Henry, but Pan wasn't finished with us. A few months after we'd returned from Neverland and started our relationship, Peter came to Storybrooke and kidnapped Emma. His island was dying and the only way to save it by then was with the heart full of true love."

"We're not quite sure how or why he chose Killian, but it was when we were back on the island Killian first confess to loving me. It was a test Peter devised to prove Killian loved me, so he could take his heart and save the island. Killian tricked him though. He got Peter to send everyone off the island including all the children staying there," Emma explained.

"We didn't know at the time, Wendy and her brothers were in Neverland and were sent off," Killian added, "I was able to escape the island just before it crumbled around me."

"The island is no more?" Brennan asked.

"No more Peter Pan either," Fallon chimed in, "Papa made sure we were safe from him."

"He sure did," Emma kissed the top of her daughter's head.

"You have a very brave papa, Princess Fallon," Brennan told his granddaughter.

"Yep," Fallon bobbed her head.

"Wendy blames me for Peter Pan's death," Killian admitted.

"Sounds like Pan had an even greater hand in his demise," Brennan sliced up the final piece of fruit and laid it on the pan.

"Now we need to roast these bad boys until they're dry," Emma put the pan in the preheated oven.

"How long for them to cook, Love?" Killian asked.

"Regina said they need to cook at a low heat for a couple of hours," Emma replied, "I should call my dad. He's at the station."

Killian nodded. Brennan stared curiously at the oven. Killian did his best to explain the process without getting into the mechanics of it he didn't quite understand himself. Fallon found the conversation hysterical and was giggling when Emma returned.

"How about you take Max into your play room?" Emma lowered Fallon from her chair and gave her a tap to the rump. Fallon rarely needed encouragement to play. She called out to her puppy and darted off.
"She's has quite the sparkling personality," Brennan watched his granddaughter wander off.

"Yes, she does," Emma laughed and returned the chair to the dining room table, "She's a very popular little girl in this town…How about we all sit down for a bit?"

Killian groaned internally. He loved his wife for trying, but he simply wasn't ready for the conversation she was trying to initiate.

"How is it you came to be a soldier in your kingdom's army?" Emma guided everyone to sit in the living area. "I get the feeling you gave us the abbreviated version of your story back in Avalon."

"Aye, there wasn't much time for details…I grew up in a rather poor area of the kingdom. My mother used to read to me for my father's journal and of stories my father had told her during their relatively short time together. After my mother returned to Avalon, we didn't have much money. We did odd jobs to keep a roof over our heads and food in our bellies, but there wasn't money for much else. As soon as I was able, I joined the army so as to provide my mother a comfortable living.

"I rose through the ranks quickly. With each promotion came an increase in wages. My mother was able to maintain a comfortable existence for the rest of her life," Brennan explained.

"How did you meet your wife?" Emma asked.

"Siobhan came to the kingdom as a little girl. Her father was a captain of a merchant vessel, and she and her mother sailed with him. Her father settled the family in Avalon when he grew too weak to command a ship any longer. Siobhan's mother, Lachina, had been a seamstress in her kingdom until she was married and taught her daughter the skill. When they settled in Avalon, they came to the attention of the queen during a visit to the market. Lachina had no interest in the queen's offer to become a seamstress, but Siobhan did. She quickly became the queen's favorite seamstress.

"As I rose through the ranks, I became one of the more trusted advisors to the king, not King Daniel but King Stefan. It was during one of the performances at court I was first able to make the acquaintance of my Siobhan. I knew immediately she would be my wife. I like to think she knew too.

"We were married within a year. Liam came to us not long after and Killian few years more.

"For many years we lived a happily as a family, but Siobhan fell ill. We brought in healers from all over the kingdom. Because she wasn't from our kingdom, the manchineella would have done more harm than good.

"I tried to balance my duties to my family and kingdom for as long as I could, but eventually I resigned my commission. I wanted you and Liam to have adventures like I'd dreamt of as a child, so we set sail," Brennan replied, "It was very soon into our voyage I received word my king had fallen ill. You know the rest."

Killian suddenly rose from his seat and was climbing the staircase without a word to either Emma or Brennan.

Emma looked to Brennan, who had such a pained expression on his face.

"This is a lot for him to digest, Brennan," Emma tried to explain her husband's reaction.

"Perhaps I should speak to him," Brennan offered.

"No," Emma shook her head, "This is partly my fault. I'm forcing him to deal with these issues, and
he's not ready. He has lived with the knowledge he was abandoned by his father and forced into service to pay his father's debt. As noble as your intentions were, you still abandoned him."

"But my king," Brennan began.

"You may have felt it was your duty to your kingdom, but you forgot your first duty was to your two sons," Emma went to the front door to grab her coat and her husband's, "Brennan, Killian has lived a tough life. You're going to need to be patient with him."

Brennan nodded. Left alone, he head fell into his hands.

TBC…
Chapter 26

Disclaimer: Nope, still not. The only characters I can claim are the ones I made up myself.

Killian felt Emma's presence before she made it known.

"I hope Fallon doesn't realize it's snowing," Emma brushed several snowflakes from her husband's shoulder before draping his coat over them when she'd found him on the roof of their cottage looking out over the water.

"We would have heard if she had," Killian lowered his head.

"I'm sorry for pushing the issue with your father," Emma hugged him from behind. "I should know better."

"It is your nature as the savior," Killian replied, "Always trying to fix things."

"I'm sorry," Emma rose up on her toes to kiss the nape of his neck.

Killian released a heavy breath through his nose.

He caught Emma off guard when he turned abruptly and devoured her lips.

"Not that I'm complaining, but what is that for?" Emma asked when Killian's forehead came to rest against hers.

"Feels like I haven't properly kissed you in days," he replied.

"You can properly kiss me any time you want," her arms wrapped around his shoulders and pulled herself tight against him. "It's one of the perks of being married."

"I love you, Swan," he mumbled into her neck.

"I love you too," Emma held him for several minutes before she spoke again, "Talk to me, Killian."

"How do I tell my father about my past?" he asked.

"Slowly," she caressed the back of his neck, "Start with the good things. Show him your love for the sea. Tell him of the adventures you've had...the good ones, and then slowly start telling him about the bad."

"What if I tell him about the bad, and he wants nothing to do with me yet again?" Killian asked, "What if I'm setting myself up for more pain?"

"If that were happen, and I'm doubtful it would, but if it did happen we would deal with it together," Emma replied, "You're a good man when you choose to be. You have darkness in you. It doesn't make you a monster. It makes you human. Under the right circumstances we can all make poor decisions...You've changed, Killian. I've seen it with my own eyes. Your father will see the man you are now, not what you once were. If he can't, then it's entirely his loss."

"I don't deserve you," his lips brushed her forehead.

"Too bad, buddy," Emma poked him in the ribs, "You're stuck with me."
"Make's me the luckiest man in all the realms," he smiled.

"Let's get out of the snow," Emma suggested, "We should check on the fruit and maybe try talking
to your father a second time."

"I'll follow you anywhere, Love," he pulled on her hand and brought her tight against him.

"Maybe I should follow you, Sailor," Emma's arms circled Killian's shoulders, "You seem to have a
good idea."

"I think you're a bad influence on me," his eyes sparkled.

It was Emma who initiated the kiss the second time.

Emma and Killian came down the stairs to see Fallon attempting to cheer up her grandfather with a
little song and dance.

"We need to get her some song and dance lessons," Emma spoke softly to her husband at the sour
note her daughter hit to end her little show.

"She sings like her grandmother," Brennan chuckled when Fallon launched herself into his arms for
a hug. "It was fortunate she was a good seamstress, my Siobhan, she would never have made a
living as a songstress."

"Papa, it's snowing," Fallon turned and hugged her father around the legs, "Snowman time."

"How about I take you out, Princess, so Papa and his papa can talk?" Emma suggested.

"No," Fallon stuck out her bottom lip to pout. "Both of you."

"Both of us, huh," Emma knelt down and began tickling her daughter. "You have to get your snow
clothes on first."

Fallon disappeared into her room to change clothes.

"What is this snow she's referencing?" Brennan rose to his feet.

"You've never seen snow before?" Emma glanced towards Killian in bewilderment. Even her
husband had seen snow before coming to Storybrooke.

"Never in my life," Brennan replied, "What is it?"

"Condensation which comes from the sky when it's too cold to rain," Killian explained, "It does rain
in Avalon, doesn't it?"

"Aye, that it does," Brennan confirmed. "How cold must it get to snow?"

"Cold," Emma began bundling herself up in her warmest winter wear. They'd purchased a coat and
gloves for Brennan the previous day, but he hadn't understood their purpose as of yet. "You're
welcome to join us. Fallon just wants to play in it for a bit. She'll tire herself out in about a half an
hour and then come in for some cocoa. With any luck, the cocoa will inspire a nap, which she rarely
takes."

"Aye, I think I will," Brennan nodded.

Emma instructed him to suit up while Killian did the same. Bradyn was asleep in his playpen, but
Killian grabbed the monitor just in case he woke up while they were outside. Killian motioned for Max to stay next to the sleeping infant just in case. The canine was becoming a particularly good watchdog.

Fallon emerged from her bedroom and hopped the entire way to the front door, where she patiently stood while Emma helped her with her boots.

"Poppy coming too," Fallon beamed with excitement.

"For a little while," Emma nodded, "He's never seen snow before, so you need to show him what to do, okay?"

"Okay," Fallon grasped her grandfather's gloved hand with her mitten and pulled him outside. Clear of the stairs, she flopped down on her back and promptly made a snow angel and instructed her grandfather to do the same. Emma and Killian nearly burst out laughing when Brennan did exactly as Fallon had instructed.

Brennan was several strokes in before the coldness seeped into his clothing, and he rose to his feet with a shiver.

"We should have warned you about that," Emma replied, "If you're too cold, you can head back in. We'll be in soon."

"Aye, I think I will," Brennan nodded, "Perhaps I'll enjoy more of this snow a bit later."

"Fallon will likely insist on it now that she has a snow angel buddy," Emma stated.

Brennan trudged into the house and shed his outerwear while Emma and Killian helped Fallon make a snowman.

Bradyn had just woken from his nap when Brennan peered over the playpen to look at the boy. Bradyn reached towards him expectantly. It had been quite some time since he'd held an infant, but he gave it a try. The little boy immediately curled up in his embrace and drifted off to sleep once more. The pair were curled up on the sofa together with Max's head in Brennan's lap when Emma, Killian and Fallon came inside. Killian was visibly startled by the sight.

"He woke briefly when I first came in," Brennan replied, "I hope it was alright I pulled him from his cage."

"It's a playpen," Emma corrected her father-in-law, "It's quite alright. He looks pretty comfortable."

"Liam never cared much to be held at least not by me," Brennan replied, "Killian, on the other hand, would make such a fuss whenever I put him down."

"That's the attention seeker in him," Emma bumped Killian with her hip. "This one doesn't mind it either way. He's a pretty easy going baby."

"And Fallon?" Brennan inquired.

"Like her papa, she always wanted to be held," Emma knelt down to hug her daughter who was now free of her snow wear, "Still does, isn't that right, Princess."

"Yep," Fallon hugged her mother in return.

The ringing phone interrupted their conversation. Emma went to answer it and had a very brief
"I have to go into the station," Emma replied, "The town needs its sheriff for a bit. Will you be alright here?"

Killian and Brennan both nodded their heads.

"When the timer on the stove goes off, pull the fruit out of the fridge. There's a container Brennan can put them in which we can throw away after in the cabinet next to the sink. Don't use the glass wear," Emma went to pull on her jacket, "I'll be back in a bit to take Brennan to Regina's. With any luck, the potion can be delivered by the end of the day and we can put all of this behind us."

Fallon came over to offer Emma a goodbye hug.

"We'll do pizza for dinner," Emma added before kneeling down to accept Fallon's hug, "You're in charge, Princess. Keep Papa and Poppy out of trouble, okay?"

"Okay, Mama," Fallon kissed her mother's cheek.

"Be safe, Love," Killian stepped in and pecked at her cheek.

"I'll be back soon," Emma caressed his cheek, "We can talk more later."

"Aye," Killian nodded.

"This town is literally ready to tear each other apart," David filled his daughter in on what had been happening during his shift. He'd called in Robin as well. They would need all hands on deck until everything was sorted.

"What's going on?" Emma asked. "I saw the dwarves going at it. It's three on four, and it was not a pretty picture."

"It's like that all over town," David responded, "It's like a switch was flipped as soon as we got back from Avalon."

"Could Wendy know what we're planning and accelerate her plans?" Emma thought out loud.

"How could she know?" David asked, "We didn't tell anyone we were leaving for that specific reason."

"I don't know, but it's chaos out there," Emma replied.

Just as Robin was about to offer his opinion when Neal came running in.

"Now isn't a good time, Neal. We're in the middle of something," Emma replied.

"Wendy's brothers are in town," Neal spoke with his first available breath, "They arrived just this morning."

"Just as the town started to turn on each other," David replied.

"Will John and Michael help us?" Emma asked.

"No," Neal shook his head, "It's why I came. They are under her spell too. They probably have been all along. You have to do something. Did you find what you needed in Avalon?"
"Avalon?" Emma ears perked up suspiciously, "Why would we go to Avalon?"

"I thought I heard..." Neal began and then quickly began to backtrack, "I thought you and Hook were going to look for his father. I heard he was in town, so I assumed you went looking for him."

"No," Emma shook her head, "There was no need. He found us. He just arrived. He'd been looking for Killian and Liam for years."

"I see," Neal's head fell.

"Neal, we're in the middle of something," Emma replied, "Is there anything else you need right this minute?"

"No," Neal shook his head, "Tell Henry I say hi."

"You can always tell him yourself," Emma reminded him.

Neal nodded and sulked out of the station.

"Why did you..." David trailed off when Emma put her finger to her lips.

She wanted to make sure they really were alone before they spoke again. She peered out into the hallway and went so far as to check that Neal had really left before she returned to Robin and her father.

"You don't trust Neal," David realized.

"That's a pretty blanket statement, but especially right now," Emma replied, "I don't trust him to not be under Wendy's control. There is no way he could have known we were going to Avalon, yet he knew. If I were a siren, I would know the ways my powers could be taken away. I can't believe it took Regina only a few hours to find the cure in her books when Killian, Neal and I had been looking for weeks."

"Do you think he's been under Wendy's spell this entire time?" Robin inquired.

"Yes," Emma nodded.

"How long have you had this thought?" David asked.

"It just came to me, but it makes sense," Emma replied, "Wendy just so happened to trick Neal into revealing Killian's whereabouts during his stay in London, and almost as soon as he returned things in this town started to go wonky. A mysterious little girl just starts showing up, yet no one really remembers seeing her. The only ones to have really given us anything to go on is Killian and Michael Tillman.

"We spent weeks looking for answers, and Neal was sitting at the same table. He could easily hide the right books in the wrong places."

"Do you really think he'd do something so underhanded?" David asked.

"Maybe not by choice," Emma shrugged, "We know the only way to combat Wendy's charms is by experiencing true love. Unless he's not being truthful with me about his past, he's never experienced it, certainly not with me."

"And not telling him we went to Avalon?" David prodded.
"Keeps us at the advantage," Emma explained, "With any luck, Brennan's fruit will be dried soon. Regina can whip up her potion, and we'll end this siren's threat once and for all."

"And then what?" Robin asked, "This girl will no longer be the threat as a siren, but what should be done with her? She's still responsible for numerous crimes around town."

"I hadn't thought of that," Emma frowned, "Is going into the system really the solution? I've been there. It's not a good place."

"She has to learn there are consequences to the choices she's made," David replied.

"How about we cross that bridge when we get to it," Emma suggested, "It's really not up to us to decide anyways."

"First things first," David agreed.

"I'd better get back to the cottage," Emma glanced at her phone to check the time, "The fruit should be out of the oven. Regina is expecting us. I'll call you guys when everything is ready."

"Good luck," David called after his daughter.

TBC…
Chapter 27

Disclaimer: Nope, still not mine, but if someone were to gift them to me I'd put them to good use.

"It's about time," Regina greeted Emma and Brennan when they arrived at the manor with the necessary fruit safely tucked away in the plasticware in Brennan's satchel.

"Hello to you too, Madame Mayor," Emma rolled her eyes.

"Did you bring it?" Regina asked.

Brennan produced a container from his satchel and held it towards Regina. She reached for it before thinking better of it.

"You'll have to help me," Regina replied, "I've done as much as I can, but you'll have to do the rest. If this fruit is as dangerous as you claim, we cannot take any chances."

"I will do everything you say," Brennan nodded.

Emma gave him a smile of confidence.

Brennan and Regina went straight to work. Regina's instructions were precise, leaving no room for error.

Minutes ticked by as they worked. Emma paced anxiously, trying to keep the jitters at bay while staying out of the pair's way.

"Neal," Emma suddenly spoke out of the blue.

"What?" Regina looked up abruptly.

"Neal," Emma repeated, "Wendy is using him to do her dirty work. We can use that."

"Use it how?" Regina asked.

"To draw her out," Emma stated, "She's using him, even if he doesn't know it."

"So you're going to just knock on his door and tell him to take you to Wendy?" Regina rolled her eyes.

"I haven't thought it all out yet," Emma responded defensively, "I don't hear you coming up with any better plans."

"Give me a minute, I'm sure I'll come up with something," Regina replied.

"Have at it," Emma rolled her eyes.

Regina returned her attention to the potion they were working on. Brennan was good with following her instructions, much to her surprise.

"Finished," Regina responded finally.

"So what now?" Emma asked.

"The potion is the easy part," Regina replied, "We need to draw her out."
"Any brilliant ideas?" Emma pressed, "I'm open for suggestions."

"I don't know," Regina replied, "We might need to try your Neal idea, despite every reservation I have."

"Let me call my dad and Robin," Emma responded.

"Not the pirate?" Regina asked.

"Not right now," Emma shook her head.

"He won't be happy with you," Regina replied.

"I'll call him when we have a plan," Emma explained, "For right now, someone needs to stay with Fallon and Bradyn. Killian understands that."

Emma dialed up her father and asked him and Robin to join them at the manor.

"So what's the plan?" David asked.

"We're still working on that," Emma replied, "We...I think we can get to Wendy through Neal."

"What draws out Neal?" Robin asked.

"Henry," Regina replied.

"No," Emma spun towards Regina, "We're not putting our son in harms way."

"I'm not saying any such thing," Regina replied, "We just use him to put our plan into motion."

"Won't Neal be suspicious if Henry calls him right out of the blue after practically ignoring him for weeks?" Emma asked.

"He might be, but he's so desperate to have a relationship with his son he'll show up if Henry asks him to," Regina replied.

"You have to promise me nothing happens to Neal," Emma demanded, "He's made bad decisions, horrible decisions, but there's good in him."

"Your faith in him is admirable, if not misguided," Regina replied.

"Promise me," Emma demanded a second time.

"So long as he doesn't do anything stupid," Regina nodded, "I will not harm him."

"Thank you," Emma nodded.

"Henry should be getting out of school soon. He's supposed to bring Roland home. We'll ask him then," Regina replied.

"If he says no, we come up with another plan," Emma replied, "I will not force him to do this."

"What's wrong, Sheriff?" Regina asked, "Afraid he would side with his father?"

"No!" Emma exclaimed. "He's six years older than when I first met him, but he's still a boy. It's an impossible decision to ask him to make, not to mention unfair. We ask him once and then no matter his answer, we accept his decision."
"Fine," Regina replied, "But we both know which side he will come out on."

"Henry, we need to talk to you for a few minutes," Emma was waiting in the entryway when Henry arrived with Roland from school. Roland had immediately wandered off. The little boy was young but surprisingly perceptive.

"Can it wait?" Henry adjusted his backpack on his shoulder. He was clearly carrying quite a bit of weight, "I have a ton of homework tonight."

"No," Emma shook her, "Regina and I need to talk to you."

"What's wrong?" Henry immediately caught the seriousness in her tone. "Have I don't something wrong?"

"No," Emma reassured him when they stepped into Regina's office. Regina, Robin, David and Killian were waiting. Mary Margaret would have been there too, but she had taken the children to Regina's crypt to keeping them safe. If things were to happen, they would happen immediately, and the safety of the children was their primary concern.

"I thought you said I wasn't in trouble," Henry smelt an ambush.

"You're not," Emma assured him, hugging him around the shoulders for reassurance. "We've made the potion to end the siren's curse."

"That's good," Henry replied. He didn't understand the melancholy feeling in the room. "Why are you all looking at me like this?"

"We think Neal has been under the siren's curse," Emma explained, "Only there is no way to know how long he's been under her influence."

"Oh," a pit began to build in Henry's stomach.

"It may explain why he hasn't been around and why he's been so distance since he got back to town," Emma offered, "We're not sure how the curse works. He may know something is wrong, but not know what. He may not know anything is wrong at all. When Michael Tillman cut my breaks, he didn't remember doing it, but he knew he had."

"So what does this have to do with me," Henry shifted nervously.

"We need to draw Wendy out, but no one has seen her or at least remember seeing her," Emma replied, "However it appears Wendy is using Neal."

"You want to use me as bait," Henry's eyes were suddenly angry.

"No!" Regina and Emma exclaimed in unison.

"That is the last thing we want," Emma added, "We want to put Neal in a situation where Wendy couldn't resist coming out of hiding so we can use the potion on her."

"And where do I come in?" Henry pressed.

"We want you to call Neal. We want you to convince him to meet you in the mines. Instead of meeting you, he'll be meeting us, hopefully with Wendy in tow," Regina explained.

"You want me to set up my father," Henry's eyes were suddenly angry.
"Only so we can get to Wendy," Emma did her best to reassure her son, "We will not hurt Neal."

"He can't be working with Wendy," Henry shook his head, "He hasn't always made great choices, but he's not a bad guy, not like his father."

"No, he's not," Emma agreed, "He's under a curse, Henry. He doesn't know what he's doing. Even if he does, he doesn't have a way to stop it."

"But you can stop it," Henry replied.

"Yes, but we need your help," Emma nodded, "If I were to call and ask for a meeting, he or Wendy would know it's a setup, but you…Your father loves you, Henry. He will come if you ask."

"I haven't been very nice to him," Henry's eyes suddenly cast to the floor, "Not since he got back to town. I've been ignoring his calls. When I see him around town, I pretend I don't."

"You're still upset with some of the choices he made," Emma gave him a sympathetic smile, "I am too."

"But he's my dad," Henry replied.

"There is more to being a dad than biology," Emma offered, "Yes, he is your father, but he has to earn the right to be your dad. He did a pretty good job for a little while, but then he got lost. It's time to help him find his way again, but only if you're okay with this. If you're not, we will find another way."

Henry pulled his phone from his pocket, "What do I need to do?"

"Just arrange a meeting with him," Emma gave him a proud smile.

"Promise me he won't get hurt," Henry's eyes pleaded with his two mothers.

"We will do everything we can," Regina did her best to reassure him, "But he may make some choices…"

"Promise me," Henry demanded.

"We promise," Emma chimed in.

Henry scrolled through his contacts until he found his father. He stepped towards the window in Regina's office to glance out into the yard, giving himself something to focus on besides the sick feeling he was getting.

"Henry," Neal's voice sounded surprised when he answered on the second ring, "Is everything alright? Are you okay?"

"No," Henry replied, "I had this big fight with my mom and then my other mom when she backed Emma up. I can't talk to Killian or Grandpa because they'll just side with her. Can we meet somewhere?"

"Uh, yeah, of course," Neal responded after a few moments of sputtering, "Just tell me when and where, and I'll meet you."

"The mines," Henry replied, "I go there to think sometimes after school. Emma and Regina don't know. They always look for me by the docks."
"I can be there as soon as you need," Neal responded instantly.

"About thirty minutes," Henry replied, "I'm going to have to sneak out. Emma has me under house arrest."

"I'll be there," Neal responded.

"Thanks, Dad," Henry felt himself choke up as the last words left his mouth.

"Henry," Killian advanced towards his stepson the moment Henry ended the call, "You know you can always talk to me about anything."

"I know," Henry nodded, "I just said that for him. I'm pretty lucky. It's a mismatch family, but it's a family none the less."

Killian grabbed him by the shoulders and hugged him. "That was very brave of you, Lad."

"It didn't feel very brave," Henry frowned.

"It was," Killian assured him.

"Killian, will you take Henry and Roland to the crypt?" Emma asked.

"What?" Killian turned abruptly towards his wife.

"Hear me out," Emma's hands came to rest against his chest. She could feel him ready to argue with her. "You're the one Wendy is targeting. She's trying to distract us with all the chaos in the town so she can get to you. I'm not about to give her a free shot when you come waltzing in."

"Em…" he began.

"Killian," Emma cut him off, "We need to keep the children safe."

"Em…" he tried again.

"Killian, please," Emma pleaded with him, tears welling in her eyes, "I need my children to be safe, and I need my husband to be safe. We don't know what else this siren is capable of, but she was under the influence of Pan for over a century or vice versa. I nearly lost you in Neverland. I certainly won't lose you in Storybrooke."

"Same goes for me, Love," Killian tenderly caressed her cheek, "Who will watch after you?"

"My dad," Emma felt herself choking up at the loving concern written on his face, "We'll be okay… Stay with Henry and Fallon and Bradyn…Please."

"As you wish, Love," he nodded in agreement.

"Killian, I will guard Emma," Brennan spoke up. "I've been guarding royalty for nearly three decades. I'd be honored to continue guarding royalty, especially when she's family."

"Bring her back to me," Killian's eyes locked with his father's for perhaps the first time since they were reunited.

"I will," Brennan vowed.

"Henry, watch after Roland," Regina hugged her son.
"I will," he nodded, "Stay safe."

"Never fear, Lad," Robin touched his shoulder, "We still have many adventures ahead for us all."

"I hope so," Henry nodded.

"I love you, Henry," Regina hugged her son tight a second time.

"I love you, Mom," Henry hugged her back.

"We'll come get everyone at the crypt when everything is said and done," Regina replied. "Until then listen to Hook."

"I will," Henry nodded his head, "Take care of Dad. It's not his fault he's caught up in this."

"We'll do everything we can," Regina assured him.

Emma quickly hugged her son, gave her husband one last kiss and a pleading glance to protect their children and then followed Robin, Regina, David and Brennan.

"They're going to be okay, won't they?" Henry asked Killian on their way to the crypt.

"Aye," Killian nodded, "Your mum has yet to fail."

"I don't like this," Henry replied, "I'm worried about Neal. What if you guys missed something in your research?"

"Your mum will figure it out," Killian tried to reassure him.

"What if they can't?" Henry pressed.

The little kernel of doubt started to creep into Killian's subconscious just as they entered the crypt.

"Killian, why are you here?" Mary Margaret gasped in surprise, lowering the bow she had aimed in case someone other than Henry and Roland had tried to enter. The journey to the crypt with the children had been more harrowing than she'd thought it would originally be.

"Emma asked me to help you," Killian picked up his daughter, who was overjoyed to see him, raining kisses along his face. "She's worried because I am Wendy's target."

"Since when has that ever stopped any of us from facing the danger head on?" Mary Margaret asked, "Go, Killian, I have everything under control here. You know where you need to be."

"Emma..." Killian began.

"Would do the same thing," Mary Margaret responded before he could finish his thought.

Killian thought for a moment and then nodded, "I need to help your mum. Will you be a good girl for Grammy?"

Fallon nodded her head when she was returned to her feet.

"I love you, Little Love," he kissed her forehead.

"I love you, Papa," Fallon gave him her brightest smile.

"I'm going with you," Henry spoke when Killian turned to address him.
"I can't let you do that," Killian shook his head.

"Every parent I have is in danger. Maybe if I was in another family, I could sit back and let everyone else worry about it, but I'm from this family," Henry replied, "We protect each other. You can leave me behind, but I'm just going to follow you."

"Another thing you inherited from your mum," Killian sighed while picking up one of the swords in the crypt, "Do you remember our lessons?"

Henry nodded, grabbed the sword and buckled the holster around his hips.

"This is real, Henry," Mary Margaret spoke up. "The sword you wear has the power to hurt, even kill someone."

"It's a power not to take lightly," Henry recited one of the lessons Killian had already taught him.

"Keep your guard up," Killian added.

"I will," he vowed.

"Be safe," Mary Margaret hugged him tight.

"I will," Henry reassured her.

"Be safe, Henry," Fallon parroted her grandmother while hugging him around the legs.

"We'll be back soon," he told her, "And we'll get a big bowl of ice cream, okay?"

"Yes," the little girl bobbed her head eagerly.

Killian kissed the top of Fallon's head, pecked at Bradyn's cheek and reassured Mary Margaret they would all return safe and sound.

"Henry, are you here?" Neal called out when he entered the mine. He was met only by silence.

"You know what you have to do, don't you?" Wendy's accented voice broke through the silence.

"You promise he won't be harmed," Neal reminded her.

"Of course not," Wendy scoffed, "He's only going to be used for information."

"If you hurt him," Neal began.

Wendy cut him off with a shrill laugh. She admired his fight. He was fighting much harder than anyone else to break out of her curse, but she knew it was only a matter of time. Henry would be under her spell at last, and he would practically deliver her foe to her.

Regina, Robin, David and Brennan all hung back in the shadows while Emma approached the pair.

"I didn't want to believe it was true," Emma stated.

"Emma, what are you doing here?" Neal was flummoxed by her entrance.

"Trusting my gut," Emma replied, "I knew there was something wrong."

"You need to go now," Neal demanded.
"Is that any way to treat a guest?" Wendy batted her lashes at Neal. He was suddenly a puppet in her hands.

"How does this work?" Emma asked curiously, "Is it a little song and dance? Do you speak in rhymes? What is it that has this entire town ready to tear each other apart?"

"It's my little secret," Wendy brought her finger to her lips, "Want to know another secret? There's more to my gift than what you see. My puppets are fun, but after awhile I lose interest. Why don't you bring out your friends? I'll be happy to demonstrate. I know you're not alone. Did you bring along my dear, Captain Hook? I'd love to get reacquainted."

"I'm sure you would," Emma snorted.

"Stop toying with her already, Sheriff," Regina came out of her hiding spot.

"Oh goody, this will be such a lovely little party," Wendy's eyes brightened as everyone revealed themselves. She was most interested in the eldest Jones, "And who is this? We've never had the privilege. I'm Wendy Darling, and you are?"

"Jones, Brennan Jones," he responded.

"Are you the nefarious Captain's proud papa?" Wendy inquired, "Tsk, tsk. You must be so disappointed in how he turned out, or did he follow in his father's footsteps? Are you a pirate too?"

"Pirate?" Brennan repeated in surprise.

"Oops, was that supposed to be a secret?" Wendy turned towards Emma with innocent eyes. "My mistake."

"We were going to tell you," Emma replied, "We just wanted you to get to know the man he is now before we told you about the mistakes of his past."

"Can we do this later?" Regina cut in, "Can we just get on with the part where we turn her into dust?"

"And who might you be?" Wendy asked.

"Your worst nightmare," Regina pulled up her sleeves, "I'm a parent."

"And what are you going to do? Spank me?" Wendy nearly doubled over with laughter.

Regina and Emma were doing their best to keep Wendy's attentions occupied so Brennan could inch close enough to douse her with the potion.

"I bet you both think because you have true love you're immune to me," Wendy's face went suddenly sober, "It may be true I can't get you to do my dirty work, but that's quite alright. I have Neal for that and soon Henry."

"You will never get near my son," Regina's hands filled with balls of flame.

Wendy began her shrill laughter again, but suddenly it changed. The sound was more like a shriek and all the adults, except Neal, fell to their knees in agonizing, crippling pain.

Henry and Killian were just approaching the mine when suddenly Killian was overcome by an agonizing pain he couldn't explain.
"Killian, what's wrong?" Henry knelt next to him.

"It's Wendy," he managed to get out through his pain.

"Has she done this before?" Henry asked.

"To many in my crew," Killian nodded, "If she keeps it up long enough, she'll stop the hearts of all who hear it."

"Not if I can stop her," Henry turned determinedly towards the mines and trudged ahead.

He quickly found Wendy and the others. All the adults were clutching at their chest, the agony overwhelming. The only one capable of moving was Neal, who was frantically motioning for Henry to leave.

Wendy's focus was in front of her, not behind her where Brennan had been approaching. Henry spotted the vial in his right hand. He knew he couldn't touch it with his bare hands. He pulled his leather gloves from his pocket and put one on, hoping the leather would provide protection just long enough to pour the potion.

Henry moved quickly, pulling the stopper from the vial and then tossing it at Wendy. The liquid sloshed out. As soon as it made contact with her skin, the shrieking stopped.

"What?" Wendy watched in horror as everyone was able to regain their footing. "What just happened?"

"No one messes with my family," Henry spoke from where he stood only a few steps away with his sword draw and pointed directly at her.

"You brat!" Wendy exclaimed, "Neal, take care of him."

"Not on your life," Neal stepped towards his son.

"But…" Wendy sputtered. The horror fully hit her when she realized his curse was completely broken. She screamed with anger, but now it was the sounds of an out of control teenager, not a siren. She looked around for any sort of weapon, a pick ax left by the one of the dwarves was within her reach, she launched it with all her might at Henry.

"NO!" Neal charged towards Henry.

Everything appeared to be going in slow motion, but neither Emma nor Regina could move quick enough to stop the ax from striking their son.

Henry and Neal landed in a heap.

"Henry!" Emma and Regina ran towards him.

Robin, Brennan and David advanced towards Wendy making sure she didn't sneak away.

When Emma and Regina pulled Henry out from under Neal away, he was covered in blood.

"Where are you hit?" Regina began to search him for the source of the wound.

"It's not me," Henry realized after the sudden adrenaline rush wore off.

"Neal," Emma rolled him onto his back. There was blood pouring out of his side. He had caught the
"ax meant for his son.

"Emma," his eyes went wide as the pain took over.

"Regina, you have to do something," Emma demanded of her one time nemesis.

"Dad," Henry fell to his knees.

"Henry," Neal reached for his hand, coughing as he felt the life leaving him.

"Dad, I'm sorry," Henry took his hand squeezing it tight, tears pouring down his cheeks. "I'm so sorry. I should have been quicker."

"Regina," Emma's voice waffled, "Fix this."

"He's lost a lot of blood," Regina's hands began to hover over him, shaking nervously, "Maybe Rumple should do this."

"He'll be dead before Gold can get here," David replied.

"If I do this wrong, we're talking about starting a war between me and Gold," Regina responded.

"You can't let him die," Henry pleaded with his mother.

"Just do it, Regina," Emma demanded, "We'll deal with consequences later...Come on, Neal. Stay with us."

Neal coughed again. Breathing was becoming more of a challenge. He only had moments left.

Regina took a deep breath and focused all of her energies on her hands. White light flowed from her and into Neal. Everyone could see his wound was healing, but with the blood loss, it might be too late. The ax had torn a nasty hole into his side.

"I've repaired the damage, but I can't repair the blood loss," Regina checked for a pulse. It was faint but still there. "We need to get him to the hospital. I'll take him. Stay with Henry."

"No, I'm going," Henry insisted, keeping a tight hold on his father's hand.

"Henry, we don't have time to argue," Regina's eyes narrowed towards him.

"Just take him, Regina," Emma replied, "We'll be there as soon as we get everything else sorted."

Regina waved a hand and Neal, Henry and Regina disappeared into a cloud of purple smoke.

"You'd better hope he lives," Emma growled at Wendy.

"Bae," a rouge tear slipped down her cheek as if she'd suddenly realized what she'd done. Neal had always looked out for her and her brothers. Her need for vengeance had clouded her mind and hurt someone very dear to her.

"Emma," Killian came running into the cave just as Regina's cloud dissipated.

"Killian, what are you doing here?" Emma rushed to him, hugging him tight, ignoring the blood on her hands.

"You'll be rather cross when I tell you I was intending to ignore your demand to stay with your mum
"in the crypt," Killian admitted sheepishly.

"I don't care right now," Emma kissed him deeply.

"Are you alright?" Killian pressed his forehead to hers.

"I am," Emma nodded slightly, "Neal isn't. Wendy threw an ax at Henry. Neal pushed him out of the way and took the impact himself." She motioned towards the pool of blood left when Regina took Neal off. "Regina healed him and took him to the hospital, but he might not make it."

"Go on to the hospital," David instructed his daughter, "Henry is going to need you guys right now. We'll bring Wendy to the station. We'll talk about charges later."

"Brennan?" Emma asked.

"I'll stay with David," he replied.

"Thank you for your help," Emma walked over and hugged him, "We couldn't have broken the curse without you."

"Glad to be of any assistance I could," he felt himself begin to blush at the accolades she was bestowing upon him. Since his king had passed away, even something as simple as a thank you for his services had gone amiss.

"After you get things sorted out at the station, will you get the rest of our family from the crypt and let them know we're all safe?" Emma turned towards her father.

"Of course," David nodded, "I have to admit I'm a little disappointed. I didn't get to pull out a sword or a gun."

"If only all the adversaries we have face will resolve in such a nonviolent way," Emma snickered.

"I'll send Mary Margaret to the hospital as soon as I can," David kissed her forehead, "Go be with my grandson. He's going to need the support."

Emma nodded and extended her hand to her husband.

TBC…
Chapter 28

Disclaimer: Nope, still not mine, but if someone were to gift them to me I'd put them to good use.

"How's Neal?" Emma asked when she and Killian arrived to a room full of people waiting for word. Regina must have called Belle and Gold. Belle was sitting next to Henry with an arm around his shoulders. There were a few other townspeople waiting as well.

"You need to leave," Gold immediately advanced upon Killian the moment he saw him. "You have cause my son nothing but pain from the moment you first set eyes on my wife."

"We're not doing this now," Emma stepped in, "Killian is here for Henry."

"Emma, it's okay," Killian gave her hand a squeeze, "I'll find another room to wait. Now is not the time to be rehashing all of our bad history. If you hear anything, call."

"I will," Emma rose up on her toes and kissed his lips.

Just as Killian turned to leave, Victor came in with an update.

"Neal has lost a lot of blood," Victor explained, "We gave him an immediate transfusion to stabilize him, but we're going to need to do a second after we find a donor with the correct blood type. Neal's type is rare, and we don't have any stored in our blood bank."

