Summary

They’ve sacrificed themselves to save their true loves and the town

Now stuck in the Underworld, Robin Hood and Captain Hook work with King Arthur to clear the River of Lost Souls. In recognition of their help in destroying Hades, Zeus offers to return them to the land of the living.
However, when the pair return to Storybrooke, they discover the town, and their lovers, have all moved on!
The Return of The Outlaw and The Pirate

Chapter Summary

As a reward for clearing the Underworld's River of Lost Souls, Zeus sends Robin of Locksley and Killian Jones back to rejoin the living.

An unpleasant surprise awaits them...

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone! This is my first stab at an AO3 story, so please bear with me! There's a lot to come. You've probably guessed that this story has many relationships and I will not be trashing any particular ships. There will be three separate poly relationships, so if that's not your thing, or you're hung up on one particular ship, or hate any specific ships, you best not bother reading this.

I hope you enjoy. French is my first language but my father's English, and I'm studying here in the UK (hence a lot of spellings in British English), so there may be some regional typos and corrections needed.

I welcome constructive criticism and will publish and answer when I can, though I'll delete any nasty stuff. Enjoy

Robin Hood slowly opened his eyes as he lay on the floor, familiarising himself with his surroundings. What the hell just happened? he thought, trying to piece everything from moments ago.

He vaguely remembered Hades snarling at Regina, promising to ‘end’ her. The bastard held some sort of icy spear, pointing it at her. She’d frozen, closing her eyes and braced herself for the inevitable. As though she deserved it! Robin hadn’t hesitated - his love was under threat and he wasn’t going to have her killed by that slimy bastard. So, without a moment’s hesitation, he’d thrown himself in front of her, grabbing her by the shoulders to try and shield her from whatever that thing was.

The next bit was confusing. He vaguely remembered a freezing sensation, like a sharp jolt passing through him. He remembered looking at Regina, her eyes wide in shock and mouth open. He tried to touch her cheek but couldn’t. Everything seemed to fade away and go blank after that.

Where is everyone?

Getting slowly to his feet, Robin noticed the office now seemed...different. There was no fire, no lights on. Just a sense of greyness. As his head cleared, his mouth went dry when as he realised that there was no basket. The baby! No Regina! Shit! Bile rose in his throat and the hairs on the back of his neck stood as he realised they were still in danger. He raced from the room as fast as his legs would carry him, desperate to find someone, anyone, to tell him what was going on. Stumbling out
of the Mayor’s office and into the street, the first thing the former outlaw noticed was the eerie quiet; then the sky. Grey!

“Holy fuck - no! I’m in the Underworld!” That’s when it really hit home to Robin what had just happened in that office. He’d been killed!

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Time went by in a blur. After spending hours walking aimlessly around the town in a haze, Robin sat on the park bench, considering what on earth he was going to do next. He groaned inwardly as he thought of Roland, his five-year-old son. I can’t even protect him. Is he safe? His young daughter, who had yet to even be given a name. Two weeks old. Two weeks! And the love of his life. Regina, are you even alive? Had Hades killed her too? If so, is she here somewhere?

Usually one of life’s optimists, he now sank into despair. Dead. God, I need a drink!

An hour later, seeing that the Underworld version of Granny’s Diner was closed, he went to the only place that appeared open, something that looked like a sleazy bar. Relieved to see at least some sign of ‘life’ inside, he slowly opened the door and strode in.

“Bloody hell!” came a familiar voice from one of the booths at the side. “I never expected you in here!” He turned to see a very welcome face. “What the hell happened?”

“Killian!” he yelled, surprised to see the former Captain Hook, “A friendly face at last!” He walked over, grabbing his erstwhile colleague by the shoulders and bringing him into a rough hug, before stepping back. “I’m sorry you couldn’t go back with Emma! We all returned to Storybrooke together, though she was devastated not to get you back with us!”

“I’m not sure whether to feel happy or sad to hear that mate,” said the former pirate, “I guess I’ve had a little while to come to terms with never seeing her again. It hurt, I grant you, but I’ve lived a longer life than most. Emma’s a wonderful girl. I’m sure she’ll find someone more deserving of her in the end.”

Robin knew Killian Jones was just as devastated as him at the loss of their respected true loves. He gave a sympathetic smile, patting his back.

“Anyway, what happened to you? The Blind Witch told me you all got through the portal?”

Robin recounted everything to his friend as best he could. However, he couldn’t help but feel maudlin when he considered the children he’d left and what may have happened to them now Hades was in Storybrooke. Killian tried offering consolation. “I know it’s painful mate, but I’m sure Regina & Emma would have no hesitation putting their own lives on the line before anything happened to Henry or your two. I’m sure they’ll rally around. And the Charmings are resilient folk. I’m sure Dave and Snow will find some way to defeat that bastard!” He smirked, trying to provide at least a modicum of comfort to the former outlaw.

“Maybe. Though they now have to deal with Hades and the green bitch! That’s a different order altogether. I know Regina said Zelena’s reformed, but I don’t believe it. That vile creature murdered my Marian. She’ll never change!”

“I understand, I really do, but you and I know that when Emma and the queen combine their talents, instead of squabbling, they usually fix things. Provided they both know when to shut up and listen to Henry, of course!”

Robin smirked, for the first time that day. “Yes, he does seem a very calming influence on the pair of
“They’re sometimes the most unfriendly, best friends I’ve ever met. But they’re good for each other. And I’m sure they’ll do right for your kids, Rob.”

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Several hours of mutual commiseration later, the pair left the grubby bar, walking across to another watering hole Killian had discovered. It seemed odd that in this strange world no money changed hands, yet drinks and food seemed to be plentiful. Whether Robin could even, in a land where you never felt hungry, feel the effects of alcohol he didn’t really know. But he was damn well going to find out!

Killian had explained that, since leaving Hades’ crypt containing the supposed ambrosia tree (after saying his tearful and final goodbyes to Emma), he’d met the former King of Camelot, Arthur. The former monarch, regarded by both as, frankly, a first-class shit, seemed to have transformed himself following his murder by Hades. From a villain pursuing his own ends for want of glory, to someone desperate to achieve absolution for past crimes, Arthur searched everywhere he could in this godforsaken purgatory for people he had wronged, begging forgiveness and offering to help them to achieve their pass to the better life. Some accepted him, some didn’t. After forgiving him, several of them had been met by a blinding light which appeared from the sky, opening the path to a better place, he hoped. Some didn’t. But Arthur continued to try.

Robin was surprised to see the self-same former King of Camelot, the Once & Future King, propped up against the bar at the Rabbit Hole, nursing a scotch. The former legend seemed to be a transformed man. Dead, but surprisingly upbeat.

“Gentlemen, I bring you great news from the living world!” said the former monarch before any introductions. “I have it on good authority from someone I wish to remain nameless, that Hades has been vanquished! Robin of Locksley, it seems the Olympian spear that killed you, was impaled in Hades himself shortly after. He is no more!”

“If that’s true, it is indeed good news,” said Killian, “Though how would you even come by this information?”

“Again, I cannot reveal my source for they would indeed be in great danger. However, it’s true. The Lord of the Underworld is no more. Which leaves us free to pursue a truly great quest!”

Robin sighed with relief. It meant his son & young daughter were hopefully safe. “Thank God. Does your ‘source’ give any other information as to what is happening in the real world?”

“Sadly not. Information is scarce, though I do know that the Wicked Witch was the one to kill the Demon. Shortly after your death, I understand!”

That surprised the other men. Zelena saw sense? Perhaps his daughter wasn’t in so much danger after all. “So, tell me of your proposed quest?”

Arthur outlined his plan, which basically seemed to involve recovering as many people as he could from the River of Lost Souls. It involved capturing the regenerated Excalibur from Cruella & The Blind Witch and using it to pull the darkness from the waters, releasing as many lost souls as they could from eternal torment.

“Although Cruella has no magic other than her ability to control animals, her partner in crime does. They make quite a team. They’re only ever seen together these days, after Prince James, the former
Sheriff here, apparently fell into the river whilst fighting his brother. Gossip around here is that they’re more than just a business couple these days,” he said, raising a brow. “Which works out rather well for us as it keeps them both out of our way whilst they spend more time entertaining themselves. First, we need to remove Excalibur from the Mayor’s office. Which is where you come in, Robin. Or should I say ‘Lord’ Locksley? I assume you still have your famed thievery skills?”

Killian raised a brow. “Lord Locksley?” He reminded himself to confront the archer about that at a suitably inconvenient time.

Robin smirked. “I renounced my claim to that title many years ago, and my thieving days are long gone. However, for a just cause, your Majesty. Only in a just cause. Tell me more!”

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The following days flew by as the three men plotted to distract the Blind Witch and Cruella. Having already established a small group of trusted allies, keen to help with advanced warning, Robin broke into the mayor’s office, knocked out two guards, distracted the hounds (how on earth did Killian get hold of pot in the Underworld?), neutralised various security traps set up by the gruesome twosome, before finally recovering Excalibur. “God, I’m good!” He smiled to himself.

Killian, having previously been tortured in Hades’ underground lair, knew the route well and led the group down into the dark labyrinth, Arthur hanging back with the enchanted sword as agreed, while Killian & Robin looked for any further traps and hazards, finally emerging into the magically lit cave unscathed. Arthur followed them in.

“Gentlemen, let’s hope this works! My source told me to place the tip of Excalibur into the river source and this will somehow draw these wretched souls out.”

“And if your ‘source’ is wrong?” said the former pirate, growing ever more concerned about them placing their faith in someone he had never even met.