"He can have mine," Gold immediately offered.

"Yes, I figured you would offer, so I checked your type. Yours is not a match," Victor replied.

"What about me?" Henry stepped up.

"You are not a match either, nor would you be eligible if you were. You need to be at least sixteen in order to even give blood with a parent's consent," Victor patted the young boy's shoulder, "Only one percent of the population is AB negative."

"Kilian is," Emma turned towards her husband, "He could donate."

"Absolutely not," Gold responded immediately, "I will not consent to you putting the blood of that pirate in my son."

"Perhaps you are not fully understanding the situation," Victor responded calmly, "Neal is stable for the moment, but unless he gets at least one more transfusion within the next few hours, he will die. I've already called the state blood bank. They do have some in reserves, but it's going to be at least six hours until it gets here and is ready for transfusion."

"Rumple, let Killian donate," Belle went to her lover's side, "It will save Baelfire's life."

"There is no one else?" Gold looked to Victor.

"I checked the town's database. No one else in our database is a match. Though it may be possible others in town are a match, we don't have the time to line everyone up and test them," Victor responded, "If you want your son to live, we best get started."

Gold looked sick to his stomach but relented.
"I'll go with you," Emma took her husband's hand, "Henry, will you be okay here with Regina?"

Henry nodded and immediately went to hug Killian. "Thank you."

"You're very welcome," Killian returned the hug.

"You were very brave," Emma hugged her son as well, "I'm so proud of you."

Killian and Emma were lead to an unused examination area. A nurse came in and immediately poked him in the finger to draw enough blood to do a type match test. When they had confirmed Killian was indeed a match, they set him up to draw the necessary blood.

"I've been thinking," Emma took Killian's other hand and brought it to her lips.

"Thinking is always good," Killian smiled, "Unless it is about how I disobeyed your orders to stay with the children, then I'd rather change the subject."

"We'll have that conversation eventually, but not right now," she scowled at him for a moment.

"What are these thoughts then, Love?" Killian asked.

"Remember the conversation we had about maybe adding to our family?" she began playing with his fingers of his left hand.

"Aye," he nodded, "We agreed not to rule anything out, but with the danger the town was facing it wasn't a good time to decide one way or another."

"We just ended the threat," Emma reminded him.

"And now you want to have this discussion?" he asked.

"Yes," she nodded, "I know your thoughts. You'd like us to have another baby."

"Aye, I would," he nodded his head.

"You're such an amazing father," she gushed.

"Because I have an amazing partner who showed me how," he brought her hand to his lips to kiss it.

"I know I'm bias, but we do make beautiful children," Emma smiled.

"Positively stunning," Killian agreed.

"I have a proposal for you," she replied.

"I thought we took care of the proposal years ago," Killian spun her wedding ring around her finger.

"Different proposal," she thumbed her rings.

"I'm not going anywhere," Killian glanced over at the needle in his arm, drawing his blood.

"My proposal is we start trying," she responded.

"Is another child what you want?" Killian asked, "Last we spoke, you were reluctant."

"I was reluctant," Emma bobbed her head, "We live in an uncertain world. At any moment another evil could come to town and turn everything upside down, but I've also come to the conclusion we
can't stop living our lives. More than live, we should take advantage of every good moment we have."

"I love you, Swan," he gave her his happiest smile.

"I love you," she leaned over and kissed his lips.

"I very much look forward to creating another life with you," he caressed her chin.

The nurse returned and checked the bag. After a few more minutes, the nurse removed the I.V. and bandaged his arm. Killian wanted to move immediately, but Emma held him down.

"Wanting to start trying right away?" he wagged a brow.

"This is your first time giving blood," Emma explained while handing him a cup of juice the nurse had brought, "You're going to feel a little weak. Drink this."

"I'd prefer rum," he took a sip from the straw.

"You're going to relax here for a bit," Emma explained.

"I feel just fine," Killian assured her.

"Right now because you're nearly horizontal," she smirked.

"Not nearly horizontal enough," he wagged his brow a second time.

"You've just had a pint of blood pulled out of your body," she explained, "I think we should let you recover before we send what's left south."

Killian groaned in disappointment.

"Will you behave if I leave you alone for a few minutes?" Emma pecked at his lips again.

"Define behave," Killian requested.

"Stay in bed and don't get up until I say you can," she replied.

"I'm going to need some incentive," he stated.

"You get plenty of incentive," she shook her head before leaving the exam room.

"Mama," Fallon ran and leapt into her mother's arms, "Do you have an ouchie?"

"No, Sweetheart, Papa and I are just fine," Emma reassured her, "Uncle Neal has the ouchie, a real bad one. How about we give Henry a hug? I think he needs one."

Once Fallon was on her feet, she darted over, jumped into Henry's lap and kept herself there.

"Emma, is everything alright?" Mary Margaret asked while Emma took Bradyn from her arms and rained kisses all over his face. "Your father only gave me a brief rundown."

"Wendy threw a pick ax at Henry," Emma explained after they stepped away from the group, "Neal pushed Henry out of the way."

"Oh my goodness," Mary Margaret's eyes went wide in surprise, "Is Neal going to be alright?"
"Regina was able to heal him, but he needs a blood transfusion. He has a rare blood type. Ironically Killian is a match. He just gave up a pint of blood, so he's resting," Emma explained.

"Gold's allowing the transfusion?" Mary Margaret asked.

"Reluctantly," Emma nodded, "Timing is important."

"I hope you're not too upset with Killian and Henry for disobeying your request to stay put," Mary Margaret replied.

"If they hadn't, we'd all be goners right now," Emma replied.

"I don't understand," Mary Margaret frowned.

"You didn't hear the shrieking?" Emma asked.

"What shriek?"

"When we encountered Wendy, she did this shrieking thing which crippled us. The only ones not effected were Neal, who was already under her spell and Henry. If Henry hadn't arrived and thrown the potion on her when he did, I think everyone's heart was about to burst. Regina's crypt must be fortified to protect her from a magical attack," Emma's free hand clutched at her chest, "Mom, it was a horrible feeling."

"Sounds like it," Mary Margaret hugged her daughter. "How are you holding up?"

"I'm fine," Emma responded automatically.

"Emma," Mary Margaret gave her a knowing look.

"I'll be fine," Emma clarified.

"It must have shook you up seeing Neal injured like that," Mary Margaret replied.

"I didn't expect it," Emma admitted, "After everything we've gone through the past several years, I figured I was done caring about him, but him lying there, gasping for breath, blood pouring out of his body…If it had been Killian, I would have been inconsolable, but this hurt more than I thought it would."

"You two share a connection and a son," Mary Margaret replied, "Once upon a time you did love Neal. That doesn't just go away because he broke your heart."

"Do I tell Killian about this?" Emma glanced down at her shoes, kicking lightly at the floor.

"Yes," Mary Margaret responded simply, "But tell him the reason it affected you so much."

"What if I don't know the reason?" Emma asked.

"Figure that out first," Mary Margaret gave her a gentle smile, "You're in love with Killian. I don't doubt that, and I'm quite certain you don't either."

"Of course I do," Emma responded automatically. "I should check on Henry."

"If you need to talk," Mary Margaret gave her daughter's hand a squeeze.

"I know," Emma smiled. Her mother was always there when she needed her. After twenty-eight
years of being alone, it was a comfort she didn't take for granted.

Emma returned to the waiting area where Gold was pacing. She side stepped him and took a seat next to Henry and Fallon, who was doing a bang up job of cheering up her brother.

"Princess, why don't you go with Grammy for a bit," Emma tugged on her daughter's pigtail, "I bet she'll get you some ice cream if you ask sweetly."

"Do you want some, Henry?" Fallon batted her lashes at her brother.

"If you bring it back for me," Henry nodded.

"Okay," Fallon hugged him tight around the shoulders and then wiggled from his lap. She instantly darted over to her grandmother and swayed back and forth while asking for the sweet treat her mother suggested. Emma wasn't surprised with Mary Margaret's immediate offering of her hand to take her to the cafeteria.

"She has this entire town wrapped around her finger," Henry chuckled.

"Including her big brother," Emma slung an arm around his shoulder, "Do you want to take a walk...just around the hospital? I promise we will not go far."

"Yeah," Henry nodded, "Whale said it might take awhile to complete the transfusion."

"You were very brave back in the mines," Emma walked with her arm still slung around his shoulders, "I'm very proud of you."

"You're not mad I disobeyed you?" he asked.

"No," she shook her head, "Not even a tiny little bit."

"Don't be mad at Killian either," Henry requested, "I made him take me."

"I'm not," Emma smiled, "Just don't tell him I said that. He needs to work for forgiveness a tiny bit."

Henry laughed in reply.

"You want to talk about Neal?" she asked.

"Is it okay?" he asked.

"Of course," she nodded.

"I feel guilty," Henry admitted, "I've been so mad at him since everything happened with Killian. I really haven't given him any chances to make things right."

"He made some pretty big mistakes, and he hasn't done a lot to try making up for them," Emma replied.

"But I still should have let him try," Henry frowned, "I should have done what Killian told me to do. I should have given him something to look forward to...given him a chance to be my father. If I'd done that, maybe he wouldn't have gone to London in the first place, and then Wendy never would have known how to find Killian and none of this would have happened."

"Henry, what happened with Wendy is not your fault," Emma tried to reassure him. "Your father was just looking for a reminder of who he used to be, before he make the bad choices he did. There
is no way he could have known Wendy and her brothers were still alive when he went to London, nor could he have predicted she was a siren. It's just really bad luck."

"He has a lot of that," Henry grumbled.

"He's not perfect," Emma replied.

"Do you regret ever getting involved with him?" Henry asked.

"There is a lot of things I regret in my life," Emma gave a sarcastic laugh, "If I hadn't met Neal, I wouldn't have you. You are one of the best things I've done in my life. I only wish I had been in a better place in my life so I could have kept you. Then I could take credit for how well you turned out."

"You're doing a good job now," Henry offered.

"I'll take what I can get," Emma smiled.

"What if Neal doesn't make it?" Henry's voice broke as the question left his lips, "What if he dies thinking I hated him?"

"He knows you don't hate him," Emma tried to reassure him, "You've been disappointed with them. There's a difference…But you can't think like that. Neal is going to pull through."

"I hope so," Henry nodded.

Just as Emma and Henry were about to reenter the waiting area, Paige appeared.

"Paige, what are you doing here?" Henry asked.

"We all heard about your dad," Paige fidgeted nervously with her fingers, "I thought maybe you'd like some company while you waited, so I asked my parents to bring me…Hi, Sheriff Jones."

"Hi, Paige," Emma smiled, "It was very thoughtful of you to come. Henry, Fallon and your grandmother are going to come back with your ice cream. Why don't you see if you can catch them and have Grandma buy Paige some too? If we hear anything about Neal, I'll come find you."

"Yeah, okay," Henry took Paige's hand as they wandered off.

"I'm not ready for that," Regina approached and motioned towards Henry and Paige and they're joined hands.

"I'm not either," Emma laughed.

"No word yet on Neal," Regina stated.

"Thank you for healing him," Emma replied.

"I…ah…I don't know why I hesitated," Regina glanced at her hands.

"It's like you said in the mines. If it didn't work, it could have started a war with you and Gold," Emma replied, "I can't blame you for having the same thoughts I would have had."

"Another evil gone from Storybrooke," Regina mused.

"One down, probably a billion more to go," Emma responded dryly.
"I think you're overstating it a bit," Regina rolled her eyes.

"We've come a long way since I first arrived in Storybrooke," Emma stated.

"Considering I hated you the minute you arrived, yes, I'd say way have," Regina chuckled.

"Does that mean you don't hate me anymore?" Emma snickered.

"No," Regina smiled, "I'd say we moved to fond tolerance."

"I'll take it," Emma replied, "I'd better go check on my husband. He's likely ignoring my orders to rest."

"He does seem to have a slight disregard for authority," Regina replied.

"You're still in bed," Emma was surprised to find Killian still laying down.

"I did try to get up," he admitted sheepishly.

"Did you get a little dizzy?" Emma guessed.

"I'm still in bed, aren't I?" he pointed out.

"You might need to actually listen to me for a change," Emma felt his forehead. He was a bit clammy.

"I always listen," he scoffed.

"Then you choose to ignore," Emma kissed his temple.

"Any word yet on Baelfire?" Killian turned serious.

"Nothing yet," she shook her head. "These things can take time."

"When we first met, I saw myself in him. He'd been essentially abandoned by his father, completely alone in the world," Killian began, "When I found out he was Milah's son, I vowed to protect him, but then I went and screwed it up by letting my need for vengeance get in the way. Our relationship never recovered…Then of course we quarreled over you. I've never made his life better…ever."

"You will now," Emma caressed his shoulder. "You're giving him the gift of a second chance, one hopefully he chooses not to waste."

"Is it enough?" Killian asked, "After all I've taken from him…"

"You didn't take Milah from him. She left. She made her own choice. You've said it yourself, you would have taken her back to Neal if she'd asked, but she never did. You didn't take me from Neal. I made my own choice. We fell in love. I'll never apologize for that," Emma set him straight.

"Nor will I," Killian brought her hand to his lips.

"Fallon and Bradyn are here. Do you want me to bring them in?" Emma asked.

"Hi, Papa," Fallon came running in with a paper bowl full of ice cream and held it up to him, "I broughted this for you."

"Guess you don't get the choice," Emma smiled and went around his bed to pick Fallon up so she
could hand Killian the ice cream.

"Thank you, Little Love," Killian accepted the ice cream.

"Papa have an ouchie?" Fallon noted the bandage around his arm when she reached out to give him a hug.

"Papa is helping Uncle Neal, remember," Emma reminded her daughter while lowering her enough to give Killian the hug.

"Why?" Fallon refused to let go when her arms were able to wrap around his neck.

"Because it's the right thing to do," Killian set aside his ice cream and motioned Emma to let Fallon curl up in his arms.

"But he's so grumpy," Fallon replied, "He's grumpier than Leroy."

"Yes, he is," Emma snickered.

"Even grumpy people deserve our help," Killian tapped her nose.

Fallon giggled and curled up against him.

"Did Henry and Paige find you and Grammy?" Emma asked.

"Yep," Fallon bobbed her head while pulling at her father's necklace.

"Where Grammy now?" Emma asked.

"With Bradyn," Fallon released a healthy yawn.

"And where is that?" Emma asked.

"I don't know," Fallon shrugged her shoulders.

"You two okay in here?" Emma asked.

"Aye," Killian stroked Fallon's back as she appeared ready to drift off to sleep. With his other hand, he was able to feed himself the sweet treat Fallon had brought him.

"I'm going to check on them and then see if there is any news on Neal," Emma replied. "I'll be back."

"We won't go anywhere," Killian replied.

"Make sure Papa behaves," Emma bent over to kiss Fallon's forehead.

"Okay," Fallon nodded her head slightly but it was obvious she wasn't going to stay awake for long.

"Did Fallon find you?" Mary Margaret was rocking from side to side with Bradyn in her arms. The little boy was sound asleep.

"She did," Emma nodded, "And she's about ready for a nap herself. Is there any news on Neal yet?"

"They finished the transfusion. It's still a waiting game, but Gold is in with him now," Mary Margaret replied, "Whale seems pretty optimist at this point. Neal will likely need a third transfusion, but he's starting to wake up."
"Where's Henry?" Emma glanced around.

"He and Paige stayed in the cafeteria to eat their ice cream. They are so cute together," Mary Margaret replied.

"I'm so not ready for him to go all hormonal on me," Emma plopped herself down in one of the chairs. Mary Margaret took a seat next to her and gingerly handed over her grandson.

"You have a few years before this one does," Mary Margaret held Bradyn's hand.

"Killian and I decided to start trying for another child," Emma admitted.

"That's a pretty big step for you two," Mary Margaret's eyes went wide, "You've never actively planned before. Fallon and Bradyn kind of sprung up on you."

"I guess I finally figured out why I was so reluctant to think about having a third," Emma admitted.

"And why is that?" Mary Margaret inquired.

"We live in a town where at any moment another evil something could arrive with an agenda," Emma sighed, "I guess I didn't think it was fair to bring another kid into that."

"So what changed your mind?" Mary Margaret asked.

"That siren was moments away from ending my life, and my only thoughts were of my husband and children, and how happy I am to have them," Emma explained, "I'm tired of being scared by what is out there. I'm tired of having outside forces dictate how I choose to live my life."

"I'm proud of you," Mary Margaret replied and then bit her lip.

"Is this going to be hard for you?" Emma asked, "I know you and Dad have been trying…"

"I've…we've been waiting to tell you," Mary Margaret placed a hand on her daughter's shoulder, "With everything going on with Wendy, we didn't want to distract from the task at hand."

"Is something wrong?" Emma's mind always went to the negative in these situations.

"No," Mary Margaret smiled, "I'm pregnant."

"What!" Emma gasped.

"It's early," Mary Margaret elaborated, "I just saw my doctor yesterday. It was confirmed."

"That's wonderful," Emma smiled widely.

"We're going to keep things quiet for a little bit," Mary Margaret added, "At least until I'm in the second trimester."

"Your secret is safe with me," Emma zipped her lips but continued to smile broadly, "I'm very happy for you and Dad. I know how much you wanted another child."

"If you hurry, we can be pregnant together," Mary Margaret pointed out.

"It would be kind of fun to torture Killian and Dad like that again," Emma snickered.

"I thought your father was going to spend the last two months sleeping at the station because my
mood swings were all over the place," Mary Margaret laughed.

"We'll have to celebrate soon," Emma offered.

"In about six weeks," Mary Margaret nodded.

"Deal," Emma agreed. "Now it makes sense why you were so easily convinced to take the children to the crypt rather than go with us to the mine."

"I also wanted to make sure the children were safe," Mary Margaret replied, "I am a mother, wife and grandmother first."

"And we're all lucky for it," Emma smiled.

"I'd better get back to the station. I left Leo and Roland with Robin and your father," Mary Margaret stated, "With our luck, the boys probably locked the men in the cell next to Wendy."

"At least her curse has been neutralized, so no harm can come to any of them," Emma snickered at the visual picture her mother had painted.

"You appear to have everything handled here. Call me if you need anything or if there is any further word on Neal," Mary Margaret hugged her daughter around the shoulders, careful not to wake the sleeping infant in her arms. "Oh, here's my keys. I'll walk back to the station."

"Mom, you don't need..." Emma replied.

"It's a short walk," Mary Margaret replied, "It's getting colder, and my two grandchildren shouldn't have to trudge through the snow currently falling."

"I guess Fallon gets to make herself yet another snowman," Emma smiled and accepted her mother's keys, "I really need to find myself a new car."

"I'll be happy to watch the children so you and Killian can look," Mary Margaret offered before she left.

Emma sat with Bradyn for a bit, watching the little boy sleep so peaceful. His entire future still laid before him. Emma wondered what type of adventures the little boy would find. Would he love sailing the seas like his father, or would he prefer land bound activities?

"Forget a siren's curse," Emma whispered and kissed her son's hand, "You've worked your spell on me, Little Sailor."

Bradyn didn't flinch a muscle as Emma rose to her feet. She was going to check on Henry, but Belle found her instead.

"Baelfire's awake," Belle proclaimed with a relieved smile.

"That's wonderful," Emma replied.

"He's asking for Henry. Do you know where he is?"

"My mom left him in the cafeteria with Paige a few minutes ago," Emma replied, "I can go get him if you'd like."

"You seem to have your hands full," Belle tenderly touched Bradyn's hand, "I'll go get him...I'm sure Baelfire would like to see you as well."
Emma nodded as Belle wandered off. Emma wasn't so certain she was ready yet to see Neal. Her feelings were still a giant jumble. Instead she returned to the exam room Killian was using to recover.

"You're really milking this recovery from giving blood," Emma spoke quietly when she entered his room. Killian appeared to be asleep with Fallon, but his eyes opened when he heard Emma's voice.

"Just resting my eyes," Killian extended a hand to her, "It's been an eventful day."

"Yes, it has," Emma agreed, "Far too eventful for my liking."

"Blu came in while you were gone. She says I can leave whenever I feel ready," he stated.

"We should get the kids home," Emma agreed, "Once everyone is settled, I'm going to come back here to stay with Henry."

"I'm sure he appreciates you being here," Killian gave her hand a squeeze.

"Not as much as he appreciates Paige," Emma sighed.

"So the lass is here," Killian smiled, "I wondered if we'd see her."

"I'm going to need to have the talk with him," Emma frowned.

"Which talk is that, Love?" Killian inquired.

"The one about the birds and the bees," she replied.

"You'll have to do better than that love," Killian knew she was using one of her frustrating expressions he didn't understand.

"The sex talk," Emma replied, "You know about what happens between a man and a woman when there are certain feelings involved."

"Are you sure a mother should be having this discussion with her son?" he raised a brow, "Sounds more like a man on man talk."

"That sounds like such a bad idea when the first man in that conversation is you," Emma groaned.

"Why is that, Love?" Killian inquired, "I'm quite learned in the ways of man and woman relations as you are well aware."

"Which is what I'm afraid of," Emma replied, "You'll make it sound glamorous with all of your pirate stories, and I'll end up being a grandmother in nine months time."

"You don't think I can keep such discussions age appropriate?" Killian waged his expressive brow.

"I don't know. Can you?" Emma asked.

"I was a young lad about Henry's age once," Killian reminded her.

"Yes, hundreds of years ago," Emma replied, "Do you even remember when you lost your virginity?"

"Aye," he nodded, "One of the scariest days of my life. Thought I might wet myself."

"Oh my god," Emma couldn't stop the laugh from escaping, "I so want to hear this…tell you what,
we have a practice session just you and me tonight after everyone is tucked into bed. If it ends up being an age appropriate discussion I'll consider letting you have the conversation with Henry because you're right, this should come from a man."

Killian nodded.

"Come on, let's get these two home," Emma replied. "Mom left me her car."

"Thank the heavens," Killian sighed, "I don't know if I'd have the strength to carry Fallon back to the cottage."

"Are you okay to take her to the car or did you want to carry the lighter of our offspring?" Emma asked.

"I'll manage," Killian untangled himself from Fallon's limbs and rolled out of bed, taking it much slower than he had the first time.

"Are you good?" Emma watched him test his balance to see if he was going to get dizzy a second time.

"I believe so," Killian nodded slowly.

"Take Bradyn," Emma adjusted her son so she could hand him off, "I'll take Fallon."

Killian agreed and took Bradyn, adjusting him so he was curled up against Killian's chest. The little boy was still out like a light.

"If you get dizzy, let me know immediately," Emma demanded.

"You're quite sexy when you get all bossy with me," he grinned.

Emma rolled her eyes and led him out of the hospital. She caught Regina just as they were about to leave. "I'm going to take Killian and the kids home. Tell Henry I'll be back once they are settled."

Regina nodded.

TBC…
Chapter 29

Disclaimer: Nope – still not mine.

"Brennan," Emma was startled when they came home to see Brennan reading a book Killian must have left on the coffee table, "I thought you'd still be at the station with Robin and my dad."

"I asked for them to take me home," Brennan explained, "I hope you don't mind. Your father let me in."

"No, of course not," Emma crossed the living room to lay Bradyn in his playpen. The little boy was still asleep. "You may come and go as you please."

"How is Neal?" Brennan set his book aside and made room for Fallon who was sound asleep in her father’s arms.

"He appears to be on the mend," Emma replied, "I'm going back to the hospital as soon as everyone is settled. I'm actually glad you're here. Killian donated some blood and is a bit woozy. He'll need some supervision until he's on the mend."

"I'm afraid I don't understand," Brennan scratched behind in ear in confusion.

Emma had to bite her lip to keep from laughing. Of course her father-in-law would have the same nervous tick as her husband. "It's rather complicated," Emma replied, "Killian can explain. I need to get back to the hospital."

"What shall we do for dinner, Love?" Killian inquired, "Still haven't procured any fish to cook."

"Damn," Emma muttered softly, "I really don't want to eat out a third night in a row. Do you think you can work your magic on something we have in the fridge?"

"I shall try," Killian advanced on her, "Will you be long?"

"I'll be back by dinner," she glanced at her watch, realizing it wasn't far off. "Can you manage without me until then?"

"It shall be a challenge," his arms went around her waist and brought her in close against him. Her arms automatically wrapped around his shoulders.

"You do love a challenge," she mused while running her fingers through his hair.

"You are definitely my favorite," he kissed her lips.

"I'll be back soon," she reassured him.

"Aye," he nodded and released her, "We shall be here waiting anxiously for your return."

Emma rolled her eyes.

"I love you, Swan," he whispered and pecked at her lips again.

"I love you," she smiled.

"Mama and Papa sitting in a tree," Fallon had apparently woken in time to sing her favorite song.
Emma and Killian both chuckled while Emma advanced on her daughter and began tickling her while she tried to spell out k-i-s-s-i-n-g.

"Be a good girl for Papa and Poppy, okay, Princess," Emma pecked at her cheek.

"Okay," Fallon bobbed her head.

"If you need anything, call my cell," Emma went to the door.

Killian followed. "Hurry home, Love."

Emma turned once more and kissed him.

With Emma gone, Killian turned towards his family.

"She's a lovely woman, Killian," Brennan stated.

"Aye," Killian agreed.

"I'm full of questions," Brennan replied. The pirate reference he'd heard Wendy make kept tumbling through his mind, "How did you and Emma meet? Were you a sailor in her family's navy?"

"No," Killian shook his head, "I met Emma many years after my naval career ended. When I met Emma, she'd only just discovered she was a princess. She'd lived for many years as an orphan in this realm."

"Her family abandoned her?" Brennan's voice was full of outrage.

"Not by choice," Killian picked Fallon up and set her in his lap as he joined Brennan on the sofa.

"Regina was once the Evil Queen of the Enchanted Forest and cursed everyone to this land but without the memories of who they once were. She cast roles for everyone in town. She was the mayor. Snow White's name had changed to Mary Margaret Blanchard, and she was a teacher. David was a man cursed to sleep. Emma didn't arrive in Storybrooke for many years. Before Regina could cast her curse, Emma's parents sent her away on the day she was born so she would be protected, however things didn't go quite as planned."

"How did you come to know her then?" Brennan asked.

"Mama tied Papa to a tree," Fallon chimed in.

Killian chuckled and kissed his daughter's cheek.

"There's more to the story," Killian replied, "But yes, the first time we met, Emma tied me to a tree… It's quite a long story."

"Certainly sounds like it," Brennan chuckled, "Your mother and I got off to the wrong foot at first. I'd inadvertently knocked over her entire sewing basket. It took her hours to put it back to rights."

"How did you make it right?" Killian inquired.

"I brought her a flower a day until she started talking to me," he replied, "Then when she finally did, I brought her a full bouquet the next day along with several new spools of thread, some fabric and everything else needed to make the finest dress for herself she'd ever had. She looked rather stunning."
"What color was the dress?" Fallon asked excitedly.

"Blue," Brennan tapped her nose, "Just like the color of your eyes."

"Cinderella's dress was blue," Fallon giggled and then turned towards her father with her large doe eyes, "Papa, can we watch Cinderella?"

"Yes, we can," Killian lowered her to her feet, "Go set it up, Little Love."

Fallon sorted through all the DVD cases until she found the correct one and then loaded it easily. The movie was playing before Killian had a chance to explain to his father what was happening.

"Another one of your realm's inventions?" Brennan's eyes were completely hypnotized by the screen.

"Aye," Killian nodded.

"Astonishing," Brennan replied.

"Fallon, how about you sit and watch the movie with Poppy while I get dinner started," Killian lifted Fallon onto the sofa to curl up with her grandfather. "Fallon can answer any questions you have on this particular invention. She knows it far better than I do."

Killian listened to the conversation between his father and daughter while he went about making dinner for the family. Fallon's laughter regularly filled the cottage and brought a smile to his face. It suddenly hit Killian how absurd his current actions were. A siren had come to town to seek her revenge on him. She failed due to the actions of his stepson, and here he was making dinner for his family like it was a regular night. To make the situation even more unbelievable, his family included his long absent father, a man he'd believed to be dead for centuries.

So engrossed in his thoughts, he didn't know of Emma's return until her arms wrapped around his waist.

"Those must be some pretty important thoughts," Emma felt his surprise at her touch, "You usually hear me coming."

"Aye, lost in thought," Killian confirmed.

"Whatever you're making smells very good," Emma kissed his cheek, "Something new?"

"I guess it was from a memory," Killian replied.

"Aye, it was one of my Siobhan's recipes," Brennan came over with Fallon in his arms, "It was Killian's favorite as a young boy. You used to sit in the kitchen watching your mother work. It was the stillest you ever sat."

"What is it?" Emma asked.

Killian fumbled for a reply. He didn't know what it was called, only the ingredients to put in it. "Do you remember what Mama called it?" Killian looked to his father to fill in the blank.

"It never had a name," Brennan shook his head, "It was always known as Killian's favorite dish."

"Smells yummy," Fallon chimed in.

"Is Cinderella over, Little Love?" Killian inquired.
"Yep," Fallon bobbed her head, "Poppy liked it a lot. Didn't you, Poppy?"

"Aye, it was quite entertaining," Poppy confirmed.

"Not a bad place to start if you've never seen a movie before," Emma noted.

"It's a wondrous machine," Brennan replied.

"We'll have to take you to a movie theater to experience the real thing," Emma replied.

"Theater?" Brennan inquired.

"Imagine that television blown up about a thousand times," Emma pointed to the television in the living room.

"We have popcorn and if I'm super good, we get candy. My favorite is the licorice," Fallon added her two cents.

"You like all candy," Emma ran her fingers through Fallon's hair.

"How is Baelfire?" Killian inquired.

"He's pretty out of it," Emma sighed, "He squeezed Henry's hand when directed. Whale says it's a good sign he's following commands when he's as sedated as he is. Regina took Henry and Paige home. I told Henry he could skip school tomorrow to spend the day with his dad. Regina did not look pleased."

"The lad would be distracted at school anyways," Killian countered.

"That's what I said," Emma crossed the room and lifted Bradyn out of the playpen. "Are you hungry, Little Sailor?"

Fallon bobbed her head, so Bradyn mimicked her.

"Of course you are," Emma tickled his tummy. "Fallon, go wash your hands. I bet dinner is almost ready."

Fallon scrambled off.

"It is almost ready, isn't it?" Emma looked nervously towards her husband.

"Aye," Killian lifted the pot off the burner and brought it to the table, putting it down on the hot plate he'd set earlier when he'd set the table.

"I can't wait," Emma looked eagerly towards the table.

Fallon came running in and practically launched herself into her chair. Killian caught her at the last possible moment before the attempt ended in tears.

"Easy there, Little Love," Killian kissed her cheek.

"I'm hungry," Fallon moaned.

"Then we'd best feed you," Killian dished out a helping for her, "Remember to blow on it to cool it down. You don't want to burn your tongue."
Fallon bobbed her head and did as instructed.

Killian waited anxiously for Fallon’s assessment. Since she was the pickiest of eaters, she would determine if he attempted the dish a second time.

"It's yummy," Fallon announced after taking a couple of bites.

"How about that?" Emma laughed, "There is more to her repertoire than fish and roni and cheese."

"Remarkable how much it tastes like what your mother used to make," Brennan replied, "You weren't much older than five when she passed."

"Some memories stick with a man," Killian's eyes glanced away, "Even over several centuries."

Emma reached out and offered him a hand.

"Thank you, Love," Killian brought her hand to his lips.

"Eat," she encouraged him.

"Ladies first," he sent her a flirtatious wink.

Emma didn't need any further prompting. She loved when he tried out a new recipe. Since Fallon started making her tastes known, he hadn't experimented as much.

"This is delicious," Emma smiled. "Definitely a keeper, isn't that right Fallon."

"Yep," Fallon was nearly half way done with her first helping.

"If you remember any more of your family dishes, feel free to test them out," Emma replied.

"This may be the only one," Killian frowned, "It just came to me today. I cannot explain it. Papa, did she hum a song when she cooked it?"

Brennan gave it a moment of thought. "Aye, I believe she did."

"I kept hearing a tune as I worked," he swallowed hard. "It was almost as if she was with me, guiding my hands."

"This is Storybrooke," Emma reminded him, "I've learned nothing is out of the realm of possibility."

Killian nodded.

"More please," Fallon held out her empty plate.

"A second helping," Emma smirked, "That's never happened before."

It meant the world to Killian that he was able to share a memory with his family, even a simple one like a favorite dish.

"You okay?" Emma had felt Killian was in a melancholy mood for most of the evening. They'd retired to their room the moment the children were in bed. Brennan had been fascinated by the television and was currently flipping through the channels. Emma had provided verbal and written instructions on how to operate the device and turn everything off before he went to bed. "You should be happy. The siren is no longer threatening this town or our family."
"I am," he assured her.

"Then what's with your mood?" she asked, "You were quiet most of the night, which is very unlike you."

"Stuck in the past," he sighed.

"Your mom?" she guessed.

"I wish I had more memories of her," he sighed, "I remember these tiny little moments."

"Killian, you're remembering things which happened three hundred years ago," Emma hugged him tight, "I barely remember what I ate for breakfast."

"I wish it was more," he replied.

"Maybe there's a way you can," Emma responded after a quick thought popped into her head, "Regina has made potions to make people forget things. Surely she also has a potion to help people remember."

"Trusting Regina to make me a memory potion," Killian winced, "You forget I have a history with her before the curse."

"It can't be that bad," Emma rolled her eyes. "Besides she's changed, and just like you, it's for the better."

"I love your trusting heart, Swan," he smiled.

"We'll talk to her in the morning, but for now, I want you to describe another detail of your past," Emma's eyes began to twinkle with mischief. "Do you really remember your first time or were you just talking rubbish at the hospital this afternoon?"

"I remember," he chuckled, "Though there isn't much to the memory. It didn't last long."

"After that set up, you have to tell me the full story," Emma prompted him towards the bed so she could make herself comfortable in his arms, "Who was she?"

"She was a...I'm not really sure what her profession was," he responded after a moment of thought, "We'd just sailed into her port. This was before I'd joined my brother aboard the Jewel of the Realm. My fellow sailors had been giving me grief, I think you'd call it, because I'd never been with a woman. They made it their mission to find me someone the first time we were given liberty. They took me to a tavern, hoping to find me a wench to take to her room, but there were none I was interested in."

"You had standards back then?" Emma responded in disbelief.

"I've always had standards," he chuckled, "I choose you, didn't I?"

"So you're in a tavern looking for a woman to bed," Emma prompted him.

"Aye, the other sailors had been filling my head with all sorts of nonsense about how to properly court a woman. None of it was of any real use," Killian replied, "Once everyone was drunk and preoccupied, I was able to slip out of the tavern without them being aware. It was on my way back to the docks that I bumped into this young lass. She was probably a few years older than me. I could barely stammer out an apology."
"Little Killian Jones was shy around the ladies," Emma snickered while poking him in the ribs, "I'd say you got over your shyness."

"Took a few centuries," Killian chuckled. "The woman must have taken pity on me. She asked me to walk her home...gave me this song and dance about the docks not being a safe place for a lady. We walked for a bit, and we talked about nothing important. When we got to her door, I turned to leave, but she took my hand and guided me into her home."

"And then you did the deed," Emma filled in the rest.

"Didn't take long," Killian grumbled, "I'd never seen a woman fully undressed before."

Emma snickered in amusement.

"She was gentle with me," Killian replied, "Took time to explain what a woman liked or didn't like."

"Did you ever see her again?" Emma asked.

"Aye," Killian nodded, "Next time we sailed into her port, I was intending to look her up. I was convinced our interlude meant something special, but alas I was wrong. I knocked on her door with a single flower, and her husband answered. Thankfully I had my cutlass, or I likely would have been run through by his sword."

"She was married?" Emma asked.

"Aye, probably was when we first met," Killian frowned, "Turned out her husband worked as a sailor for one of the merchants of the village and was away for long stretched of time, and she had certain urges."

"That's pretty miserable," Emma frowned. "It's a wonder you became the suave ladies' man you were when we first met."

"Eventually I overcame my shyness," he confirmed, "After several dozen slaps across the face, you begin to pick up what the fairer sex appreciates as far as compliments go."

"Who would slap such a pretty face?" Emma caressed his cheek lightly.

"I'm fairly certain you thought to do it a time or two," he chuckled.

"I got over such notions," she smiled. "When did you lose your shyness?"

"I suppose it was after Liam died," he frowned, "Until then I was so focused on following the rules set forth by my captain and king. When my captain died because of the duplicity of my king, the rulebook went overboard along with Liam. A pirate crew attracts a certain type of woman. For a long while, I simply embraced what was offered."

"Until Milah," Emma replied.

"Aye," he nodded.

"You can talk about her," Emma responded, "I've always been curious about what she was like...what drew you to her."

"Her smile," Killian replied, "She had a way of drawing me with just a smile."

"Love at first sight?" she asked.
"I'd say it was intrigue at first sight," Killian replied, "She loved to laugh and just have a good time, which at the time we met, was what I was interested in, but then her husband and son arrived. I could see immediately she was a caged tiger about ready to break free, but I never expected her to show up at my ship asking me to take her away."

"Did you ask about her son and husband?" Emma asked.

"Yes," he nodded. "She said she was in a horrible situation, and she needed to leave before things got worse."

"If only she knew," Emma frowned.

"Aye," Killian nodded, "For many years, we just sailed where the wind took us, pillaging along the way."

"Did she ever talk about Neal?" Emma asked.

"Not for about a year," he shook his head, "When she did, she always had this far off look on her face. Every time she talked about him, I asked if she wanted me to take her to him. She always said no. She said he was better off with her husband. She had tried to be a wife and mother, and it didn't suit her."

"Is that all she said?" Emma asked.

"I always knew there were things she kept from me," Killian rolled his wedding ring around his finger with his thumb, "She liked being at sea, liked being able to go wherever she wanted. With Rumple and Baelfire, she had felt tied down…stuck. Was it a good reason to abandon her life and family, no, but it was her choice to make. If I hadn't taken her, someone else would have. Perhaps that someone wouldn't have appreciated her as I did."

"Had you ever been in love before Milah?" she asked.

"No," he shook his head slightly, "I'd played the role of a pirate captain well. I'd had my dalliances, but she was the first one I truly let in. She knew things about me no one knew, not even my brother."

"Do I know these things?" Emma asked.

"Aye," he kissed her temple, "And so many more."

"I'm not trying to make this a competition," she replied, "I just want to make sure I know the important things. You keep so much to yourself. I try to prod when I think you're in the mood to share, but so much about you still feels like a mystery."

"Milah only knew up to my late twenties as you would say," Killian replied, "I went through centuries more of trials and tribulations. I don't talk about my past because I am not proud of it. What I am proud of is the four plus years of happiness I've had with you and our family…Today I tried to talk to Papa after you returned to the hospital. I was going to open up to him. I tried, but the words wouldn't come."

"Maybe they'll come if I'm sitting with you," Emma offered, "That's one of the perks of marriage. We see each other through all the good and the bad."

"It is one of the perks I enjoy," he turned her chin so he could capture her lips.

"Me too," she smiled. "I really do love you, Killian, more than I ever thought I'd ever love a man."
"And I you, Swan," he responded automatically.

"I want to talk to you about something," Emma began the conversation she'd been dreading, "I don't want you to take it the wrong way, so promise you'll hear me out."

"Why do I have a feeling I'm not going to like this?" he asked.

"When things went sideways today in the mines…when I saw Neal bleeding on the floor, gasping for air, I felt something," Emma began.

Killian breath hitched slightly.

"I thought with everything we'd gone through with him that I'd be done feeling anything," Emma admitted, "But when I thought he was dying, I felt like part of me might as well. I don't know what it even means…I know what you and I have is true love. I don't even doubt it, but what did I have with Neal? Does that just go away because of what you and I have? Does true love stomp out all the other people you've ever loved? I don't think it does."

"It doesn't," Killian flipped his wrist to show the tattoo he'd gotten for Milah, "It is possible to love two people at the same time. I still feel the love I felt for her, but it's different than what I feel for you. It doesn't make one more or less special than the other. You've given me things Milah never could…you became my wife, gave me children and a real family."

"So it's okay to still have feelings for Neal?" Emma asked.

"So long as at the end of every day you meet me right here," Killian motioned towards the bed they were laying in.

"Deal," she sealed the deal with a kiss.

"We should get some sleep, Love," Killian suggested, "Fallon will be certain our day starts early tomorrow."

"I'll need to take Henry to the hospital and then deal with things at the station," Emma shifted slightly so she was laying down.

"What will happen with Wendy?" Killian followed her lead and laid beside her.

"I don't know," Emma sighed, "She committed some pretty horrible acts. She needs to learn there are consequences to her actions, but my one question is, did Pan do this to her, or did she do whatever it was to Pan?"

"Pan was a nefarious nitwit long before Wendy came to the island," Killian replied.

"Can one learn to be a siren?" Emma asked.

"In everything I've read when we were looking for ways to stop Wendy, being a siren is something you are born with," Killian replied, "She may always have had the siren abilities…"

"But it was Pan who brought out the worst of them in her," Emma finished his thought.

"He does that for a lot of us," Killian replied.

"Perhaps she'll be open to speaking with me tomorrow," Emma replied, "If I can get the real story from her, maybe then we can decide how best to punish her. I don't relish putting a young girl into the system when her actions were encourage by a teenage boy with the obsession for saying young
forever, especially knowing the lengths he went to accomplish such feats."

"Sleep well, Love," Killian hovered above her.

"Always," Emma's hands carded through his hair, bringing his lips forcefully against hers. Her intentions were clear.

"My father is right down stairs," Killian pulled away breathlessly.

"I can be quiet," her eyes shimmered with love and happiness.

"I hope so," he dove into her lips again.

TBC…
Chapter 30

Disclaimer: Nope – still not mine.

"Wake up, Papa," Fallon began her morning ritual by shaking her father awake, "Sail today."

As sleep slowly evaporated, he realized Emma was not laying beside him as she traditionally would.

"Where's Mama, Little Love?" Killian rolled onto his back to survey the entire room, in hopes of spotting his wife.

"In the kitchen," Fallon replied.

"Is she cooking?" Killian's voice sounded only a trifle bit nervous.

"She's making Henry cereal," Fallon explained, "Henry was awake before me."

"Is that so?" Killian chuckled, "Did he wake you for a change?"

"No," Fallon whipped her head from side to side, her brunette locks flying with the movement, "I wake myself."

"Yes, you do," Killian nodded, "Go get dressed. I'll be down in a moment."

Fallon leapt off the bed to follow her father's instructions. After several days of no sailing, she was not going to take no for an answer this day.

"You're up early," Killian stepped into Emma after he was dressed and ready for the day. His arms were instantly around his wife, holding her tight around the middle.

"Henry came home first thing this morning," Emma replied, "I heard him come in. He's showering right now, and then he wants to go to the hospital to see Neal."

"Is there any update?" Killian asked.

"I called the hospital after the first cup of coffee," Emma stated. "He's still pretty out of it. Apparently Gold spent the night and wore the nurses out with all sorts of demands. Belle took him home to change clothes and eat. The nurses have all taken a collected breath." Killian simply rolled his eyes. "And how is my love this morning?"

"Very well," she leaned into his embrace.

"Is Bradyn awake?" Killian inquired.

"He wasn't when I checked on him," Emma shook her head, "That was about ten minutes ago… What's your plan for the day? I'm taking Henry to the hospital and then heading to the station to relieve Robin and work on the paperwork for Wendy."

"I think Fallon has her heart set on sailing," Killian chuckled, "I will not deny her request for another day."

"She has been surprisingly understanding these past few days," Emma replied. "Will Brennan be allowed to sail with you?"
"Wake up, Poppy," Fallon's voice filtered in, "We go sailing today."

"I guess so," Killian chuckled.

"Good morning, Princess," Brennan reached out and tapped her nose, "Starting another day early, I see."

"I like mornings," Fallon replied.

"It's annoying, isn't it," Henry came out of the bathroom freshly washed and dressed.

"Hi, Henry," Fallon ran over and hugged him around the middle.

"Someday we're going to find a way to put a snooze button on you," Henry picked her up for a proper hug.

Fallon giggled in reply and hugged him tight around the neck.

"Cereal is on the table," Emma motioned towards his usual spot where the cereal had been poured along with the carton of milk along side it.

"Thanks, Mom," Henry replied, "And thanks for letting me skip school today. Regina was not happy."

"I know," Emma nodded, "I'll handle her."

"You want some?" Henry poured the milk over his cereal and offered Fallon the first bite.

Fallon shook her head from side to side, "Papa is making me pancakes."

"They're called pancakes," Henry responded, "And don't you get tired of them?"

Fallon shook her head vigorously.

"You'd better get cooking," Emma turned towards her husband, who was already a step ahead of her and pulling out all the necessary ingredients.

Fallon gave her brother a triumphant look.

"I'm going to get Bradyn dressed and ready for the day," Emma announced, "Then we can get going, okay, Henry."

Henry nodded as he took another bite of his cereal.

"Good morning, Killian," Brennan stepped into the kitchen to retrieve his cup of coffee.

"Morning, Papa," Killian nodded, "Did you sleep well?"

"Aye," Brennan replied, "The sofa is still quite comfortable."

"But it's not permanent," Killian replied, "We should think about finding you some permanent quarters…if you're planning on staying in Storybrooke."

"Is staying in Storybrooke your plan?" Brennan inquired.

"Aye," Killian nodded.
"Then it is my plan too," Brennan stated.

"What should we do with your kingdom's ship?" Killian asked while mixing the batter.

"I haven't given it any thought," Brennan admitted, "I suppose it should be returned, but if I take it, I'll likely be tried for treason."

"There is no realm where treason ends well," Killian frowned. "Is your king an honorable one?"

"His father was," Brennan frowned, "King Karl was humble yet strong when needed. He was fair and ruled his kingdom well. Daniel doesn't appear to have learned from his father. Ever since he married, he has become an entirely different person. He's arrogant and the decisions he makes are only for his and his wife's benefit. The kingdom has suffered. The villagers go about their daily lives, but it doesn't feel as though they are truly living."

"Aye," Killian agreed, "Emma and I noticed the same when we first rode through Avalon."

"I don't like speaking ill of my king, but Katarina was not a suitable choice for a wife," Brennan stated, "She has this power of him and the kingdom."

"Power you say?" Killian raised a brow, "Like a siren?"

"I never thought of such a thing," Brennan replied after a few careful moments of thought, "Perhaps, if not a siren's charms, there are some other similar type charms."

"Perhaps," Killian agreed, "Today we will be sailing, as Fallon already mentioned. You're welcome to come along."

"I look forward to it," Brennan responded after taking a healthy drink from his mug.

"This is Papa's ship," Fallon stated after giving her grandfather a fairly detailed tour of the harbor. She skipped up the gangplank as if she owned it.

"It's a mighty impressive ship," Brennan marveled at the sight. "However did you afford such a ship?"

"It is a story for another day," Killian stepped onto the gangplank with Bradyn in his arms. The little boy was happily pointing towards various pieces of rigging.

When Brennan stepped aboard, Fallon as at the wheel, turning it to her heart's content, calling out orders to her fictitious crew.

"She was born to captain her own ship," Killian smirked.

"Is such a thing possible?" Brennan inquired.

"Aye, I've encountered a few lady captains during my years at sea," Killian nodded, "They can be just as successful managing a crew as a man."

"Forgive me," Brennan replied, "In our kingdom, women are able to work until they were married. Then they are expected to keep a home and take care of the children. Your realm's customs are a bit odd to me."

"Emma's the breadwinner in our relationship...er...she makes more of an income than I do," Killian replied while setting Bradyn in his hammock so he could get the ship ready to depart, "It's quite common in this realm."
"She makes a good income as sheriff?" Brennan inquired.

Killian nodded his head and continued with his tasks.

"A lady enforcing laws is also a bit perplexing," Brennan helped Killian where he could.

"Emma has never been one to believe in traditional male and female roles," Killian responded, "It's one of the things I love about her. She is her own person."

"You do appear to be quite happy, especially when she is in the vicinity," Brennan observed.

"Papa, hurry up," Fallon called out when she felt her father was taking too much time.

"She's rather an impatient little lass," Brennan chuckled.

"Aye," Killian laughed along, "Stay with Bradyn and Fallon. I'm going to cast the lines, and then we can be off."

Brennan went to Fallon and Bradyn. The ship began to move even before Killian could raise the sails. It didn't take long for the sails to fill and the ship to pick up speed. Fallon grasped Brennan's hand and pulled him to the bow of the ship. She gleefully pointed out the dolphins swimming along side the ship. She'd ever picked out names for them, "That's Hansel and Gretel."

"You have quite the imagination," Brennan smiled.

Fallon beamed with pride while cheering on the dolphins each time they leapt out of the water. When the dolphins tired, Fallon asked to be put down so she could run around the ship.

Brennan returned to the wheel where Killian was steering the ship with Bradyn in one of his arms. He could hear Killian begin to teach the little boy about navigation.

"Seems a bit early to start the lessons," Brennan smiled at the scene they made.

"I started Fallon's lessons even earlier. It's something I want them both to enjoy," Killian replied.

"Fallon certainly does," Brennan replied.

"This little sailor will too," Killian bounced Bradyn a bit. The little boy laughed and clapped.

"May I?" Brennan offered his arms to the little boy while asking for Killian's permission to hold his grandson. Killian nodded and allowed the little boy to be transferred over. Bradyn immediately latched onto Brennan's finger. "I didn't expect to be a grandfather just yet, but I find I am rather enjoying it."

"They are quite dazzling," Killian replied, "Those particular traits they inherited from their mother. I knew the moment I first laid eyes on Emma that she would be quite important to me."

"Killian, I know you're holding back on me when it comes to your past. I want you to know, no matter what you've done, you are my son. Nothing you could have done will chase me away."

"I wouldn't be so sure of that," Killian muttered, mostly to himself while staring out along the horizon.

"What could you have possibly done?" Brennan heard his reply.

"After I lost Liam, I vowed to never sail for anyone with a less than honorable agenda. We didn't
return to our kingdom. We commandeered our ship and turned pirate," Killian began after taking a deep breath to brace himself for the rejection he knew would come after he finished his tale. "We preyed upon the ships of those kingdoms where corruption was known to run rampant. Along the way I met a woman..."

"Emma," Brennan guessed.

"Her name was Milah," Killian glanced to his wrist, "She was my first love. She wanted me to take her away from the life she was living, which included a husband and son. Though I had my reservations, I took her along. During our adventures at sea, we fell in love. She was by my side as we sailed the realms, continuing in our quest to make the corrupt kingdoms pay for their corrupt rulers.

"One day we returned to her village and encountered her husband. Though he was once a coward, he had gained immense power. He challenged me to a duel. I was confident no one could defeat me. I was wrong. Milah stepped in. He took her heart and crushed it to dust. I watched her die right before my eyes. In my rage, I charged after him. He took my hand, in which he believed I held a magic bean he needed for his own purpose."

Brennan glanced in confusion as he looked at the two fully functioning hands his son had.

"I vowed to get my revenge on the man who took my love. I sailed my ship to Neverland because I knew it would give me the time I needed to come up with a plan to exact my revenge," Killian replied.

"I still cannot believe Neverland is real. It sounded like merely a fantastical tale when my mother would tell me the stories as a boy," Brennan admitted.

"Aye," Killian nodded, "It was nothing like the stories I remembered hearing when I was a lad. The boy in power was ruthless. He forced me to do his bidding in exchange for allowing me and my crew to take refuge on the island.

"Eventually my plan came together, and he allowed me to take what was left of my crew away from Neverland where we started to hunt my foe. My journey led me to an alliance with the woman who became known as the Evil Queen's mother, Cora. It was Cora who sent me to intercept Emma and her mother when they came to the Enchanted Forest through a portal. Cora wanted to know how to find her daughter.

"Her daughter, the Evil Queen, is in Storybrooke?" Brennan sputtered. Naturally the stories from the Enchanted Forest made it to their realm.

"Aye," Killian nodded, "However the Evil Queen has reformed her ways thanks to her adopted son."

"Henry," Brennan guessed, "You said he was adopted.

"Aye, Regina was the evil queen once upon a time," Killian nodded.

"I didn't know redemption was possible for a soul as dark as hers," Brennan replied.

"I hope there is because mine was just as dark," Killian swallowed hard, "Did any of your ships ever encounter a pirate captain named Captain Hook?"

"They may have," Brennan shook his head, "I didn't have regular briefings with our admiral...Your foe took your hand. You were Captain Hook."
"Aye," Killian confirmed. "Everything changed when I met Emma. We had an adventure in the Enchanted Forest, and we found our way to each other here in Storybrooke. On our wedding day, she gave me a gift. She restored my hand through an act of true love."

"So you and Emma do in fact have true love," Brennan realized.

"It's been tested more times than either of us care to remember," Killian nodded, "I didn't need a test to confirm it. I love Emma with every breath I consume. She has brought me back to life, so much I've been able to put aside my need for vengeance so I can have a life with her and our family."

"Whatever became of your foe, the one who took your first love and your hand?" Brennan inquired.

"He runs a shop in Storybrooke. He goes by the name Gold here, but he's also known as the Dark One," Killian explained.

Brennan's face went as white as a ghost.

"He's contained in Storybrooke. His son keeps him on the straight and narrow, most of the time, and he also has his love, Belle. We tolerate each other for the sake of our families," Killian explained.

"I see," Brennan took a seat to process the news his son had given him.

Fallon picked that moment to approach her father, "Papa, is it fishy time?"

"Aye," Killian nodded while tying down the wheel so he could drop the sails and eventually anchor.

"Are you okay, Poppy?" Fallon approached her grandfather, "Uncle Robin gets sick sometimes when we sail."

"I'm fine, Princess," Brennan pecked at her forehead, "You like sailing with your papa, don't you?"

"Yep," Fallon looked towards her father adoringly. "My papa is the bestest."

Brennan smiled and watched Fallon dart after her father, helping as much as a three year old could with the tasks Killian was trying to accomplish.

"He's a good papa, isn't he, Bradyn," Brennan tickled his grandson's stomach.

"Do you fish, Papa?" Killian approached his father with a spare pole he kept onboard for those days Emma's father sailed with them.

"I haven't since I was a lad, but it can't be too hard," Brennan smiled and accepted the pole.

"I'll put Bradyn down for his nap," Killian took his son into his arms and rocked him a bit. The little boy was asleep almost instantly. "The ship's movements lulls him right to sleep when he's tired. Fallon show Poppy how you fish. I'll be with you two in a moment."

Fallon pulled Brennan over to where Killian always set up the chairs for fishing and showed how well she could cast a line. "Papa says we can fish always."

"Is that so," Brennan took a seat next to her and cast out his line.

"Yep," Fallon bobbed her head, "He say sailing is in my blood." To make her point, she pointed to the blue veins in her wrist. "He says Papa sailed and Uncle Liam sailed and Poppy Jones sailed."

Brennan swallowed hard as her words hit him. He'd only sailed once before his son returned to his
life, but he'd always filled his sons' head with the stories his mother told him of his father's adventures.

"Have you caught any fish yet, Little Love?" Killian approached after making sure Bradyn was settled below deck.

"Nope," Fallon shook her head from side to side, "I show Poppy how to cast a line. I did really good, didn't I, Poppy?"

"Aye, she did," Brennan chuckled, watching Fallon climb into Killian's lap without a hint of hesitation. Whatever reservations he'd had about the man his son had once been were erased in that moment.

After catching their limit of fish, the quartet returned to town. Killian sold all but the best fish to the canary after promising Fallon he'd make fish for dinner after a stop at the sheriff's station.

"You're cheeks are cold, Princess," Emma kissed her daughter's cheeks when they arrived at the station to check on her. It had been a quiet day. Wendy hadn't said one word to her since she first arrived.

"Hi," Fallon ran over to the cell after Emma returned her to her feet, "My name is Fallon."

Wendy appeared startled by Fallon's actions. She was curled into a ball in the cell. She jumped in fright and simply stared at the little girl.

Fallon didn't appear the slightest bit phased by the bars in between them. "Do you like candy?" she pulled a few pieces from her pocket she'd managed to hang onto since the town parade and offered them to Wendy. Wendy reached out slowly and took one from the little girl. She mumbled a quiet thank you and then ate the candy.

"That was very nice of you," Emma told her daughter when Fallon came back.

"Papa is making fishy for dinner," Fallon told her mother, seemingly unaware of the selfless gesture she'd just made.

"Can't wait," Emma kissed her daughter's forehead.

"Can Fallon and Bradyn stay here with you?" Killian asked, "I'm going to show Brennan around the grocery store."

"You don't want Fallon with you, going up and down the aisles asking for ever sweet treat she sees," Emma surmised, "I can multitask. Go."

"Thank you, Love," Killian gave her a quick peck.

Fallon colored a picture at her grandfather's desk, and Bradyn slept soundly in the playpen Emma had available for this very scenario.

Wendy watched the family with great interest.

"What's going to happen to me?" Wendy asked suddenly in a small voice which almost broke Emma's heart. She'd had the same thoughts when she'd been busted for stealing the watches at seventeen.

"A lot of that depends on you," Emma crossed the room with a chair and sat next to Wendy's cell, "If
"you talk to me and convince me you are truly sorry for your actions, I might be willing to offer a lighter sentence."

"And if I don't?" Wendy asked.

"You threw a pick ax at my son, which nearly killed his father," Emma reminded the young girl of her most serious offense, "I am within my rights to charge you for some pretty horrible crimes which could send you away for a very long time."

"Is Baelfire going to be alright?" Wendy asked.

"He's recuperating," Emma confirmed, "You're lucky he appears likely to make a full recovery, or we'd be having a very different conversation."

"I didn't mean for things to go this far," Wendy played with her fingers, "Neverland had been my home for so long, and one day it was gone. Suddenly we're back in London with no one to care for us."

"You really don't want to compare bad childhoods with me, Little Girl," Emma began, "Whatever you've endured, I've been through worse. I was living on the streets on my own for years. At least you had your brothers. From what Neal said, you were living in your family's home with people taking care of you, so spare me the poor little rich girl speech."

"Pan said you were…" Wendy began.

"There's your first mistake," Emma responded, "You listened to Pan."

"You know nothing about Peter," Wendy hissed.

"I know he had my son kidnapped to save himself," Emma replied, "When that didn't work, he kidnapped me and tried to take my husband's heart."

"You're lying," Wendy hissed, "Peter would never do something so horrible. I'll never trust anything you say. Peter said all adults lie."

"You and Baelfire were friends," Emma reminded him, "Do you think he would lie to you?"

"Baelfire was one of us," Wendy replied, "He was with us for years."

"You didn't answer my question," Emma responded, "Would he lie to you?"

Wendy hesitated.

"Peter kidnapped him too," Emma stated, "He took him from this world, where he has his son, and brought him to his island, for his own purpose."

Wendy turned her back towards Emma abruptly.

Emma sighed and returned to her desk.

"All done," Fallon brought her drawing to her mother.

"It's very pretty, Princess," Emma smiled.

"It's for Poppy Jones. He was sad today."
"He was sad today," Emma repeated, "How come?"

"I don't know," the little girl shrugged.

"Did he and Papa yell at each other?" Emma asked.

"Nope," Fallon shook her head from side to side.

"There's my favorite granddaughter," David came into the station. His smile was immediate.

"Poppy!" Fallon ran over and launched herself into his arms.

"You get prettier and prettier each time I see you," he kissed each cheek.

Fallon giggled in reply, "I made picture for you."

"It's very pretty," David glanced at the picture she held for him to see.

"Did you stop by the hospital on the way here?" Emma asked her father.

"I did," David sat in his chair and arranged Fallon in his lap.

"How's Neal?" Emma asked knowing Wendy would also be interested.

"The blood transfusion did the trick," David replied, "He is officially listed in stable condition. If he doesn't have any setbacks, he might be able to leave the hospital tomorrow."

"And Henry?" Emma asked, "How was he?"

"He looks a bit tired," David admitted.

"He probably didn't sleep all that well last night," Emma concluded, "I have the paperwork all sorted. I filed it with the court, so Wendy has been officially charged."

"You just put assault and battery," David read the paperwork, feeling comfortable discussing such items in Fallon's presence since she likely had no idea what the words really meant.

"We can add to the charges if we feel it necessary," Emma replied, "The charges now are enough to hold her."

David raised a curious brow in his daughter's direction as he wondered at his daughter's motives.

"Say goodbye to Poppy," Emma instructed her daughter while crossing the station to pick up Bradyn from his playpen.

"Bye, Poppy," Fallon dutifully responded with a slight frown.

"Cheer up, Little One," David chuckled, "I think a sleepover is due very soon, you, me, Leo, Bradyn, and Grammy. Does that sound good to you?"

Fallon bobbed her head eagerly.

"Are you sure Mom is going to be up to that, Dad?" Emma asked.

"I take it she told you our big news," David concluded.

" Yeah," Emma responded, "I told no one."
"Killian?" David asked.

"No one," Emma repeated.

Fallon's head turned towards each adult as they spoke, trying with all her might to figure out what they were talking about. Finally giving up and chalkling it up to something adult oriented she did what she always did, turned the spotlight on herself by reaching out and hugging her grandfather with all her might.

David promptly returned her hug and added a kiss to her cheek for good measure, "I'll see you soon, Princess."

"Bye, Poppy," Fallon hopped off his lap. She called after Wendy as well, "Bye, Wendy. I'll bring more candy."

"I'll explain later," Emma told her perplexed looking father while taking Fallon's hand. "If Killian and Brennan stop by, tell them I took Fallon and Bradyn home."

Fallon waved to her grandfather until he was no longer in sight.

"Hey, Mom," Emma was taken aback by her mother's spur of the moment visit to the cottage after dinner.

"Hi, Emma," Mary Margaret greeted her daughter with a hug, "I hope I'm not catching you at a bad time."

"It's just a typical Jones evening," Emma stepped back to allow her mother to come in out of the cold and snow, "You usually call first."

"I was just too excited," Mary Margaret stepped in with her arm full of books.

"What's going on?" Emma asked.

"Brennan, this is about you," Mary Margaret explained, "I had a talk with the headmaster today about the possibility you could teach art…that is if you might still be interested."

Brennan rose to his feet and nodded.

"He wants to first see your art, but he sounded very interested. We haven't really had a proper art teacher…well ever," Mary Margaret stated, "So I was hoping you might draw some sketches tonight and bring them by the school tomorrow. I'll introduce you to the headmaster and then show you around the school. If you'd like, you could even sit in on a few of my classes. I also brought these books I have on teaching. With all the Wendy nonsense, I completely forgot about them until today. Oh, Henry, I also brought your school assignments for what you missed today."

"Mom, take a breath," Emma chimed in when Mary Margaret appeared ready to ramble on.

"Sorry," Mary Margaret shook her head slightly, "I just get excited about my work."

"We can see that," Emma chuckled.

"Sorry, I'm rushing a little bit," Mary Margaret replied, "Brennan, are you even still interested in teaching art?"

"I haven't given it much thought," Brennan admitted, "It would be nice to have a purpose in this realm."
"You already have a purpose," Emma chimed in, "As the Jones patriarch."

"What's a pat-tree-arch?" Fallon stumbled through the big word.

"It means he is the head of your family, Sweetheart," Mary Margaret replied.

"Oh," Fallon continued to color to her hearts content.

"Is there some sort of income associated with such a position?" Brennan stepped towards the two women in the entryway.

"Oh yes," Mary Margaret nodded, "Teachers make a fairly decent income in this realm."

"You could even afford your own place so you wouldn't have to sleep on our sofa night after night," Emma added, "Not that we don't love having you here because we do."

"Here are the books I promised you," Mary Margaret offered the stack to him, "I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have on the subject. I have been teaching for several years."

"And she's really good," Henry chimed in.

"Thank you, Sweetheart," Mary Margaret sent her oldest grandson a warm smile.

Brennan accepted the books with a slight bow, "Thank you, your majesty."

"Oh…" Mary Margaret flushed, "You don't need to do that. Here in Storybrooke, we're all just regular people. No need to stand on ceremony."

Brennan nodded in understanding.

"I need to get back to the cottage," Mary Margaret announced, "Ruby is watching Leo."

"She's not working tonight?" Emma asked.

"No," Mary Margaret shook her head. Lowering her voice she added, "She and Whale are having some challenges."

"Did they break up?" Emma's tone matched her mother's.

"No," Mary Margaret shook her head, "I'll let her explain. Maybe we should have a girls' night on Friday."

"Are you sure you're up for that?" Emma asked.

"I'm completely up for it," Mary Margaret assured her, "I'll arrange everything. You just show up at the Rabbit Hole ready for some girl bonding."

"Sign me up," Emma smiled.

"We'll talk more later," Mary Margaret hugged her daughter before addressing Brennan, "I hope to see you tomorrow."

"Thank you for the consideration, milady," he nodded in respect.

"I guess milady is better than your majesty," Mary Margaret laughed and waved to the rest of her family before leaving.
"You'll need supplies to draw with," Emma pulled on her coat in preparation for a trip to the store.

"I have everything I need in this cottage," Brennan assured her. "That is if Fallon as a few blank pieces of parchment she could spare."

"Fallon, do you have any blank pieces of paper?" Emma translated her father-in-law's request.

"Uh-huh," Fallon turned to dig into her toy chest until she found what was needed.

"Do you also have a writing implement?" Brennan inquired.

"Henry, do you have any sharpened pencils?" Emma asked her oldest.

"Yeah," Henry dug into his bag for the pencils and the sharpener just in case it was needed.

Brennan sat at the table and went straight to work. Fallon, ever the curious child, climbed onto the nearby chair to watch him work. Brennan noted her curiosity and began narrated his actions in terms simple enough for Fallon to understand. In short order, Brennan had created a pencil drawing of Fallon with remarkable precision.

"Look, Mama," Fallon held up the drawing her grandfather gave her, "It's me."

"It sure is," Emma kissed the top of her head while Brennan went to work on another drawing. This one was not of anyone in the cottage, at least so Emma thought. "It's beautiful, Brennan. Is this from a memory?"

"Aye," Brennan turned the second picture toward Emma so she'd have a better view, "That is a picture of Killian and Liam as they slept when they were young boys."

Killian, who had been reading on the sofa, rose from his seat and came over to glance at the drawing. He instantly recognized various features of the room he'd lived in as a young lad.

"I would always get home from duty quite late. Liam and Killian would typically be asleep. I would take a book or a sketchpad into their room and entertain myself while they slept," Brennan replied, "I wanted to be more present in their lives, but my duties never allowed it. On occasion, I would wake the boys, and we would go star gazing. I would teach them how to read the stars and how to navigate by them. It was a lesson my father had taught my mother during the early days of their courtship. She in turn taught me."

"And Killian taught me," Emma smiled at the memory of the nights they spent aboard his ship learning the stars.

"He taught me too," Henry chimed in.

"I want to learn," Fallon stuck out her bottom lip to pout.

"Papa will teach you when you're a bit older," Emma reassured her daughter. The promise seemed to do the trick because Fallon's pout was quickly erased. "Your wife couldn't have been happy with you waking your sons in the middle of the night."

"No, she was not," Brennan chuckled, "She was right cross with me. I usually slept in the barn loft on those evenings, but a little discomfort was worth it."

"Do you remember, Killian?" Emma caressed her husband's shoulder.

"It's a foggy memory, but it is there," Killian nodded slightly.
"Maybe others are too," Emma offered.

"Aye," Killian's eyes locked with hers. Emma rose up on her toes to kiss his cheek.

"This is the picture you should show the headmaster tomorrow," Emma suggested. Killian nodded in agreement.

The house phone ringing interrupted their evening. Emma quickly went to answer it, having a brief conversation.

"I have to go into the station," Emma announced, "Apparently Wendy's brothers showed up frantically looking for her and are demanding her release."

Killian nodded in understanding.

"It's almost bedtime, Princess," Emma kissed her daughter's cheek, "Why don't you change into your pajamas, and Papa will come in to read to you."

"Okay," Fallon hugged her mother tight.

"Be a good girl," Emma replied, "I'll be back soon."

Fallon hopped off her chair to carry out her mother's wishes.

"I'll be back," Emma repeated to her husband, stroking his chin in the way she knew he liked.

"Hurry home, Love," he leaned in for a slow, sweet kiss.

TBC…
Disclaimer: Nope – still not mine.

Chapter 31

Emma entered the station, hearing the commotion before she could see it. She could hear Robin attempting to defuse the situation.

"What's going on?" Emma came in.

Two young men about Henry's age were standing at Wendy's cell. The younger one was holding her hand through the bars.

"You're the one in charge?" the older boy asked.

"Yes, I'm the sheriff," Emma nodded, "Who are you?"

"I'm John, Wendy's brother," he replied, "We demand you release her immediately."

"I can't do that," Emma responded calmly, "She has committed some pretty horrible crimes. I'm not even talking about how she cursed this entire town with her siren charms."

"Her siren what?" John sputtered.

"Siren charms," Emma repeated.

"What siren charms?" Michael, Wendy's younger brother, asked.

"They don't know, do they?" Emma turned to address Wendy.

"Wendy, what is she talking about?" John also turned towards his sister.

"I don't know," Wendy stammered out a reply, really playing up the innocence in her voice and face.

"Wendy," John apparently read through the look and was not fooled.

Wendy sulked back to her cot.

"What has she done?" John turned back to Emma expectantly. He'd always known his sister had some sort of pull with people they met, but he hadn't thought for a minute she had some sort of magical ability.

"I don't even know where to start," Emma began. She spent the better part of an hour running through Wendy's laundry list of offenses. Her brothers' emotions ran the gamut, first in complete disbelief their sister could do such horrible thing, but eventually there was only sadness they didn't see the signs before their sister took things too far.

"Will Baelfire be okay?" Michael asked in a small voice.

"Fortunately, yes," Emma nodded, "It sounds like he will pull through, which is fortunate for everyone. I'm going to level with both of you. I don't want to put Wendy in the juvenile offender system. It can go bad in a hurry. I'm open to other options, but she has to earn this chance."

"And how will she do that?" John inquired.
"For starters, she needs to take responsibility for her actions," Emma glanced beyond the two boys to look directly at Wendy, "My husband was returning you to your family when he took the three of you away from Neverland. He was doing what he thought was the right thing. Having been orphaned at a young age, he was swayed by your parents' impassioned pleas for your return...Were your parents kind to you, Wendy? Did they tell you they loved you?"

"Yes," Michael answered for them.

"And you chose to leave your home to live on some stupid island with a boy who refused to grow up?" Emma was completely baffled by their decision, "Do you have any idea how lucky you three were? I woke up every morning for twenty-eight years wishing to have just one person care about me. You three threw that away. For Pan."

"Peter cared about us," Wendy snapped.

"Pan cared about himself," Emma snapped back, "He cared about his agenda and his life. He would have traded any of you in a heartbeat if it furthered his plans, kept him alive one minute more. If you believe any thing other than that, then I don't know if there is any hope for you. I pray to god I'm wrong."

"When will my sister get released?" John asked.

"That's up to her," Emma replied, "She can choose to take responsibility for her actions. If she does, I'll recommend some sort of boarding school. If she doesn't, then we're going to make sure she's appropriately charged. She'll end up in a juvenile detention center. Your interactions will be limited to visiting hours through a thick piece of glass. If she's lucky, when she turns eighteen she'll be released, but her options for a future will be limited. I speak from experience when I say, no one wants to hire a young girl with a record."

Wendy turned her back on Emma yet again.

"Turn your back on me all you want, but I know you can hear me. I want to be for you what I wish I'd had when I was in your place. I want to be the offer of a second chance, but it is up to you to take it," Emma then took a deep breath to calm herself down. It was beyond frustrating that she couldn't get through to this stubborn girl. "Boys, I'm sorry, but your sister will continue to stay here until her case has been resolved, one way or another. Do you have a place to stay?"

The boys shook their heads from side to side.

"I'll take them to Granny's and set them up for the time being," Emma told Robin, "Are you okay here?"

Robin nodded in agreement. "I'm sorry I had to call you in so late."

"You did the right thing," Emma assured him. "Boys, come with me."

It took a good deal of effort to convince Granny to allow the boys to stay in one of her rooms unsupervised for any length of time, but once they were settled, Emma headed home. The cottage was mostly dark, with only a few lights on to allow Emma to find her way upstairs where her husband was reading in bed. Upon seeing her, he instantly set his book aside and descended upon her.

"Everything alright, Love?" Killian recognized the emotional exhaustion etched on her face.

"No," she shook her head slightly and stepped into his embrace.
Killian held her tight for several minutes until she found the strength to explain herself.

"I could have been that girl," Emma wiped at the tears with a tissue she snatched from the box next to her bed, "At any moment, I could have been arrested and charged with any number of crimes, yet I cannot believe I would be as stubborn as Wendy is. I'm giving her a legitimate second chance to make something of her life, yet she cannot let go of her anger towards you for taking her precious Pan from her. Is she truly so naïve to not see how he manipulated her and her brothers for decades?"

"Pan has a curious knack for being able to say exactly what one wants to hear," Killian replied, "He lived his life according to his own rules. For impressionable children, there is a great appeal."

"I don't understand how they could leave a home with parents who clearly wanted them to live an island existence with Pan," Emma wiped away more tears, "The abandoned little girl in me just can't wrap my head around those actions. I wanted so much to live in a home where I was loved and wanted. By their own admission, they had that and gave it up."

"It makes no sense to me either, Love," Killian advanced on her again and wrapped his arms around her, "But you have that home now."

"To make things worse, we have an impressionable young daughter. What if she encounters someone like Pan? What if she chooses to leave our home?"

"We would never allow it," Killian voice spoke to his determination, "No matter where Fallon would go, we would find her, we would bring her home, and we would do whatever it took to keep her here. This family never stops fighting for each other."

"I hope that would be enough," Emma attempting to dry her eyes with her tissue. Killian took the tissue from her hand and dried the rest of her tears. "It will be."

"It has to be," more tears fell down Emma's cheeks. Killian wrapped her in his arms, holding her tight while her fears poured out through her tears. Emma soaked in his love.

"Come, Love," Killian took her hand when the tears ceased to fall. He led her to the staircase. She thought they would go to the roof, but instead he led her down the stairs to Fallon's bedroom. The little girl was sound asleep. Her arms wrapped tight around her teddy bear, and her dog was sleeping at the end of the bed. She had a peaceful smile on her face.

Emma and Killian watched the little girl sleep for several minutes before Emma bent down and kissed her daughter's forehead and whispered, "Mama loves you."

When Killian and Emma emerged from Fallon's bedroom, Henry was waiting for them.

"Is everything alright?" Henry asked, keeping his voice soft to not wake Brennan who was asleep on the sofa, "Is Fallon in some sort of danger?"

"No," Emma shook her head before hugging him. Henry was taken aback by her gesture but hugged her back all the same. "What's going on?"

"Let's go upstairs," Emma suggested.

Henry nodded and followed his mom and Killian up to their bedroom.
"Wendy's brothers were at the station demanding their sister's release," Emma explained to both her son and her husband why Robin had called earlier. "I explained the situation. Her brothers were surprised and rightfully horrified by what she'd been up to. I also explained my reluctance to throw the book at her, offering to give her a lighter sentence if she will take responsibility for her actions. She won't…at least not yet. Pan still has some sort of influence over her."

"Why were you in Fallon's room?" Henry asked.

"I had a momentary meltdown," Emma explained, "I worry one day Fallon could fall under the influence of someone like Pan."

"That will never happen," Henry was quick to reassure her, "This is home for all of us."

"Thank you for saying that," Emma hugged him.

"Are you going to be okay?" Henry recognized Emma was on the verge of tears again.

"Yes," Emma nodded, giving her best attempt at a smile. "You'd better get to bed. With Neal out of the woods, I'd like for you to go to school tomorrow."

"I will, but it's only nine thirty," Henry informed his mother, "I was just reading in my room when I heard you and Killian enter Fallon's room."

"We're sorry we disturbed you," Emma replied.

"It's okay," Henry assured her. "I have a week to finish the book anyways before I have to give a report on it."