“Well then, we’ve nothing to lose,” muttered Robin, “It’s not as though we’re going to be killed, is it?” he said as Killian started helping himself to a large scotch from Hades’ extremely well stocked drinks trolley, laying down on the chaise longue to watch the king work.

“Well here goes!” Arthur breathed, placing the tip of the enchanted sword into the water’s edge. Everyone held their breath.

For a few seconds, nothing happened. Then slowly a purple hue appeared to bleed from the sword into the water. The intense colour grew, forming an ever-expanding cloud within the murky grey of the river. As it continued expanding, small golden flashes started to rise out of the water, landing like sparks on the banks of the river.

The three men watched open mouthed as figures starting to materialise and grow from the sparks, developing into, they assumed, the poor unfortunates who had been thrown in the River of Lost Souls in the first place. At least twenty people stood up to look around them, as surprised as the men who had freed them.

“Bugger me!” Killian croaked, unable to believe his eyes. “It’s working!”

Arthur nodded, wide-eyed, “Yes, look…” he said, pointing to the opposite wall of the cave. An intense bright light grew from the centre, seeming to make the wall itself disappear, to be replaced by stone steps leading up to a bright blue sky and welcoming clouds, with a large building in the distance. Robin’s open-mouthed expression seemed to require an explanation from Killian, who was
beaming as he had seen this before.

“That must be the Better Place. Or Valhalla, or Heaven or whatever you want to call it.”

“Not quite, Captain. It leads to the Fields of Judgment, or the Pearly Gates as some refer to it. It is where you are judged worthy of a better place, purgatory or eternal damnation. We all go through them, eventually…”

As the newly freed souls started to move up the stone steps towards the light, Robin looked back to see that more sparks continued to flick out from the river onto land, more people emerging until a calm chain of men, women and children formed an orderly queue, anxious to get out of this horrible world. After only a few minutes, it was difficult to count the numbers leaving, now in their hundreds. And the sparks kept landing. And the people kept coming.

The smiles between Robin, Arthur and Killian just grew larger, breaking in to laughter as they fully took in what was happening. “We’ve broken the bloody Underworld. We’ve gone and broken the bloody Underworld!” said Killian, happy tears starting to rain down his face.

Over the next few hours the heroes watched the seemingly never-ending sea of former humanity move up the flagstones to their judgment, a number of people coming across to thank them and introduce themselves. A few souls came over to thank the group, introducing themselves to their saviours.

As time progressed, Robin & Killian moved back to Hades’ chairs and drinks trolley, sitting to witness the astonishing scene before them.

“Hades may have been a truly evil bastard,” said Robin, pouring from a crystal decanter, “but he did have excellent taste in whisky!”

“I agree,” said the pirate, “there’s no rum, but the brandy is quite exquisite.” He said lifting a full Tantalus to rest it on his knee. “Waste not want not!”

Robin estimated there must have been a couple of thousand recovered souls at least. They had been there a good four hours, watching the flow of people up the steps. Mind you, time was difficult to judge in this land. However, the sparks finally stopped emerging from the now blue waters, people stopped arriving and the queue finally ended.

“Well I guess we should be getting out of here,” said the former king as he looked to the men, all now heading towards the light. Arthur stopped before mounting the steps.

“Gentlemen, it has been an unfortunately brief honour and privilege working with you both. I now realise that this has been my destiny all along; not to rule over the living but to assist the dead. My friends, this is where we must part company…”

Killian looked astonished. “You’re…you’re not coming with us? Where will you go? This is your reward, your majesty. The Better Place. You may have been a crap king in Camelot,” he said with a smirk, “but you have more than redeemed yourself today.”

“Perhaps. I was a fairly, how did you put it, ‘crap king’? But there are more people on the surface above still to pass over. I believe I will be able to help them. So, farewell my friends.” With that he grasped the forearm of Killian, pulling him in to a brief shoulder hug before doing the same to Robin.

“Farewell Arthur, I wish you luck,” said Robin as he turned towards the light. “However, I do have a question I need the answer to before I leave.”
“Go on.” Said the former king.

“Who is your source? Who could give you information on the living? We’re moving to a safer place, we hope, so now is the time to tell us.”

Arthur smiled. “Merlin!”

“He lives?” said Killian, “That’s impossible. I saw him die. I killed him myself when I was a Dark One.”

“Well, though some of your friends and the Dark One have magic, Merlin has always been in a very different league. The greatest sorcerer that ever lived, he needed all of you to believe that he’d died, to fulfil your destiny, apparently. And now you have indeed fulfilled it! Merlin is fit and healthy I assure you, in the land of the living, and immortal; he’ll come again when needed. Now go and enjoy your afterlives…whatever they may bring!

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Storybrooke – The Mansion

“Mum! Ma! Where are you?” Henry hollered as he bundled noisily down the stairs, taking three at a time.

“Henry Daniel Mills!” chided Regina. “How many times have I told you not to thump down the stairs like that? You’re not a child. I swear you’ll break them one day! Now what is it, what’s with all the shouting?”

“Sorry mum, but this is important. When I woke this morning, I seem to have written a whole lot of new chapters in the Underworld story book. You REALLY need to see this! Ma too, and Roland!”

“Hen,” said Emma, coming from the kitchen, “Stop yelling already. What’s all the fuss?”

“It’s Robin and Killian – they’ve got new stories from the Underworld!”

At mention of their names, Regina and Emma froze, turning to stare at him. Now he had their full attention! “Mums, I haven’t written anything about them since we left Killian down there, and Robin was killed. They carried on as heroes down there! Robin didn’t just disappear, as Hades said. He got into the Underworld! And you’re never going to believe what they’ve done!” Regina’s eyes reddened, her mind going back to Robin’s sacrifice. When he saved her life.

“They broke the Underworld! They broke it!”

Emma’s throat ran dry, remembering how Killian told her to go save herself, leaving him in that horrible basement. She looked to Regina and knew what was going though her mind. She reached for the brunette’s hand, squeezing gently.

“His soul didn’t disappear. Robin arrived in the Underworld, linked up with Killian and King Arthur. They captured Excalibur and drained the souls from the River of Lost Souls! They’ve saved thousands of souls!” Henry opened the book to the new pages, detailing the remarkable exploits of the women’s former lovers, with beautiful artwork and text. Regina smiled as she saw her outlaw breaking into Cruella’s office, knocking out guards, before stealing Excalibur. Then the trio’s descent into that horrible crypt. The pictures showed sparks flying from the river, the ascent of so many to their heaven. The page said several thousand had been rescued.

Emma laughed at the picture showing Killian & Robin, lazing on Hades’ chairs and enjoying
brandies as the damned were leaving, to go up the enchanted stairs for a better place. _Bloody typical Killian_, she thought, the grin never leaving her face. The last picture showed Robin & Killian saying farewell to Arthur as they ascended the steps to their own final, happier place. By the end, both women had tears reaming down their cheeks. Their former loves were now at peace, but the pictures reminding them just how much they missed them.

Emma stood, wrapping her arm around the brunette’s waist, drying her own tears. “They’re at rest now, Gina.”

“I hope so!” she croaked, “I’m just so glad that there’s even a remote possibility that one day Robin could be reunited with Roland, Honour and Robyn!” _And me_, she thought.

Henry saw their angst. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to upset you both. I just thought you needed to know.”

“It’s OK Henry. Thank you. I can’t believe it’s been five years! We loved them, and we still miss them. This’ll be nice for Honour and Robyn to read someday.”

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The men walked steadily up the celestial steps towards, well, whatever was to come, for a good half an hour, talking about their lives and recent events.

“I’m still worried about Regina and the children. I hate that I’ll miss seeing them grow up. And my little girl! I’m happy to be going to a better place, hopefully, and seeing Marian and my parents, but I still wish I could do something to protect them.”

“Me too mate, me too, though I’m pretty sure they’ll all be fine. Our time is over, and I’ve no doubt our loved ones will reunite with us…eventually.”

“You’re right. I hope I’ll still know you in the afterlife. As Arthur said, it has been an honour and privilege, my friend!” Said the former thief, patting Killian’s shoulder.

“You too, mate. I think we…what…what the hell!” Said the former pirate as he realised they had both walked into some form of Roman amphitheatre, with giant white stone pillars surrounding them. There didn’t seem to be a way out behind them. “Robin, where the bloody hell are we?”

“Olympus!” said a booming voice immediately behind them.

The pair turned at the voice. A large man, seemingly in his fifties, with a white beard and even whiter hair, a bright circle of light beaming around him. “Gentlemen, I’ve been expecting you!”

“Zeus?” Robin breathed, somehow recognising the ruler of the sky and lord of all the gods.

“Indeed, Robin of Locksley. I thought I would welcome you personally! It’s not every day I greet two of the people partially responsible for ending the existence of my lost brother.”

“So, it’s true then?” said Killian, “Hades is really dead?”

“Well he was never actually ‘alive’, in your understanding. But yes, his existence has finally been extinguished. It saddens me, but we lost my brother to the darkness a very long time ago! I hope he will be at peace at last.”

“Aye, well thank you for the personal welcome. Were you planning on showing us to a promised land now or giving us a map or something?” smirked the pirate.
Zeus laughed, a low bellow. “No, Killian Jones, I’m here as we decided to give you both a small
reward for your actions. You not only helped stop Hades, but in rescuing those souls, you’ve
changed the Underworld to how it was originally meant to be. A place for atonement before
judgment.”

“I always like the sound of a reward!” Killian responded cheekily. “Though I’m not sure what you
have in mind, now we’re dead!”

“Life,” said the Lord of the Gods. “An opportunity to return to your loved ones. Or, I can send you
on your way to the next stage, if you prefer?”

“You would send us back? With our memories intact?”