"I love you, Henry," Emma hugged him yet again.

"I love you too, Mom," Henry assured her before he returned to his bedroom.

"Feel better, Love?" Killian asked.

"A little," Emma wiped at her eyes again. "I'm going to check on Bradyn. Go back to your reading. I know it's a book you enjoy."

"I won't be far," he kissed her forehead.

"I love you," Emma caressed his chest.

"And I you," he smiled.

The next morning started like all others with Fallon waking up the entire cottage and demanding her Papa make pancakes. After everyone was dressed and ready for the day, Killian had volunteered to show Brennan around town and take him to the school after they went for an early morning of fishing. Emma returned to the station. Silence reigned once more until Wendy's brother arrived with breakfast.

"Good morning, Boys," Emma greeted them, "I trust Granny took good care of you this morning."

"Oh, yes, she was extremely hospitable," John confirmed while Michael emptied the basket Granny had sent and handed each item to Wendy. They'd made sure to pick out their sister's favorite breakfast foods. "We heard Baelfire will be released from the hospital today. We thought we'd check in with him a bit later."
"I'm sure he'd like to see you," Emma replied.

"We wish he would have called when Wendy first arrived," John added, "We'd been most worried about her when she disappeared into the night."

"He said he called you weeks ago," Emma frowned.

"We only received word a few days ago," John explained, "We made arrangements to get here as soon as we heard."

Emma concluded Neal hadn't been able to call Wendy's brothers because of the curse. She wondered what other false information they'd been fed. It wasn't really important as they'd neutralized Wendy, but it might reveal the full extent of her deception.

"Is there anything more on Wendy's release?" John asked.

"There has been no change in my stance nor Wendy's I'm afraid," Emma replied.

"Wendy, please," Michael turned towards his sister, "We miss you."

"I miss you too, Brother," Wendy responded in between bites.

"There must be some sort of compromise," John replied.

"I've offered up my compromise," Emma held firm, "It's Wendy now who needs to make the next move."

"May we have a few moments with our sister alone?" John asked.

Emma nodded in agreement, "I need a refill on my coffee anyways. I'll be back from Granny's in ten minutes."

"Hey, Sheriff," Granny greeted Emma with a smile and a quick pour from the coffee pot in her hand.

"Here's your basket. Thanks for sending over breakfast and for allowing Wendy's brothers to stay here," Emma took a seat at the counter, "I hope they weren't too much trouble."

"Not at all," Granny assured her, "They are very polite young men. They're quite concerned about their sister."

"That makes three of us," Emma blew on her coffee for a bit.

"It's hard to believe a sweet looking little girl like that cause so much chaos around town," Granny responded while wiping the counter. "You should have seen the dwarves going after each other just before the curse broke. I thought Sneezy was going to pull Dopey's ears right off."

"How bad did it get?" Emma asked.

"Fortunately there were no serious injuries. Most were able to be treated with supplies at Sneezy's pharmacy. Only a few others had to go to the emergency room, but it was nothing worse than a few stitches," Granny reported.

"Good," Emma replied.

"What's going to happen to Wendy?" Granny asked.
"We're still sorting through our options," Emma sighed, "I'd like to go easy on her, but she doesn't seem ready to take any responsibility for her actions. She hardly talks to me at the station. It's so frustrating. I'm trying to give her the benefit of my years on the run, but it's like I'm speaking to a brick wall."

"I'm sure you were as hard headed as she was," Granny replied, "Lord knows Ruby was at that age. She certainly didn't want to listen to me...still doesn't some days."

"Is everything okay with her?" Emma asked, "Mom said she stopped by last night with some whale of a crisis."

"Oh my Ruby," Granny sighed. "She's being quite dramatic at the moment. She's so worried about what might happen to me that she can't allow herself to be happy."

"I don't understand," Emma replied.

"It's best if she explains it herself," Granny replied, "I hear there is a girls' night on the horizon. It will do her some good to get out."

"We'll make sure she has a good time," Emma chuckled.

"If I know my Ruby, she doesn't need any help," Granny laughed.

"Thanks for the coffee," Emma replaced the lid on her cup.

"I'll send over lunch in a bit," Granny called as Emma went to the door, "Wendy's brothers already told me what her favorites are."

Emma nodded and pushed her way out the door, nearly running into Belle in the process.

"Sorry, Belle," Emma replied.

"It's my fault," Belle held up the book she'd been reading as she walked. "I was a bit preoccupied, I'm afraid."

"How's Neal?" Emma asked.

"Getting better hour by hour it appears," Belle replied, "He's being released this morning in fact."

"That's good to hear," Emma replied, "Tell him John and Michael are in town and would like to stop by to see him."

"I will," Belle nodded, "I'd better get my order. Rumple has been complaining quite a bit about the hospital food. I told him I'd pick up breakfast on my way to the hospital."

"I won't keep you then," Emma replied.

"Oh, and Emma, Baelfire has been asking to see you," Belle called after her. "He said he's been wanting to talk to you about something."

"Oh," Emma stopped in her tracks, "I, ah, maybe when he's recovered a bit more I'll stop by to see him."

"Whenever is convenient," Belle replied, "I'm sure you have your hands full right now with a prisoner at the station and a house full of children, a husband and a father-in-law to attend to at home."
"I have been keeping pretty busy," Emma nodded.

Belle nodded in understanding.

When Emma returned to the station, she appeared to have walked into a staring contest between Wendy and her two brothers. Emma cleared her throat to break up the tension.

"Would you be able to point Michael and I towards the hospital?" John turned abruptly towards Emma, "We would like to call upon Baelfire."

"Sure," Emma took out a clean piece of paper and drew them a map of town.

John and Michael left without a word to Wendy.

"You've turned my brothers against me," Wendy hissed when they were alone.

"I've done nothing of the sort," Emma responded calmly, "I know it may be hard to accept because I'm an adult and an unfamiliar one at that, but I am trying to help you."

Wendy huffed in reply.

Emma sighed and returned to her work.

"Hi, Mama," Fallon skipped into the station in the afternoon.

"Hi, Princess," Emma set her daughter in her lap after receiving a hug. "How was fishing? Did you have fun?"

"Yep," Fallon bobbed her head, "Papa caught a really big fish."

"Did he?" Emma glanced towards her husband who was babbling along with Bradyn. "Where's Poppy Jones?"

"With Grammy," Fallon replied.

"I see," Emma responded.

"He wanted to sit in on a few classes with your mother after he was given a tour of the grounds," Killian added.

"Did the headmaster like his drawing?" Emma asked.

"Aye," Killian nodded, "Gave him the job on the spot. He'll be starting next week."

"So soon," Emma's eyes went wide in surprise.

"He seemed quite keen on having an art program in the school," Killian replied, "It was one aspect of the curriculum which had apparently been lacking for quite some time."

"Yeah for twenty-eight years," Emma snorted.

"For longer than that, Love," he smiled, "The curse has been broken for twenty-eight years, but you've been here for five years more. There still isn't an art program, and according to your mother, art is quite a beneficial piece of a child's education."

"I suppose she's right," Emma conceded. "I'm glad Brennan will have a regular income. He seems to
have enjoyed sailing with you, but that couldn't last forever."

"He says he'd still like the opportunity to sail when his schedule allows," Killian replied.

"And will you be taking him up on it?" Emma asked while Fallon slid herself off Emma's lap.

"I think I will," he bobbed his head slowly, watching his daughter cross the room to approach the town's prisoner.

"Hi, Wendy," Fallon held out a new piece of candy, "I brought you this."

"Thank you," Wendy quickly snatched the candy from the girl and unwrapped it.

"I broughted you this too," Fallon unfolded a picture and held it out to her.

Emma smiled at the effort her daughter was going through to make a new friend.

"Is that a dolphin?" Wendy asked curiously.

"Yep," Fallon bobbed her head, "I see them lots when I go fishing with my papa."

"I've never been fishing before," Wendy responded, "Is it fun?"

"Lots of fun," Fallon nodded and proceeded to tell her new friend all about fishing, even boasting about her biggest catch.

"How goes it, Love?" Killian asked his wife after lowering Bradyn into his playpen.

"No real progress," Emma sighed, "Her brothers tried talking to her this morning, but apparently they were unsuccessful. I walked in on some sort of staring contest. It's been mostly silent ever since."

"I'm sorry, Love," Killian pulled her from her seat to give her a hug.

"Maybe tonight when we get home...," Emma tugged at the collar of his jacket to bring him in closer, "...You and I can take a bath together, and you can give me one of those shoulder massages you're getting so good at."

"I'll give you more than a shoulder massage, Love," he whispered in her ear.

"I like that idea too," Emma chuckled.

Killian released a strangled groan deep within his throat he covered with a cough at the last possible moment.

A giggle from Fallon interrupted their moment.

"Alright, Princess, you and Papa better get going," Emma turned to kneel next to her daughter while Killian went to retrieve Bradyn, "You'll want to get home before Poppy does."

Fallon bobbed her head in agreement. "Bye, Wendy."

"Bye, Fallon," Wendy waved as she took her father's hand and left.

Alone, Wendy spoke to Emma for the first time uninitiated. "She's a lovely little girl."

"Fallon is a charmer all her own," Emma nodded and returned to her desk to do more paperwork.
"I do miss them," Wendy said softly.

"I'm sure your brothers will be back soon," Emma replied.

"I mean my parents," Wendy clarified, "I didn't realize until we returned from Neverland the second time that they wouldn't be alive anymore."

"No one lives forever, Wendy," Emma reminded her, "Not even Peter, nor should they."

"I asked him once if I could go back," Wendy admitted, "He said my parents didn't want me anymore. He said the only reason me and my brothers were in Neverland was because we were not wanted."

"Killian took you home," Emma replied, "Didn't that prove they did want you?"

"Things got all mixed up then," Wendy glanced at her fingers, twiddling her thumbs as she spoke. "I don't have a good reason for why we went back. Michael and John tried to talk me out of it. They were happy to be home, but Peter…"

"You were sweet on him," Emma concluded.

"Not him," Wendy shook her head, "Peter promised if we came back to Neverland, he would bring him back."

"Bring who back?" Emma advanced towards the cell doors.

Tears trailed down Wendy's cheeks, "Every day after we returned, he promised tomorrow he would bring him back so long as I did everything he said."

"Wendy," Emma tried to get her attention. The poor girl was lost in a memory, one which was clearly painful. "Who did Peter promise to bring back?"

"Baelfire," Wendy pushed away her tears.

"Baelfire," Emma's eyes went wide with surprise.

"But when he came back he was older, so much older," Wendy's tears continued to fall, "Peter said he could make him younger, but I had to keep doing what he said. When Peter brought Henry to the island, he said Henry was the key. Not only would he bring Baelfire back but he could make him young again. I just had to play my part…and then he didn't…"

"Wendy, Peter lied to you," Emma replied, "He was using you because of your gifts."

"I know that now, but I was so angry," Wendy nodded, "Baelfire looked at me and all he saw was this little girl, and all he could talk about was his son and his son's mother. I couldn't bear to hear the words, so I cursed him."

"It wasn't Killian you were trying to hurt in Storybrooke," Emma realized.

"And I almost killed Bae," more tears tumbled down Wendy's cheeks, "I didn't mean to do it. I was just so angry. I picked up the ax and just threw it before I could stop myself. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry."

Emma went to her desk to grab the box of tissues for Wendy. Her heart went out to the young girl. First loves were always difficult to get over. She knew first hand. Emma's mind was made up. She would not put Wendy through the juvenile offenders program. She'd taken responsibility for her actions. Now she would get her second chance.
TBC...
Chapter 32

Disclaimer: Nope – still not mine.

"You want to do what!" exclaimed the mayor when Emma went to her office with her recommendation for charges.

"Assuming Neal agrees, I'd like to drop all charges against Wendy with a few conditions," Emma repeated herself calmly.

"This siren terrorized our town for weeks...months, threw an ax at our son, and you want to let her off with a slap on the wrist," Regina was still fuming with anger. Emma was surprised the walls weren't shaking with the rage Regina was displaying.

"Wendy is a product of her circumstances," Emma responded calmly, "As was I. I'm sure you can see how someone's judgment can become clouded by their emotions after being manipulated for such a long time by outside forces."

"She almost killed our son!" Regina erupted in rage, which caused a small shockwave to shake the floorboards.

"Regina, calm down," Emma fought to keep her balance.

"Sorry," Regina took a deep, cleansing breath.

"I'd probably have a different thoughts about Wendy's punishment if she'd hurt our son, but she didn't. I've been her, Regina. I was a scared child when I was locked away for a year. I wish like heck I would have been given a second chance. I can't even fathom how much different my life might have been. Wendy knows what she did was wrong," Emma explained, "I want to give her what I wish I'd been given."

"What are your conditions?" Regina's rage was still evident, but she appeared willing to hear Emma out.

"She must go to boarding school, fully comply with their rules and maintain a GPA greater than 2.5. There will be quarterly reports with her teachers and the administration. If there is any sign of trouble, we can re-file the charges and move her through the juvenile courts," Emma explained.

"And how does she pay for such schooling?" Regina asked.

"I talked with her brothers," Emma replied, "There was a trust fund set up in their name which is still valid. They can afford to set up a scholarship to pay her way."

"The trust fund is for children who should be dead and buried by now," Regina spoke through gritted teeth. "We might as well put up a billboard which says, 'Come to Storybrooke to see a Magic Show'."

"The trust fund is for the Darling children and their descendants. For all anyone knows, Wendy, John and Michael are simply the grandchildren or great grandchildren of the original Darling kids who disappeared years ago," Emma replied, "No one is going to make the leap that they are actually the missing Darling children."

"And you're sure of this?" Regina asked.
"John says they have been living this way since they first returned from Neverland," Emma replied, "No one has questioned or challenged their story yet."

"Smart kids," Regina mused.

"We need to protect these kids, Regina," Emma demanded, "They've been lucky so far considering the world they've found themselves in. They got caught up in Pan's mess. It wasn't their fault."

"You want to adopt the entire family," Regina realized.

"They need guardians," Emma replied, "I'm not saying I'm equip to take care for them on a full time basis, but as a community we can do right by them."

"You want the entire town to adopt them," Regina amended her original thought.

"I know I'm asking a lot, but we have a chance to do something good here," Emma stated, "If we turn them out into the world, we don't know what will happen to them, what type of bad influences they could fall into. I've done some research. There is a boarding school in New Hampshire Wendy can go to. It's only a two hour drive. She could come here during holidays, and we could arrange for weekend visits for her brothers to see her."

"Why did you have to inherit your parents incessant need to do good?" Regina sighed.

"Does that mean you'll agree with my recommendation?" Emma asked.

"If you can get Neal to agree to this cockamamie plan, then yes, I'll go along with your recommendations," Regina replied.

"Thank you, Regina," Emma smiled.

"Don't thank me yet," Regina responded, "You still need to sell your idea to Neal and Gold. You think I was a hard sell."

"Good point," Emma sighed, "Gold would rather take a pint of Killian's blood before allowing the girl who almost killed his son to get away without any true punishment."

"I wouldn't go that far," Regina snorted.

"Thanks again, Regina," Emma left the mayor's office and returned to the station.

"There you are, Love," Killian was sitting in her chair with his boots propped up on her desk. In his lap was a book he must have pulled from her desk.

"Where are Fallon and Bradyn?" Emma glanced around.

"I left them at the cottage to fend for themselves for a bit," he replied. Emma gasped until she realized he was joking, "Henry is with them."

"Still doesn't answer the question of what you're doing here," Emma advanced towards him.

"Can't a man check in with his wife?" he asked, "Ruby was here when I arrived. She seems a bit out of sorts, so I sent her back to Granny's. Told her I'd watch the lass until you returned."

Emma turned towards the cell to see Wendy was napping. The emotions from early had apparently zapped her of her strength.
"What are you really doing here?" Emma snatched the book away from him and tucked it back into her drawer, "And what have I told you about going through my desk drawers?"

"Don't go through your drawers until you're prepared for what you might find," Killian recited her warning verbatim, "You seemed a bit vexed earlier. Thought I could cheer you up a bit. Henry offered to take Fallon, Bradyn and Brennan to Granny's tonight with your mum and Leo. Your father will be here shortly for his shift. You and I are having ourselves a 'date night' as you call them."

"And what are we going to do with this date night?" Emma smiled and tugged him from her chair.

"Dinner aboard the Jolly Roger," Killian smiled.

"It's like twelve degrees outside," Emma pointed out, "We'll freeze aboard your ship."

"Not in my cabin, Love," his eyes twinkled.

"You have yourself a date, Captain," Emma wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him soundly.

They were still kissing when David arrived for his shift. "Is that an appropriate use of time when you're on the taxpayer's dime?"

"Hey, Dad," Emma pulled away from her husband abruptly.

"I should tell Regina," David looked at her in mock horror.

"Like Mom's never stopped by the station for a little make out session," Emma rolled her eyes.

"I'm not one to kiss and tell," David responded coyly.

"Wendy," Emma approached Wendy's cell.

Wendy awoke with a start. "Are my brothers here yet?"

"Not yet," Emma replied, "I'll send them your way if I see them. David's here for his shift, so I'll see you tomorrow."

Wendy nodded.

"I'll stop by the library and get you a couple of those books I was talking about," Emma added.

"Thank you," Wendy replied.

"Did I miss something?" Killian thought the conversation a bit odd considering Wendy had barely spoken to Emma since she'd arrived.

"We had a bit of a chat," Emma replied, "I'm working out the kinks in my plan, so I'll discuss the particulars when I have everything firmed up."

"Am I supposed to know what that means, Love?" Killian asked.

"No," Emma slipped into her coat, "Dad, if you need anything, just call my cell."

David nodded and waved the pair away.
"Are you going to discuss your plan?" Killian asked as they left the station.

"Not yet," Emma glanced up and down the main street of the town hoping to see Wendy's brothers, "Before we have dinner at the docks, I want to find Wendy's brothers. They were a bit mad at her earlier, and I know it's been bothering her."

"Some days you truly baffle me, Love," Killian followed her along without another thought.

"She took complete responsibility for her actions," Emma filled her husband in on her earlier conversation with Wendy while they feasted on the meal her husband had cooked up special for her aboard the Jolly Roger.

"Sounds like quite the productive exchange," Killian replied.

"The twist to the entire story," Emma added, "She wasn't here seeking revenge against you…she was still plenty mad at you, but she was trying to get to me. She was jealous because Neal has…had feelings for me."

"Are you telling me Wendy is sweet on Baelfire?" Killian raised one of his expressive brows.

"Think about it, Killian. When they met, they were about the same age. He even lived with them for awhile. Is it out of the realm of possibilities she could have developed a crush on him, or even him on her?" Emma asked.

"No, I suppose not," Killian conceded.

"While Neal continued to age, Wendy stayed the same age," Emma added, "When he found her and her brothers in London, he looked at her the way an older brother would a younger sister…like Henry looks at Fallon, if you will. She was heartbroken, even more so when he told them about the son he had with the woman he still cared about. She saw red and cursed him. It was likely a coincidence when you saw her the first time. I don't even think she expected to find you here in Storybrooke."

"An unexpected turn of events for certain," Killian replied.

"Since she's lived up to her end of the deal, I'm working on living up to mine. I got Regina to agree to drop the charges, if Neal agrees. In exchange, Wendy will be sent to a boarding school in New Hampshire, and her brothers will stay here…with some adult supervision."

Killian raised a brow for the second time.

"I'm still working on those particular kinks, but I'm hoping this town might pitch in to help out this family," Emma replied, "They don't really have anyone in London they can trust, and they know things about our town and magic which would be dangerous if it got out."

"Emma, we don't have room for them in our cottage," he reminded her, "If we're planning on added to our family…"

"I'm not suggesting we take them in," Emma reassured him.

"Then what are you suggesting, Love?" Killian asked.

"I'm suggesting as a community, we don't abandon them. We don't let them go out into the world without a soul to protect them," tears began to well in Emma's eyes again.
Killian was out of his seat to comfort her immediately.

"I'm a mess right now," Emma wiped at her eyes as he held her.

"You're reliving the pain of your childhood," Killian offered, "You'd be made of stone if it didn't effect you."

"I feel so helpless and guilty right now," Emma admitted.

"Then lean on me," Killian patted at his chest, "You and I have made promises to each other, to be there through the good and the bad, and I intend to keep my promise."

"I know," Emma smiled through her tears, "You're an amazing man and husband and father. The best thing I ever did was knock on your door that first night aboard your ship and ask you to keep me warm."

"I was beyond confused," he admitted.

"So was I," she snickered, "I still cannot explain what pulled me in your direction. I don't know if it is fate or how true love works, but something inside me made me come to you that night. I've never looked back, never regretted it for one moment. I felt precious in your arms but not in a breakable way."

"You will always be the greatest adventure I ever sailed on," he looked deep into her eyes.

Emma swallowed down a lump of emotion developing in her throat. More tears threatened to spill, but they were happy tears. She still felt like she should pinch herself. Killian had given her more than just his heart. He'd given her a place to belong, to feel safe, to come home to. Even when she found her parents and son, they hadn't been able to truly give her the gifts Killian had.

Emma began unbutton his shirt, just enough to reveal the tattoo on his chest, the one with her name, the one which marked him as hers and began tracing each letter with her finger slowly.

She'd never really been one for tattoos on a man before him, but this one just did things to her. Every now and then he talked about getting tattoos for his children just under hers, but Emma fought him on it, not in an angry shouting kind of a way, just a way which verbalized her displeasure. It was a tiny bit selfish, but she wanted just her name on his chest. She had to share so much of him as it was.

"What thoughts are you having, Love?" he asked after several moments.

"Just how much I love you," she smiled, rising up on her toes to press her lips to his.

"I like when you have those particular thoughts," he wrapped his arms around her torso and picked her up.

"Before you sweep me off my feet," Emma could feel him moments away from carrying them towards the bed.

"What is it, Love?" he asked.

"Dinner," she replied, "We should finish dinner. You went through a lot of trouble."

"It's no trouble when its for you, Love," Killian reluctantly returned her to her feet, "However we should ensure we have adequate strength."

"Oh really," Emma raised a curious brow, "What exactly do we need such strength for?"
"Use your imagination," Killian wagged a brow towards her.

Emma and Killian snuck into the cottage late in the evening. All appeared quiet, yet it didn't stop the parents from checking on their children.

"Don't they look cute," Emma caught Brennan asleep in the rocking chair with Bradyn situated against his shoulder, also asleep.

Killian dutifully nodded while Emma lifted Bradyn from Brennan's embrace and then gently shook her father-in-law awake.

Brennan startled awake, glancing around in an attempt to get his bearings.

"We're home, Brennan," Emma replied, "You can go to bed."

"I didn't mean to fall asleep with the lad," Brennan replied, "This chair of yours is quite the marvel. Put us both right to sleep."

"It's happened to all of us," Emma smiled. "Go to bed."

"I hope you two enjoyed…what did the lad call it?" Brennan fumbled for the correct words.

"Date night," Emma offered, "Yes, we did. Killian cooked me dinner aboard his ship, and we stargazed for a bit after. Lost track of time."

"It was quite alright," Brennan replied, "Henry and I managed quite well. He managed to get Fallon into bed, so I offered to help with this little lad."

"He's a good cuddler," Emma rubbed Bradyn's back while the boy continued to sleep soundly. It seemed he was finally past the phase where ever little sound woke him. "You two go into the living room. I'll put Bradyn to bed for the night. I'll be out in a bit."

Brennan and Killian nodded and left.

"Emma seems to be in better spirits," Brennan noted, taking a seat on the sofa.

"It's been a rough few days for her," Killian took a seat in the leather chair, "She's been reliving some of the pain from her childhood. It's a difficult subject for her."

"From what you've said, I can only imagine," Brennan replied.

"We're alike in that way," Killian added.

Brennan flinched at the reference. There was a long pause in the conversation.

"Bradyn's out for the count," Emma emerged from her son's nursery to feel the stifling silence between father and son.

"I'll check on Fallon," Killian rose from his seat abruptly.

"Did I miss something?" Emma noted the slump of her father-in-law's shoulders.

"Another bump in the road, I'm afraid," Brennan replied, "May I ask you something?"

"Sure," Emma sat on the sofa and turned to face him.
"How long did it take for you to...forgive your parents for abandoning you?" Brennan asked.

"Wow," Emma's eyes went wide. She hadn't expected his question. "I...ah...I guess when I found out the real reason they gave me up, it made more sense, but forgiveness...I guess I went more the acceptance route. I accepted they did what they thought was best to give me my best chance. It still hurts sometimes. Accepting they did what was best doesn't erase the memories of the pain I went through as I was shuffled from one home to the next, thinking there was something so fundamentally wrong with me from the moment I was born that they had to leave me on the side of the road...I was able to relate more when I found out I was pregnant with Henry and knew I had no chance in being a good mom to him."

"Yes, how did he end up with two mothers?" Brennan inquired.

"You met Neal," Emma replied, "We had a whirlwind type of relationship which ended badly. He and I were living a sort of Bonnie and Clyde type life..."

Brennan looked to her in confusion.

"Right, we were stealing to get by," Emma explained. "I ended up going to jail for a crime Neal committed. It wasn't until I was in jail for a few months that I discovered I was pregnant. Neal was long gone by then. I was seventeen and couldn't take care of myself, so I did what I felt was the only choice I could make. I put him up for adoption. By some strange twist of fate, Henry ended up being adopted by Regina. She didn't know at the time he had any connection to the Enchanted Forest.

"I tried to move on with my life. Once I got out of prison, I was determined to make something of myself. Eventually I became a bail bonds person. I was living in Boston, when on my twenty-eighth birthday, Henry comes knocking on my door and brings me here to Storybrooke."

"That's quite the tale," Brennan replied.

"It even has a happy ending," Emma smiled while glanced around her home.

"Aye, it does," Brennan nodded.

"You'll get one too," Emma rubbed his shoulder.

"I wish I was as certain as you," he frowned.

"He'll open up to you," Emma assured him, "It will just take some time. He's quite stubborn."

"Aye," Brennan's head bobbed in agreement.

"Did you enjoy your afternoon sitting in on my mom's classes?" Emma asked.

"Aye," Brennan cheered up just a bit, "It was quite entertaining. The children seemed quite entertained by what she was teaching them."

"There is an art to being an effective teacher," Emma replied, "I'm afraid I tuned out pretty early in my learning career. I did get my GED in prison."

Brennan gave her a blank expression.

"When a student successfully finished their schooling, they are giving a diploma for finishing. I didn't successfully finish, so I didn't get a diploma, but when I was in prison I did all the work to be given the equivalent of a diploma. It's called a general equivalency degree," Emma explained.
"I suppose if I'm going to teach, I should know these types of things," Brennan replied.

"You'll figure it out eventually," Emma assured him, "I'm sure no one expects you to know everything right away."

"I should hope not," Brennan agreed.

"When do you start?" Emma asked.

"On Monday," Brennan replied, "Whenever that may be."

"Right," Emma laughed, "It's in five days."

"Your mother did invite me to sit in again tomorrow. She was going to stop here on her way to the school," Brennan explained.

"Then you'll be wanting to get to sleep soon," Emma glanced at the clock and then realized her husband had been in her daughter's room much longer than was necessary. "I wonder what's keeping Killian? I'm going to check on him. Did you need anything before you turn in?"

Brennan gave a slight shake of his head and retrieved the bed linens he'd folded earlier.

Emma stepped into her daughter's room to see Killian standing in the doorway, smiling at the adorable scene. Fallon and Henry were curled up together. A book was just out of Henry's reach as he must have released it when he fell asleep.

"Do we leave them?" Killian whispered.

"Help me untangle Fallon, and then I'll wake Henry," Emma suggested.

It took a bit of struggling as apparently Fallon was enjoying having a cuddly Henry to sleep with, but once she had released Henry, Emma shook him awake. Henry was barely conscious as he stumbled his way into his room and immediately flopped onto his bed.

Fallon stirred a bit.

"I'll stay with her for a bit," Killian took Henry's place on her bed. Max yipped softly at having been nudged unexpectedly to make room for Killian's longer legs. Fallon immediately curled up with her father.

Emma and Killian traded proud smiles and then Emma left the room. Killian would follow when he was sure Fallon would stay asleep.

Emma tiptoed up the circular staircase and waited for Killian. They still planned on taking a bath together that evening, so Emma went into their bathroom and began filling it with water and her favorite scented bubble bath. She was just shedding her robe when Killian's hands closed around her waist, bringing her tight against him.

"We've never planned for a child before, I rather like all this planning we're doing," he breathed into her ear.

"Yes, all this planning has been quite exhilarating," she turned and wrapped her arms tight around his neck, "You'd better shed these close, or I'm going to start planning without you."

Killian groaned in the back of his throat as Emma settled into the tub, watching the show her husband was putting on as he stumbled around the bathroom, trying to shed his clothes as quick as
possible. In his haste, he nearly tripped over his own feet at one point and took a tumble.

"That's a mighty impressive show there, Hubby," Emma slid forward in the tub to make room for Killian to slid in behind her, "You act as though you haven't had sex in months when it's actually been a few hours."

"Can't a husband enjoy spending quality time with his lady without comment?" he wrapped his arms around her midsection and relaxed.

"We don't bathe together nearly enough," Emma sighed.

"We do have busy lives," he kissed just below her earlobe, "Fallon on her own is a handful, thankfully I have two functioning hands once more."

Emma took his left hand into hers, studying it closely.

"You know the hook never bothered me, right?" Emma traced the lines of his palm.

"I know," he nodded.

"And I'm sure it never would have bothered Fallon or Bradyn," she added, "You would have adjusted."

"It was never about the hook, Love," he reminded her, "It was more about what the hook represented, what I became when I took on the hook."

"Do you ever wonder what it would be like if you still had the hook?" she asked.

"Are you planning on chopping it off in the middle of the night as some sort of test?" he chuckled.

"No," she shook her head slightly, "I guess I'm a bit curious. Do you miss the hook?"

"It came in handy a time or two," Killian replied, "It was a far easier adjustment going back to two hands than it was learning how to use a hand and a hook."

Emma brought his left hand to her abdomen, recalling the first thing he touched when she'd restored his hand on their wedding day.

"Your dad is really struggling with his inability to connect with you," Emma stated, "I know it's difficult, but I think for both your sakes, you should try."

"I have been trying, and I will continue to do so," he responded, "However I can't help how I feel when we speak of such things which are unpleasant."

"I know, and I'm proud of you for all your efforts so far," she replied, "Be patient with him and yourself. No one expects you to be best friends right away."

Killian nodded.

TBC…
"Brennan is a natural," Mary Margaret told Emma the next evening while having a family dinner at Granny's.

"A natural at what?" Emma fed Bradyn from his jar of pureed food in between bites of her own dinner. The little boy wasn't all to thrilled with the squash he was being fed as most of it was ending up on his bib.

"I let him take command of my classroom for a bit, and he kept total control of the room," Mary Margaret explained, "I've never seen anyone take immediate control of a classroom and be effective. The children loved him. They were so excited to start drawing. It was quite remarkable. As school let out for the day, all they talked about on the walk to the bus was how excited they are for art class next week."

"How exciting," Emma replied.

"He's already working on lesson plans," Mary Margaret glanced towards Brennan who was helping Fallon with her own drawing in between bites of her roni and cheese. She appeared mesmerized by what her grandfather was teaching her.

"He already has one fan," Emma smiled, "Killian and I found him asleep in the rocking chair in Bradyn's room last night, sound asleep with Bradyn against his shoulder, also sound asleep. It was adorable."

"He's fitting in well then," Mary Margaret concluded.

"With his grandchildren," Emma nodded, "It's still slow going with Killian."

"It's to be expected," Mary Margaret nodded.

"I wish I could help in some way," Emma sighed.

"You are helping," Mary Margaret reassured her. "You're there to listen to him when he needs to talk and encourage him when things aren't going so well."

"They hit a bit of a speed bump last night," Emma admitted, "Brennan was pretty upset about it."

"He did ask my advise about how to approach Killian," Mary Margaret replied.

"What did you tell him?" Emma asked curiously.

"I told him to be patient," Mary Margaret replied, "We didn't get to the place we are now right off the bat. It took patience and persistence."

"It wasn't always smooth sailing for us, was it?" Emma recalled.

"There were some definite bumps of our own," Mary Margaret nodded, "Yet look at us now. Not only are we mother and daughter, but I hope you'll also say friends."

"Best friends," Emma nodded.
Mary Margaret brushed away a tear threatening to spill. "Changing subjects, we have Christmas coming up."

Fallon's ears perked up. "Santa's coming?"

"Uh oh," Mary Margaret realized her misstep.

Fallon hopped off her seat and ran over, jumping up and down in excitement.

"We still have about a month, Princess," Emma told her daughter.

"Awe," Fallon moaned. To the little girl, a month felt like a lifetime.

"But we should start decorating," Emma offered, "I'm surprised Regina hasn't had the town's decorations put up yet. She's usually on top of those types of things."

"We've all been a bit preoccupied with other things," Mary Margaret reminded her, "We missed Thanksgiving entirely with our climb to Avalon."

Fallon returned to her seat and began a new drawing, this time with the expectation she would be sending it to Santa along with her Christmas list. Santa had been most generous the previous year, and she was certain she'd been equally as good this year as last year.

"Oops," Mary Margaret gave her daughter an apologetic look.

"She was going to figure it out soon anyways," Emma shrugged, "I'm sure they're already starting to run those movies on television. We're fortunate she's been on such a movie kick lately we haven't been watching regular television. Besides, she's so cute at this time of year, offering to do all sorts of things around the house she wouldn't normally do all to please Santa."

"Who told her about that?" Mary Margaret asked.

"Henry," Emma snickered.

"Tell him to spread the word to our home," Mary Margaret replied, "I could use an extra helper around the house right now. My energy level is at about a two when I get home from school these days."

"If you need some help, we can always have Leo to our house for dinner," Emma offered.

"You've got a lot going on already," Mary Margaret replied.

"So do you," Emma reminded her.

"I'm fine," mother reassured daughter.

"Offer still stands, if you need it," Emma stated.

"Thank you," Mary Margaret replied.

After dinner, Fallon was all sorts of excited by the falling snow. She immediately gathered up some snow to make a snowball, aimed squarely at her brother. After hitting him smack dab in the chest, she took off in a run, giggling as Henry gave chase.

"I really need to get a new car," Emma pulled up the collar on her warmest leather coat as the family walked back to the cottage.
"With the Wendy business nearly resolved, you'll have the time to do your research, Love," Killian responded while tucking her hand into his arm. Fallon was still several steps ahead with Henry, playing in the snow as she went, and Brennan was carrying Bradyn a step behind them.

"Once we have all the details firmed up with Wendy and her brothers, I will," Emma nodded. "Which reminds me, I need to have Regina call a town meeting so we can discuss John and Michael. I'll have to talk to her about it tomorrow."

"Hopefully the town feels as generous as you have about the entire situation," Killian replied.

"I also need to talk to Neal," she released a heavy sigh. "This all hinges on him agreeing to drop the charges against Wendy. She did almost kill his son."

"Did you want me to go with you?" Killian asked.

"A sweet offer but unnecessary," she smiled, "This is a conversation I need to have alone."

Killian nodded in understanding.

"You'll have more fun with Fallon and Bradyn aboard the Jolly Roger anyways," Emma smiled.

"Papa, will you be joining our voyage tomorrow?" Killian turned to address his father, "Or are you going to sit in with Mary Margaret's class again?"

"I think I'll join you for a bit," Brennan appeared surprised by the offer, "If we could come in a bit early. The children have art class in the afternoon, I'd like to continue with today's lesson."

"We'll have you back in plenty of time," Killian assured him.

Emma gave her husband's arm a reassuring squeeze. She was so proud of his attempt to reach out. She would make sure to reward him accordingly later.

"Emma," Neal was surprised to see her when she arrived at Gold's shop to talk to him. It was clear by his slow movements he wasn't fully healed.

"How are you?" Emma asked.

"Better than I was," he stepped around the counter. His hand was at his side, almost as if he was holding himself together.

"I thought Regina healed you," Emma was taken aback by his obvious discomfort.

"Not fully," Neal shook his head, "Just enough to not die."

"Why doesn't your father finish the job?" Emma asked.

"I won't let him," Neal replied.

"Right, the whole his magic is dark and is what separated you in the first place," Emma concluded.

"Something like that," Neal nodded, "Thank you for sending Henry to see me in the hospital. It meant a lot to me."

"I didn't send him," Emma corrected him, "He wanted to be there. He's quite grateful you saved his life, so am I."
"It's what a parent does," Neal's eyes shifted away.

"It was very brave of you," Emma replied.

"I still can't believe Wendy was capable of such hatred," Neal frowned, "She is not the girl I once knew."

"About that," Emma began but Neal wasn't done speaking.

"I'm sorry I ever went to see them. At first I just wanted to be reminded of the boy I once was. The time I spent with Wendy and her family was probably the happiest time of my life. I didn't know about her ability, and then things just started to go bad. I was telling her things I shouldn't have told her. I'm sorry I put Hook in danger."

"It wasn't Killian Wendy was after," Emma shifted slightly, "It was me. She was jealous of me."

"Jealous of you?" Neal looked to her in confusion.

"She has feelings for you," Emma explained, "When you reconnected in London, she was devastated that not only did you have a son, but you had feelings for your son's mother, feelings Wendy wanted you to still have for her."

Neal looked like he'd been punched in the gut. Yet again, the disturbance in Storybrooke had been his fault.

"She feels really bad," Emma added, "She's taken responsibility for her actions. She has been nearly inconsolable because she hurt you. She probably thinks you hate her."

"I don't know if I could ever hate her," Neal responded softly.

"She's no longer a threat. Her siren charms are gone," Emma replied, "She knows she's done some bad things."

"What's going to happen to her?" Neal asked.

"I'm glad you asked," Emma had been struggling with how to bring up her idea to Neal, "I want to give her a second chance. I don't want to put her into the juvenile system just yet, but in order to do that, you need to agree to drop the charges."

"He will not," Gold appeared suddenly from the back office. "I will make sure that little witch will have to account for all the havoc she caused this town including nearly taking my son from me."

"Papa," Neal stepped towards his father in an attempt to calm him.