“There’s not much point in sending you back without them, is there, Lord Locksley? In fact, I was
also intending to give each of you a little personal ‘bonus’.” The God said, his eyes twinkling as he
looked to Killian “First though, let’s give you a hand…”

Killian felt a hot, strong tingling in his lower arm and looked down to find a complete working hand
in place of the hook that made him legendary. He stretched the limb, amazed. “Bloody hell, that’s an
odd feeling! Umm…thank you, god!”

He chuckled again “Zeus is just fine! You’re very welcome, Captain. Though be careful. This new
limb, like your body, has new magic, which you’ll no doubt discover in due course. Use it
cautiously…” he then turned to the former outlaw. “Now as for you, Robin of Locksley,” said Zeus,
looking a little more serious. “You also have a most interesting destiny ahead of you, if you choose
it. So, my gift to you is similar to the magical abilities bestowed upon some your friends in
Storybrooke, although a lot more powerful, seeing as you have people like the Dark One in your
midst. Use them well, and for the common good, and you will both enjoy a long, happy and
rewarding life.”

Robin stood stunned, open mouthed as he considered the possibility. A chance to get back to Roland,
Regina, his daughter! He hardly heard the bit about magic, only the part about returning to them.
“My Lord, I don’t know what to say. Yes, yes please! There’s nothing I want more then to get back
to my family.”

“Then don’t waste any more time talking to me. Farewell gentlemen!”

Killian turned to ask another question, though before he had a chance, he and Robin became
surrounded by dense purple swirling fog, as they felt the ground disappear below.

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It seemed like moments, before Robin felt his knees buckle as he dropped onto soft soil. He heard a
moist whump next to him, which he assumed to be his friend landing close by. Where the hell are we
now? The forest? Storybrooke? The fog started clearing as he saw where they’d landed. Oh, lord!
He found himself standing in front of a headstone. But not just any headstone. His headstone!

‘Robin of Locksley, died 2016’. Bugger! They’ll still think I’m dead!” He groaned, enough for his
friend to hear.

“Bugger indeed,” muttered Killian looking at his own stone. “‘Captain Killian Jones RN. Forever in
our thoughts’,” he read. “Mind you, they put up our headstones quick, considering we’ve only been
gone a few weeks. Grass has grown over me a bit quick too if you ask me. They must have had a lot
of rain.”
Robin smiled at his friend, enjoying the smell of cut grass, so lacking in the Underworld, and happy to be returned. He now needed to see his children as soon as possible. “Come on Pirate, we need to get home!” With that they left for the town, for the mansion and Emma’s house, to restart their lives.

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When they stepped onto Main Street, a thought occurred to Robin. “Killian, I’m wondering, it could be a big shock, us just walking in on them like this! They think we’re dead. Perhaps we should go into Granny’s first. Then tell David or Ruby or someone, so they can call Emma & Regina in advance, to prepare them.”

“Makes sense. Let’s just get a coffee first and see who’s about…” With that they trooped in to the diner.

Walking in, Killian recognised the long legs and shapely rear end of the dark-haired waitress, as she bent over one of the tables, serving breakfast. He walked up behind her, leaning in without touching and breathed, “Hello gorgeous, what’s cooking?”

Ruby spun around to a familiar voice. “Well, we have….AARRGGGHHH!!” She screamed at the top of her voice, collapsing back on the table behind. Everyone in the café turned, to see what was wrong.

“What? NO! You’re Dead! Hook?” she seemed genuinely scared.

“Red, love, sorry I didn’t mean to frighten you! I just….” He was interrupted by a yell from a tall brunette coming out of the kitchen.

“Rubes, what’s wrong? I heard a scream!” she called, eyes flashing with her first thought the man had in some way done something to her lover.

Killian saw the growing glare in the woman’s eyes and put his hands up to calm her. “It’s ok Miss… I came up behind her and surprised her, I guess. Rubes, I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to startle you! Yes, It’s really me, Killian. I’m not dead. We just came back.”

Ruby calmed, realising she’d overreacted. “So…sorry…I was just shocked. Dottie, it’s ok, he didn’t do anything. I’m just surprised! Kill…Killian…how the hell are you even here? And what do you mean, we came back. Who else…?”

“He means me!” said the famous thief, in a calming voice, hoping not to shock further any frayed nerves. “Hello Ruby…”

“Robin? You’re alive!” Ruby jumped up excitedly and wrapped her arms around him, hugging him tightly. Ruby, like most of the Storybrooke women, loved the leader of the Merry Men for his calm, warm and caring manner towards them all. He had been a fantastic father, and many had openly wept at his funeral, seeing Regina utterly broken and Roland devastated. That had been a very bad day.

“Yes, we managed to leave the Underworld. It’s a long story.”

Ruby let him go from her tight embrace, slightly teary-eyed, when she looked to Dorothy, feeling slightly embarrassed by her reaction. “Um…Dottie…this is Rob…”

“Robin Hood? Yes, I guessed…” the tall brunette spoke while moving across to them. “I recognise him from the statue. Hello Robin.” She said offering her hand to shake. “I’m…”
“Dorothy. Yes, Ruby’s true love! I remember the drawings Henry showed me in the Underworld,” he smiled as he took her hand and, instead of shaking it, turned it slightly placing his other hand on top in a gesture of warmth. Dorothy’s eyes changed from suspicion to a mild twinkle in an instant, sensing that Robin was a kind and genuine soul. “Drawings? I don’t understand.”

“In the Underworld. When Ruby woke you up with true love’s kiss! Henry wrote it up in his book and showed us. I remember your face from the colourings, and I have to say, they don’t do either of you justice in the flesh!” At that last comment, the ladies blushed.

“How on earth would you remember that?” said Ruby, now taking Dorothy’s hand in hers.

“What do you mean? It was only a few weeks ago. I’ve a good memory. And the pictures were very nice after all.”

That confused Dorothy. “A few weeks? You’ve been gone like…”

“Sorry love” said Killian, jumping in to the conversation. “Our boy here will give you all the details, but can we get some food and coffees? I’m bloody starving and my stomach thinks my throat’s been cut!”

“Agreed” said Robin, “I don’t want to face my own true love on an empty stomach.”

Dorothy & Ruby looked at each other still slightly confused, but Dorothy replied. “I’m sorry, where are my manners? I’ll sort it. What’ll you have?”

After Dorothy took their orders and disappeared around the back, Robin leaned across to the wolf.

“Ruby, I also need to ask a small favour. It’s a little delicate.”

“Um…yes, of course. What is it?”

“If Killian and I just drop in on Regina & Emma it might be a bit of a shock, especially for Roland. Could you possibly preempt us by calling them before we go over?”

“Robin, it’s going to be more than a shock! You said two weeks since you saw our pictures. How long do you think you’ve been away?”

“Well let’s see, we went…” though he was interrupted by a yell from the front door.

“ROBIN? KILLIAN?” called a tall, dark haired, well-built young man. “Is it really you?”

“Aye lad. And who might you be?” though as he said it, the man came closer and both the older man recognised the face, despite some rather obvious changes.

“Henry?” breathed Robin. They couldn’t believe it. Henry had grown at least a foot and a half, his chest now broad, his hair darker, shoulders and face resembling David’s but with stubble. The three stood, staring. “I, I don’t understand. Henry? We’ve only been gone a few weeks! What’s going on?”

“A few weeks? Five years, you mean?”

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The small group remained speechless, as it slowly dawned on them what had happened. Killian, the first to break silence, realised that all the diners had now stopped, staring at the group.

“Ok - I guess time moves a little slower in the Underworld. That would explain you, young Mills!”
You’re quite the handsome young fellow now, it seems,” said Killian, moving forward to put hands on the young man’s shoulder. Henry was now a good four inches taller than him! As he said it he realised, it also meant that to Emma he had also been gone five years!

“You two haven’t changed a bit!” said Henry, still awestruck by the sight of the lost pair before him. As he tried to figure what to say next, his younger brother came in from the front of the café almost unnoticed.

Roland noticed Henry standing in front of a couple of men in some sort of shock. As he walked up to find out what was wrong, he glanced at the face of one of the men, then froze.

“Pa…Pa…Pap…Papa! PAPA?” Roland found it hard to move. He trembled, his eyes glazing as the tears started forming. He can’t be! It’s a trick - a nasty trick. My dad’s dead! My wonderful dad…my famous dad, my-

Robin stood transfixed, taking in the sight of his boy for the first time in weeks. Not weeks, years! No longer his beautiful five-year-old, but the makings of a young man himself. “Roland…Zeus sent me back. It’s me!”

“PAPA!” yelled the ten-year-old, launching himself at his father, tears coming freely now from both as Robin’s arms wrapped tightly around his son’s frame. “It’s me, my boy, and I swear, I’m never leaving you again!” The pair cried openly, Roland clinging tightly to him, soaking his father’s shirt as he held on for dear life.

They were oblivious to their surroundings. Henry, Ruby, Dorothy and the other diners stood or sat transfixed and there wasn’t a dry eye in the house. Henry’s lower lip wobbled, Ruby sobbed as Dorothy held her. Even Killian, the villainous Captain Hook himself, had a small tear rolling down his cheek.

“Well that was bloody emotional!” said the pirate as it started to dawn on him. If this is Roland, what the hell’s it going to be like seeing Emma? Five years! Five fucking years!

His typical blasé comment seemed to ease the atmosphere, as their audience started to breath again, taking serviettes to dab their eyes. Robin slowly eased his grip on his son, standing back a little to take a good look at him, rubbing a thumb across his cheek to help dry the tears. My god, he’s changed so much!

“Papa - You died saving Regina! How did you get back? Are you…are you really back for good?” The last part said with a tremble in his voice.