"Don't Papa me," Gold scowled at his son, "You nearly died."

Emma rolled her eyes and waited for Neal to calm his father down. Of course Gold wouldn't see the hypocritical response for what it was. He'd done a hundred times worse things to everyone in town yet had never been held accountable for any of it.

"I'll consider your request," Neal told Emma.

"Thank you," Emma turned to leave.

"Emma, I'm sorry," Neal stated.
Emma turned back towards him in bewilderment.  
"I've done some pretty horrible things to you and your family. I'm sorry for all the pain I caused," Neal stated.  
"What brought on this sudden need to apologize?" Emma asked.  
"In the mine, when I thought I was dying, you were there. I wanted to say it all then but couldn't," he felt himself getting choked up by the memory.  
"I'm glad you're okay, Neal," Emma replied, "I hope you use this chance for something positive."  
"Me too," Neal nodded.  
"Let me know when you make your decision," Emma stated, "There are a few other details which will also need to be worked out."  
"What other details?" Neal asked.  
"Wendy's brothers for starters," Emma replied, "I'd like Wendy to go to boarding school where she's given a good education but in a structured environment. I also believe her brothers should be allowed to see her. My hope is they would stay here in Storybrooke, and they can be taken to see their sister on weekends and such."  
"That's really nice, Emma," Neal replied.  
"They were caught up in Pan's drama. Pan threatened them to get them to do what he wanted," Emma explained, "I don't believe in punishing children who are manipulated by such evil."  
"Peter was quite skilled at knowing exactly how to get others to do what he wanted," Neal replied, "Thankfully he's no longer a threat."  
"See you later, Neal," Emma left before Neal could continue the conversation.  
"Sheriff, would it be possible to let Wendy stretch her legs?" John asked when Emma returned to the station after running her errand. "She's been cooped up here for days."  
"Yeah, that's a good idea," Emma agreed, grabbing the keys from her pocket and unlocked the cell, "You'll have a police escort, but a good walk can't hurt."  
"Can we go with?" Michael asked.  
"Sure," Emma nodded.  
The trio suited up for the cold weather and followed Emma outside. The quartet were given some funny looks, but no one appeared outraged by Wendy's walk.  
"Sheriff, did Baelfire agree to drop the charges?" Wendy asked.  
"He's thinking about it," Emma replied.  
"He must hate me," she frowned, her head falling.  
"He said he could never hate you," Emma replied, "He just needs to wrap his head around everything. He'll come around."
"I hope so," Wendy responded quietly.

"What about us?" Michael asked.

"I'm still working on the particulars, but how would the two of you feel about staying in Storybrooke?" she asked.

"Where would we stay?" John asked.

"That is one of the particulars I'm working on," Emma admitted, "If everything works out, I'm hoping you'll be able to see your sister as much as you want."

"What if it doesn't work out?" Wendy asked.

"One thing I've learned from living in Storybrooke, believe it will work. Only if it doesn't, do we go to plan B," Emma replied, "We will figure things out."

"I'm ready to go back," Wendy stated softly.

"Okay," Emma nodded and led the family back to the station. Wendy walked back into her cell without any direction. Emma's heart ached for her. She'd felt the same hopelessness when she was arrested. "Don't lose hope, Wendy."

"I'll try, Sheriff," Wendy nodded.

Fallon came in later in the afternoon with her pieces of candy for Wendy. Wendy had resumed her silence treatment, and it was quite concerning to Emma, yet she still took the candy Fallon was offering.

"How was fishing today?" Emma asked her husband while Fallon tried to extract a conversation from the young prisoner.

"Quite cold," Killian replied, "Fallon and Bradyn spent most of the voyage in my cabin."

"Let's feel those fingers," Emma removed Bradyn's mittens and brought his fingers to her lips. The little boy laughed as his mother's kisses tickled his fingertips. "Did Brennan go to the school?"

"Aye," Killian nodded, "He was most anxious."

"Mom said he was a natural," Emma replied, "She allowed him to teach a class yesterday. She said he held command of the entire room throughout the lesson...I hope it works out well for him."

"Aye," Killian agreed, "Fallon and Bradyn have most enjoyed having their poppy here."

"What about Fallon and Bradyn's Papa?" Emma asked, "Is he enjoying have his own papa in town?"

"There are moments," Killian conceded, "Yet it other moments not as much."

"It takes time and patience," Emma leaned in and kissed his lips, "Something I know you have in spades...Dinner at Granny's tonight?"

Killian nodded and glanced towards Fallon, who was clearly frustrated by Wendy's silence towards her.

"You'd better get these two home before Fallon melts down," Emma suggested.
"Aye," Killian returned Bradyn's mittens to his hands and then lifted him from Emma's arms.

"I'll be home soon," Emma replied.

"Come, Fallon," Killian held out his hand to his daughter, "Poppy will be home soon. You promised him a new drawing."

Fallon snatched up his hand. With a final wave to her mother and then Wendy, she was gone.

"Fallon is just trying to cheer you up," Emma told the young girl, "You could at least make a tiny bit of effort with her."

There was only silence in reply.

Dinner at Granny's was the usual affair. Fallon worked the diner like a pro until her food arrived. Brennan watched the little girl with amusement. He'd seen such infectious energy before on display, but it had been his dear wife. She'd always had a special way of connecting with everyone she met.

"How was class today, Brennan?" Emma inquired.

"It went quite well," Brennan smiled. "The children seem quite excited by what they learned."

"Mom says you have them eating out of the palm of your hand," Emma replied.

"It's an expression which means, the children are enjoying what you are teaching," Killian chimed in.


Emma gave a sheepish smile. She'd come so far with her husband understanding her modern expressions. She now had to start over with her father-in-law.

After dinner the family suited up to brave the elements. Fallon was most excited by the second evening of falling snow. She and Henry had run ahead.

Brennan carried Bradyn. The little boy had his mittened hand out trying to catch snowflakes. He had a jubilant smile on his face as he did so.

"He's turning into a snow baby like his sister," Emma noted.

"Aye," Killian nodded. Just as he turned around he felt a pair of snowballs smacking him in the back.

Emma burst in a fit of giggles as Killian gave chase of the offenders, Fallon and Henry. Fallon's high pitched squeals carried her all the way to the cottage, reaching the picket fence just as Killian caught her, picked her up, swung her upside down and then dumped her in a nearby snow bank.

Not to be forgotten, Killian aimed several snowballs in his stepson's direction. Henry was shaking the snow from his coat and hair while Emma unlocked the cottage for the family.

Fallon had picked herself up out of the snow bank and charged towards her father, attacking his legs just enough to throw him off balance. He landed in the snow with Fallon on top of him.

Emma winced on impact. Killian appeared to land a bit hard, but he instantly sat up and began tickling his daughter until she squirmed free and darted into the house.

"You okay there, Sailor?" Emma noticed Killian was moving a bit slower, "You landed with a bit of
a thud."

"I might need a soak in the tub to recuperate," his eyes shone with mischief.

"If you play your cards right," Emma smirked. Just as she rose up on her toes to kiss his cheek, Fallon appeared to tug on his hand, dragging him into the house to read to her.

"She's full of energy." Brennan noted while Emma tugged on Bradyn's hat and mittens, tossing them in the designated box by the door.

"She is right up until she falls asleep for the night," Emma noted, taking Bradyn from her father-in-law so she could finish undressing him.

"Poppy," Fallon waved her grandfather to join her and her father on the sofa for story time. Brennan immediately went over, sitting on the opposite side of Fallon from Killian. Fallon passed the book from Killian to Brennan and back again, each one reading a different part of the story to her.

"Are you tired, Little Sailor?" Emma noted how her youngest son's eyes were all droopy.

Bradyn responded by resting his head against her shoulder.

"Can I help put him to bed, Mom?" Henry asked.

"Sure," Emma nodded and transferred Bradyn to his older brother's arms. The little boy appeared excited by the prospect of having quality time with his big brother. His exhaustion from moments early appeared gone. "He needs his bath. Did you want to tackle that task?"

"Yeah, if you don't mind," Henry bounced Bradyn a bit.

"Have at it," Emma ruffled her son's hair, "If you need help just holler."

"I will," Henry carried Bradyn into the bedroom to pick out his brother's pajamas before bringing him into the bathroom to bathe him.

Emma focused her attention on the scene of father and son entertaining her daughter. She quickly pulled out her phone to snap a picture before the trio could spot her.

There was a comfortable routine settling into the Jones household Emma thought she could get used to.

TBC…
Chapter 34

Disclaimer: Nope – still not mine.

"Neal," Emma was surprised when Neal came into the station the next day. Wendy was huddled up in a ball on the cot. She hadn't spoken since her brothers left for lunch, even when they asked what she'd want them to bring her back.

"Bae," Wendy looked up suddenly.

"I ah...I was hoping to speak with Wendy...alone," Neal looked between the two.

"I could use a refill on my coffee anyways," Emma snatched up her travel mug and gulped down the last of her drink.

"Thanks," Neal nodded as Emma left the station.

"I'm so glad you're on the mend," Wendy spoke first once they were alone, "I've been so worried."

"Still a little sore," Neal's hand went to his side, almost on reflex.

"I'm so sorry," Wendy spoke, "I'm so ashamed of everything I did...to everyone, especially you. I had no right to curse you and make you do all I did."

"Emma explained why you did," Neal replied.

"Oh," Wendy glanced away, her face flush with embarrassment.

"Once upon a time I had those feelings for you too," he admitted, "And maybe if we were still the same age."

"I wish for it so much," Wendy admitted.

"It was a happy time for me when I stayed with your family," Neal replied.

"I wish we'd have stayed in London," Wendy stated, "We were a family there."

"Why did you go to Neverland?" he asked.

"To find you," Wendy stated, "We missed you. We wanted to bring you home, but Peter..."

"You don't have to explain," Neal assured her, "I know how manipulative he could be, especially when he discovered your abilities."

"Did you know before...in London?" Wendy asked.

"I suspected you might have some magical abilities," Neal admitted.

"Everything is so messed up," Wendy glanced at her surroundings.

There was a significant pause in the conversation. Both appeared to be searching for the right words.

"Emma told me her idea about you going to school," Neal replied.
"She's been very kind," Wendy replied, "Far more than I deserved."

"If given a second chance, would you take advantage?" Neal asked.

"I would, I swear it," she nodded her head vigorously, "Emma did me a great favor when she took away my powers. I feel like myself again, like I was before Neverland."

"You were so kind and gentle," Neal felt emotions start to overtake him.

"I'm not going to beg for a second chance," Wendy replied, "I've caused far too much pain to deserve it, but I promise, Bae, if I am given the chance, I will use it."

"This world is different," Neal stated, "It's not like it once was."

"I know," Wendy nodded, "We have discovered as much since we returned to London."

"No one can know about Neverland or the magic in Storybrooke. They will not understand, or worse they will try to take advantage," Neal stated.

"I know," Wendy agreed.

Emma returned with a cup of coffee and Wendy's lunch basket. "Everything okay in here?"

"Yeah," Neal stepped away from the cell, "Emma, I'd like to formally drop the charges."

Both Emma and Wendy's faces brightened in reply.

"Wow, Neal, that's great," Emma replied, "I'll get the paperwork ready."

"Thank you, Bae," Wendy chimed in.

"You'd better live up to your promise," Neal looked towards her, "Not everyone gets the benefit of a second chance."

"I will, Bae," Wendy nodded her head vigorously.

"It will take a bit for me to get the paperwork ready," Emma replied.

"I'll stop back," Neal replied.

Emma nodded.

Wendy was in much better mood when Neal left.

"I told you to think positively," Emma replied.

Wendy nodded, "So what happens now?"

"We'll have to get you enrolled in school, and get your brothers settled here in Storybrooke," Emma explained, "Because its nearly the end of the term, you might have to spend the holidays in town, but that might not be such a bad thing. We may be new to celebrating, but we do it right."

"It would be nice to celebrate properly," Wendy smiled.

"You're going to be in here for at least another day," Emma replied.

"It's not so bad," Wendy shrugged, "At least it has running water. Neverland was rather primitive."
"That's one way of putting it," Emma nodded.

"Sheriff, would it be possible to get that reading material we talked about?" Wendy inquired.

"Of course," Emma replied, "I'll have Killian swing by the library on his way here. I'm sure Belle will have some good suggestions."

"Thank you," Wendy smiled.

Emma quickly typed out a text message to her husband and then went back to her paperwork. She also put in a call to the mayor's office to have a town meeting called, though Regina wasn't in her office so she left a voicemail.

Wendy's brothers returned from lunch to the news of Wendy's impending release. They were more excited than their sister had been. The prospect of staying in Storybrooke was a comforting notion as the town had already begun to welcome them and make them feel at home.

"Hello, Love," Killian greeted his wife after their voyage. He carried a canvas bag full of books to entertain Wendy in one arm and Bradyn in the other.

"Hey, Sailor," Emma smiled and greeted Bradyn and then Killian with a kiss, "You seem to be short a child."

"She'll be along shortly," Killian smiled, "She was having a heart to heart talk with Ruby at Granny's over a bowl of ice cream."

"Mom and I are taking Ruby out tonight," Emma stated, "Apparently she's been in a bit of a funk. I'll have the details tonight, but I gather it has something to do with Whale."

"I suppose life doesn't stop even when we're facing impending doom," Killian replied.

"No, it does not," Emma agreed as she took the bag of books from her husband and unlocked the cell. "Here you go, Wendy."

"Thank you, Sheriff," Wendy smiled and accepted the books, looking through them to see what were her options. Belle had provided many classics, but also a few more contemporary works.

"Those should keep you busy for a little while," Emma replied.

"Indeed," Wendy nodded.

Emma returned to her desk without locking the cell.

"Love," Killian motioned towards the open cell.

"Can I trust you not to run?" Emma looked towards Wendy.

Wendy nodded while making herself comfortable with one of the books on her cot.

"She won't be here much longer anyways," Emma explained to her husband, "Neal was here a bit earlier. He's agreed to not press charges."

"That's good news," Killian smiled.

"I'm working on Wendy's application to the boarding school in New Hampshire. The deadline for spring semester is in a few days, so we have to hurry," Emma replied, "Some of these questions are a
bit tricky…date of birth?"

"No less tricky than when you had to fill out such forms for me," Killian chuckled.

"We might need Regina to work some of her magic," Emma stated, "These children will need proper documents."

"Shouldn't be a problem for our esteemed mayor," Killian replied.

"Mom, I found this stray animal at Granny's," Henry came into the station with Fallon pulling on his hand, "Can we keep her?"

"Hi, Mama," Fallon giggled as she skipped in.

"Of course we can keep her…Hello, Princess," Emma greeted her with a hug and a kiss to the top of her head, "I hear you and Ruby had some ice cream."

"It was yummy," Fallon bobbed her head.

"Granny sent some for Wendy," Henry produced a container of ice cream.

"How about some ice cream, Wendy?" Emma took the container from her son and handed it to Wendy.

Wendy set her book aside and eagerly dug in.

"How come her cell isn't locked?" Henry was puzzled as to why his mom didn't lock the cell door.

"Your father has agreed to not press charges," Emma replied, "As soon as all the paperwork is complete, she'll be able to leave."

"That's good," Henry smiled.

"Your father really stepped up," Emma stated, "I think he's really trying to be a better person."

Henry nodded in agreement, "Yeah, it feels different this time."

"He's still going to need some encouragement," Emma added.

"I know," Henry replied, "And I'm trying…I really am, but Killian's my dad in all the important ways."

"Yes, he is," Emma smiled at the way Killian's face lit up with pride, "Letting Neal into your life will not change that. You don't have to choose one over the other. You didn't have to choose between me or Regina."

"That's different," Henry protested, "Regina raised me. Neal hasn't had any significant influence in my life until a few years ago."

"I hadn't either," Emma reminded him, "Yet you sought me out. You forced your way into my life, and I'm better for it."

"It's okay with me if you spend time with Baelfire," Killian added, "I'm confident in our relationship."

"Thank you, Killian," Henry hugged him tight.
"And I will always be here if you need me," Killian's hands rested on his stepson's shoulders.

"I know," Henry nodded.

Fallon added herself to the moment by hugging Henry around the waist. "I wove you, Henry."

"I love you too, Fallon," Henry picked her up, "Even if you wake me up every morning."

"Only when its wake up time," Fallon replied.

Emma glanced at her watch, "Henry, you're supposed to spend the night at Regina's. I'm sure she's expecting you. Fallon, you're taking Papa, Poppy and Bradyn to the movies."

"Aw, yes, Girls' night," Killian recalled, "I hope you don't end up being arrested by your own deputies."

"It's not like Guys' night when you guys usually end up in a bar fight," Emma chuckled, "We just have a couple of frilly cocktails and share stories about how annoying we find our significant others."

"Won't you be a bit bored, Love? You'll have nothing to contribute," Killian grinned.

"Oh, I have plenty, believe me," Emma snorted when Robin came into the station for his shift.

"Hi, Uncle Robin," Fallon waved.

"Hello, Your Highness," Robin made a showing of bowing before her.

Fallon erupted in a fit of giggles as she usually did.

"We should let Mum finish her day. We'll see her at home," Killian lifted Bradyn out of his playpen. Fallon's smile quickly turned to a frown.

"I'll be home shortly," Emma pecked at her cheek.

The Jones family filed out of the station, leaving Emma, Robin and Wendy. Emma quickly filled Robin in on the pertinent details of the day and then followed her family home, tugging her jacket collar up to block against the biting wind.

"Mama!" Fallon ran to greet her mother as if she hadn't seen her in days rather than the few minutes it had actually been.

"Hello," Emma lifted her into her arms and accepted the plethora of hugs and kisses she received.

"Papa says we have pizza," Fallon told her mother.

"Sounds yummy," Emma returned her to her feet to greet her father-in-law, "How was class today?"

"It went well," Brennan stepped in to greet her with a kiss to her cheek, "Your mum gave me a few tips on how to prepare lesson plans. We're meeting on Sunday to finalize everything."

"I'm sure you'll do very well," Emma replied.

"Tell her your other news," Killian prompted him.

"I found a…what did you call it, Killian?" Brennan inquired.
"An apartment," Killian chimed in, "It's fully furnished near the marina with a view of the water."

"That's wonderful," Emma smiled, "When can you move in?"

"Next week," Killian replied, "I told Papa we would help with the security deposit and the first month's rent. I have a bit of savings set aside to use."

"I will repay the debt," Brennan quickly chimed in.

"Take your time," Emma stated, "I can't wait to see it. I'm so happy you're putting down roots here."

"This is where my family is," Brennan replied.

"And we like having you here," Emma replied, "Don't we Fallon."

"Yep," she bobbed her head.

"I need to get changed," Emma returned Fallon to her feet, "Will you help me pick out my outfit, Princess?"

Fallon bobbed her head eagerly and snatched up her mother's hand, pulling her up the stairs and into her mother's closet.

"You said we're seeing a movie," Brennan spoke to his son.

"Aye," Killian nodded.

"On a screen bigger than the one in your living room," Brennan motioned towards the television.

"Much larger," Killian confirmed, "It is an experience not to miss. The movie itself is one of Fallon's favorite princess movies. The cinema likes to show the classics around the holidays. Fallon knows the movie by heart, but she'll enjoy it all the same."

"And Bradyn?" Brennan reached for Bradyn's outstretched hand, allowing the little boy to curl his hand around his finger.

"He'll be entertained by the colors and sounds," Killian stated, "When he's not, he'll fall asleep."

"Are all infants this…" Brennan struggled for a description.

"No," Killian recognized where his father's thoughts were going, "Based on our previous experience with Fallon, we were certain we wouldn't be sleeping for months, but Bradyn joined our family and almost immediately started sleeping through the nights. Emma had to wake him for feedings, which we've been told is rare. He's so quiet, it would be easy to forget he was in the room if we weren't so attached to him."

"He is quite handsome," Brennan wiggled the boy's hand, drawing a laugh from the little boy.

"He's a curious little lad too," Killian bounced Bradyn a bit, "He had this toy where you have to stack rings in a certain pattern to get them all to fit. He doesn't play with it anymore because he's bored of it. He's already figured it out. He wants a new challenge, so we found him some puzzles. They're supposed to be a bit advanced for his age, but he's nearly figured those out as well."

"Smart lad," Brennan smiled like the proud grandfather he was.

Fallon came flying down the stairs.
"Is your mum ready for her night out?" Killian inquired.

"Almost," Fallon replied. "We go Papa?"

"Soon, Little Love," Killian chuckled, "What kind of pizza do you want tonight?"

"Roni and cheese," Fallon proclaimed.

"That had better be pepperoni," Emma came bouncing down the stairs in her skintight green dress and matching heels. "Do not let her put macaroni and cheese on her pizza."

"What I said, roni and cheese," Fallon insisted.

"You look stunning, Love," Killian took a step back to appreciate her dress, "Not sure I want you going out looking like that."

"Is this common dress in this realm?" Brennan chimed in. The dress was far tighter than anything he'd ever seen a woman wear. "Shouldn't there be more of it."

"Believe it or not, this is more than most wear out. It's the type of dress a woman wears when they want to have a good time with their friends," Emma replied, "Fallon picked out this dress, didn't you, Princess?"

"Yep," Fallon bobbed her head proudly, "Mama pretty."

"Yes, she is," Killian stepped into his wife and inhaled her scent. "Far too beautiful."

"Let them look," Emma caressed his cheek, "I'll still come home to you."

"I'm counting on it," he kissed her soundly just as a knock came at the front door.

"That's Mom," Emma replied, "She was going to give me a ride."

"Grammy," Fallon ran to the door and opened it, flinging her arms around her grandmother's waist.

"Hello, Princess," Mary Margaret greeted her with a hug.

"Hi, Grammy," Fallon responded, "You look pretty."

"Thank you, Sweetheart," Mary Margaret gave her granddaughter a sweet smile.

"We won't stay out too late," Emma kissed the cheeks of her youngest child, then her daughter, then Brennan before laying a tantalizing kiss to her husband's lip, "Save some energy for later, Sailor."

"Same goes for you, Love," he gave her one of his teasing grins.

"Out with it, Red," Emma watched one of her best friends stare at her drink without taking so much as a sip. There was clearly something bothering the woman.

"It's Whale," Ruby sighed.

"Did you two have a fight?" Emma asked.

"Far from it," Ruby shook her head, pulling a gold chain from around her neck to reveal a ring dangling from it, "He proposed."

"That's wonderful," Emma smiled.
"It's not wonderful," Ruby wiped at a few tears falling, "What right do I have to be happy?"

"Ruby, what happened is in the past," Mary Margaret chimed in, "It's not like you haven't been totally honest with Victor. He knows everything, yet he still wants to marry you."

"But he wants a wife and a family," Ruby replied, "Any child I have would also have this…this curse."

"Being a werewolf is not a curse," Emma insisted, "It makes you special…unique. You've learned to control your ability, and you'd be able to teach any child you have how to control their gift."

"I wish you saw it like I did," Ruby frowned.

"Ruby," Emma began.

"You guys can save your breath," Ruby halted any further arguments they could make, "I'm going to give Victor back his ring and break things off completely."

"Ruby, don't," Emma replied, "You two are happy together. You deserve happiness. We all do."

Ruby abruptly snatched up her drink and downed it in one go and then went to belly up to the bar for another.

"Oh my goodness," Emma looked towards her mother. "She can't really be serious in breaking things off with Whale, can she?"

"Granny told me she hasn't spoke or returned any of his calls since he proposed," Mary Margaret explained, "It was all Victor could do to get her to take the ring and wear it around her neck until she had a definite answer. She wants to say yes, but she's having a hard time reconciling what happened to Peter."

"How do we get her to see reason?" Emma asked.

"I wish I had some sort of experience to draw from," Mary Margaret swirled her diet soda.

"I do," Emma grabbed her rum and coke and followed Ruby to the bar, where she had quickly pounded back a second drink and was requesting a third. "You're fishing for one heck of a hangover."

"I don't want to talk about it," Ruby replied.

"Fine, don't talk, listen," Emma stated. "I've felt like a curse to the men I was attracted to. After Neal left me high and dry in prison, I didn't waste time on men. They were used to scratch an itch, but then I came here, I got to know Graham. I didn't want to get involved because of my past. When we kissed, he died in my arms. I was convinced it was because of me, because I was cursed."

"But you weren't," Ruby replied, "Graham was, and Regina crushed his heart to dust."

"Ruby, you are not cursed, but I'm not ever going to be able to convince you of that," Emma insisted, "You need to find that out for yourself, but I can speak to what its like when I finally allowed myself to be happy. Even with everything which has and maybe one day will come to Storybrooke, I am most grateful I allowed myself to find happiness with Killian and have a life and a family with him."

"I appreciate the pep talk," Ruby replied.
"Just really think about what you'd be giving up," Emma demanded, "You love Victor. In a perfect world, you would be jumping at the chance to marry him and have his babies. Don't just throw it away without really thinking it through, and don't use the wolfies you get once a month as the only excuse because that's exactly what it is. It's not an issue for him, so it shouldn't be one for you either."

Ruby quickly downed her third drink and then headed to the dance floor to lose herself in the beat.

"Fighting a losing battle," Emma frowned when she returned to the table where she'd left her mother.

"Yeah," Mary Margaret agreed, turning so they could keep an eye on Ruby just in case, "How about a subject change? Brennan's classes are going to be quite popular. My students have been enjoying their hour of art."

"As excited as I am for him, I also a bit worried. What happens when the day doesn't go so well or a student challenges him?" Emma asked.

"Brennan and I have talked about those scenarios. I think he has a good plan for handling such students," Mary Margaret replied, "I think he'll be okay."

"I hope so," Emma swirled her drink before taking a sip. She'd never really been a rum girl until Killian, but thanks to him, rum and coke was her drink of choice on nights out. "Did Brennan tell you he found an apartment near the marina?"

"He said he and Killian came in a bit early today and went looking, but he hadn't officially found something when we talked," Mary Margaret replied, "I'm so happy he's settling in."

"I really hope Brennan can make a life here," Emma replied, "Bradyn and Fallon adore him, and I think Killian is starting to open up to him."

"I hope Killian allows himself to really open up," Mary Margaret replied, "Speaking from personal experience, I would have been devastated if you and I hadn't been able to connect as mother and daughter after we found each other."

"Seems like such a long time ago," Emma smiled when her mother put an arm around her shoulders, "Yet sometimes it feels like just yesterday. I have a family. I belong somewhere. It's a hard thing to wrap my mind around sometimes."

"For me too," Mary Margaret smiled, "After twenty eight years of loneliness, it's nice to have my husband back."

"You weren't lonely the entire time," Emma snickered.

"Don't even bring up the fiasco with Whale," Mary Margaret scowled at her daughter.

"Come on, Mom, it is kind of funny," Emma fought to keep her laughter at bay.

"No, it's not even a tiny bit funny," Mary Margaret shook her head, "David and I both violated our marriage vows; me with Victor and him with Katherine."

"In fairness to you both, you didn't know you were married, and Dad thought he was married to Katherine," the subject was no longer funny to Emma considering how hard her mother was being on herself. She didn't know how she would have taken felt if she had been in her mother's place and Killian had been in her father's. On the rare occasion someone attempted to even flirt with Killian, usually when they were out of town, she saw red.
"I'm just happy your father has forgiven me," Mary Margaret replied.

"And have you forgiven him?" Emma inquired.

"Ages ago," Mary Margaret assured her.

Just then a daring young man approached Ruby and asked for a dance.

"Do we step in?" Emma winced when Ruby happily accepted, wrapping her arms around the man and grinding against him in time to the beat.

"Don't think we have to," Mary Margaret caught Victor entering the establishment and searching for Ruby. His eyes immediately flashed to anger as he approached. Emma stood a few steps away in case she was needed in her sheriff's capacity to break up any fights.

"Ruby, I've been trying to call for days," Victor quickly dismissed Ruby's dance partner.

"You'd think that might be a hint," Ruby turned away from him and disappeared further into the crowd, but Victor did not appear ready to be dismissed. He followed her, pulling her away from the dance floor and finding a quiet spot near the restrooms. Emma and Mary Margaret ran interference while Victor made his feelings clear.

Mary Margaret and Emma were inwardly cheering while Victor made the exact same points they had earlier.

Ruby refused to make eye contact with him, keeping her head down while Victor ranted on and on about how much he wanted to have a life with her.

Emma recognized the exact moment Victor's pleas sunk in, when Victor laid a finger gently under Ruby's chin and lifted until their eyes locked. Victor held her graze. Tears trailed down Ruby's cheeks.

"Make me the happiest man in the world. Marry me, Ruby," Victor whispered softly.

Slowly Ruby's head began to bob up and down.

Victor's lips descended upon hers, devouring her like a man starved. Ruby's arms wrapped around his neck, and he backed her against the nearest flat surface.

"Okay, enough of that?" Emma's back quickly turned when hands began to roam into dangerous territory.

"Yep," Mary Margaret agreed, also turning away from the pair. "Do we stop them, light their cigarettes after?"

"We'll give them a couple of minutes," Emma snorted, "If clothes start to fall, we'll step in and remind them they're in a public establishment."

"Think they'll make Fallon a flower girl?" Mary Margaret tried to think of something else to talk about while they waited.

"Depends on what kind of ceremony they have," Emma snorted, "I kind of see Ruby as the type of girl to head down to city hall."

"We're decent, guys," Ruby hollered over to the pair after regaining their wits about them.
"Congratulations!" Mary Margaret ran over and hugged her oldest and dearest friend.

"Thank you," Ruby felt her cheeks crimson in response as Emma took her turn congratulating the pair.

"Let's see it," Mary Margaret demanded to see thing ring now that it had a proper place on Ruby's finger. "It's beautiful."

"Not nearly as much as the woman wearing it," Victor wrapped his arm around Ruby's waist and kissed her temple.

"Thanks for putting up with my mopping this week," Ruby replied.

"We're just happy for such a great outcome," Emma chimed in, "You two deserve some happiness of your own, after all neither of you succumbed to the siren's charms."

Ruby seemed startled by the thought, "Does that mean…"

"True love was the only known antidote," Emma reminded her.

Ruby's eyes locked with Victor's and then she turned towards Emma and Mary Margaret again, "Why didn't you tell me that sooner?"

"Would it have made a difference?" Emma bit her lip to keep from laughing.

"Do you think Fallon would like to be a flower girl?" Ruby attempted to change the subject.

"I think our princess will insist on being flower girl," Mary Margaret traded an amusement look with her daughter, "That is if you're going to have such a ceremony."

"I was thinking something simple, like Emma's wedding to Killian, but I like the idea of a couple of bridesmaids and a flower girl," Ruby explained.

"Fallon will love you forever if she can have a new princess dress," Emma replied.

"We'll have to get planning," Ruby glanced at Victor, "I think a Christmas wedding would be wonderful."

"But that's less than four weeks away," Mary Margaret sputtered, "We need more time than that to plan. What is the hurry?"

"We've waited through a twenty-eight year curse and then some, where is the hurry in that?" Ruby asked, "Christmas."

"Christmas it is," Emma chimed in before her mother could protest further.

"And of course you'll have to be the couple of bridesmaids," Ruby wrapped an arm around Mary Margaret's waist.

"We'd be honored," Mary Margaret assured him.

"How was the movie?" Emma returned home and made her way up to her bedroom after checking on Fallon to find her sound asleep. Bradyn's room was suspiciously empty, and Brennan was asleep on the sofa. Killian was wide awake when she made her way upstairs with Bradyn asleep against his chest.
"Fallon loves her princess movies," Killian chuckled softly and set aside the book he'd been reading.

"And your father?" Emma gently climbed onto the bed, careful not to jostle it too much and wake Bradyn.

"He was about as mesmerized as I believe I was during my first screening," Killian smiled.

"We'll have to take him to an adult type movie one of these days," Emma caressed Bradyn's back, "How come Bradyn isn't in his nursery?"

"He was being a bit fussy," Killian replied, "I wonder if the scary monster didn't get to him a bit. Even Fallon climbed into her poppy's lap when it appeared."

"It's a bit different when it's on a screen that large," Emma explained, "I forgot about that. I hope Fallon doesn't wake up with nightmares tonight."

"She was fine when we got home," Killian replied, "How was ladies' night?"

"It started off pretty rocky, but by the end of the night we all had rather wide smiles. Whale and Ruby are engaged," Emma stated.

"It's about time," Killian smiled, "He's been talking about proposing for a year."

"She wasn't all that thrilled when he first proposed," Emma replied, "She still has guilt about her first boyfriend."

"Glad things worked out," Killian replied.

"I am too," Emma shifted on the bed to snuggle in next to her husband, "She wants to have a Christmas wedding. She asked me and my mom to be bridesmaids, and she wants Fallon to be flower girl."

"We didn't have a flower girl at our wedding," Killian replied.

"No, we didn't," Emma shook her head and then patted at her tummy, "Although we did have Fallon. She was right here."

Killian's hand came to rest on top of hers.

"I look forward to putting another children right here," he smiled.

"Me too," she replied.

"Truly?" he raised a curious brow.

"We agreed to try, remember," she reminded him.

"Indeed I do," Killian chuckled softly, "I've very much enjoyed our attempts so far, but you were the one who said our family felt complete only a few months ago."

"It doesn't anymore," Emma replied, "I really do want a third child with you, Killian."

"You're not saying so to please me?" he asked.

"No," she shook her head.
"Then I shall not rest until we put another child in here," he rubbed circles into her abdomen.

"I'll take Bradyn to bed," Emma gingerly lifted Bradyn off her husband's chest, "I'll be back in a bit and then we can make another go at it."

"Aye," Killian bobbed his head.

TBC...
Chapter 35

Disclaimer: Nope – still not mine.

"How'd Granny take the news?" Emma inquired when the Joneses filed into the café for breakfast the morning after girls' night. Ruby was curiously working the breakfast shift even though she was a bit hung over.

All of a sudden, singing could be heard from the kitchen.

"Is that Granny?" Emma coughed out her surprise.

"She's been singing all morning," Ruby giggled at Emma's reactions, "She was surprisingly very excited when Victor and I told her the news last night."

"Why do you say surprisingly?" Emma asked.

"I don't know," Ruby shrugged, "I guess part of me thought she'd be mad and think I'm just up and leaving her to fend for herself now after her looking out for me for all these years."

"It's not like you're moving to a different realm," Emma pointed out, "You and Victor will be staying in Storybrooke, right?"

"Oh yeah, definitely," Ruby nodded, "I don't know how the wolfies would be handled out in the world."

"You look really happy," Emma noted the extra bounce in her step.

"I am," Ruby nodded, "I'd better ask Fallon if she wants to be my flower girl before her schedule fills up on that day."

"It's still on Christmas Day?" Emma asked.

"Victor's double checking with the hospital that he has that day off, but as of right now, yes, Christmas Day," Rudy replied, "After everyone opens their presents they can get themselves all prettied up to attend my big day."

"You've earned it," Emma linked arms with Ruby as they made their way to the table where Fallon was talking animatedly about the movie she'd seen the previous evening.

"Aunt Ruby," Fallon leapt out of the booth into Ruby's awaiting arms.

"How are you, Pumpkin?" Ruby hugged her tight, "I heard you went to see Sleeping Beauty last night. Was it good?"

"Yep," Fallon bobbed her head, "There were these three fairies, and they did funny things, and they turned Aurora's dress blue and then pink and then blue and then pink…"

"She'll go on if you let her," Henry chimed in while covering Fallon's mouth.

Ruby laughed in reply, "Hey, Pumpkin, would you like to do something for me?"

Fallon eagerly bobbed her head.
"Will you be the flower girl at my wedding on Christmas Day?" Ruby asked.

Fallon paused for a moment not fully comprehending what Ruby was asking of her.

"Remember at Ashley's wedding, Princess," Emma chimed in, "Remember how Alexandra walked down the aisle and threw rose petals and then stood next to Ashley during the ceremony?"

Fallon bobbed her head.

"That's what a flower girl does during a wedding," Emma explained, "Do you want to do that for Aunt Ruby?"

"Yay!" Fallon threw up her hands in excitement.

"And you get a new dress to wear," Ruby chimed in, "Would you like that?"

"Can it be a princess dress?" Fallon asked.

"Of course it can be a princess dress," Ruby laughed, "What color do you want to wear?"

"Red," Fallon tugged at a red strand of the waitress's hair.

"Red it is," Ruby kissed her cheek and then set her back in the booth, "Did you want some pancakes, Pumpkin?"

"Yep," Fallon's head bobbed away.

"I'll be right back," Ruby kissed the top of Fallon's head.

Fallon was dancing in the booth to an unknown beat, so excited for the honor Ruby had bestowed upon her.

"You're so cute," Henry kissed her cheek.

"Before we going sailing today, I was hoping you'd show me where you'll be living," Emma spoke to her father-in-law.

"It's on the way," Killian added.

"Do you want to see where Poppy is going to be living, Princess?" Emma asked.

"He not live with us anymore?" Fallon pouted.

"No, he was only staying with us temporarily until he found a permanent place to live, but I'm sure he'll come over and see us all the time," Emma tried to reassure her daughter, "Won't you, Poppy."

"Aye," Brennan nodded, "I want to see my favorite granddaughter as much as possible."

Fallon cheered up a bit at her grandfather's reply.

Ruby returned with the pancakes for Fallon and breakfast for the rest.

While covering her pancakes with enough syrup to make them float, Fallon discussed the day's course with her father, basically telling him exactly where she wanted to go.

"Who's the captain of the Jolly Roger again?" Emma muttered under her breath so only Killian could hear.
"She takes her captain lessons seriously," Killian chuckled.

After a quick stop at the apartment Brennan was renting to take a look around the Jones family were climbing aboard the Jolly Roger for a Saturday sail.

Once they were safely on their way, Henry found a comfortable spot for writing in his journal with Max sitting at his side. It was becoming a common occurrence for Henry to be writing, one which Emma fully encouraged. Emma wished she'd used such an outlet when she was his age rather than bottling up all her emotions.

Fallon was running all around the deck of the Jolly Roger, pulling her poppy back and forth to show off things she found interesting onboard.