“Roland, I’ll tell you everything. I’ve been trapped in the Underworld for three weeks down there, but I’ve only just discovered it was five years here! I’m as shocked as you. There is so much to talk about, but I need to talk to Regina first! And see your little sister!”

“Which one?” Roland blurted out, without thinking.

“What?” Robin asked before hearing a loud crash of cutlery as somebody knocked over a small table, the culprit having staggered, eyes glazed and open-mouthed in front of the group, just as Henry had done minutes before, but dropping to her knees. Robin turned to face her. “Regina?”

“ROBIN?” She breathed, her eyes glazed as though she’d seen a ghost.

Overwhelmed, she fainted, sliding to the floor of the café. Robin darted across, too far away to catch her fall. He slid down beside her, lifting her gently to place her head and shoulders into his lap, arm around her neck, cradling her until she came around.
He knew it would only be a matter of moments before his love slowly regained consciousness. It gave him a little time to gaze. She was still stunningly beautiful. Those full ruby red lips he longed to kiss again. The sweeping eyelashes. That glorious raven-black hair. However, he couldn’t help but notice the extra tiny little wrinkles in the corner of her eyes and a hint of grey surrounding them. Clearly some signs of stress and trauma and sleeplessness. Perhaps because of him! *My love, what have I put you through?*

As she stirred, those beautifully clear dark brown eyes slowly opening, Robin bent over, speaking softly. “Regina my love, yes it’s me. You fainted. Stay still till you feel OK to stand. I’ve got you.”

“What’s going on?” yelled another new arrival into the café, on seeing the group surrounding someone on the floor. As Henry stepped back up, Emma could see past him to who was lying there, before recognising Regina’s dark blue dress. She wanted to rush over but was holding a young child’s hand. She walked across as quickly as she could, without yanking the young girl across the floor.

“Gina!” she shouted, “What happened? And who are…” stopping immediately, when she recognised the face of the bearded man cradling the fallen woman. “ROBIN?”

Henry jumped in quickly, seeing what was going through his blonde mother’s mind. As it had only been moments since he saw the two heroes return, Henry was now starting to realise the next few minutes were going to be difficult. “Ma, it’s ok! Mum came in a moment before you. She saw Robin and fainted…”

To say she was shocked was putting it mildly. Emma was stunned and a little put out to see him holding Regina so tenderly. “Thank…thank you Robin,” she said a little stiffly. “I’ll take it from here,” as she bent down to the opposite side of Regina who was starting to get her bearings.

“It’s quite alright, Emma” said the archer, “I can help her up. Give us a moment.”

Emma’s mind was a whirlwind. *If Robin is back…wait…Robin…Roland…Robyn. Honour! Does he even know?* Her mind racing, interrupted by a voice from above she’d thought she’d never hear again.

“Hello love!” said Killian. “Been a while then? Five years apparently!”

“Killian? Killian! Oh, my god how the hell…” Just like her son, Emma froze, her mouth dry.

“Steady Swan - don’t want you fainting too!” said her former lover, moving across to wrap an arm around her. She tensed, never having felt more awkward in her life. She looked down to see Regina, receiving a similar affectionate hug from Robin. The women looked directly into each other’s eyes, each seeing panic in the other. *Yes, this was going to be REALLY awkward!*

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After rising slowly, supported by Robin, Regina tried composing herself. But the usual icy, majestic sang-froid was always impossible with him. She was just too shaken. She felt a huge amount of magical energy surrounding them, which she assumed was linked to her emotional state.

Emma placed her hand tenderly on Killian’s cheek. “It’s really you?” she mumbled, her emotions shot to hell. She felt the urge to kiss him but, aware of their audience and her changed circumstances, wrapped her arms around him instead and laid a head on his shoulder. “How are you alive?”

“It’s quite the story, Swan. Let’s sit,” He said, leading her to one of the tables, further away from prying eyes.
Opposite, Regina found herself staring into those beautiful deep blue eyes. The eyes she saw close for the last time five years ago, when he sacrificed his life for her. She couldn’t concentrate on what he was saying. Just kept looking at those eyes. Henry, seeing the awkwardness, got straight to the point.

“Killian. Robin. I don’t understand. I’m staying at mums’ this weekend and I woke up to see I’d written a new story about you. And now you’re here? Same day! More than a coincidence, don’t you think? I showed them how you cleared the River of Lost Souls. Fucking brilliant by the way!”

“Henry!” his mother’s admonished, simultaneously, “please don’t swear in front of your brother & sister!” said Regina. Henry just ignored them as though they were invisible.

“How did you get back here? I saw you shaking hands with King Arthur. He stayed behind while you went to heaven. I thought you moved on?”

“We did, lad,” answered Killian. “Though we both met Zeus in Olympus. It was all quite brief but, he was rather pleased with us clearing the River of Lost Souls, so he gave us both the option to come back. Fully restored too, see!” he said, showing his new left hand. “The Handless Wonder no more, eh Regina?”

Robin took over, seeing as the two women seemed still too dumbfounded to speak.

“Things are a bit confusing, but it felt like after I was taken from you Regina, we were only down there less than three weeks. It was Arthur’s idea to clear the river, so we willingly helped. Unfortunately, Henry tells me up here it was five years. I’m sorry if we shocked you, my love.” Regina blanched at the last words as Robin continued, “That’s why we came here first. We wanted Ruby to call you to break the news a little more gently.” He glanced over to a smiling Ruby, who had been listening, intrigued. “I must admit, I was a little stunned to see my boy here and how he’s changed. Plus, Henry of course. That was quite a shock. You’ve become quite the handsome young man now, Henry.”

Robin glanced across to his teary-eyed son, who had stayed holding his hand and never letting go since he brought Regina back to the table. “And you Roland, I haven’t seen you since before we left on Emma’s mission to rescue Killian. I’m sorry I wasn’t around for you. I would give anything to make up for that, my boy. I’m not even sure what day, month or year it is. Five years! So, what month is this. Are you ten yet?”

“It was my tenth birthday last month, Papa! It’s May 2021.” Roland giggled. Robin noticed that although his son had lost most of his childish innocence, he still retained those dimples. They were going to be more than helpful when he started meeting girls.

“Then I owe you five years of presents,” he said, pulling the boy to him for another hug.

“Nope. Today I got the best present ever - You! I don’t need anything else.” he said as he again cuddled into his dad. Several people around the room aahed, Dorothy included, still tearful at the reunion of father and son.

It was then Robin noticed the little girl hiding behind Roland. A little dark blonde with, unusually for her colouring, the most beautiful brown eyes. And dimples! She clearly looked like Roland. My girl! She didn’t look big enough to be five, still very small. But god, those eyes! Definitely not like Zelena’s! he thought.

Robin turned, addressing Regina. “Darling, is this my little girl?”
Regina, still not ready to speak, sat with tears sliding down her cheeks. She started to grin. Henry sensed things were still a little hard for her, so he took over again, not wanting any misunderstandings.

“Robin, this is Honour and she’s your daughter - she turned four in January,” he said, knowing this was going to be quite a shock.

“Honour. A beautiful name for a beautiful girl. Hold on…four? I don’t understand. You said we’ve been gone five years? How…”

“Honour isn’t Zelena’s, Robin. This is Regina’s. Yours and Regina’s!” Henry couldn’t help himself. He knew that if he didn’t open everything up for them now, his mums would likely avoid the subject for days and then suffer guilt until everything was finally out in the open, with all the embarrassment. So again, Henry did it for them.

Robin stumbled. “So, Gina, when I died, you were pregnant?”

The former mayor gave a small smile and nod, still overwhelmed and biting her lower lip. Robin beamed, moving to gently take her hand in his own. Trembling, she considered the eyes of her former lover. God, I’d forgotten how handsome he is! She trembled. He hasn’t changed one bit!

The small gathering watched intently as Robin gently let go of Roland and Regina’s hands, lowering himself to his knees to talk to his daughter for the very first time.

“Hello little one” he smiled. “Please don’t be frightened of me. That’s a beautiful dress you’re wearing! Are you off to a party today?” He was cautious, not wanting to unnerve her.

The little blonde poppet smiled back, “Yes, Colette’s having a fairy party!” she said, her voice clear and holding on to Roland as she walked from around him. “She’s my friend.”

“Is she? How lovely - did you have a party for your birthday?”

“Yes, Henny & Vi got me a bicycle,” she said looking adoringly up to her big brother. Henry smiled back. “Robyn & Auntie Zee got me a bubble factory and my mummies got me a dampoline!”

“Really!” he encouraged “A trampoline - how exciting! Wait…um…Robyn?”

“Yes, my sisi.” Henry saw the confusion on Robin’s face but this time, Regina, watching everything, quietly spoke before her son could intervene. “Zelena named your other daughter after you, Robin,” she croaked, still teary eyed, caught up in the first ever conversation between her daughter and the girl’s father.

“You’re Robyn too?” said the little girl. Although usually a little shy, Honour felt comfy with this man. Roland and Henry like him, so he must be nice!

“Honour,” the little girl looked up into the teary, red eyes of her mother, “Listen now…um…Robin here is your sister’s daddy…but, you remember our stories? He is your daddy too!”

“You’re my daddy?” Honour said, turning to the man.

“Yes…yes, I am, poppet!” now it was the archer’s turn to shed a tear.

“But daddy died,” she said, looking to her brother, worried. “Rolly?”

“Yes Hon, but it’s really daddy! He’s not dead anymore! We got our Papa back!” He smiled at his
little sister. He was finding this hard enough, so could only imagine what she was going through.

Robin sensed the four-year-old’s confusion. He so wanted to haul her into his arms, but he knew this would possibly frighten her. So, changing tack, he looks to the little doll she clutched. “So, who’s this, Honour?”

Honour smiled and showed her doll, a princess, to him and Regina watched in awe as, within moments her normally reserved and shy little girl just seemed to warm to Robin and, without any further hesitation, opened her arms to demand a lift up so she could sit on his knee and explain. Robin didn’t hesitate. He was already completely smitten. As the group looked to the happy scene between father and daughter, Killian instead glanced down at Emma, who had sat down close to Regina. Very close. He couldn’t help but notice that her eyes were fixed on the other brunette as she spoke to Robin, with an odd look. What was that? Fear, envy? He also saw that the two women had been holding hands these last few minutes, their fingers intertwined.

Regina, teary-eyed, turned to glance back at Emma. Killian spotted a look, an exchange between the two women as though something needed to be said. Emma coughed nervously. “Robin, Killian, we…we really need to talk,” she stumbled nervously. “Perhaps somewhere a little more private. Please?”

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After a few minutes whispering to Honour, with the little girl now laughing, Robin reluctantly put her down on the seat with Roland, kissed his son’s head before getting up to walk with Killian to the back of the diner to join them, out of earshot of other diners, some of whom by now were starting to leave.

He looked across to Killian, who said nothing, but with a small sideways flick of his head and a raised brow, drew Robin’s attention to the backs of the women. That’s when he noticed Emma had her right arm around Regina’s waist as she directed the brunette to the furthest bench at the back. Robin glanced back to the rest of the remaining group and noticed everyone looking at them. Clearly, they were being prepared for bad news. Killian moved to Emma’s left, placing his hand lightly on her shoulder as she maneuvered Regina into the bench seat. She hesitated, turning tightly to sit next to Regina, so Killian had no choice but to remove his hand.

“Guys…um…could you sit opposite, please? We really need to talk.” Said the blonde, looking embarrassed. Regina said nothing, just kept looking into Robin’s eyes, still teary, sad and, nervous.

Robin grew concerned. “Gina, what’s wrong? Is it my other daughter? Is she OK? You’re worrying me.”

Regina spoke, her voice breaking “No…Robyn’s fine…um…Robin. It’s not that.”

Then what, love? Come on! You can tell me anything - you know that!”

The women looked at each other, both wanting the other to start. Emma moved her hand across to take Regina’s, as the brunette looked to Robin almost apologetically.

“Robin, Killian, I know you’ve been in the Underworld for a few weeks. However, now you know up here it’s been over five years!” Emma started but Regina interrupted her.

“Robin, I’m sorry…I’m finding this difficult to talk about. It was very painful, but I want you know that…”

“Regina, love, I understand. Why don’t you start from when Hades killed me?” He offered his hand
to take hers, though she hesitated before taking it, holding tightly with the other hand on to Emma. Robin and Emma looked at each other, curiously.

“I saw you die! Your body went down like a stone! You looked at me and, just, just evaporated! Hades told me your soul was obliterated! I couldn’t do anything to help you and…Robin…it killed me too! Why, why did you have to do that?”

“To save your life of course! Just as you were prepared to do for me. Go on. Please?”

“Zee…Zelena came in and we argued, though she finally came to her senses. He gave her the crystal to kill me, but she stabbed him instead. She’s not the same now Robin! She’s…sort of better. Even Roland likes her now.”

“You let Roland near Zelena? What the hell were you thinking?”

“Hey!” Emma jumped up, angry. “That’s not fair! You have no idea…”

“NO IDEA!” For a usually calm man, Robin’s temper was instant and furious. “TELL ME, HAVE YOU EVER BEEN RAPED, EMMA SWAN?” Robin’s voice roared, Emma seeing the anger still burning in him. “Well I have! Don’t you EVER presume to tell me what I should think about her!” His fist clenched. “She has caused me more pain than you could ever imagine - she also murdered my Marian, for god’s sake!”

Emma knew there was no answer to that. Robin wasn’t backing down. “I’m sorry. I know things were hard for you…for your family. It’s just that things have happened here over the last few years which you need to know about, first.”

Robin now felt guilty for his overreaction. He knew it wasn’t Emma’s fault - she was just trying to defend Regina from being yelled at. He slowly sat down again. “Emma…I’m sorry too. I shouldn’t have shouted at you. It’s just that when it comes to that woman I’m more…raw. Imagine if something like that had happened to Henry! Would you feel inclined to forgive?”

Regina shook her head, also sharing the guilt. “I’m sorry too. You’re right, but I also hurt Marian the first time and you know my past. The Evil Queen was responsible for more suffering than the Wicked Witch.”

“True, but we both know you’re not her now!”

“That’s how you feel, but there are still many who haven’t forgiven me! I won’t excuse Zelena, but you just need to talk to her when you’re ready. Regardless of her crimes, she’s become a good mother to Robyn. She knows what she did, and she’s trying to atone. She’s still in therapy with Archie. Has been for five years…”

“Dr Hopper? The psychiatrist? She’s seeking help?”

“Just like the rest of us, Robin! For the first two years after your deaths, me, Emma, Roland. And Zelena. If the cricket was charging New York rates he would be a very wealthy man by now,” she smirked, “as it is, he’s become a close family friend. We owe him a great deal…”

“I’m glad. I realise you’ve been through hell yourself too. And I haven’t thanked you for all you’ve done for Roland these last few years.” He smiled as he looked back to the young man talking to his sister.

“Robin, I don’t know what we’d have done without Roland! He kept us all sane,” she said smiling at the ten-year-old standing close to his father. Emma nodded in agreement. Clearly the
Saviour had played a role in his son’s life these past few years. “Little John, Tuck and Will. They’ve all played a big part in helping us. We couldn’t have got through it without them.”

“I’m pleased to hear it. It made me feel quite sick to think of him being left, especially after losing Marian too. I never doubted you’d love him. However, now I know about Honour! I’m surprised Merlin never thought to say anything to Arthur. Arthur would have told me…”

“Merlin?” Emma asked, still refusing to look Killian in the eye. “He’s dead, surely?”

“He isn’t,” interrupted Killian, “the Sorcerer’s been communicating, somehow, with King Arthur. His departure from Camelot was planned, to allow us to change our fates rather than take its course. I should’ve guessed Nimue and I killing the greatest sorcerer that ever lived, was a little too easy!”

“Arthur gave us the idea of how to clear the River of Lost Souls” said Robin. “He told us Merlin was feeding him information from above. He’s out there somewhere. Anyway, Tell me about Honour and Robyn.” Robin felt something was wrong and wanted them to get to the point. He knew Regina would find it easier if she could tell the story her own way.

“Robin, after you died we held your funeral in the cemetery rather than the forest. Next to Killian’s.”

“Yes, I saw my grave. It’s where Zeus returned us.”

“Everyone in Storybrooke came, plus the Merry Men, of course. Smee and your old crew were there too, Killian. We couldn’t fit everybody in the memorial service in the town hall that we had about a week after your funeral.” Regina sighed, and Emma smiled, though she still wouldn’t look Killian in the eye, a fact the pirate picked up on. “It was the worst day of my life. I was broken, Robin. Broken.”

Regina was clearly struggling, and starting to well up, so Robin thought to help by distracting her. “Tell me when you discovered you were pregnant,” he smiled at her.

“Oh. Well it was a good three months later. You know I couldn’t have children?” The archer nodded. “Well I assumed I had some sort of bug. Morning sickness, as it turned out! Whale diagnosed me, and I was stunned.”

“Well, true love and all that!” he offered, at which Regina started to smile but Emma visibly stiffened. Regina seemed to move on quickly.

“Well, I was astonished. Happy though! I never imagined for one minute…”

“I know you always craved another child alongside Henry, and I’m truly delighted to have been of some, assistance.” He winked. “Honour is truly beautiful, and I’ve fallen in love with her already! She’s got her mother’s eyes and smile, how could I not?”

Regina blushed, “And your hair and dimples! My temper, unfortunately…” she smiled at him, though looking to the other woman, brought herself back. “Robin, I gave birth six months later. It was Zelena’s idea to name her little girl after you. So, I named mine…our girl… after everything you stood for.” More tears started sliding down her cheek. Emma brought about a tissue from somewhere and dabbed her cheek, giving her a silent smile.

“Your girls - they spend plenty of time together, Robin! They’re very close and Roland is a wonderful big brother to both of them. Very protective. Plus, Henry of course, they all adore Henry! He’s our guiding light” she said, Emma nodding as they both looked back proudly at the young man as he held his little sister on his knee. “He’s home for a few weeks, but he’s in his second year studying English and Medieval Literature at Harvard. Sometimes we miss him so much!”
“He’s changed the most,” said the Outlaw. “In a good way. He’s a handsome, super smart young man and I always knew he would do well. He’s a credit to you both. Mind you, I’ve lost five years of Roland and, well, everybody. I’ve missed so much.” He almost choked the last few words. Regina smiled sadly and patted his arm but still never let go of Emma.

Killian had seen enough. He knew the women were holding something back.

“A true sad tale indeed. Though I’m sure now Robin will be reunited with his children all will be well. However, Emma, I’ve noticed that since you came into this place you’ve barely looked at me twice and said even less. Odd for five years apart, don’t you think? You’re nervous and twitchy. You’ve held off the queen’s hand since we sat down, flinched when I touched you and look as guilty as hell. What’s going on Emma? I think after what I’ve been through, I deserve a little better than that, don’t you?”

Emma slowly nodded…nervously. This was going to be difficult. She sighed, loudly. “You’re right, Killian…I’m sorry. Yes, I’m nervous. Truth is, we need to tell you something. Both of you. I…we never imagined we would ever see you again. Like Regina said, it’s a shock!”