"I get exhausted just watching her," Emma told her husband from her vantage point near the wheel. Bradyn's attention was currently on the birds flying overhead. His finger was following their flight path. Killian was at the wheel keeping them on course.

"At lease she's keeping herself warm," Killian snorted.

"It's not that bad today," Emma replied.

"Says the lass with four layers of clothes under the parka she's wearing," Killian glanced up and down at her attire.

"I dressed warm on purpose," Emma replied, "You'd get annoyed when I complain the entire time."

"No, I just send you below deck," he stated.

"Which is code for you finding me annoying," Emma smirked.

"I could never find you annoying, Love," he extended his hand, pulling her to her feet and bringing her in tight against him. Bradyn's attention instantly shifted to the wheel within his reach. His tiny mittened hand closed around one of the spokes.

"Uh-oh," Emma tried to pull Bradyn's hand away from the wheel only to find he had a death grip on it, "I think someone wants to steer."

"Do you want to steer, Little Sailor?" Killian took Bradyn from Emma's arms and allowed the little boy to move the wheel as much as he could considering the usual force it took to move the wheel even an inch.

The ship shifted course slightly much to the little boy's delight.

"Don't crash us, Bradyn," Emma pecked at his cheek.

Bradyn released the wheel and watched as his father corrected their course. Apparently their course was not where Bradyn wanted to go as he grabbed ahold of the wheel again.

"Who's the captain here, Little Sailor?" Killian chuckled at the scowl on his son's face when he tried again to correct their course.

"Looks like he is," Emma snickered.

"Don't you be inspiring a mutiny on me, Little One," Killian playfully scolded his son, yet he chose not to correct their heading.
Finally in a suitable spot, the anchor was thrown out and fishing lines were cast by Killian, Brennan and Henry. Emma took Bradyn into Killian's cabin, and they napped for a bit together while Fallon ran about the ship with Max nipping at her heels.

"She is quite the energetic little thing," Brennan noted when Fallon ducked under the fishing poles and whizzed past them.

"That's one way of putting it," Henry noted.

"She'll wear herself out eventually," Killian shrugged, "She usually does."

"Maybe its all the sugar she consumed at breakfast," Henry replied.

"It most likely is," Killian chuckled.

Just then Henry's line caught. Fallon came running over, eager to watch the trio reel in their first catch of the day, only to be disappointed when Henry reeled up a glass bottle.

"There's a bit of parchment inside," Brennan noted when Henry pulled out the stopper.

"It's probably a love letter or something," Henry replied, "There was a movie several years back about letters in a bottle and after that there was this rush for all the single women to send out their own letters. Mom made me watch it one night when it was her turn to choose the movie. It was after she returned from the Enchanted Forest but before you came to town with Cora, Killian."

"Sorry, Lad," Killian chuckled. "Sounds like a long evening."

"It was," Henry dumped out the contents of the bottle and opened the scroll. "What language is this?"

Killian glanced over his stepson's shoulder, "Looks like Avalonean. Papa?"

"Aye," Brennan grabbed the paper from Henry, "This is the mark of my king."

"How would a message in a bottle get from Avalon to Storybrooke?" Henry thought out loud.

"The same way my father's journal got here," Brennan responded before he read through the letter, "I sent the journal to find Killian."

"You think someone sent this message to find you?" Henry asked.

"Aye," Brennan began to read through the letter. His face had turned as white as a ghost by the end.

"What's wrong, Papa?" Killian asked.

"My kingdom is in trouble," Brennan replied, "I must return."

"I thought you couldn't go back because you committed treason," Henry stated.

"This message is from the king himself. He says Katarina has turned the entire kingdom against him. His only hope is my return to restore the peace," Brennan replied.

"Sounds like a setup to me," Henry thought out loud.

"Aye," Killian agreed with his stepson, "Papa, you can't leave. You only just got here."
"What choice do I have?" Brennan asked, "My kingdom needs me."

"Your family need you," Killian countered, "Fallon was nearly in tears this morning when it was announced you were moving out. Try to explain to her you're returning to Avalon and may never make it back."

"How can I just ignore my king?" Brennan pressed.

"How can you ignore your family? How can you abandon your son…again?" Killian shouted. He quickly reeled in his line and then went below deck.

"Killian will come around," Henry assured the elder Jones, "He's a hero just like my mom. They always do the right thing when people are in trouble."

"How do I ignore my son and my family?" Brennan spoke mostly to himself. The words his son spoke had been a dagger to his heart. He was genuinely conflicted. For his entire life he'd always done what was ordered of him by his king and kingdom, no matter how it affected his family. He was finally starting to have a relationship with his only remaining son. He couldn't in good conscience run away from that, but he also couldn't ignore the pleas of his kingdom.

Emma came on deck. "What's Killian talking about? Are you leaving, Brennan?"

"My kingdom is in trouble. King Daniel says Katarina has turned the entire kingdom against him. I must return to help restore order," Brennan exclaimed.

"How is one person going to be able to restore order against an entire kingdom likely under the siren's curse?" Emma asked, "You saw a little of what Wendy did to this town in only a few months. How long has Katarina been in your kingdom? Years?"

"I must do something," Brennan glanced at the scroll in his hands.

"We will," Emma assured him, "There has to be some other way besides you leaving Storybrooke. One thing I've learned during all my years here, there is always more than one way to achieve our goals."

"I hope you're right," Brennan slumped in his chair.

"Henry, will you pull up anchor and get us on a heading back to Storybrooke?" Emma requested, "We'll head to the library immediately thereafter. I'll call Belle when we get in range of a cell phone tower."

"I'll help," Brennan followed Henry to carry out Emma's task.

Killian was pacing inside his cabin when Emma returned. "He's been out of my life for three centuries. He's barely back a few weeks, and he's ready to up and leave me again for his blasted kingdom."

"You were a sailor of a kingdom once upon a time," Emma reminded him, "You followed orders without question. Your father has done the same thing for most of his life. I think you would understand his need to do his duty."

"What about his duty to us?" Killian countered.

"I know this is hard for you," Emma rubbed his shoulder, "You have carried the burden of him abandoning you all this time. I'm not trying to minimize your anger, but I am trying to get you to see
things from his perspective. He doesn't want to leave you, but his kingdom is falling apart."

"There has to be another way," Killian demanded.

"If there is, we'll find it," Emma assured him, "Henry is already steering the ship back to Storybrooke. When we get close I'm going to call Belle and have her meet us at the library. Maybe there really is some information in those books which can help us now that we don't have Neal under a spell trying to undermine us."

"Am I being selfish?" Killian asked.

"No," Emma shook her head, "I know you don't want to hear this, but neither is Brennan."

"When he said he had to return to Avalon it was like I was that little boy aboard the ship all over again," Killian replied, "Waking up to a new reality where my father is a criminal, and I am now an indentured servant."

"I cannot imagine what that must have been like for you and your brother," Emma felt the emotions bubbling up to the surface for both her and her husband. Killian was nearly in tears.

"At least I had Liam," Killian crossed the room to lift Bradyn from his hammock, "I never would have survived if I'd been on my own. He was always looking out for me. When I was to be punished for my incompetence, he always stepped in and took it in my place even when I begged him not to."

"Killian," Emma touched his shoulder, trying to bring him back to the present. He was lost in a memory again, one that was truly painful.

"I can't go through that again," Killian's anguished words nearly broke Emma's heart, "I can't become an orphan a second time."

"You won't," Emma hugged him around the shoulders as much as she could with Bradyn in his arms. The little boy was Killian's lifeline at the moment curled perfectly into his father's strong embrace while he slept. "Stay down here. Henry can dock the ship."

Killian managed a nod as Emma returned to the deck to make sure Henry had everything under control. Fortunately Killian had trained Henry so well they practically glided into their berth.

"Can you take Fallon and Brennan to the diner for lunch?" Emma asked Henry as she helped him tie the ship to the docks, "Tell Granny to put it all on our tab."

"Yeah, okay," Henry nodded, "Is Killian going to be okay?"

Emma paused from her task and went to hug her son. His concern for his stepfather was plainly evident. "He'll be okay."

"Brennan's not really going to leave, is he?"

"I hope not," Emma replied.

Once Fallon, Henry and Brennan were on their way to Granny's, Killian emerged from his cabin.

"Let's go see what we can figure out," Emma pulled him to the library. Bradyn was still comfortably situated in Killian's arms. "Belle's waiting for us."

Killian followed Emma to the library to be greeted by a very concerned Belle, who had been feverishly pulling books from the shelves since Emma called. Fortunately the Avalon books were
relatively easy to find considering she'd just returned them to the shelves the previous day.

"I found a few things already," Belle motioned to the table of books.

"Thank you, Belle," Emma nudged her husband to the table.

"Your little Bradyn is getting so big," Belle noted the boy sleeping peacefully in Killian's arms.

"We know," Emma caressed the back of Bradyn's head. "It all happens entirely too fast."

"Where is the rambunctious little Fallon?" Belle inquired.

"She's with Henry and Brennan," Emma explained.

"That's a shame," Belle frowned, "Her smile is quite infectious."

"It certainly is," Emma nodded.

"I hope you don't mind, but I told Baelfire about the situation. He said he'd like to help," Belle replied, "He thinks he remembered reading something earlier which might help."

"Killian," Emma looked to her husband for guidance. She wouldn't force Neal on her husband right now, not with how turbulent his emotions already were.

"Couldn't hurt," he shrugged.

"Please call him," Emma instructed Belle while Killian made himself comfortable in one of the chairs with Bradyn in his lap.

"I can take him if you'd like," Belle offered, "I have the playpen set up."

"Not today," Killian shook his head.

"Okay," Belle nodded after trading a curious look with Emma, "I'm going to pull a few more books and then start my search."


"Right, after I call Baelfire," Belle nodded and went about her task.

"He might be more comfortable in the playpen," Emma glanced towards her son, "Your research might go faster."

"I just can't let him go right now," Killian admitted.

"He's not going to vanish into thin air," Emma tangled her fingers with the hand Killian was using to turn pages of the book he was flipping through.

"He's the only thing keeping me from completely losing my mind right now," Killian gave her hand a squeeze.

"Whatever is going through your mind right now, know that I'm here for you…always," she gave him her most reassuring smile.

"I know, Love," Killian brought her hand to his lips and then released it to turn the page on the book he was reading.
Neal came into the library a bit later.

"You're feeling better," Emma noted the bounce in Neal's step, "Did you take your father up on his offer to be fully healed?"

"No," Neal shook his head, "It's been the daily visits from our son."

"I'm glad you two finally seem to be getting back on track," Emma replied.

"Belle told me about your situation with your father," Neal plopped himself down and began searching through the books on the table, "I think I can help. I remember reading something about a siren's curse and how to avoid it."

"We already know," Emma replied, "True love."

"There's one other way," Neal finally found the book he was looking for and flipped it open and then spun it to Emma to read.

"Those who have succumb to the curse of a siren and survived are immune," Emma read from the page, "So half the town is immune from a siren's charms...more because of those who were immune before because of true love. We could gather up enough towns people..."

"No," Brennan appeared in the library.

"Brennan," Emma was surprised by his sudden arrival.

"I will not put your entire town in danger to save my kingdom, especially my son and his wife," Brennan stated.

"Brennan, this is what our town does. We help those in trouble," Emma rose to her feet.

"This is not your fight," Brennan replied.

"It is when it involves our family, it becomes our fight," Emma told him, "Brennan, if you're going back to Avalon, we are going with you and fighting along side you."

"I will not put my family in danger," Brennan insisted.

"Our family has never run away from danger, and we will not start now," Emma countered.

Brennan looked to his son. His eyes instantly began to well with tears as he noticed his grandson curled up in Killian's lap.

"I can't…" Brennan began to get choked up, "I can't leave my family…not again."

"We'll figure it out, Brennan," Emma went to embrace him. Her eyes locked with her husband. He lifted Bradyn into his arms and then crossed the room to embrace his father.

"I'll go," Neal spoke up.

"What!" Emma turned suddenly towards him.

"I'll go," Neal repeated, "I can take the Haunted Siren back to Avalon."

"No," Emma shook her head, "You'd stick out like a sore thumb, especially when you're the only one not under the siren's curse."
"Of everyone here, I know what it's like to be under a siren's curse. I can blend in and get close enough to this siren to douse her with the potion," Neal responded.

"One flaw in your plan," Emma replied, "You can't touch the potion. It will kill you."

"I don't know if that is true," Neal stated after a moment of thought. "Only someone with the blood of Avalon running through their veins can touch the fruit. Killian was born in Avalon and therefore has the blood of Avalon running through his veins."

"He donated blood to you, which is now running through your veins," Emma realized, "It was only a pint. That can't seriously be enough."

"It may be," Belle spoke up, "It would be enough to break blood magic. Why would this be any different?"

"Even if what you're saying is true, you are not going to sail off on some cockamamie half thought through scheme after getting out of the hospital just a week ago," Emma replied. "Explain that to your son."

"Henry will understand," Neal stated, "Besides, I owe Hook a debt…more than one actually."

"This is not the way to pay him back," Emma insisted.

"It's a place to start," Neal held his ground, "Last I checked, you had zero say in the way I live my life. I certainly don't need your permission."

"Then you tell Henry why you're abandoning him yet again," Emma growled, "You are finally starting to have a relationship with him. Why do you want to leave now?"

"Because it's the right thing to do," Neal responded, "It's the hero thing to do, and that's the type of father Henry wants and deserves."

"He also wants and deserves a father who is present in his life," Emma countered.

"He has that…in Killian," Neal glanced towards his long time nemesis. "I can't compete with the bond they have, not with the way I've been acting the past several years."

"You saved his life," Emma replied, "Heroic deed accomplished."

"I need to do this," Neal told her, "I need to prove to Henry and maybe myself that I have the ability to be heroic on purpose."

"You could be walking into a trap," Emma felt herself choking up at the thought he could be injured or worse.

"Then I'll con my way out," Neal replied, "I've spent hundreds of years conning my way out of all sorts of sticky situations. This will be a piece of cake."

"Fine," Emma threw up her hands in defeat, "Go on this suicide mission and leave me to explain to our son…"

"I'll talk to Henry before I go," Neal interrupted her, "If he has the same objections, I'll stay. Is that enough for you to stop yelling at me?"

"What is in this for you, Neal?" Emma asked, "Why are you willing to risk your life to help a kingdom you've never been to?"
"Because I've been there before," Neal hollered.

"What!" Emma and Killian exclaimed.

"I was there before," Neal was slight more calm when he admitted it for a second time.

"When?" Killian asked.

"After I left Neverland the first time," Neal spoke quietly, "Time moves different in all realms."

"Which is why to Brennan it's only been about ten years since he was separated from his sons, when to Killian it was centuries," Emma realized.

"How long did you spend in Avalon?" Killian asked.

"Years," Neal replied, "At least what I think is years. I don't really know."

"What did you do there?" Emma asked.

"Worked in the village as an apprentice to the silversmith," Neal explained, "I wasn't much of a student however. I mostly daydreamed about the life I wanted."

"How old were you?" Emma asked.

"Probably physically seventeen…eighteen," Neal replied, "I'd lost count of how many actual years it was."

"Was this before or after us?" Emma asked.

"Before," Neal replied, "A year or so before us."

"Was there someone?" Emma had always assumed she'd been this first love, but now she was wondering if it was the case, especially since he was suddenly so insistent on returning to Avalon.

"She was the daughter of the silversmith I worked for. She was younger than me, and in Avalon there was no courting before a girl turned eighteen. We merely spent time together, mostly after dinner. We would read stories and just talk," Neal replied, "It might have led to more, but I had to leave Avalon rather abruptly."

"Why?" Belle chimed in.

"The town discovered my father was the dark one. They feared he would come looking for me," Neal admitted, "Cilla wanted to come with me, but I couldn't force my life on her."

"Her name was Cilla?" Emma inquired.

"Pricilla actually, but everyone called her Cilla," Neal replied.

"You want to see what happened to her," Emma concluded.

"I want to make sure she found happiness," Neal stated, "Whenever I left somewhere, it always seemed destruction followed in my wake, with you, with Wendy…"

"Okay," Emma nodded finally, "Make sure Henry is okay with you leaving first."

"Thank you," Neal nodded.
"Hi, Mama," Fallon rushed to greet her mother when she and Killian returned to the cottage.

Upon returning to the cottage after lunch, Fallon must have convinced her older brother to get out the Christmas decorations, as boxes were scattered around the living room and decorations were starting to be put up around their house.

"It's Christmas time," Fallon motioned around the room while hugging her papa.

"Yes, it is, Little Love," he kissed her cheek.

"Fallon wants a Christmas tree," Henry replied.

"We'll go tomorrow," Emma pecked at her cheek before Killian returned her to her feet. Emma turned to address Brennan, "Did Henry and Fallon explain the concept of Christmas to you?"

"Aye," Brennan nodded, "Sounds like quite the treat for the children."

"It is for adults too," Emma smiled, "We look forward to including you in our traditions…that is if you are staying."

"I am," Brennan confirmed, "My place is with my family. I've lost entirely too much time as it is. I would be remiss to lose any more. My kingdom will have to find their own way."

"We will find a way to help," Emma assured him, "But we're glad you're staying…aren't we, Princess?"

"Yep," Fallon bobbed her head and then took his hand and pulling him towards the decorations, instructing him where to put various trinkets.

Emma noticed Killian's mood had drastically improved upon receiving the news his father was staying.

"You okay?" Emma ran her fingers through the hair at the nape of Killian's neck.

"Better now," he nodded and then went to join in the decorating fun.

Since their first Christmas together, each year the decoration volume grew, and it was at his insistence. Killian had really gotten into the spirit of the holiday, especially for his children.

Emma stayed back and watched the activity. Nearly every inch of their home would be decorated for the season. Even Max would be given a festive holiday collar. Emma was overjoyed to be able to give her family what she wished she'd had as a girl growing up in the foster care system. She'd had one good Christmas before coming to Storybrooke, and she'd barely been only enough to remember it. Sometimes she wondered if she'd dreamt up the memory of the single year she spent with the Swans.

"Mama, help," Fallon came over when she realized her mother wasn't participating.

"How about you help me make sugar cookies we can decorate?" Emma lifted Fallon into her arms, "Would you like that?"

"Yep," Fallon bobbed her head.

Emma pulled out her can't mess up sugar cookie recipe and the necessary ingredients. With Fallon's cheering more so than any actually assistance, the cookies were coming out of the oven rapidly. Emma spent more of her energy keeping Fallon from snatching up cookies than actually baking, but
there were laughs all around.

Henry broke out his camera and began capturing the moments for posterity. It felt like the perfect moment. Killian and Brennan were interacting again, trading laughs and joking with each other.

When the cookies were sufficiently cool, the icing was whipped up and the entire family tried their hand at decorating, even Bradyn.

Killian made a large batch of hot cocoa and the family all sat at the table eating cookies and drinking cocoa while admiring their work. Emma and Killian were trying to explain the concept of a Christmas tree to Brennan. It was clearly a concept which needed to be seen rather than explained. They made plans to head to the tree farm the next day to which Fallon cheered with excitement.

"Off to bed, Princess," Emma encouraged her daughter, "Go get your pajamas on. Papa will read to you."

Fallon hopped out of her chair and darted off without hesitation. When the Christmas decorations came out, Fallon was on her best behavior so as to impress Santa.

"We have extra decorations," Emma told Brennan, "When you move into your new place, we'll need to make sure it's appropriately decorated for the holiday."

"I would like that," Brennan nodded, but his eyes betrayed his words.

"We are planning to help your kingdom," Emma reached for his hand, "You have the promise of my family, which carries a lot of weight behind it."

"Thank you," he gave her hand a squeeze.

"Mom, when can we take Fallon and Bradyn to see Santa?" Henry asked.

"Maybe one night this coming week we can get Grandma to loan us her car and drive to the mall the next town over to have an audience with him," Emma smiled.

"Maybe Fallon won't scream her lungs out this year," Henry laughed.

"Santa can be an intimidating figure to a two year old," Emma replied. "I'm more worried how Bradyn will take it."

"He'll be fine, Love," Killian chimed in, "He just an easy going little fellow."

"True," Emma gave him a smile in reply.

"Papa," Fallon called from her bedroom.

"There's your cue," Emma motioned her husband towards their daughter's bedroom.

"I'll be back," he kissed her temple and went to entertain his daughter until she fell asleep.

"He's quite the doting papa," Emma watched her father-in-law's eyes follow his son.

"Yes, he is," Brennan smiled longingly.

"You have time to make things right," Emma stated.

"I hope so," Brennan agreed.
"Quite an eventful day," Emma noted when she and Killian retired to their bedroom for the evening. They'd curled up together in the oversized chair in the corner of the room. There was just enough room for them to sit together and snuggled up as close as possible, which is the way they preferred anyways.

"Aye," Killian agreed when Emma settled against his chest, her head resting against his heart to hear it's rhythmic beating, "Am I being selfish with insisting my father stay in Storybrooke?"

"Yes, but you're entitled to a bit of selfishness after all you've gone through with him and because of him," Emma replied, "I think the reason you took his potential leaving so hard is because you want to connect with him. I hope you use this chance you've been given."

"I'd like to," Killian admitted.

"So Christmas…" Emma began what had become their yearly discussion on how much they had available to spend on gifts. "Fallon has been a very good girl this year, and we'll need to make sure Bradyn's first Christmas sets the tone."

"I've been tucking a bit of money aside from my wages this year as we discussed," Killian replied, "We should be able to make this a good Christmas for everyone."

"Let's just focus on the children," Emma requested, "I have everything I need and want under this roof already. How about we not exchange gifts this year?"

"Are you certain?" he inquired, "You've enjoyed me spoiling you in the past."

"No presents this year," she repeated.

"No presents," he agreed.

"Although there is a certain gift I'll be more than willing to receive," she toyed with the button of his shirt in a playful manner. "If I'm not mistaken, I believe you'll enjoy it as well."

"Aye, it is my favorite gift," he tilted her chin so he could press his lips fully to hers.

"I love you, Killian," Emma stroked his chin.

Killian lifted her easily into his arms and carried her across the room and laid her out on their bed and proceeded to give her an early Christmas gift.

TBC…
"Someone has a special glow about her this morning," Ruby greeted the Jones family when they arrived for breakfast.

"I could say the same for you, Red," Emma accepted her usual cup of coffee, "How are the wedding plans coming?"

"Victor and I agreed we wanted to keep it simple," Ruby explained, "It's going to be a no frills service at City Hall in the auditorium, and then a simple reception with good food and lots of laughs."

"We can do better than that," Mary Margaret joined the girl talk when she arrived with her husband and son both who quickly joined the Joneses at their regular table.

"Mom, let them plan the wedding they want," Emma spoke up before Ruby could. "A royal affair worked for you, but it doesn't work for everyone."

"I just meant we could at least throw in some Christmas decorations into the festivities," Mary Margaret replied.

"That's not such a bad idea," Emma replied, "Throw in some holiday cheer."

"So long as it's kept simple," Ruby replied, "We agreed we wanted to find a new place, so we're saving for that rather than having a big, elaborate wedding. I was pricing wedding dresses and almost lost my mind…those things are expensive."

"Buy what you like, cost be damned," Emma advised her, "It's your wedding."

"You're one to talk, Emma," Ruby snorted, "How much did yours cost?"

"I liked my dress. It fit the ceremony we had aboard Killian's ship. If I found a dress I liked better, I would have spent whatever it cost," Emma replied.

"I'll take the advice under consideration," Ruby replied, "Don't think you've completely sidetracked the conversation. You came in positively glowing, Sheriff. Did someone do some howling with her husband last night?"

"Really not breakfast conversation, Red," Emma motioned towards the table full of family only steps away.

"Really? This is me you're talking to," Ruby eyed her, "I've already sniffed out one charming on the way. I think we're well on the way to another."

"What!" Mary Margaret gasped.

"Do you really think you can keep a secret like that from me?" Ruby chuckled at her longtime friend.

"How long have you known?" Mary Margaret glanced around in hopes no one was eavesdropping on their conversation.

"About as long as you've been pregnant," Ruby smirked, "You weren't fooling anyone with your
designated driver routine on girls' night…Don't worry, your secret is safe with me."

"Darn you and your super wolf abilities," Mary Margaret muttered.

"So," Ruby turned her attentions to Emma, "Is there another Jones in the works?"

Emma glanced towards her family to make sure their attentions were diverted before answering, "I think so." She felt her cheeks flush as she spoke. "We've been trying for a few weeks, and I'm late."

"How late?" Mary Margaret asked.

"Late enough I've noticed," Emma replied, "I haven't taken any tests. I'm just starting to get those feelings I remember getting with Henry and Fallon and what I would have gotten with Bradyn if the snow witch hadn't stolen my memories…Honestly I don't want to know just yet. I want to enjoy the holidays."

"And the howling fun," Ruby eyes glimmered with amusement.

"On that note," Emma snatched up her cup of coffee and made her way to the table where the family was making plans for their trip to the tree farm at the outskirts of town. David and Killian were discussing the merits of the different types of trees. Brennan looked completely lost.

"She's pregnant, isn't she," Mary Margaret glanced towards Ruby.

"Too soon for even me to tell," Ruby snickered, "If I had to bet on it, I'd say yes."

"Are you okay with having two pregnant bridesmaids?" Mary Margaret asked.

"Absolutely," Ruby nodded, "I'm so happy for the both of you. You make adorable children."

"Yes, we do," Mary Margaret glanced towards the table and the children all around it and gave a proud smile.

"Drinking tea these days?" Ruby inquired and handed her a cup of warm water with a tea bag.

"You've known me for far too long," Mary Margaret snickered and then joined her family.

"Grammy, will you help me make my list for Santa?" Fallon climbed into her grandmother's lap.

"Sure, I will," Mary Margaret flipped over her placemat and grabbed a crayon, "What do you want to start with?"

Fallon gave an exaggerated pause, tapping at her lip with her finger to give thought to what she would ask Santa for. The adults at the table had a good chuckle in response.

"Such the little show stopper," Emma nipped at Fallon's cheek.

Fallon giggled and then began rattling off items she intended to ask Santa for. It was all Mary Margaret could do to keep up.

"Oh, goodness," Emma watched her daughter's list grow and grow.

"She doesn't need all of it," David reminded his own daughter.

"I want so much to give her good Christmas memories," Emma replied, "After all we've been through this year…"
"You'll give her good memories just by celebrating together as a family," David replied, "Years from now, she won't remember what was under the tree, but she will remember the people she celebrated with."

"You're right," Emma nodded.

Killian leaned in and kissed her temple, "We'll make this a wonderful Christmas for us all."

Emma felt the happy tears welling in her eyes. She was so happy with her life.

The bell to the diner door rang and in walked Regina and Roland.

"Hey, Mom," Henry went to greet her. "I didn't know you were having breakfast here this morning."

"Spur of the moment decision," Regina smiled, "Roland was hungry. We promised to bring breakfast to Robin at the station."

"Sounded like he had a quiet night when I checked on him this morning," Emma approached with Fallon nipping at her heels.

"He told me so as well," Regina nodded and then looked to Fallon with a gentle smile on her face, "Hello, Fallon."

"Hi, Mayor Mills," Fallon flashed her usual smile and waved.

"You can call me Regina," the mayor reminded her.

"Oh yeah, I forgot," Fallon smiled. "Mama, can we get our tree yet?"

"Your tree?" Regina prompted her.

"Our Christmas tree," Emma amended, "We're taking the family to that tree farm a few miles outside of town after breakfast."

"You can come too," Fallon offered.

"That's very sweet of you, Fallon, but Roland, Robin and I already have our tree picked out," Regina smiled at the little girl.

"Okay," Fallon shrugged and returned to the table to finish her breakfast at her father's urging. She pulled Henry and Roland with her.

"She reminds me so much of Henry at that age," Regina watched the little girl, "He was quite precocious himself."

"Yes, I remember," Emma laughed, "Him showing up at my door in Boston was a big tip off…Do you and Robin talk about adding to your family?"

"It's complicated," Regina admitted, "There are a lot of factors to consider."

"Any kid would be lucky to have you as a mother," Emma smiled.

"Thank you for saying that."

"We'd better get going," Emma noticed the family was finishing up.
"Have fun," Regina went to join Roland.

Killian trudged through the snow at the tree farm with Fallon high atop his shoulders, pointing in various directions she wanted her father to go. Henry was carrying Bradyn, and Emma and Brennan were bringing up the rear while she explained everything he was seeing. In her hand was the saw they would eventually use to cut down their tree. Every so often the family would pause to admire a tree.

"Aw, how about this one, Love?" Killian shook the tree a bit to shake out the lingering snow.

"It's beautiful," Emma admired the tree from all angles, "Is it too tall for our space?"

"Can you see over the top, Little Love?" Killian twisted his head slightly to glance up at his daughter.

"Yep," Fallon bobbed her head.

"Then we have plenty of room," Killian replied.

"Start cutting then," Emma handed Killian the saw and then pulled Fallon from her father's shoulders. The little girl began playing hide and seek with her brothers while Killian got to work.

"Brennan, how about you come with me," Emma suggested, "We'll get a sled we can pull the tree on."

"Aye," Brennan followed Emma just as Killian got on his hands and knees and began cutting.

Emma couldn't help taking a moment to admire the view of his posterior. Her daughter laughing as she ran around the farm shook Emma out of her momentary trance.

"Fallon, you're not supposed to run when you're found," Henry called out to her, "It's your turn to seek."

Emma laughed. Fallon was good at being the hider, not so much when it came to being a seeker. Fortunately Henry was patient and willing to teach her.

"Is this an important holiday to your people?" Brennan asked Emma.

"Oh yes," Emma nodded, "It's the best time of the year for little kids, especially those with a healthy imagination."

"Like little Fallon," Brennan smirked.

"Most definitely," Emma agreed, "She certainly takes it to an extreme level."

"Who is the Santa chap she was writing a letter to this morning?" Brennan asked.

"Right, no Santas in Avalon," Emma sighed, "He's a mythical figure who brings presents on Christmas Day to all the good girls and boys across the world. It's a customary thing for all little girls and boys who believe in him to write him letters. They usually start with proclaiming what a good girl or boy they were throughout the year, and then they list all the toys they'd like him to leave under their trees. There will be a ton of movies on throughout the month which will answer most of your questions, but that's the general gist of the season."

"I see," Brennan nodded.
"Fallon doesn't know he's mythical, and likely won't for several more years. We'd like to keep it that way," Emma stated.

"Children need good things to believe in," Brennan replied, "We had our own mythical figures in Avalon, perhaps none so...generous as your Santa. It's been many years since we celebrated the season for which they originated."

"Was it due to your queen's influence?" Emma asked.

"Aye," Brennan nodded, "I didn't agree with the match when it was first proposed, but King Daniel was smitten from the moment they met. If only I'd realized why he was smitten."

"You can't beat yourself up," Emma replied, "There was no way for you to know."

" Doesn't make the situation any less tolerable," Brennan frowned.

It was then that Emma noticed the dark circles under his eyes. "Are you sleeping alright?"

He shook his head slightly.

"I promise we are working on a resolution," Emma wrapped an arm around his shoulders, "You heard my ex, Neal, has volunteered to go to Avalon with the potion to save the kingdom. There are a few particulars to work out, but he should be leaving soon."

"I hope it works," Brennan soaked in her comfort for a moment.

"It will," Emma gave him a reassuring smile, "Do you know the silversmith he worked with or his daughter?"

"Cilla," Brennan stated.

"You know her?" Emma asked.

"Everyone knows of her," Brennan replied, "She took over her father's shop after he passed. It was a bit of a scandal because she's a single woman running a shop in a typically male dominated profession."

"It's never easy being the first," Emma replied.

"She's quite skilled," Brennan replied, "She forged my sword. It is the strongest blade I've ever held."

Emma smirked in reply. She always enjoyed hearing about a woman thriving in a male dominated role. She too had felt the pressure of stepping into a man's shoes as sheriff when many thought a woman was incapable. She thought she might like this Cilla if she ever had a chance to meet her.

Emma and Brennan returned with the sled just as Killian finished cutting the tree.

"Perfect timing," Killian lifted the tree onto the sled. Emma did her best to hide how much his show of strength turned her on, but one look into her eyes told Killian exactly where her thoughts were taking her. He gave her a slight wag of his brow.

"I'll round up the kids," Emma turned abruptly so Killian wouldn't see the pink tinge to her cheeks which had nothing to do with the chill in the air.

"Fallon darted past not moments ago. They cannot be far," Killian replied.
"Can you get the tree loaded into the back of Dad's truck without too much trouble?" Emma asked.

"Aye," Killian nodded. He and Brennan took turns pulling the sled back to the truck. Killian stopped to pay the proprietor for the tree while Brennan pulled the sled the final few steps. Just as the tree was loaded into the back of the truck, Emma came with the children. Fallon was proclaiming victory for the game they'd been playing despite Henry's attempts to explain the rules.

"Everyone buckle up," Emma instructed the children while buckling Bradyn into the car seat. The little boy wiggled and giggled and generally made the process as difficult as possible. With the process finally accomplished, she climbed into the driver's seat and revved the engine to life. "I really need to get my vehicle replaced soon."

"I'm ready for the adventure when you are," Killian wagged a brow at her.

"After Christmas," Emma replied.

"Mama, Christmas music," Fallon requested from her booster seat.

Emma reached out and turned on the radio, fiddling with the stations until she found one to play Christmas music. She then threw the vehicle into gear and directed the vehicle back to the cottage. Fallon's off key singing carried them all the way home.

"Why couldn't you inherit your papa's singing voice?" Emma lowered her daughter to the ground after they arrived home. Fallon giggled and darted into the house.

Killian lifted the tree from the bed of the truck.

"Brennan, will you take Bradyn inside?" Emma lifted her son from the car seat, "I'm going to help Killian get the tree in the stand to bring inside."

Brennan didn't understand anything Emma said after asking to take Bradyn, but he took his grandson all the same.

"We'll be inside in a bit," Emma stated, "Henry, will you get the tree decorations out of storage?"

Henry nodded and followed Fallon into the house.

With everyone safely inside, Killian set the tree against the truck and pounced on Emma. Emma didn't protest getting backed against the cold steel, his lips warm against hers.

"Quite a show of strength you've displayed today," Emma ran her fingers through his hair. "Your time aboard the Jolly Roger has been spent well."

Killian only chuckled and dove in for another kiss.

A clearing of a throat interrupted them.

"Mind if I borrow my truck?" David tapped at the cab of his vehicle.

Emma felt an immediate blush creep to her cheeks at being caught making out with her husband by her father as she wiped at her lips with the back of her glove.

"Bad form, Mate," Killian chuckled and manhandled the tree away from the truck.

"How was tree shopping?" David inquired.
"Found the best in the lot," Killian motioned towards the tree in his hands, "You'll have to settle for having the second best tree in Storybrooke."

"I'd best pick up your mother and brother," David chuckled, "I'll have the truck back in a bit."

"Take your time," Emma finally recovered her wits.

David looked towards the pair with an amused chuckle and then climbed into the cab of his vehicle.

"I'll get the tree stand," Emma cleared her throat after her father backed the truck out of their driveway.

Killian caught her hand after propping up the tree against the cottage. He quickly pulled her into his embrace for a second time to pick up where they'd left off after being so rudely interrupted.

Emma hummed in content, her arms wrapping tight around his neck.

"I love kissing you," Emma mumbled against his lips, "You're always so warm."

"Lucky for me," he chuckled, "It was my heat which drew you to me in the first place."

"I'm sure your charms would have eventually worn me down," she responded as they continued to peck away.

They were interrupted a second time by a snowball hitting Killian square in the back. They turned abruptly to see Henry and Fallon both with snowballs in hand, laughing at being able to sneak up on their parents.

Emma and Killian both snatched up handfuls of snow and launched them towards their children, forcing the pair back into the house.

Taking the hint, Emma finally retrieved the tree stand and helped Killian get the tree setup and into the house.

Fallon took great joy in showing her grandfather how to decorate the tree while Emma pulled out Henry's camera to capture the moment.

Upon completing their task, Emma whipped up a big batch of hot cocoa and popcorn for the entire family. They took their mugs and bowls of popcorn into the living room, so they could curling up and watch whatever holiday movie they could find on the television.

Their happy holiday evening was interrupted by a knock on the door.

Killian went to answer it. "Baelfire."

"Sorry to stop by so late," Neal rocked on his heals, "I was hoping to speak with Henry. Is he here?"

Henry untangled himself from his sleeping sister's limbs and went to the doors.

Emma handed Bradyn to Brennan and went to the door as well. She was pretty sure she knew what Neal came to talk to Henry about, and she was sure her son would need her support.

"Hey, Henry," Neal smiled and glanced around the cottage looking for a way to start the conversation, "Looks like you guys decorated today. It looks good."

"Thanks," Henry replied.
"I need to talk to you about something," Neal began, "I need to leave town for awhile."

"What?" Henry gasped. "Why?"

"It's a bit complicated, but Avalon is in trouble. I've been there before, so I know my way around," Neal replied, "Because of Wendy, I'm immune to a siren's song."

"You've been to Avalon," Henry repeated, "When?"

"A long time ago...before your mom and I got together," Neal admitted, "I had friends there, people I want to help."

"Why do you have to go now?" Henry asked.

"I know the timing sucks, with the holidays coming..." Neal began.

"You're still healing," Henry added, "We were finally talking."

"I'm trying to do the right thing, Henry," Neal replied, "I need for you to see me as a father you can be proud of."

"You already are," Henry hugged him. "Can you at least stay until Christmas?"

"I wish I could," Neal frowned, "The siren who has taken over Avalon has had far too long to influence the kingdom. I need to get there as soon as possible."

"Have you worked out how you're getting there?" Emma chimed in.

"Anton," Neal replied, "I got him to give me another of his beans."

"What did he ask for this time?" Emma smiled.

"That is between me and Anton," Neal replied.

"Has Regina given you the potion to neutralize the siren?" Emma asked.

"She gave me the potion without the fruit," Neal held out the vial, "I'm to get the fruit when I get there and add it."

"How are you going to do that?" Emma asked, "Touching it may or may not kill you."

"I'm hoping an old friend will help me," Neal glanced away.

"Brennan, tell Neal what you told me about Cilla," Emma motioned Brennan over.