Robin could see her struggling with her words. “Emma, I know you and I hadn’t known each other long prior to me dying. And a five-year gap doesn’t exactly help,” he gave her a sympathetic smile. “But I like to think you and I were…are…friends. Please just tell us?”

Emma still said nothing, so Regina continued, “Robin, it’s a little difficult for both of us. When you were…murdered…I was left utterly broken. Charming, Snow and everybody tried to help but…but it was difficult. Whilst I was still grieving, we had Mr. Hyde and other monsters to deal with. I’ll tell you about it another time. But you need to know that after losing you, despite everyone’s support, I…I’m ashamed to admit it but once I even tried…ending it all.” Tears were now flowing down Regina’s cheeks, which even made Robin’s eyes redden. Emma’s too.

“I’m so sorry I did that to you! I’m sorry I brought you so much pain!” He tried to reach for her hand, though she pulled back.

“Don’t Robin, don’t please! You’ll set me off, and I won’t be able to explain. Without Roland, Henry and of course Emma here,” she glanced to the blonde who rested her head on the other woman’s shoulder. “I would never have got through it. As I mentioned, Archie Hopper was priceless! He’s now one of Honour’s godfathers, by the way.” She forced a small smile. “Killian, I’ll let Emma tell you her own story. But she was also going through an awful time after you were killed, and we couldn’t bring you back.” The pirate nodded, Emma still avoiding his gaze.

“Emma has truly been my rock. We supported each other through the worst time of my…our lives.” She turned slightly to face the blonde, placing a small kiss on Emma’s forehead. “I would never have got through it. As I mentioned, Archie Hopper was priceless! He’s now one of Honour’s godfathers, by the way.” She forced a small smile. “Killian, I’ll let Emma tell you her own story. But she was also going through an awful time after you were killed, and we couldn’t bring you back.” The pirate nodded, Emma still avoiding his gaze.

“Emma has truly been my rock. We supported each other through the worst time of my…our lives.” She turned slightly to face the blonde, placing a small kiss on Emma’s forehead. “She helped me over the next few years, from straight after I discovered I was pregnant with Honour. I was now raising three children and so Emma moved in to help. We became much closer and gradually…our feelings for each other grew. Quite simply, we fell in love.”

The two men looked to each other, stunned.

“Neither of us could have foreseen this would happen. We’d both lost our soulmates. Neither of us had ever had feelings for each other before, but this felt right. It still does!” She turned to face Emma, placing a small chaste kiss on her lips. The resulting silence was deafening for all four of them, before Emma felt the need to break it.

“We married last year, Robin – Regina's now my wife!”
Taking Bad News

Chapter Summary

Emma and Regina married a year ago, five years after the deaths of their much lamented soulmates.

But fate, with a helping hand from Zeus, has brought them back.

What happens next?

Chapter Notes

This was my first stab at an AO3 story, so please bear with me! There's a lot to come. You've probably guessed that this story has many relationships and I will not be trashing any specific ships. There will be two separate polyamorous relationships, possibly three, in it, so if that's not your thing, or if you are hung up on one particular ship, or hate a ship in particular, you best not bother reading it.

I hope you enjoy. French is my first language but my father's English, and I'm studying English here, so there may be some typos and corrections needed.

I welcome constructive criticism and will publish and answer when I can, though I'll delete any nasty stuff.

“We married last year, Robin. Regina's now my wife.”

The men looked at each other, both completely floored by the revelation. Killian wanted to come back with a suitably snarky remark, but the only words that came were, “I see!” He felt utterly devastated. Without another word, he silently stood, turned and walked away from them, through the remaining diners as though they were invisible, towards the door.

“Killian!” yelled Emma, finally gaining the voice she couldn’t find moments earlier. She wasn’t sure what his reaction would be. Shouting? Anger? But not this. Not silence. She couldn’t imagine what was going through his mind. For him, it had been less than three weeks since they’d all returned from Camelot. Her mind went back to that horrible time she'd tried so hard to forget.

_I turned him into the Dark One! I turned him, then he went and sacrificed himself to save us all. To save me! He got stabbed, beaten and tortured by Hades. Because of me! And now? Zeus sends him back, only to find out I moved on!_ It was Emma’s turn to weep, the dam breaking as guilt overwhelmed her. _After everything he’d gone through – for me!_ She dropped her face in to her hands.

Regina would’ve comforted her, but she was too distracted by the face of her own former lover.

Robin just sat with his arms folded, looking into the middle distance. A single tear formed, dropping
down his right cheek, spotted by Regina who now felt truly dreadful for being the cause of his suffering. Heartbroken, she placed a hand on his arm. He seemed to flinch, as though burned.

“I’m truly sorry Robin. I thought you’d gone forever!”

The Outlaw slowly nodded. “I guess five years is a long time. I’m glad it was only Zelena, and Marian never faced this…”

“I did love you! With all my heart…”

“Did,” he repeated softly, “Such a small word…” His calmness only seemed to make her feel worse.

“Robin…please? I just…”

“I need to be anywhere but here right now,” he breathed, standing up to leave the table, before turning his head away to look at his children. “Congratulations. I hope you’ll both be truly happy.”

He said it without any feeling. As with Hook, his intention was to just walk out the door, to breathe fresh air, his mind a jumble of emotions. However, as he stepped away, he felt a small pull on his trouser leg. Looking down, he saw his little brown eyed girl looking up at him.

“You going?” asked the inquisitive youngster. “Picky-up me?”

Robin felt overwhelmed. Again. Whatever he’d just lost, he’d gained something far more precious. Forcing a smile, he lifted the little tot into his arms. He wanted to cuddle her so tightly, although he knew that might scare her so soon after meeting. So, drawing her gently to his chest, he whispered “No Honour, I’m not leaving you! Never again.” As the four-year-old rested her head on his broad shoulder, he tilted the side of his head to rest gently on hers as, eyes closed, another tear made its way down. A voice from his right side said, “You promise?”

Pulling his boy to him, “Yes, Roland, I promise!”

Henry looked over to Ruby and saw the wolf in tears, being comforted by Dorothy. She’d clearly heard everything from the far table with the sobbing women. Robin had been a good friend to Ruby, and she felt devastated for the pain he was clearly feeling. Henry walked over to her, placing large hands on her shoulders and pulling her into a hug. He was much taller than all the women here and his voice deep. “It’ll be alright, Rubes. They’ll sort it out.”

“I know, Henry. It’s just…so unfair! None of them deserve this…”

Robin continued hugging his children, wishing the moment would never end. Honour lifted her head to look at her new daddy. Nervousness gone, she could see how much Roland loved him. He was clearly nice, so she asked. “Play wiv me outside?”

“I’d love to - let’s go!” he said, desperate for fresh air and the chance to get to know his daughter. “Henry, could you tell your mothers I’m taking Honour to the park. I don’t want them worrying. Roland, you coming?”

“Try to stop me, papa!” said the boy. “I’m not leaving you!”

“Nor I you, my boy! Never again…”

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The trio left, the remaining diners starting to drift off. Word about the return of the former pirate and
outlaw from the Underworld spread rapidly. Thanks to Henry, their story of the cleansing of the River of Lost Souls also spread, mainly due to the Author showing the storybook to Leroy and Ruby that morning. So quickly in fact, that within an hour of playing on the swings and rides with his children, a small group headed towards him from the opposite side of the park, some breaking in to a run and shouting. For a moment, Robin thought there could be danger, so calmly let Honour down to the ground, moving in front to shield them. Damn, no bow and arrows!

“Roland, hold on to Honour.” However, his anxiety was immediately dispelled once he saw one of the men in front of the pack, a bearded giant, instantly recognisable.

“Robin - it really is you!” bellowed Little John, bounding across to them, surprisingly fleet of foot for such a large man. Robin broke into a huge smile as he greeted his closest friend.

“John! I’m so happy to see…” his words pressed out of him by the enormous man’s bear hug, lifting Robin in a crushing embrace.

“My friend!” said the weeping giant, “I heard the wonderful news! You’re alive!” happy tears rolling down the face of his oldest and closest friend.

“I am indeed old friend, though if you don’t put me down, I don’t think I will be much longer. I don’t think my ribs could stand it!” John let him down, as the rest of the Merry Man came around the small group, cheering, hugging and patting their leader.

“Jonny!” yelled Honour, putting her arms out for her godfather. John gathering her up for a cuddle. Robin grinned. Regina was right, he could see how close the friendly giant was to his daughter. Roland was also grinning as Will and Alan moved across to hug the boy. Robin hadn’t realised till now, how much he had missed the simple companionship of his men over the last few weeks. ‘Weeks? Five years!’

“Tonight, we feast! Locksley family, your chariots await” called John to the men, receiving a loud cheer from the team. Without being asked, the chuckling children were gathered up, Will collecting Honour from Little John, turning her to place her on his shoulders. Tuck did the same with the somewhat heavier Roland. “My, you’re putting on the beef, young man!” As Robin grinned at his children, he felt strong arms grab him from behind. “What the bloody…Woah!” he yelled as, with the rest of the gang and his children laughing, Little John easily lifted the fully-grown man cleanly on to his own shoulders, far too easily, making his children laugh in delight. They all marched towards the forest edge and, presumably, the latest site of their camp.

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Henry arrived late to the park, wanting to see where Robin had gone with his children. He watched, smiling, as he saw Honour, Roland and yes, even Robin, being paraded on shoulders and heading somewhere. Running across to join the group, he heard a voice from behind. “Henry, what’s happening?” asked the tall brunette, putting her hand in his.

“Violet! Hi…it’s Robin…him and Killian came back from the Underworld!”

“Robin Hood?” asked the Author’s girlfriend, remembering the brief time the famed outlaw had spent with the heroes, “he’s Honour’s dad, isn’t he?”

“Yup. Rolly and Robyn’s too. And he’s…was…mum’s True Love…”

“Oh - that’s not going to go down too well!” said the young woman, Henry’s on/off girlfriend over the last five years.
“What do you mean?”

“Well Emma’s not going to be too pleased, having her wife’s former boyfriend wandering around town. How’s that going to work? He’ll want to be with his kids. I can’t see Robin just leaving them both to their mums and not being involved. Bit awkward!”

It never occurred to him that anyone would not wish Robin well. Killian yes, but Robin? Now he thought about it, his blonde mother was a bit brusque with him earlier, when he mentioned Robin taking the children off.

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“Mums – just so you know, Robin’s taken Rolly and Hon to the park. He wanted me to tell you he’ll bring them back later.”

“What?” said Emma, her voice rising, with a hint of anger. “How dare he? He should have asked us before he-.” She was interrupted by her slightly irritated son.

“He’s their dad, ma - their dad! He hasn’t seen Honour since she was a baby, so cut the guy some slack!”

Emma scowled. “I don’t like your tone, kid. You may be twenty but I-.”

Henry’s anger rose instantly, irritated at her attitude. “I don’t like yours much, either! Yes, well done for noticing that I am twenty, Em-ma! That means I’m an adult, not a fucking ‘kid’! So, stop calling me one! Honour’s his daughter. His! He’s more right to be with her than you do. Rolly even more so, as Robin’s the only parent he has left. So, get off his back and leave him to be with his children!”

That comment stung Emma, reminding her that she only inherited her current family, apart from him. She knew too well that, even though she had married Regina and loved each one of her family, Roland and Honour would never be truly hers. As Henry’s voice rose in annoyance, Regina finally noticed the pair, having been too deep in her own thoughts.

“Henry Swan-Mills! Do NOT talk to your mother like that!”

“Then get her to back off and leave Robin alone!” he bellowed back. “They just heard that you two broke up with the pair of them. Don’t you think you’ve done enough for one day!” Henry knew with his temper, this couldn’t end well, so turned and walked away, muttering loud enough to be heard, “Sod the pair of you!” as he stormed out the diner without giving his mothers a chance to respond.

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“Well, Mum and Ma did tell him and Killian a couple hours ago. They didn’t seem too happy.”

The Merry Men made their way to their camp in the forest on the outskirts of Storybrooke to celebrate his return. Robin had insisted that Killian Jones, the former pirate, who had been as much a hero as himself in the Underworld, should also be there. Will Scarlett phoned around, gathering everyone for the impromptu feast while walking to the Rabbit Hole to gather some of the stragglers. He found Killian propping up the bar. Walking across to him, he called Robin, then handed the phone to the pirate.

“Killian Jones, you reprobate!” shouted the former thief on the other end, “Seems you and I have made an impression, for some reason! There’s a feast starting here, some sort of pig roast, so stop drowning your sorrows and get your hairy arse over here.”
Killian had indeed been in a foul mood after leaving the diner. Despondent and depressed. Five years! She could have waited before moving on. Did she ever love me anyway? He’d spent the last two hours in the bar drowning his sorrows, trying to figure out what he would do next. The call from Robin was a welcome distraction.

“Hello thief! I was expecting you in here sometime. You seem rather too cheerful, considering we’ve both lost something rather dear to us!”

“My friend, I really don’t know what to think right now. Regina and me? Well we were…according to Tink, ‘soul mates’, though it seems after five years’ dead, anyone can move on!” he said sarcastically. “Yes, I’m bloody hurt, but I don’t want to think about them right now. I have a new daughter Killian! A beautiful daughter I didn’t even know about! Two daughters in fact, and Roland, and I’m just so bloody happy to have them back that I don’t really want to think about…her! Just come over to the camp! If you want to just get wasted, then we can do that too. Together. Just get over here!”

“Aye mate – Perhaps I am ready for a bit of company.”

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**Somewhere in the forest**

A little over an hour later, Killian, having walked with Will to the Merry Men’s new camp, was struck to see that Robin’s description of a ‘pig roast’ was somewhat of an understatement. There were fires and animals being roasted, music, people dancing in small groups and even a small bar set up by the outlaws. It seemed as though the entire town was here. “Bloody Hell, what’s all this, Scarlett?”

“Enjoy it Captain! This is for the pair of ye! Young Henry has shown us your story from the Underworld. Word spreads fast, you know? Apparently, you guys saved over two thousand souls down there. Do you know how many people here have relatives that passed over? All of ‘em! And Henry said Zeus sent you back here. So, whatever people thought before, Captain Hook, or should I say Captain Two-Hands, you’re definitely one of the heroes now!”

*Heroes?* The pirate didn’t feel like a hero. Just plain confused. As he thought of a suitable response, a light feminine voice piped up from his right side.

“Captain Jones!” a small waif-like blond yelled excitedly, looking down to his new left hand, “I’m so pleased to see you back,” she said, giving him a warm hug.

“Hello, Tink! I don’t think everyone’s so delighted to see the pair of us back…”

“Ah. Emma and Regina? Yes, I heard…News travels fast. I’m sorry!” the fairy seemed genuine enough.

“Well, five years away dead didn’t help. Still, she’s moved on. With another woman, no less! So, I guess I should move on too.” Tink recognised the suppressed anger in his voice despite an appearance of calm.

“Don’t hate her Killian! When Emma lost you, she was utterly devastated. It really was a bad time. Snow and David tried everything to pull her out of it. We all did. I spent many days with them. They visited your graves daily, for weeks. They even left Storybrooke together for quite a while, trying to recover but Henry insisted on them coming back, when Regina found out she was pregnant. We…we even thought we would lose Regina at one point.”
“Yeah, she mentioned something about that.” Killian started feeling guilty for his earlier anger. Things were obviously more complicated.

“Thank god for Doctor Hopper! You know he took them both in for a couple of weeks? I don’t know what he did, but it helped. They healed, but it was slow. It was only after a couple of years later that Emma moved in with Regina, partly to help with Honour and Roland. I guess feelings just developed between them. They disappeared for a few months and later we found out they went to Boston. They came back married.”

“So, no big royal wedding then?”

“No. Snow was furious!” she laughed. “Not because they married, but because she missed out on organising a big royal wedding. Only daughter…princess… all that stuff,” she smiled, half-heartedly. “When they first became a couple, she was really awkward about it.”

“Well, good luck to them, I guess. Though it still bloody hurts, Tink!” he grumbled in a half whisper. “You know, I really thought she was ‘the one’ for me!”

“I know, though Regina and Robin have a real problem coming. They’re soulmates and true loves. I should know, I brought them together!”

“I don’t understand - true loves? Still?”

“Fairytale dust doesn’t lie, Killian – true love lasts till death. Just because she thinks she’s moved on, they haven’t! Denying yourself your true love when they’re near, is painful. It’s a magical force, and they’re in for a lot of heartache. Poor Emma will be trapped in the middle!”

The celebration carried on long into the evening, everyone in high spirits. Killian, initially glum, with a few drinks and good food inside him, started feeling better, though not quite back to his old self. Several of the local single women made more than an effort to introduce themselves to the former pirate and now hero. Effort which was much appreciated by him, if not by Tinker Bell, who stuck close to him throughout.

“Killian!” called Ruby, making her way over, hand in hand with Dorothy. “Sorry about earlier - all a bit emotional for me! I’m so sorry for…” she started to get misty eyed once again, so he jumped in.

“Rubes, please! Nothing to apologise for, love. It’s been quite a day.” Then looking to the tall brunette standing next to her. “Miss Gale? I’m sorry we weren’t properly introduced earlier. I met your Aunt… ‘Em’ was it? In the Underworld... she came out of the River with someone. An older gentleman. Henry, I think?”

Tears rose in the eyes of the former hero of Oz. “Auntie Em and Uncle Henry - they’re safe? Rubes said that Hades…”

“Safe and now gone to a better place, I promise.” At that, the woman released her true love’s hand, moving across and hugged the pirate forcefully. “Thank you... thank you, Captain!” she blubbed, happily. “After Rubes told me what that bastard did, I never imagined…”

“Call me Killian; and you’re more than welcome love,” he said, not resisting her embrace. “I confess, I can’t recall all the details as we met a lot of people that day. But can I say congratulations, to you and Ruby for finding your own true love?” he said, looking at the wolf over Dorothy’s shoulder, winking at her. “Dorothy, thanks for making my friend happy. You make a beautiful couple!” The two women blushed, smiling at each other with a loving gaze.
“Killian, where are you staying tonight?” asked Ruby.

“I hadn’t given it much thought. I assumed I’d be going back to Emma’s place. But now? I…” The pirate hesitated, a glum look overtaking his handsome features. “After five years, I’m not even sure where the Jolly or all my stuff is, or if I even have stuff anymore! I died as a Dark One, remember? So, I guess Robin’s men will sort me out with a roof, or at least a canvas, over my head for a while.”

“Not a chance - you’ll stay with us at the diner, won’t he Rubes?”

“Of course!” grinned her wolf happily. “You’re welcome to stay with us as long as you need, Killian.”

Before he had a chance to speak, the fairy butted in. “Well that’s settled. And in a little while I’ll find out where your clothes and things are,” said Tinker Bell. “I’ll go over Regina and Emma’s and ask. One of them’s bound to know. And if not, well there’s always magic!”

“Aye, magic. Thanks love! Mind you, hadn’t you both better clear it with granny before I stay?”