"You know Cilla?" Neal looked to Brennan.

"Aye," Brennan came to the front door. Killian took Bradyn from him and stepped back. He didn't need to be a participant in this conversation.

"Cilla took over her father's shop when he passed away," Brennan replied, "She's become quite a silversmith."

"Do you think she'll be willing help me?" Neal asked.

"She might," Brennan nodded, "Assuming she's not under the siren's spell. She's never married, so she might not be immune."
"She never married," Neal repeated.

Brennan shook his head.

"Wow," Neal breathed out.

"Wait here," Henry abruptly darted into his room and emerged a moment later with a mirror in his hands, "Take this…so we can communicate while you're in Avalon. My mom has the other mirror. I'll get the it from her, so you can check in while your gone."

"Thank you, Henry," Neal accepted the mirror and slipped it into his pocket.

"When are you leaving?" Emma asked.

"First thing in the morning," Neal replied, "Just waiting for the bean to work it's magic."

"Mom, do you think I could see him off tomorrow?" Henry asked Emma.

"I don't see why not," Emma ruffled his hair, "It's a teacher work day, so you won't miss anything there. What time are you leaving, Neal?"

"Early," Neal stated, "Around eight."

"Not so early in Fallon's world," Emma replied, "I'll make sure to bring him over."

"Thanks," Neal nodded, "I guess I'll see you tomorrow then."

"Yes, you will," Emma nodded.

"Good night," Neal acknowledged everyone before leaving.

"You okay, Kid?" Emma wrapped an arm around Henry's shoulders.

"Yeah," Henry nodded.

"He's trying to do good," Emma tried to explain Neal's need to leave Storybrooke.

"I know, and I'm proud of him," Henry replied.

"But," Emma prompted him.

"I just wish he didn't have to leave just yet," Henry frowned.

"He's not leaving permanently," Emma reminded him, "With the time difference, it will hardly seem like he's gone at all."

"I hope so," Henry nodded, "I'm heading to bed. Good night."

"Night," Emma kissed his cheek.

"Poor lad," Killian frowned after Henry closed his bedroom door.

"He just got his father back, and he's already leaving," Emma sighed and took Bradyn from him, "I'm going to put him down. Join you upstairs in a bit?"

"Aye," Killian pecked at her lips lightly.
Emma disappeared into Bradyn's bedroom while Killian and Brennan cleaned up the dishes from the evening.

"What did you think of your first Christmas film?" Killian took the dishes from his father one at a time to load the dishwasher.

"It's quite entertaining," Brennan glanced towards his sleeping granddaughter, curled up on the sofa while another holiday movie played on. "Fallon called one of her snowmen, Frosty. Is that a coincidence?"

"Probably not," Killian chuckled, "She likes to think her snowmen will come to life like the one in the movie…they won't, by the way, unless Fallon can figure out a magical way to do it."

"I figured as much," Brennan laughed, "You say your daughter is magical, yet I haven't seen much in the way of proof."

"Fallon is still at the early phase of learning. Emma doesn't want her using her magic until she is fully capable of understanding the consequences. We likely wouldn't have known she even had magic had the Snow Queen not forced it out of her last year."

"Snow Queen?" Brennan raised a curious brow.

"Another evil person who found her way to Storybrooke. Another evil I had previous encounters with. It seems no matter how good my intentions are these days, my past seems to find a way to encroach," Killian frowned.

"I would very much like to hear of your adventures," Brennan replied, "The good parts."

Killian gave the request a bit of thought before launching into one of his more thrilling tales. Brennan soaked up the story like a sponge. Killian had purposely picked one which included his brother. It was before his brother had received his own ship. They'd been assigned to the same vessel for the first time after Killian had graduated from the Naval Academy. By the end of the story, Brennan was howling with laughter, so much so that Emma came down the stairs to warn them against making so much noise and waking the children.

"My apologies, Love," Killian gave her his more charming smile when she wrapped an arm around his waist.

"Must have been quite a story," Emma looked between the pair to see their eyes both glimmering with amusement.

"Aye," Killian nodded, "I was telling Papa a tale of me and Liam's first voyage after I graduated from the Naval Academy."

"Is this the story about the seamstress chasing Liam out of her establishment with a broom?" Emma asked. He'd told her the story not long after she'd requested he open up about his brother.

"Aye, that would be the one," Killian confirmed, "Served him right for trying to sneak in through the window to visit her daughter."

"Still doesn't fit the image you've painted of him being a by the book sailor," Emma replied.

"He was by the book aboard a vessel, but at port he could mix it up with the best of them," Killian replied, "He got into his fair share of scrapes before he was named the captain of the Jewel of the Realm. Every good sailor has similar stories."
"And did you climb into the window of any seamstresses' shops to visit their daughters?" Emma asked.

"I'm not one to kiss and tell," he gave her a leering gaze.

"You're exactly the one to kiss and tell," Emma snorted, "Brennan, when I first met Killian, there wasn't a sexual innuendo he could resist. He was cocky and arrogant, but underneath it all, I could tell we were cut from the same cloth."

"Love at first sight," Brennan proclaimed.

"Hardly," Emma laughed out, "Tied him to a tree because I knew he was telling me a lie."

"She almost fed me to an ogre," Killian smiled.

"And then a giant," Emma added.

"Yet I still couldn't stay away," Killian pecked at her lips.

"You were relentless, and I was a sucker for the blue eyes."

"Sounds like quite the adventurous courtship you two had," Brennan noted.

"Most definitely," Emma nodded. "I'm off to bed. How about you put the princess to bed and then join me, Sailor?"

"I'd better," Killian noted the time, "Mornings start early thanks to my little navigator."

"I'll take care of little Fallon," Brennan offered.

"Are you sure?" Killian hesitated.

Brennan nodded in agreement and went to the sofa to pick up his granddaughter. She was out like a light and didn't even flinch.

"Good night, Brennan," Emma took her husband's hand and pulled him on the stairs to the bedroom. Killian barely had the time to wish his father a good night.

TBC…
Chapter 37

Disclaimer: I wish they were mine. Sadly, they aren't.

"Did Baelfire get off alright?" Killian inquired when Emma and Henry appeared on the docks. He'd taken Fallon, Bradyn and Brennan to Granny's for breakfast while Emma and Henry saw Neal off. Henry looked like he could use a bit of cheering up.

"Yes, he was several hundred feet up last we spotted him," Emma nodded, "Regina even came up with a brilliant way to return the Haunted Siren."

"I was wondering where the ship went," Killian nodded towards the vacant slip.

"She shrunk it down to toy size so it would fit into Neal's satchel. She gave him a potion to undo the spell when he's able," Emma explained, "She also enchanted the bean stalk so it can't be cut down."

"Sounds like she's learned from our past mistakes," Killian slung an arm around Henry's shoulder, "How are you holding up, Lad?"

"I'm fine," Henry responded dutifully.

"It's okay if you're not," Killian assured him.

"I just hope he can do whatever he went to do quickly, so he can be home for Christmas," he replied.

"How about a sail to cheer you up?" Killian motioned towards the Jolly Roger, all ready to set sail, "I'll let you steer."

"Do you mind if I invite someone along?" Henry asked.

Emma dreaded the next words to come out of his mouth.

"Who would you like to invite?" Killian gave his wife a knowing little chuckle.

"Paige," Henry felt his cheeks blush crimson.

"You'd best retrieve the lass," Killian motioned him towards the town, "We don't want to waste the wind."

Henry took off in a sprint.

"You could have said no," Emma groaned watching Henry run off.

"He's a growing boy, Love," Killian reminded his wife.

"I think I liked it better when he was this young little thing knocking on my door in Boston talking all this nonsense about fairytale characters who came to life," Emma sighed, "What happened to him?"

"He's run off to fetch his lass," Killian chuckled.

"You just wait until it's Fallon's turn. I'll remember all these pearls of wisdom you're currently spouting," Emma elbowed him lightly in the ribs.
"I'll happily remind any suitor who comes calling of what I can do with a blade and a hook," Killian chuckled.

Emma merely shook her head and laughed. "Is everything ready for our day's sail?"

"Aye, just waiting on Henry," Killian nodded, "Fallon is running around like she owns the vessel."

"She certainly runs it," Emma snickered as they climbed on board. Just as her feet hit the wooden planks, her daughter attacked her legs, nearly throwing her mother off balance.

"Hi, Mama," Fallon gave her usual charming smile as Emma fought to keep her balance.

"Hello, Princess," Emma picked her up, "You're all full of energy this morning."

"I had affles for breakfast," Fallon stated.

"Affles?" Emma turned to her husband.

"She wanted to try something new," Killian chuckled.

"Waffles," Emma realized, "Those aren't new. They're just pancakes in a different form."

"They were yummy," Fallon proclaimed. "Where's Henry?"

"He went to invite Paige to spend the day sailing with us," Emma explained, "So when she gets here, I want you to be nice to her. No singing your song, the one that makes your brother blush. Okay?"

"Okay, Mama," Fallon bobbed her head as Emma put her down.

"Where are Bradyn and Brennan?" Emma glanced around the deck.

"In my cabin," Killian replied, "Bradyn was a bit fussy at breakfast. I think he might be coming down with a bit of something. Papa offered to take him below until you arrived."

"He did seem a bit out of sorts this morning when I dressed him," Emma frowned, "I'd best go check on him."

"We'll get underway as soon as Henry and his lass arrive," Killian called after her.

"Papa, let's go!" Fallon hollered from the wheel.

"In good time, my little love," Killian chuckled.

Fallon huffed in annoyance and spun the wheel.

"Such an impatient little thing," Killian muttered to himself, "She definitely takes after her mum."

When Henry arrived with Paige, Killian cast off the lines and raised the sails. As promised, Henry took control of the wheel and sailed them to wherever he desired. As he worked, he tried to teach Paige the basics of sailing, starting with how Killian had first taught him.

"Looks like the lad has found a lass of his own," Brennan spoke after observing the pair for a few moments at the wheel after coming topside.

"Aye, he's quite smitten…for the moment at least," Killian replied.
"Some loves last a lifetime," Brennan pulled out the picture of his wife.

"And some loves only lasts a season," Killian replied, "It's the way this realm works."

"Not for everyone," Brennan countered, "You and your lovely wife appear to be together for a lifetime."

"Aye, true love is an unbreakable bond," Killian smiled.

"You're happy," Brennan replied.

"More than I have any right to after all my years of debauchery," Killian glanced out at the horizon.

"Papa, want to see the dolphins," Fallon ran over and attached herself to his leg. She didn't even acknowledge her father's obviously turbulent thoughts.

"You always want to see dolphins," Killian heaved her up into his arms with a laugh.

"Dolphins," Fallon pointed to the bow of the ship.

"Then dolphins you shall see," Killian bounced her a bit before heading to the bow.

Fallon's joy upon seeing the dolphins seemed to spread throughout the ship. Even the fussiness of her little brother seemed to disappear as Emma emerged from his cabin with the little boy. Upon getting to their fishing spot, lines were cast. Fallon took it upon herself to teach Paige the ropes as it was her first time casting a line. The conversation was adorable. Emma made sure to take out her phone and snap a few pictures. When they got within range of a cell tower, she would be sure to send them to Paige's parents.

When they came in after a successful voyage, the entire town had been transformed into a Christmas village. Fallon's eyes were wide with delight. She talked the entire way back to the cottage about all the toys she wanted.

"Does she ever take a breath?" Emma muttered to her husband.

"Perhaps she would if she wasn't my daughter," Killian chuckled.

"She definitely takes after her papa," Emma snickered while Fallon called out to the townspeople as she walked by, making sure to wave and extend a holiday greeting to each one. "Miss Popularity this one."

"You should have her campaign for you in four years when you're up for reelection, Mom," Henry chimed in having just returned from walking Paige home, "You'd win in a landslide, even if another siren was trying to charm this town."

"So true," Emma laughed, "She's charming enough to counteract any curse."

"Paige's parents wanted me to thank you for the pictures," Henry stated.

"I hope Paige had fun today," Emma replied.

"She did," Henry confirmed.

"Are we going to be seeing more of Ms. Jefferson?" Killian inquired.
"I hope so," Henry nodded.

Killian gave his wife an amused smile and then slung an arm around the lad's shoulders, "You and I need to have a bit of a talk one of these days."

"Oh no," Henry groaned, "Not the sex talk."

"It's more a talk about how to treat a lady you're courting," Killian corrected.

"It's courting, dating is all the same principles no matter the realm," Killian replied, "No matter what, a proper gentleman treats a lass with respect."

"I get it," Henry rolled his eyes.

"We're not finished," Killian stated when the family made their way into Granny's for dinner.

"That's what I'm afraid of," Henry sighed. "I'm going to the back for a few minutes to check on Neal. Order me a burger?"

"Got you covered," Emma assured him.

"Sounds like the lad is quite excited for our chat," Killian chuckled while glancing at the menu.

"It's more likely he ran out the back to the cottage to pack his things before we can catch him," Emma snickered.

"I'm a patient man," Killian smirked, "I'll track him down eventually."

"Just keep it age appropriate like we talked about," she tugged on the collar of his jacket.

Henry returned a short while later with news of his father. He'd arrived in Avalon virtually undetected and had made his way into the village. He'd said the villagers were acting rather peculiar in that they were virtually ignoring his entire existence. There were only a few which seemed to notice him, none he recognized. He'd spotted Cilla but had yet to approach her. He wanted to see what her life was like before he intruded.

"Did he say how many days he thinks he's been gone?" Emma asked.

"He says it's been about four days in Avalon," Henry replied, "He's hoping to approach Cilla soon. He doesn't want to wait too long."

"I hope it goes well," Emma frowned, "If she's under the siren's curse, it could go very bad."

"He doesn't think she is," Henry stated, "Hopefully he'll know more soon."

Brennan soaked in the news of his village like a sponge. He appeared more relaxed knowing something was being done to save his kingdom.

"Neal will come through, Brennan," Emma gave him a reassuring smile, "He has a lot of incentive."

"I hope so," Brennan nodded.

"Poppy, I want to draw a picture for Santa," Fallon climbed into Brennan's lap after her order had been placed. She'd surprised everyone by asking for spaghetti rather than her usual roni and cheese.
"Help me, please."

"Of course," Brennan flipped over his placemat and accepted the cup of crayons Emma was offering. "What would you like to draw for him?"

"A bicycle," Fallon stated, "It's what I want for Christmas."

"Err, uh, do they have such inventions in Avalon?" Emma noticed the perplexed look on her father-in-law's face.

"Can't say I'm familiar," Brennan shook his head.

Emma pulled out her phone and flipped through the photos until she found a picture of Killian and Henry on their bikes, most likely riding the previous summer.

Brennan stared at the picture for a few moments. "What is the purpose of this invention?"

"It's a mode of transportation," Emma explained, "In order for the bike to move, the rider, in this case Killian and Henry, need to move the pedals."

"And I want one," Fallon stated, "Don't they look fun, Poppy?"

"They are quite…interesting," Brennan told his granddaughter, smirking at the adorable little pout on her face.

"I want a pink one," Fallon held up the pink crayon.

"Then we'll draw you a pink bike," Brennan chuckled and motioned towards the phone, "Might I borrow this, Emma? I'll need the picture for a bit of reference."

"Sure," Emma nodded, "Have at it. I don't need it for anything else tonight. Dad's on night duty."

Brennan nodded his thanks and began helping Fallon draw her picture.

"Are you nervous to start your classes tomorrow?" Emma watched the pair work.

"I thought I would be," Brennan shook his head, "I'm not yet. Perhaps tomorrow when I start my first official lesson I will be. I think sitting in with your mother the previous week has helped prepare me. For right now, I'm mostly excited."

"I bet the kids are too," Emma smiled.

After several minutes, Fallon had the prettiest picture of a pink bike just like she wanted. She promptly asked Ruby for an envelope so she could mail it to Santa on their way home.

"Are we going to indulge her with a bike?" Killian whispered in Emma's ear when Fallon's attentions were elsewhere.

"I was thinking a tricycle," Emma whispered back, "Three wheels, easier to balance, less chance of injury. We'll make sure it's pink like she wants. It's not exactly what she wants, but she'll have fun with it nonetheless."

"I'm sure she will," Killian pecked at his wife's cheek, "Are we still not exchanging gifts this year?"

"Maybe some small ones," Emma flipped on her answer from their previous discussion, "Nothing extravagant. I have everything I want, but it's nice to be able to open at least a gift on Christmas…it's
"Presents you shall get," he brought her hand to his lips and kissed it.

After dinner, Fallon insisted they stop at the post office to mail her letter before venturing on to the cottage, where she played with her dog until it was bedtime.

"Wake up, Poppy." Fallon shook her grandfather awake the next morning at Emma's instruction, "It's school time."

"Good morning, Little One," Brennan reached out and tapped her nose.

Killian was at the stove making everyone a hearty breakfast, eggs and sausage for everyone else and a small batch of pancakes for Fallon.

"How'd you sleep last night?" Emma offered Brennan a cup of coffee.

"I guess I'm a bit more nervous than I thought," Brennan admitted, "It was a bit fitful."

"You'll do great," Emma assured him, "Henry's using the bathroom down here, so why don't you use ours upstairs. It seems like it takes him longer these days to get ready, and we'd hate for the teacher to be late on his first day."

"Thank you," Brennan nodded in appreciation.

"Breakfast will be in about fifteen minutes," Emma added.

Brennan climbed the stairs to their bedroom while Emma went to the kitchen to pack everyone lunches for the day.

"It's going to be weird not having Brennan here when he moves to his apartment in a few days," Emma frowned.

"But it will be less crowded," Killian added.

"I suppose we are going to need the room," Emma glanced around their cottage, "Especially if we…"

"Especially if we," Killian prompted her when she trailed off.

"Well, if I get pregnant again," Emma began, "All the rooms are currently taken. We already had to add on when Bradyn was born."

"I have been giving the idea a fair bit of thought," Killian stated, "I was thinking we might turn the playroom into another bedroom. Fallon hardly uses it anyways."

"She uses it enough," Emma replied.

"What are your thoughts, Love?" Killian turned down the heat on the stove so they could talk.

"I don't know," Emma sighed, "I'd just hate to take her tower away from her. She had enough trouble adjusting when Bradyn was born. I just don't want her to think we have to take something away from her because of another baby."

"Are you saying you don't want another child?" Killian asked.
"No!" Emma's response was immediate and a bit louder than she intended, "I just wonder if we've outgrown the cottage. It was perfect when we first moved in and it was just you, me and Henry, but now it's you, me, Henry, Fallon, Bradyn and this new baby. That's a lot of people for this little place."

"So you want to move?" Killian asked.

"Not really," Emma shook her head, "This is where we became a family. This is the first real home I've ever had."

"What other solution is there?" Killian wrapped his arms around her waist and brought her against him. Her arms immediately wrapped around his neck, careful to not spill coffee on him.

"We have time to think about it," Emma smiled, "Even if I'm already pregnant, and it would be too early to know even if I was, we have time to figure it all out. Like with Fallon and Bradyn, he or she wouldn't been sleeping in their room for the first couple of months anyways."

Killian nodded in agreement.

"Let's just put a pin in things for the moment," Emma smiled, "We don't need to decide anything right away."

"If that is your wish," Killian smiled and pecked at her lips.

"Papa, I'm hungry," Fallon tugged on his shirt, which killed her parent's amorous mood.

"It's almost ready, Little Love," Killian reassured his daughter before returning his attentions to the stove to finish breakfast.

Brennan returned to the main level after showering and dressing for the day. Henry had yet to emerge from the bathroom.

"This is a bit ridiculous," Emma stared at the closed bathroom door. "He's been in there for half an hour already."

"Love, let him be," Killian advised her, "He has a young lass to impress."

"You did talk to him last night, didn't you?" Emma asked.

"Aye," Killian nodded, "I kept it age appropriate like you requested. He had a few questions, but none too…"

"Graphic," Emma offered.

"Sure, we'll go with your answer," Killian chuckled, "He's simply a lad learning about love and life. At least he has people who love him and are willing to explain the ways of the world in delicate terms. Try learning how to woo a woman from a bunch of drunken, horny sailors."

"You must have learned a thing or two," Emma wrapped her arms around his waist from behind as he worked at the stove, pressed herself against his back and whispered in his ear, "You've acquitted yourself quite well with me."

Killian chuckled.

"Papa!" Fallon moaned from her place at the table where she was anxiously awaiting her breakfast.
"Yes, Little Love, you're hungry," Killian put the finishing touches on breakfast and then began bringing everything to the table.

Brennan joined everyone at the table after folding his bedding. Henry still hadn't emerged from the bathroom. Emma scowled at her husband and nodded towards the bathroom door.

"Aye, I'll retrieve the lad," Killian crossed the space to knock on the bathroom door, "Henry, breakfast his ready."

Henry emerged ready for the day. His hair was gelled back. He had on his best tie, and he was wearing so much cologne the family could practically taste it.

"Henry, you smell stinky," Fallon held her nose when he got closer.

"Is it too much?" Henry looked a bit panicked.

"Maybe a bit," Emma bit her lip to not laugh, "What's with the tie?"

"Paige told me yesterday how much she liked the tie I wore to Ashley and Sean's wedding," Henry replied.

"And the gelled hair?" Emma prompted him.

"It's too much," Henry glanced at his sister who was laughing at how ridiculous he looked.

"Henry, you don't need to do things to impress Paige. She already likes you for who you are," Emma replied, "It was quite clear yesterday during our sail that she was smitten."

"You sound like Killian," Henry replied.

"Well, it's true," Emma stated, "Why don't you throw those close in the wash, take a quick shower to wash out the gel and put on something you would normally wear to school."

"Yeah, okay," Henry sighed.

"We'll keep breakfast warm for you," Emma added, "Just don't take long. We need to leave a bit early today."

Henry nodded and disappeared into the bathroom a second time.

"Open a few window, Killian," Emma instructed her husband, "Or we all my die of cologne inhalation."

"That's quite pungent," Brennan coughed a few times.

"I didn't even know he had cologne," Emma waved her hand in front of her face to dissipate the smell while Killian opened several windows in his haste to air out the house.

"Henry stinky," Fallon held her nose again.

The family all did their best not to laugh when Henry returned to the breakfast table after taking a quick shower and dressing. His cheeks were a bit crimson already.

"Come on, Princess, get your coat, mittens, hat and boots on," Emma instructed her daughter while she and Killian quickly cleared the table. "We have to get Poppy and Henry to school."
"I want to go to school too," Fallon pouted as she stomped towards the entryway.

"You'll need to wait a couple more years," Emma knelt down to help her get ready while Killian dressed Bradyn for a day aboard the Jolly Roger, "I thought you like helping Papa sail. I know he likes having you. He needs his little navigator to tell him where to sail."

"I do," Fallon bobbed her head.

"That's my girl," Emma kissed her cheek and helped her with her boots.

Once everyone was appropriate dressed for the outdoors, they climbed into the truck and drove across town to the school.

Fallon insisted on walking Brennan to his classroom before she'd allow her father to take her to the docks.

"Have fun, Poppy," Fallon waved when Killian took her hand and led her out of the classroom with Bradyn in his arms.

"I will," Brennan waved and began getting his classroom ready for his first day.

"Did you need any help?" Emma glanced at her watch and realized she still had a few minutes before she needed to relieve her father from his shift.

"Aye," Brennan nodded and instructed her to set out air supplies on each of the tables.

Mary Margaret came in a few minutes later. "I wanted to see if Brennan needed my help getting everything ready, but it appears he already had his own helper this morning."

"Morning, Mom," Emma smiled.

"Are you all ready?" Mary Margaret asked Brennan.

"As ready as I can be," Brennan nodded and inhaled deeply.

"You'll do great," Mary Margaret reassured him, "You had my class completely mesmerized."

Brennan nodded and scratched behind his ear.

"I'd better get to the station," Emma glanced at her watch again. "I'm sure Dad is ready for bed."

"He said it was a quiet night when I spoke to him this morning," Mary Margaret replied.

"They all seem to be now that we have the siren business under control," Emma smiled, "Which reminds me, I need to get Regina to call a town meeting to discuss Wendy and her brothers."

"Let us know when," Mary Margaret replied, "I've already discussed things with a few of the teachers. They seem to agree with you that it will do the entire Darling family good to have a stable environment."

"I'll let you know," Emma nodded and then approached Brennan. "Good luck. I know you'll do great."

"Thank you, Emma," Brennan smiled. He was taken aback by the hug she offered but returned it all the same.
"See you at home later," Emma added as she left Mary Margaret and Brennan to discuss school things.

TBC…
The routine returned to Storybrooke. Emma, David and Robin managed to convince the townspeople to support their idea to help the Darling children after Emma received Wendy's acceptance letter to the boarding school in New Hampshire she'd suggested. Some in town were a bit more reluctant than others after the way Wendy's curse nearly tore the town apart. Of all the people in Storybrooke, it was Kathryn and Frederick who volunteered to take the children in. Emma was certain she could have knocked her father over with a feather when Kathryn stood up and made her offer during the meeting.

Emma diligently checked on the children each day to see how they were adjusting. Kathryn and Wendy had bonded. When Emma, Mary Margaret, Fallon and Ruby met to shop for dresses for the wedding, they were surprised to find Kathryn and Wendy also shopping for clothes.

"Shopping for school?" Emma asked Wendy.

"Yes, Ms. Kathryn suggested a new wardrobe," Wendy nodded.

"That's very generous of you, Kathryn," Emma replied.

"It's fun shopping with someone," Kathryn replied, "I've never really had the privilege before."

"I'm going to miss Storybrooke, and my family," Wendy glanced towards Kathryn, "It's the first time we've all really felt settled together in a long while, but I understand why I must go."

"It's a good school, Wendy," Mary Margaret assured her, "You'll get a good education."

"And you can come back here for every holiday and for summer break," Emma chimed in.

Fallon produced a piece of candy for her friend from her pocket. "Here, Wendy."

"Where are you getting all this candy, Princess?" Emma snickered.

"It's a secret," Fallon held her finger to her lips after Wendy offered up a thank you and took the piece of candy.

"We'd better get going," Kathryn extended her hand to Wendy. Each had an armload of bags full of their purchases. "We still have to make dinner, and I'm sure Frederick and the boys will be hungry after their hike in the woods."


"Bye, Fallon," Wendy waved back.

"We'd best get started," Mary Margaret looked at the racks of dresses the saleswoman had already pulled for the quartet to try on.

Since Fallon had picked the color red for her dress, both bridesmaids were also going to be dressed in red. It was appropriate considering the season and the bride's style preference.

Surprising no one, it took Fallon the most time to decide which princess dress she wanted to wear for the occasion. She liked and wanted all of them.
"How about this one, Pumpkin?" Ruby selected the dress she liked best and presented it to Fallon, "You looked so pretty in this one."

Fallon hesitated.

"And I bet we can talk your mama into letting me add some color to your hair," Ruby added.

"Can she, Mama?" Fallon's eyes lit in excitement.

"As long as it's the wash out variety, absolutely," Emma agreed.

"This one?" Fallon finally selected her dress, the one Ruby had suggested.

"Thank god," Mary Margaret and Emma sighed in relief. After a couple of hours of trying on dresses, they were both exhausted.

"Slowing down on me?" Ruby eyed the pair curiously.

Mary Margaret shot daggers with her eyes at her friend.

Ruby only laughed.

"Come on, let's go get some hot cocoa," Emma suggested while the saleswoman wrapped up the dresses.

"With cinnamon," Fallon cheered.

"Is there any other way?" Emma laughed.

Fallon shook her head vigorously from side to side.

"Are we sure this is the dress?" Ruby hesitated in handing over her credit card for her purchase.

"Yes," Mary Margaret, Emma, and Fallon all replied.

"You looked so pretty," Fallon added.

"Ruby, it was the one," Mary Margaret stated. "Your eyes sparkled from the moment you stepped out of the dressing room."

"Whale won't know what hit him when you walk down the aisle," Emma chimed in.

"That's another thing," Ruby sighed as she handed the sales clerk her card finally, "Who am I going to have walk me down the aisle? I have no close male family."

"I hate to state the obvious, but have you thought about Granny?" Emma asked.

"I have," Ruby replied, "I want to ask her, but how does it look?"

"Who cares," Emma and Mary Margaret stated in unison.

"Aunt Ruby, I'll walk with you," Fallon grasped Ruby's hand.

"Awe, Pumpkin, you are such a sweetheart," Ruby knelt down and hugged her.

"Your wedding day is your day," Mary Margaret insisted, "Do what is right for you, everyone else be dam…darned."
Emma snorted at the almost cuss word to leave her mother's mouth, and would have if Fallon wasn't looking up at her with her crystal clear blue eyes.

"You're right," Ruby nodded, "I need to plan the wedding I want...and you, Pumpkin, are going to be the cutest little flower girl ever." Ruby poked Fallon in the stomach, which drew out a sweet giggle from the little girl.

"How about some hot cocoa all around," Emma proclaimed.

"Yay," Fallon cheered, "With cinmanon and whipped cream."

"Only way to drink it," Emma lifted Fallon into her arms. "Let's go, Princess."

"Papa," Fallon greeted her father with a giant hug after he, Brennan, Bradyn, Henry and David arrived at Granny's for dinner after having a guy's day aboard Killian's ship.

"Hello, Little Love," Killian accepted the wet kiss his daughter offered. "Did you find yourself a pretty dress?"

"Yep," Fallon bobbed her head.

"Did Mama?" Killian watched as Emma took Bradyn from Henry, giving both of her boys kisses in the process.

"Yep," Fallon bobbed her head a second time.

Fallon held tight to her father's neck as he took a seat at their usual table at Granny's. She rambled on about her day, not letting anyone else get much of a word in. It was clear she'd missed her papa during her girl's day.

"Look what I caught," Ruby came in with her arm linked with her fiancé, "Think Granny will let me keep him?"

"So long as he treats you right," Granny came up with a wooden spoon, waving it at Whale in a half threatening/half teasing manner.

"I'll try," Victor chuckled.

"How are the wedding plans coming?" Killian asked Victor, offering him a hand to shake.

There was still an iciness between David and Victor, which had them keeping their distance.

"I've been advised to let the bride handle things how she sees fit, and to give my input only when asked directly for my opinion," Victor chuckled.

"Whoever gave you such wisdom is quite wise," Killian chuckled, "It's will be both the happiest, yet terrifying days of your life."

"Hey!" Emma exclaimed.

"Mostly happy," Killian amended.

"Terrifying?" Emma glared at him.

"I was committing myself to another person after being a pillaging, plundering bachelor for near three centuries," Killian explained, "That was the part of me which was terrified."
"And now?" Emma prompted him.

"The pillaging, plundering pirate is extremely happy," he kissed her soundly.

"What does pill-aging and plungering mean?" Fallon asked.

"Those are words Papa will explain to you when you're older," Emma tickled at her neck.

"I'm hungry," Fallon proclaimed.

"Let me guess, roni and cheese," Granny smiled at the little girl.

"Yes, please," Fallon bobbed her head.

"What do you want with your roni and cheese?" Emma prompted her daughter.

"And milk," Fallon stated after a moment of thought.

"And," Emma prompted her a second time.

"Ice cream," Fallon stated.

"And," Emma prompted a third time, "You need a vegetable too, Princess."

Fallon frowned but added, "And carrots."

"Some day you'll appreciate your vegetables," Emma tried to cheer her daughter up.

"How is the classroom treating you, Brennan?" Emma asked her father-in-law during their meal. They hadn't had much of a chance to speak since Brennan started at the school. He'd moved into his own apartment a few days later. As Emma had been on the night shifts, she hadn't had much time to chat with him.

"Things are going very well," Brennan was practically beaming as he spoke.

"The children love him," Mary Margaret chimed in, "They were never quite so excited during my attempts are art education."

"No offense, Grandma, but your art classes were kind of boring," Henry chimed in.

"You could have said something," Mary Margaret took the criticism in stride.

"I didn't want to hurt your feelings," Henry replied.

"Have you heard anything from Neal," Mary Margaret shifted the subject.

"Yeah," Henry nodded, "He's made contact with Cilia. She had somehow managed to avoid the siren's curse. She was really happy to see him even before he told her about the potion…He seems really happy."

"Maybe some good can come from this after all," Emma slung an arm around her oldest child's shoulders.

"It's been nearly a month for Neal," Henry stated, "He was surprised it's only been a week for us. They've mixed the fruit into the potion. Now they are trying to get an audience with the queen. She's been curiously absent from court, according to Neal."
"She'll turn up," Mary Margaret gave him a confident smile, "Royalty never stays absent for long. There are too many people counting on them. Katarina seemed like the type who liked the attention. If so, there is no better place to draw attention than at court."

"Speaking from experience?" Emma eyed her mother curiously.

"It's been a long time since I made an appearance at court," Mary Margaret snorted.

"I really hope Dad gets back by Christmas," Henry stated.

"He's got a few weeks yet. He might make it," Emma gave him a reassuring smile.

"Can we go see Santa yet?" Fallon climbed into Henry's lap while she waited for her food.

"Have you finished your list?" Henry asked her.

"Yep," Fallon bobbed her head, "I was really good this year, so I bet I get a lot."

Emma and Mary Margaret bit their lips to keep from laughing at the earnest expression on the little girl's face.

"Will you go with, Henry?" Fallon batted her lashes at him.

"Depends on when you go," Henry replied.

"Maybe we'll make it a full family outing tomorrow," Emma suggested, "Mom, do you and Leo want to join us?"

"What about Poppy?" Fallon pouted.

"Poppy has to work," Emma tapped her nose, "I bet Poppy Jones will go with us."

"I'd hate for your father to miss Leo's audience with Santa," Mary Margaret hesitated.

"Miss an hour long wait, kids running around, shrill screams of the scared little ones sitting in Santa's lap," David recalled last year's visit to Santa, "I'm okay with sitting this one out."

"Are you sure?" Mary Margaret continued to hesitate.

"More than," David laughed, "Go, have a good time. Make sure to get good pictures of the kids with Santa. I'll have a stiff drink ready for you when you get back."

"It's not that bad," Emma rolled her eyes.

"All the same, I'll stay and keep the town safe," David replied.

"What am I getting myself into?" Brennan inquired of David.

David proceeded to give his counterpart a rundown of what to expect the next day. Emma worried her father had turned her father-in-law off of the entire day, but Brennan showed up at the cottage first thing in the morning dressed and ready to go. He chuckled merrily when Fallon pulled him out the front door when Mary Margaret and Leo arrived.

The drive to the mall was filled with the family singing Christmas songs along with the radio, the ones who knew the words anyways.
While Fallon and Leo waited in line with their mothers along with Bradyn sitting happily in his stroller, the men took advantage of the wait time to get a head start on their shopping. Fallon made them promise to return before she sat with Santa.

"Every year this line gets longer and longer," Mary Margaret observed while they waited.

"Mom, this is only the third year we've ever done this," Emma pointed out.

"It's still longer," Mary Margaret sighed.

"If you want to take the kids to the play area, I'll wait here with Bradyn," Emma offered. "If I get close, I'll text you."

"You don't mind?" Mary Margaret asked.

"No," Emma shook her head, her eyes motioning towards her anxious looking daughter, "It's probably for the best."

"Fallon does look about ready to run everyone over," Mary Margaret snorted softly so her granddaughter wouldn't overhear.

"Fallon, why don't you go with Grammy for a bit," Emma suggested.

"No," Fallon moaned, "I want to talk to Santa."

"You will," Emma knelt down to give her a reassuring pep talk, "I'll wait right here with Bradyn. We'll save your place in line. You and Leo can play for a bit. Then when it's almost time, you can come back, jump in line and meet Santa."

"Promise?" Fallon demanded.

"I promise," Emma vowed. "Stay close to Grammy."

"I will," Fallon took Mary Margaret's hand.

Emma lifted Bradyn from the stroller and chatted with him for a bit when Henry suddenly returned.

"Everything okay?"

"Yeah," Henry took Bradyn's outstretched hand and shook it a bit, "Not really feeling in the Christmas mood at the moment. Killian is trying to explain the concept of Christmas presents to Brennan."

"Can't be any more amusing than it was when I explained the concept to Killian," Emma chuckled.

"Or when I explained it to him again when he nearly bought you socks because your feet were always so cold when you got into bed," Henry snorted.

"I wouldn't have minded socks," Emma snickered.

"But you liked the necklace a whole lot better," Henry laughed.

"True," Emma touched the charm around her neck. It was merely a coincidence she was wearing the same necklace Killian gave her for their first Christmas together. "Any idea what you're getting Paige this year?"

"I actually already ordered it online," Henry blushed, "It's this journal I saw with her favorite quote on the cover. It should be arriving soon."
"That's very thoughtful," Emma wrapped her free arm around his shoulder. "Did you buy all your presents online this year?"

"No," Henry shook his head, "I still have a few left to get. I've been saving my allowance and the daily profit money Killian splits with me when we go fishing."

"Don't spend that money on us," Emma replied, "If you want some money for gifts, we'll happily give you some."

"No, I like it better this way," Henry shook his head, "Then it feels like I'm actually giving the gifts."

"Don't spend all your money on us," Emma stated.

"I'm spending most of it on Fallon, Bradyn and Leo," Henry replied.

"Go easy on them too," Emma bounced Bradyn about a bit, "This one especially won't really care much about anything Christmas, and Fallon will be spoiled enough as it is."

"I know," Henry smiled, "It was so fun watching her last year, but I think it will be more so this year."

"I think you're right," Emma smiled, "In about a year or two more, this one will be giving Fallon a run for her money."

"Yep," Henry took Bradyn from his mother and bounced him about. The little boy began babbling in his older brother's direction while poking and prodding at his face, drawing a wide grin in the process.

Emma couldn't resist taking a picture of the pair.

Slowly but surely the line inched forward. Henry took Bradyn to join Fallon and Leo in the play area for a bit when it appeared even he was getting restless.

Emma glanced at her watch. She'd been in line for well over an hour. She was just about to call for reinforcements when her husband and father-in-law turned up with several cups of hot chocolate.

"You're several children short, Love," Killian held the beverage carrier still so Emma could take a cup from him.

"Sent them off to wear off some energy," Emma inched the stroller forward a step and then pulled out her phone. She quickly fired off a message to her mother to bring everyone back. If she was correct, they only had about another ten minutes to wait. "Did you guys get any shopping done?"

"A bit," Killian responded cryptically.

"What about you, Brennan?" Emma asked, "Did Killian sufficient explain the concept?"

"I believe so," Brennan gave a scratch behind his ear as Fallon came sprinting over.

"It's almost time, Princess," Killian lifted her into his arms.

"Put me down, Papa," Fallon tried to wiggle free, "You'll wrinkle my dress."

"My apologies, Little Love," Killian chuckled and returned her to her feet.

Fallon made a showing of smoothing out her dress as the rest of the family joined them.
Bradyn reached for his father, not the least bit concerned about having his picture attire wrinkled.

"Do you two have your lists all ready to go?" Mary Margaret accepted the hot chocolate Brennan was offering her as she asked Fallon and Leo.

Both children nodded their heads vigorously.

"And you're going to smile real pretty for the cameras, right?" Mary Margaret asked.

Both children continued to bob their head.

"They have to show Bradyn how it's done," Emma caressed the little boy's head.

"Hope this one doesn't do what Fallon did during her first audience with Santa," Killian chuckled.

"Me neither," Emma snickered and proceeded to explain to Brennan about how Fallon screamed and carried on during her first encounter with the man she was now extremely eager to see. Emma even pulled out her phone to show the picture of Fallon in Santa's lap with tears streaming down her cheeks, her mouth open mid scream. Emma had felt horrible for the poor man, but the elf working the camera assured the frazzled parents that Fallon wouldn't be the first or last to carry on in such a fashion.

Emma watched her daughter in amusement as she appeared to be rehearsing what she was going to say to Santa. She didn't want to forget one single thing on her list.

When the time came, Fallon was first up on Santa's lap.

"And what is your name, young lady?" the jolly man asked after giving her a welcoming, "Ho, Ho, Ho."

"My name is Fallon Ava Jones. I'm three years old, and I live in Storybrooke, Maine, in the cottage overlooking the ocean," Fallon began her well-rehearsed speech. Of course she had to make sure Santa knew exactly where to deliver her mountain of presents, "I've been a super good girl this year."

"That's very important to hear," the man chuckled, "So what would you like for Christmas?"

Fallon proceeded to rattle off the many items on her list, in the order they had been written. Emma had her phone handy and was just close enough to hear everything and take notes of the items which seemed most important and plausible.

Santa made the appropriate noises to seem interested. When Fallon paused for a beat he asked, "Is there anything else?"

Fallon thought for a moment and then looked towards her family who were waiting patiently only a few steps away.

"One more thing," Fallon made a motion with her finger to indicate Santa needed to come closer so she could whisper in his ear.

"Darn it," Emma muttered under her breath.

"I think you have quite a list to fulfill, Love," Killian caught her frustration at not being able to hear the final item on Fallon's wish list.

"Yes, but if it's such a secret she can only share with Santa, it must be the most important," Emma
replied.

Santa pulled away with a slightly perplexed look on his face. It took him a few moments to recover enough to bring Fallon's attention towards the camera so her picture could be taken. When she was done, she hopped off Santa's lap and proceeded to introduce her uncle and assure Santa he was an equally good boy before rejoining her parents in line.

"Wish I'd thought to offer up references when I was Fallon's age," Henry chuckled as he lifted Fallon into his arms, "Did you remember it all?"

"Yep," Fallon hugged him tight around the neck and added a wet kiss to his cheek.

Leo didn't take nearly as long as Fallon and rejoined their family in short order.

Emma and Killian took a collective deep breath as they approached Santa with Bradyn.

"We don't know how this is going to go," Emma told the man as Killian lowered Bradyn into the jolly man's lap.

"The first time is always the most interesting," the patient man did his best to reassure them both.

Once Bradyn appeared settled, the parents stepped away so a picture could be taken, both of them holding their breath that Bradyn wouldn't let out the same blood curling scream his sister had years earlier. Proving how different the two were, Bradyn merely smiled at the man and began babbling away once more, almost like he was telling Santa his own wish list.

With Bradyn's picture out of the way, they were allowed to take family pictures, one with just Mary Margaret and Leo, one with all the Joneses, and then one with the entire family combined. As they waited for the pictures to be printed, the elves announced Santa was going to take a bit of a break. There was a collective groan from everyone in line.

Fallon was entertaining Bradyn with a little dance while he sat in his stroller watching on, when one of the elves approached the group.

"Are any of you parents to that little girl?" the elf pointed to Fallon.

"We are," Emma motioned towards Killian and herself.

"If you have a moment, Santa would like to speak with you in his cottage," the elf motioned towards the tiny building which Emma had always assumed was merely part of the Christmas display.

"Go ahead," Mary Margaret assured her, "Brennan, Henry and I have more than enough eyes to keep on these three."

Emma gave her mother a grateful smile, took her husband's hand, and followed the elf to Santa's cottage.

"We were told you wanted to see the parents of our daughter," Emma began with a nervous breath.

"Awe, yes," the man removed his hat and glasses. Emma was surprised to realize his white hair and beard were real. "Fallon is such a charming little girl."

"She certainly is," Killian chuckled.

"The reason I asked to speak with you is a bit delicate. I wouldn't want the little girl to think I was betraying her trust," the man explained.
"We completely understand," Emma assured him.

"She asked for something a bit…unorthodox," he chose his words carefully, "I've been doing this sort of thing since my hair turned white. Let me tell you, that was many, many years ago. I've never had any child ask for such a selfless gift."

"Selfless?" Emma raised a curious brow, "Fallon?"

"She asked me to bring her brother's father home for Christmas," Santa explained, "I assume he's in the military and stationed overseas."

"Something like that," Emma nodded, "My oldest son's father is away right now, and Henry's been missing him. I didn't realize Fallon had picked up on it."

"Is it a possibility?" Santa asked.

"I'm afraid it's a bit out of our control," Emma sighed, "However Christmas is a time for miracles, so you never know…I can't believe she asked for that. She tolerates Neal on a good day."

"Neal is the boy's father?" Santa inquired.

"Yeah, my ex, from a long time ago," Emma replied, "It's a long and complicated story. We appreciate you telling us."

"I hope for you all, her wish comes true," Santa smiled.

"Thank you, Santa," Emma returned the smile, "Merry Christmas."

"Merry Christmas to you too," he nodded.

"Everything alright?" Mary Margaret asked when the pair emerged.

"Yeah," Emma smiled and lifted Fallon into her arms for a great big hug. She was never more proud of her daughter than she was at this moment, but she couldn't tell her daughter so.

"How about some lunch," Mary Margaret suggested after glancing at her watch.

"Lunch sounds good," Emma agreed.

"She asked for what?" Mary Margaret was flabbergasted by Emma's revelation when they returned to Storybrooke and the children all wandered off to play while the adults chatted. David had just arrived to see how the day had gone.

"She asked for Neal to come home by Christmas for Henry," Emma repeated, "I hate so much for having to disappoint her, but how is that something we can even think could happen? Avalon's time works so different than it does here. Look at Brennan. He and Killian and practically the same age."

"Oi," Killian protested, "I believe my papa has a few more years on me."

"Really, you're over three hundred years old and it bothers you that your father might appear to look the same age as you?" Emma stared him down, "My parents are technically the same age as me."

"Only because the curse kept us from aging," Mary Margaret chimed in, "We experienced the twenty-eight years, it just felt like one really long year."

"Some of us did, anyways," David chimed in.
"Except for those who were unconscious the entire time," Mary Margaret snickered, "Some days I think you got off easy, Charming."

"You could try talking to Neal," David suggested, "Snatch Henry’s mirror for a quick chat and replace it before he notices. If Neal knows how much Henry misses him, it might incentivize him to come home quicker."

"It couldn't hurt to try," Emma shrugged.

"We'll keep the children distracted," Mary Margaret offered.

"Thanks, Mom," Emma smiled and went into Henry's bedroom to find his mirror. It was easier to find than she thought it would be as it was on his nightstand. She snatched it up and brought it up to the roof so as to not get interrupted.

She wasn't quite sure how the mirror worked or how long she'd have to wait for Neal to appear, but it ended up not long at all as Neal instantly appeared.

"Emma," Neal was surprised to see Emma and not his son, "Is everything alright? Is Henry okay?"

"He's fine," Emma was quick to assure him, "Everyone is fine. As far as Storybrooke goes, things are quiet…I know you are doing important work, but our son misses you. Do you have any idea when you might be making your way home? He really wants you home by Christmas. It's less than two weeks away."

"We're so close to accomplishing the mission," Neal stated, "The king and queen are holding court tomorrow. Cilia is able to get us in, but it will be tricky to get close enough to the queen to hit her with the potion."

"Neal, please be careful but be quick. It would mean a lot to Henry to have you home for the holidays," Emma requested.

"I'll do my best," Neal vowed.

"Thank you," Emma replied.

Emma returned to the main living area after returning Henry’s mirror to his nightstand before he even suspected and then delivered the news to the adult that Neal was making progress. She didn't dare give the same news to the children for fear it might get their hopes up.

TBC…
Disclaimer: Only the thoughts in my head and in this story are mine. The characters, sadly, aren't.

"Wake up, Papa," Fallon began her usual morning routine with a bit more urgency than was usual. "Wake up, wake up, Santa was here."

"Wake your mum," Killian spoke gruffly.

Fallon climbed over Killian and shook her mother vigorously.

"The joy of Christmas morning," Emma laughed and tickled her daughter, "Is Henry awake?"

"Yes," Henry came up the stairs with Bradyn sound asleep on his shoulder in the cute Christmas footie pajamas he'd given him as an early Christmas present, "Fallon was quite persistent this morning."

"Santa brought presents," Fallon told her older brother with the most sincere eyes.

"I know. I saw," Henry chuckled.

"Is Poppy awake?" Emma threw back the covers. She and her husband both made sure to fall asleep in their flannel pajamas, knowing Fallon would be too impatient to allow them a moment to dress.

"He will be soon if he isn't already," Henry chuckled.

Brennan had spent the night on the sofa even though he'd moved into his own apartment weeks earlier. He wanted to experience Christmas morning with his family after having the entire experience explained to him the previous day.

The family made their way downstairs to find Brennan already starting the coffee. It was the one machine he'd become proficient with during his time in Storybrooke.

"Good morning, Brennan," Emma smiled, "Merry Christmas."

"To you as well," Brennan replied.

"Look at all the presents!" Fallon's eyes were wide as she plopped herself down near the tree with her dog parking himself right next to her. She scratched behind the dog's ears while she waited eagerly for Henry to pass out all the gifts as she wasn't yet proficient with reading the names on the packages even though her grandmother was working with both her and Leo.

"Next year, this is your job," Henry tapped at her nose playfully and began his task.

"We always go around the room, one person at a time opens a gift until only the children have presents remaining, then we let them tear into them," Emma explained the process to her father-in-law.

"Me first," Fallon proclaimed.

"Of course you go first," Emma snickered and watched as Fallon picked out the largest of the wrapped packages.

"I got a bicycle," Fallon peeled off the paper and stared at a picture on the box. Her excitement
caused her to jump up and down.

"It's a tricycle," Emma amended, "It has three wheels. It lets you learn how to pedal before you move up to a bicycle."

"Look, Henry, I have a bicycle," Fallon turned the picture on the box towards her brother. "I hope it comes with snow tires," Henry snickered, "It's not going very far with all the snow on the ground."

"Alright, Princess, it's Henry's turn," Emma told her daughter.

Henry eyed his presents and unwrapped the first one he could get his hands on. "A sailor's journal," Henry read off the front of the leather bound book.

"I started writing of my voyages at about your age," Killian replied, "It reinforced my teachings."

"I'll use it every time we set sail," Henry beamed.

"Your turn, Brennan," Emma encouraged him.

"What about Bradyn?" Brennan wiggled the little boy's outstretched hand as he sat in his mother's lap.

"He'll be more interested in the boxes than the toys," Emma smiled, "Go ahead."

Brennan opened his first package. It was a pair of warm leather gloves. "These will surely come in handy," Brennan fit his hand into one of them at Killian's urging. They fit perfectly.

Emma picked up a small present for Bradyn and tried to coax him into ripping the paper. The little boy wanted none of it. To keep things moving along, Emma unwrapped the gift for him. His first present was also a pair of mittens. "For when you lose your current pair," Emma tapped the little boy's nose.

"He does seem to drop those things a lot," Henry observed.

"Your turn, Mommy," Fallon told her mother.

Emma picked up a package from her pile and opened it. "I'm sensing a theme here," Emma laughed when she opened up her box to find another pair of gloves, this time for herself.

"Shall we make it four in a row," Killian chuckled as he searched through his boxes to see if he had any in the same shape. Sure enough, he found himself opening a pair of gloves much to everyone's amusement.

"My turn again," Fallon found the next largest package. Paper flew everywhere in her haste, even covering her beloved dog, who quickly wiggled out from underneath it.

"She really gets into it," Brennan noted in amusement.

"Oh yeah," Emma nodded, "You should have seen her on her birthday. The amount of presents was larger, and she was the only one opening. It was raining wrapping paper."

Fallon leapt with excitement upon opening the box to find one of the dolls she'd asked Santa for. She pulled it from the box and hugged it tight.
Around the room they continued to go until the adults had opened all their gifts. Then Henry and Fallon went through all their gifts, oohing and aahing each time they opened one, only to move on to the next until everything was open.

With all the presents apparently open, Fallon began arranging all her gifts to decide where to start playing with them all. Henry had was looking through the nautical book his stepfather had given him. Emma was playing tug of war with Bradyn over the new squeak toy they'd given him. The little boy was giggling incessantly. Emma noted her husband and oldest son trading curious looks before Killian rose from the sofa.

"There's one more," Killian went to the tree and pulled a small wrapped box hanging with care from a limb of the tree.

"Is it for me?" Fallon ran over to him.

"No, Little Love, this one is for your mum," Killian smiled and handed it to his daughter, "Will you give it to her?"

Fallon followed her father's instructions and darted over to her mother. "Here, Mama," Fallon thrust the small box into her mother's hands.

"Thank you, Princess," Emma took the box as Brennan relieved her of Bradyn. "What is this?"

"You'll have to open it, Love," Killian retook his place next to her and pulled Fallon into his lap.

Emma's curiosity got the better of her. She'd received about a dozen presents, new clothing, outerwear and even a new necklace. She wondered why her husband had saved this one gift for last.

"Open it, Mama," Fallon encouraged her.

"Do you want to help me?" Emma asked.

Fallon transferred herself into her mother's lap and helped Emma open the gift. Inside were a set of keys, a very familiar set of keys.

"What's this?" Emma pulled the keys from the box, "These look like my keys to the bug."

"Look outside, Mom," Henry encouraged her, trading knowing looks with Killian.

Emma went to the window and gasped at the sight in the driveway. "Is that my car?"

"Just like new," Killian stepped behind her and wrapped his arms around her waist.

"How?" Emma snatched up her coat and slipped it on. She barely remembered her boots before she was out the door.

"I think she likes it," Killian sent a wink towards his stepson before he followed Emma outside.

"How is this possible?" Emma was sitting in the driver's seat when Killian caught up to her, "My car was basically an accordion last time I looked at her."

"Just a little bit of magic," Henry stated as he and Fallon joined the pair, bundled up for the cold.

"Are you serious?" Emma palmed the wheel.

"Regina was happy to offer her services," Killian added.
Emma sent him a knowing look.

"She offered her services when Henry asked," Killian amended.

"I can't believe this is real," Emma smiled broadly.

"We figured there was a reason you were putting off replacing your vehicle," Henry helped Fallon into the vehicle and buckled her into her seat. "How about a ride?"

"I'm in my pajamas," Emma pointed towards her flannel pants.

"So what," Henry shrugged, "It's not like we're going to get out of the car."

"What about Brennan and Bradyn?" Emma looked towards the cottage. She could see Brennan and Bradyn at the window.

"I'll stay with them, Love," Killian bent down to kiss her, "Take her for a…what was the phrase, Henry?"

"Spin," Henry chimed in while hopping into the front seat.

"Thank you," Emma caressed her husband's cheek.

"She's been with you a long time," Killian reminded her, "You weren't ready to part with her."

"Let's go, Mama," Fallon cheered.

Emma started the vehicle. It purred to life.

"Sounds like Mom gave her a tune up," Henry noted the change in the engine's sound since he last rode in the vehicle.

Emma threw the vehicle into reverse and pulled out of the driveway. She drove all around town, enjoying the familiar way the car handled. It was truly the perfect gift. She steered the car back to the cottage so she could properly thank her husband.

"How was the voyage?" Killian was waiting to help her from the vehicle.

"Nearly the best gift I'll receive this year," Emma wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him soundly, "Thank you."

"You're quite welcome," he continued to peck at her lips.

"Come on, Fallon," Henry helped his sister from the vehicle, "I think Mama and Papa might be out here for awhile."

Fallon giggled and followed him into the cottage while singing her kissing song.

"So what other possible gift could you receive this year which would top the one I've given you?" Killian swayed slightly with her in his arms.

"Why would you say there is another gift?" she gave him a coy smile.

"Because you said this was nearly the best gift you'd receive this year," Killian thumbed the dimple in her chin. "I am quite perceptive, so I'm fairly certain you didn't misspeak."
Emma held out her hand and concentrated. Soon a wrapped gift popped into her hand. "I had one more present for you too."

"Is that so?" Killian laughed and took the gift from her. "You've been practicing your magic without telling me."

"Simple spell," she encouraged him to open his gift.

"Swan," Killian gasped as he opened the box to find a pair of baby booties inside. "Are you…"

"I'm pregnant," she beamed in reply.

Killian picked her up and swung her around as they both laughed with glee. "Who else knows?"

"Just you," Emma smiled. "…and Doc."

"This is wonderful, Love," Killian caressed her cheek.

"We'll have to tell the children before Ruby's wedding," Emma replied, "I'd like to tell my parents today."

"Let's just hope Fallon takes this news better than the last time," Killian chuckled.

"I love you, Killian," she felt the emotions well up and spill out.

"And I you, Swan," Killian kissed her.

"Are you ready, Pumpkin?" Ruby knelt down to twirl a red curl of Fallon's hair with her finger. The little girl looked adorable in her flower girl dress.

"Yep," Fallon held up the red rose petals in the basket she was to carry.

"Do you remember what we practiced yesterday?" Ruby asked her.

Fallon bobbed her head eagerly.

"Smile, Princess," Mary Margaret encouraged her granddaughter as the music started and the little girl pranced down the aisle, throwing a handful of petals with each step. Emma noticed Fallon was nearly out of petals about half way down the aisle, but suddenly the basket was refilled. Emma was wondering if her daughter had pulled off such a feat when she caught the mischievous twinkle in the eyes of the town's mayor. Emma traded a smile of gratitude with the mayor and then linked arms with her mother. They would be walking down together.

"So Ruby requested two beautiful bridesmaids," her mother muttered on their walk. "Both pregnant?"

"Can we talk about this later?" Emma muttered back.

"Emma, are you?" her mother asked.

"Later," Emma muttered before the entire town could figure out what they could be talking about.

Her mother gave her a knowing look and then refocused her attention on her husband and son, sitting on the bride's side of the aisle, giving her matching smiles.
Emma's focus was on her husband, standing next to Victor, serving as best man. He looked quite dashing in the black velvet tuxedo he was wearing. He had Fallon in his arms. She'd apparently forgotten she was supposed to sit next to her grandfather and uncle or just decided altogether to do what she wanted, which was fairly typical for her. Emma could only smile.

Ruby stunned the crowd into silence when she entered with Granny walking her down the aisle. She practically floated with happiness. Those watching the groom happened to catch Victor wiping away a happy tear as she emerged, so stunned he was by her beauty.

The wedding was simple as the bride and groom had requested. They traded vows and then rings before they were pronounced husband and wife.

"Two weddings in less than six months," Mary Margaret sighed happily from the head table as she and Emma watched the newest newlyweds share their first dance, "Almost makes me want to do it all again myself."

"Good luck talking Dad into it," Emma snorted.

"I think he'd be easier to talk into it than Killian," Mary Margaret retorted.

"You are right there," Emma turned to see Killian babbling away with Bradyn in his lap while Fallon entertained the little boy by twirling a step away.

"So," Mary Margaret prodded her daughter, "Are you?"

"Yes," Emma confirmed, "I gave Killian baby booties as his final Christmas present and then we told the rest of the family. Everyone was ecstatic except…"  

"Fallon," Mary Margaret guessed.

"She's worried about being replaced as Killian's princess," Emma replied.

"That will never happen," Mary Margaret insisted.

"You and I know, but Fallon will need a bit of convincing," Emma stated.

"She'll come around. She did with Bradyn," Mary Margaret reminded her.

"Yeah," Emma watched her daughter interact with her youngest son.

"The Charming ladies pregnant together again," Mary Margaret gave her daughter's hand a squeeze.

"It's going to be fun torturing our husbands," Emma smiled.

"I'll humbly accept whatever torture comes at your hand, Love," Killian snorted upon overhearing their conversation.

"Did you two want to dance?" Mary Margaret offered to take Bradyn.

"I should start this torture thing sooner rather than later," Emma nodded and watched Killian pass Bradyn off to Mary Margaret before pulling him onto the dance floor to join the bride and groom and the other couples of Storybrooke.

"I love dancing with you," Emma smiled adoringly at her husband as they swayed with the music. Her fingers were toying with the nap of his neck, something she knew her husband enjoyed.
"And I you," Killian pulled her a hair closer.

"Such a magical holiday, don't you think," Emma replied.

"Every day is magical with you, Love," Killian gave her a wink.

"You and the one liners," she laughed.

Killian suddenly spun her away and then brought her back, dipping her back in the process. Emma squealed with delight.

"You've given this old pirate everything he could have ever hoped for," Killian mused once she was back in his arms, swaying again to the music.

"Right back at ya, Babe," she smiled.

A hush suddenly fell over the room. Emma groaned, thinking someone or something had arrived to cast a spell or cause some new sort of magical chaos, but then she heard her son's voice.

"Dad!" Henry ran towards his father.

"Merry Christmas, Henry," Neal hugged him tight.

Emma gave her husband a smile. Fallon's Christmas wish for her older brother had come true. She could see the little girl up on a chair next to her grandmother, jumping up and down in excitement.

Emma entwined her fingers with her husband's and pulled him reluctantly towards Neal.

"Mission accomplished?" Emma asked.

"Avalon is on the mend," Neal confirmed, "It's going to take a bit of time for everything to go back to normal, but King Daniel has regained control of the kingdom."

Emma turned to see Brennan give a relieved sigh.

"I told you we would help your people," Emma reached for his hand and gave it a squeeze.

"Thank you," Brennan offered Neal his hand.

"I want you all to meet someone," Neal pulled a woman away from the shadows. "This is Cilia…my wife."

"Wife!" Emma exclaimed.

"It's a bit of a story," Neal put his arm around Cilia's waist, "Cilia, this is my son, Henry…his mother, Emma and her husband, Killian."

"I've heard a lot about you…all of you," Cilia smiled.

Emma didn't know what to expect if she ever met Cilia, but the woman standing before her wasn't it. Jet black hair and chisel facial features. This woman had worked hard for a lot of years, but there was still spirit in her eyes. Emma knew she'd like this woman immediately. There wasn't even a flash of jealousy that her ex had moved on.

"It's good to meet you," Emma extended her hand. "I believe you've met my father-in-law."
"Of course," Cilia smiled and gave him a nod of acknowledgment, "King Daniel sends his regards and gratitude. He has offered you a full pardon if you wish to return to our kingdom."

"I appreciate the offer," Brennan nodded, "My family is here."

"King Daniel thought you’d say as much," Neal pulled a pouch from his satchel and handed it to Brennan, "He wanted to reward you for your years of service and for helping break the curse."

Brennan poured out a bit on the contents. Several rather large gemstones fell into his hands.

"Good lord!" Emma's eyes went wide at the sight.

"The king has been most generous," Brennan returned the gems to the pouch and immediately handed it to his son, "I believe you'll be able to make better use of it than I ever could."

"Papa, this is too much," Killian tried to refuse the exceedingly generous offer.

"For our family," Brennan added, "To provide the legacy I’d always hoped for."

Killian was still reluctant to accept his father's offer.

"I insist, Son," Brennan touched his son's shoulder.

"We will use this well," Killian nodded and hugged his father.

Emma smiled proudly.

"Poppy, dance with me," Fallon ran over and tugged on her grandfather's hand.

"Of course, Princess," Brennan allowed himself to be pulled to the dance floor.

"What's the celebration for?" Neal glanced around the room.

"Ruby and Whale's wedding," Emma motioned towards the happy bride and groom dancing in the middle of everyone.

"Good for them," Neal replied, "We'd better get back to the shop. Papa was ordering dinner for us."

"I'm glad you made it home for the holiday," Emma smiled and motioned towards their son, "It means a lot to Henry."

"We brought gifts," Neal told his son, "Will you be able to stop by this evening?"

"Yeah," Henry nodded, "I have gifts for you too. Is it okay if I leave now, Mom?"

"That's up to you," Emma replied, "As long as you say goodbye to Regina, your sister and grandparents before you leave."

"Thanks, Mom," Henry hugged her quickly.

"Merry Christmas, Henry," Emma took the opportunity to hug him tight.

"Merry Christmas, Mom," Henry replied before taking a quick moment to hug Killian before he went off to make his farewells.

"He really missed you," Emma told Neal.
"I missed him too," Neal nodded.

"I'm glad you found happiness," Emma stated, "You deserve it."

"And so do you," Neal glanced towards Killian, "I'm sorry I was such a …"


"Yeah," Neal conceded.

"Just be good to our son and make him proud to have you for a father," Emma told him.

"That's my plan," Neal nodded.

"Papa, dance time," Fallon ran over after finishing her dance with Brennan.

Killian lifted her into his arms and was about to return to the dance floor when Henry approached to offer his sister his goodbye.

"No," Fallon moaned and flung her arms around her brother's neck, "You promised to dance with me."

"Dad, can you wait a couple of minutes so I can dance with Fallon?" Henry asked Neal.

"I guess," Neal shifted uncomfortable as Ruby looked over to spot the uninvited member at her reception. Neal expected a scene when Ruby approached but was surprised when she instead offered to let him stay for the dance.

"Stay," Emma encouraged him, "You and Cilia can have your own dance. You two must have gotten married fairly quick. Did you have any celebration at all?"

"We did not," Cilia answered for Neal.

"Every new bride deserves their first dance," Emma replied.

"We're not really dressed for the celebration," Neal motioned towards their clothes, still dirty from their travels home.

"Easy enough to remedy," Regina joined in and changed their attire with a snap of her fingers.

"It's up to you, Cilia," Neal shrugged.

"I'd like to stay," Cilia looked at the decorated surroundings with intrigue. It had been far too long since she'd been invited to attend any of the elaborate parties held in her kingdom. As a woman working a man's job in her kingdom, she was deemed an outcast and virtually ignored.

"I'll tell Papa," Neal pulled out his phone and dialed his father. After a brief, yet tense conversation, Neal pulled Cilia onto the dance floor for their first dance as husband and wife.

"Are you alright, Love?" Killian wrapped his arms around her waist from behind as they watched the pair.

"More than alright," Emma spun to wrap her arms around his neck, "How can I be anything but happy at the moment? Henry got his Christmas wish, which means Fallon got her Christmas wish. Ruby and Whale are waltzing towards their happily ever after. Everyone in my family got their Christmas wish this year."
"Including you?" Killian raised a brow as he backed her up until they were on the dance floor with the rest of the town.

"Especially me," Emma agreed, "I can't wait to greet this new baby."

"I knew it!" Emma and Killian heard Ruby screech in excitement as she dashed over to hug her friend, "Congratulations!"

"I was going to wait until after the reception to announce it," Emma felt herself blush, "I didn't want to upstage your wedding day."

"Don't be ridiculous," Ruby waved off the concern, "I'm so happy for you both. You two make the cutest babies."

"So do they," Emma nodded towards her parents. They were dancing together while Granny entertained Leo and Bradyn.

"Does that mean it's official?" Ruby asked, "Are they telling people?"

"If my secret is out, so is theirs," Emma snickered.

"Hey," Mary Margaret scowled at her daughter before accepting the official congratulations from her long time friend.

The entire town converged on the two pairs to offer their congratulations.

It was the perfect ending to another chapter in Storybrooke's tale.

TBC…
Epilogue

Disclaimer: Only the thoughts in my head and in this story are mine. The characters, sadly, aren't.

"Should we find it at all ironic that today of all days Regina called this little gathering?" Mary Margaret asked her daughter on Emma's birthday. The town had already celebrated with the annual parade, minus the town's mayor, which everyone found a bit unusual.

Regina had asked for the Charming and Jones families to join her at the manor for lunch. When everyone arrived, they found only Roland and Henry, holding down the fort, so to speaking. They were both tight lipped about why everyone had been summoned.

"Maybe she'll be cursing us back to the Enchanted Forest," Killian approached with their two month old son nestled in his arms, sound asleep.

"Hi, Wyatt," Mary Margaret wrapped his tiny hand around her finger, "He's such a good little sleeper."

"None of that curse business out of you," Emma poked her husband in the shoulder. "Where did Fallon and Bradyn run off to?"

"Papa took them outside to wear off some energy," Killian explained, "There are too many breakable objects for a sugar crazed Fallon to knock over."

"And naturally Bradyn doesn't want to be left in her dust," Emma chimed in. Since the toddler started walking, his direction was mostly in the wake of Fallon albeit a bit slower and less steady on his feet. The little girl enjoyed having a shadow, for the most part. She enjoyed teaching her younger brother about the ways of the world as she saw them.

"Where's Dad?" Emma glanced around for her own father.

"Bobbie needed changing," Mary Margaret referenced her own son, born two months before Wyatt.

"And Leo?" Emma asked. Just as the words were out of her mouth, her brother attached himself to her legs. Emma bent down to pick him up, grunting in the process. "Hey, Bro. You're almost getting too big to be picked up."

"I'm hungry," Leo announced.

"We'll be eating soon," Emma tried to reassure him, "As soon as Robin and Regina get here… hopefully soon."

"Mom just texted me," Henry announced, "They'll be here any minute."

"Any idea what this is all about, Kid?" Emma eyed her oldest son curiously.

"It's best for Mom and Robin to tell everyone," Henry responded cryptically.

"It's for something good though, right?" Emma pressed.

"Yes," Henry snickered, "It's something very good."

"Is the food going to be soon?" Emma asked, "Leo is hungry, and I'm thinking Fallon and Bradyn will be too when Brennan brings them inside."
"Yes," Henry nodded.

"Can you wait a little longer, Bro?" Emma asked her little brother.

"I think so," Leo bobbed his head after giving the question the necessary bit of thought.

"Why don't you retrieve Fallon and Bradyn?" Emma suggested while returning him to his feet, "They'll need to wash up before they can eat."

Leo immediately darted off.

When Emma turned towards her husband and son, Killian was transferring the sleeping infant into Mary Margaret's eager arms. The little boy didn't even flinch at the movement.

Emma watched her mother with her youngest son with an arm wrapped around her husband's waist. Wyatt was the perfect addition to the family. Even Fallon doted on him, unlike when Bradyn joined the family two years prior. She'd hover over his crib while he slept and do little dances to make his smile when he was awake.

Emma wondered if her daughter's attitude towards her youngest brother would have been different if Wyatt had turned out to be a girl. She knew her daughter relished being Killian's only princess.

With hands all washed, everyone waited anxiously for Regina and Robin's surprise to appear.

"Henry, Roland?" Regina called out when she and Robin entered the foyer.

Roland and Henry dutifully went to the front door. The rest of the Charmings and Joneses waited anxiously, the adults trading nervous glances with one another.

Suddenly Regina and Robin appeared with wide smiles.

"Everyone's here," Regina proclaimed.

"As requested," Mary Margaret was bouncing around with Wyatt in her arms, "Is everything alright?"

"Everything is wonderful," Regina was positively glowing. Her cheerfulness caught the entire family off guard.

"What's the surprise, Regina?" Emma rose to her feet and approached the town's mayor.

"We wanted you all here to meet someone," Regina smiled when Robin brought in a small girl about a year younger than Fallon, "Everyone, this is Nova. Robin and I have adopted her."

"You what?" Mary Margaret and Emma responded in unison.

"It's a bit complicated," Regina rubbed her hands together a bit nervously, "During our trip to the Enchanted Forest for our honeymoon, Robin and I were in the village one day when we found Nova wandering the market. It took some effort, but we discovered she was living in the orphanage and had wandered off. Robin and I talked about it at great length and decided to put the wheels in motion to officially adopt her. We've been corresponding regularly with the orphanage, but we didn't have a way to get her here until we discovered Anton had some magic beans."

"It's been almost a year since we made that discovery," Emma replied, "Why have you waited so long?"
"Apparently Anton needed to use the final bean he had to grow more before he could part with another one," Regina explained.

"Hi, I'm Fallon," she interrupted the discussion by approaching the newest member of the family and introduced herself.

"I'm Nova," the girl was trembling slightly as she spoke. She obviously wasn't used to being put on display, and was likely overwhelmed by her new surroundings.

"Do you like candy?" Fallon pulled a newly acquired piece of candy from her pocket.

Nova looked towards Regina with uncertainty.

"You'll like it," Regina gave her a reassuring smile.

Nova took the piece of candy from Fallon, uncertain what to do with it. Fallon took another piece of candy from her pocket to demonstrate. The little girl smiled as she had her first taste of the sweet treat.

"There's more where that came from," Emma knelt beside her daughter, "I'm Emma. I'm Fallon's mom."

"Hi," Nova responded shyly.

"I'm also Henry's mom," Emma motioned towards her son, who Nova had met privately a few minutes earlier. "Henry was also adopted by Regina many years ago."

As Emma and Fallon conversed with the little girl, Mary Margaret pulled Regina aside, "Do you think it is wise bringing a child from the Enchanted Forest into this world?"

"Robin and I talked about it at great length," Regina stated, "It was a hard decision, but one we thought was best for Nova. We can give her a life and a family the orphanage never could."

"There is also great danger," Mary Margaret replied. "We're always one day away from facing a new challenge head on."

"It hasn't stopped you or Emma from expanding your families. Why should it stop me and Robin?" Regina responded defensively.

"I just want to make sure you thought this through," Mary Margaret replied.

"We have," Regina assured her, "Robin and I have talked about everything, but at the end of the day it came down to being able to give Nova a future."

"I am happy for you, Regina," Mary Margaret stated, "I truly am, and she's adorable. Do you know anything about her parents?"

"The only thing the orphanage had was a note left in the bassinet from her mother," Regina replied. "It said her name was Nova, and her mother wasn't able to care for the little girl and hoped by bringing her to the orphanage she would be able to be placed in a good home."

"And she's found one," Mary Margaret was caught off guard when the little girl suddenly laughed at something Fallon had said.

After handing over a few more pieces of candy, it was clear Fallon and Nova were going to become good friends.
"Fallon needs a girl her age to play with," Emma approached Regina when the new friends followed Henry outside to climb into his tree house.

"Wasn't exactly our intention, but I'm glad they appear to have hit it off," Regina smiled.

"You did a good thing, Regina," Emma replied, "Giving a child a good home is a very good thing. Nova is just as lucky as Henry was. I don't know if I've ever thanked you for all you've done for him."

"He made me want to be a better person," Regina replied, "If it wasn't for Henry, I wouldn't have all I do now."

"I feel the same way," Emma glanced towards her husband, who was entertaining Leo, Bradyn, Wyatt and Bobbie with one of his tamer nautical tales. "If Henry hadn't found me in Boston, I wouldn't have my parents or Killian or any of my children. We're lucky we have him."

Regina felt tears welling in her eyes. "Who would have thought all those years ago when you first arrived that we'd come to tolerate each other?"

"We more than tolerate each other, Regina," Emma smiled.

"Speak for yourself," Regina gave her patented sarcastic reply, but there was a mischievous twinkle in her eyes as she said it.

"Mama, can Nova and I have a sleepover?" Fallon came running in and tugged on Emma's shirt to get her attention.

"Maybe in a couple of weeks, Princess," Emma knelt down next to her daughter, "I think Nova should spend time getting used to her surroundings first."

"Okay," Fallon replied and then darted out of the house to join Henry and Nova back in the tree house.

"Fast friends indeed," Regina smiled.

"I hope we're eating soon," Emma felt her own stomach start to rumble, "I think the masses are getting hungry."

"I'll check the oven," Regina replied, "Henry was in charge of putting in the lasagna."

Emma went to her husband's side and listened to the end of his tale. It was one she'd heard before. It had the children mesmerized.

"He's quite the storyteller," Brennan stepped away to speak to his daughter-in-law.

"He has a lot of them," Emma smiled. "With three hundred years of sailing the seas, you're bound to have a few stories."

"He's lived quite the life," Brennan replied.

"Killian mentioned you talked about taking an extended cruise next summer, you, him and Henry," Emma smiled, "I think it's a good idea."

"I'm afraid Fallon, Bradyn and Wyatt might not be so approving of us leaving them behind," Brennan replied.
"They'll get over it," Emma assured him, "They love their poppy and papa."

"I love them too," Brennan felt tears welling in his eyes. "This new life we've made for each other is more than I'd ever dreamed of. For so long I was looking for my sons. I'm overjoyed Killian found a family of his own which clearly makes him very happy."

"It's an even trade," Emma smiled and wrapped an arm around Brennan's shoulders, "This life is what I dreamed of as well, and Killian helped me achieve it."

Regina announced the lasagna was ready just as Killian was finishing up his story. Leo was at the front of the line to be served as he was clearly the hungriest.

"Everything alright, Love?" Killian wrapped an arm around her waist and began walking her towards the table full of food when he noticed she didn't immediately join everyone else.

"Everything is perfect," Emma gave him a wide smile, "I didn't know I could be this happy."

"Aye, Love," Killian kissed her cheek, "It is a good life you've given this old sailor, one which I will forever be grateful for."

"Me too," she angled so she could kiss his lips.

"Mama and Papa sitting in a tree…" Fallon sang out to a chorus of laughs all around.

The End.

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