Ruby’s smile faded. “Granny passed away a few years ago. Just after Robin’s death, in fact,” Dorothy put her arm around her lover’s waist. “She was very fond of him. We all were. She took Robin’s murder particularly hard, especially as he sacrificed himself for Regina. We think her heart gave out…”

Killian winced. “That’s sad news indeed. She was a fine, wise old bird! She kept me in line all right! I’m going to miss her.” The women silently nodded in agreement. He took both their hands to give a short squeeze in sympathy. “Come on ladies, let’s join the throng - I believe the drinks are on Locksley tonight!”

They worked through the welcoming crowd. Killian and Tink on one side, Ruby and Dorothy on the other. The former pirate glanced towards the makeshift bar and saw Robin, with Honour in one arm and a pint of beer in the other, Roland & Henry acting as some sort of guard of honour as people came to pay their respects. “Locksley, we meet again!”

“No Papa! I want to stay here, with you tonight!” cried Roland. “I’m not letting you go again.” He wrapped his arms tight around Robin’s waist. Honour looked down at her brother and hugged her new daddy just a little tighter too. “My darling children, I’m not leaving you. Neither of you. But it’s my first day back here, and I need to sort somewhere to stay. So be a good lad and go with Henry and I will find a way to meet you soon. Henry, would you kindly?” He said to the now broad shouldered handsome twenty-year-old. *Hell, he’s really changed the most!*

Before Henry could answer, Tink stepped up. “Actually Robin, let me take Honnie and Roland back? I need to speak to Regina anyway. I’m pretty sure Henry would prefer to enjoy a few drinks with you guys.”

Henry beamed in appreciation. “Thanks, Tink, that’d be great. I did ask Vi to come, as she hadn’t properly met Robin before. To be honest, I’m a little pissed off with my mums right now! I texted them, telling them what we’re doing, so I thought at least one of them would have shown up tonight. Their first night back and all!”

Tink placed a hand on his arm. “I understand, but I think they have other things on their minds right
now,” she said glancing at Robin, who picked up on the tension.

“Tink’s right, Henry. It’s a strange day for all of us. I’m sorry to have been the cause!”

Henry smiled. Robin had always been considerate of others and, even though he was pleased his mothers were happy, he still felt sorry it partly came at Robin’s expense. The man who saved his mother’s life. As the Author, Henry knew the story of his older mother, Robin and Tinker Bell’s fairy dust. The man with the lion tattoo. The man who had helped his own father get to Neverland to help save him from Peter Pan. The man who had seen his wife Marian killed, twice, by the Mills sisters. The man who had had a major effect on turning the Evil Queen away from darkness, to become a true hero. The man who made Regina finally believe she could be loved. The man who didn’t hesitate to sacrifice himself to save her. The man who had made her pregnant and gave him a sister. The man standing before him, back from the dead.

Henry liked Robin. He was the first real father figure since his dad had died. Unlike Killian, Robin was a real adult, a leader of men who took a genuine interest in him, not just as a means to get closer to his mother. In the short time he knew him, before their trip to the Underworld, Robin had started to teach him archery, trapping and animal culling. He always treated him like a grown up. When he’d been killed, Henry could only stand by and watch Regina’s collapse. Her descent into depression was swift, and the support of Archie and Emma had saved her from herself. Henry saw first-hand the deepening relationship between his birth and adopted mothers, from outright hostility, to acceptance, respect, admiration, friendship and finally something more.

He’d been the first to spot the signs. From the secretive chats, the constant striving to be in each other’s company during their mutual grieving, the joint sessions of counselling with Archie. The regular evenings spent together at the mansion. The whispers between the them at odd times, and eventually him catching Emma leaving the mayor’s bedroom early one Sunday morning. Henry wasn’t stupid. He knew what was happening. He finally challenged them both on it one morning, saying he knew what was going on. Regina and Emma denied it of course, though when he got angry and told them he didn’t appreciate being lied to, they finally admitted that their relationship had moved on to a full-blown romance, seeming embarrassed by the fact they had kept it hidden.

Henry had no problem with his mums coming together. He just wanted honesty. It was him that prepared his grandparents for the news, though both Charming and Snow already saw what was happening. David had been the first to accept the situation, just pleased his daughter seemed happier since the pirate’s death. Snow, having a long and sometimes traumatic history with Regina, found the thought of her daughter in a relationship with her stepmother a difficult one to process. The fact she was romantically attached to another woman was not an issue, only who that woman was. However, David was able to help Snow accept the inevitable. It was what Emma wanted and good for both of them.

As word spread, most of Storybrooke grew to accept them as a couple, apart from a few such as Albert Spencer, the former King George, who felt that the two most important public offices in town, Mayor and Sheriff, should not be shared by a couple, married or otherwise. Administrative and judicial power rested in too few hands. He made a fair point, and this was accepted by many. So such so, he won a mayoral election on it.

As much as he loved his mothers and step-siblings, Henry missed having other guys around. Apart from David, Archie and Rumple, in Storybrooke, he was surrounded by many strong women but hardly any strong male influences. So, having gained a place in Harvard, he integrated quickly, appreciating the mixed company and indulging his new hobbies, writing, squash, soccer and beer, gaining lots of new mates in the process.
Back home a week, Henry was already starting to miss Harvard. Especially Boston. His romantic life was active, and he was no longer the innocent his mothers believed him to be. Emma often asked him about girls, though he was usually able to throw her off by changing the subject rather than outright denial, knowing Emma would pick up on it instantly. His first romance with Violet had initially blossomed after they’d returned from the Underworld, though his winning a place in Harvard, and her being accepted for Vassar, had certainly threatened to kill it. However, as they were only a couple of hundred miles apart, they determined to at least keep their friendship, seeing each other regularly. Without the pressure of his mums or Violet’s father, romance slowly blossomed into something a little deeper.

His mothers had picked up on the change. Although immensely proud, Henry’s acceptance to Harvard was greeted with both joy and tears. They both dreaded the fateful day he would leave their loving embrace, though were also greatly relieved that he’d finally declined the offer from Oxford University. The thought of Henry leaving the country to live in England, coming home only once, possibly twice a year, had been one step too far for Emma & Regina. Henry argued, pointing out the benefits and his wish to expand his horizons. However, unbeknown to his mothers, a quiet conversation with Archie Hooper had finally persuaded him that, after everything the two women had been through, being several thousand miles away, albeit only for three years, would be too much. However, Henry decided that he would use his decision to his advantage, on behalf of his mothers and his siblings.

“Mum, Ma, I’ve been thinking about everything. Whether I should go to Oxford or Harvard…”

“Ok…,” croaked Regina, dreading this. She hated the thought of losing him. She sat beside Emma, holding hands, their fingers intertwined. “Just tell us!”

“I think Oxford would be the best for literature, bearing in mind I want to be a writer.”

Emma sighed, closing her eyes in resignation. Knowing she was destined to be parted from her boy, their boy, for quite some time. Tears started to redden her eyes.

“However…I don’t want to be away from my family for too long. I love you all, but I don’t want you to live a lie anymore.”

“What do you mean, Hen? I don’t understand?” said the blonde, confused.

“Mum, ma, you take care of all of us, but you also take care of each other. You two are a couple…don’t bother denying it! I know for a fact that you’re in a relationship in every way. Don’t ask me to go any further because, as your son, it’s, well ‘awkward’”.

The mothers looked to each other, embarrassed and saying nothing, their cheeks reddening. After an awkward silence, Regina was the first to speak up. “Alright. I should have known we couldn’t hide this from you. What is your point?”

“As I said, you’re living a lie! I just want you to come out. For us. I want you to admit it to me, grandma and gramps. I want you to just be a normal couple.”

“Why kid, why? What’s this got to do with you going to England?” said Emma.

“All our friends know you’re together! My grandparents know you’re together. Hell, most of the town knows you’re together. I’ve even seen ma sneaking out of your bedroom first thing in the morning mum, trying to leave before we woke up!” At that, the blonde blanched, her fair skin somehow going even paler.
“Can’t you just be honest? Here’s the thing. I’m the True Believer. So, honesty’s fairly important to me. I’ve two mums in a lesbian relationship. Big deal! I’ve no problem with that. Nobody minds. Yet you continue to put on this fake image, squabbling like an old married couple in front of everyone else. I hate it.”

The mothers sat looking at their son, stunned.

“Henry, what has my relationship with Emma got to do with you going to Oxford? Are you saying that if Emma and I…if we…open up, then you won’t go? That you’ll go to Harvard instead? Because if you are, that’s not fair! That’s basically emotional blackmail.”

“Perhaps it is mum, perhaps it is. But I don’t think it’s fair, pretending. We all deserve better from you both. Damn it, there’s even bets going on as to when you’re finally going to come out. That’s embarrassing!”

Within a week, the women opened up about their feelings to Henry’s grandparents. Within two weeks everybody in Storybrooke knew. Within a year, Emma Swan and Regina Mills were married.

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After an angry Henry left his mothers at the diner, Emma and Regina remained seated at their booth, stunned and contemplating what just happened. Emma stared into the distance, oblivious to her surroundings. Regina just looked mortified. Robin, he’s alive! She still couldn’t get to grips with the fact her former lover, her true love, had been talking to her, minutes ago. The man who died, for her! Here! It was all too much to take in.

The painful days after Robin’s murder now seemed a distant blur. She remembered grief like she had never felt before, even worse than Daniel’s killing by her mother. Worse than the loss of her parents, both at her own hand. Robin, along with her son, had been her world. She’d collapsed, physically and mentally in the weeks that followed. Tears at the graveside, nightmares, endless attempts to come to terms with her loss. To her shame, one month after his death, at her lowest point, Regina had even taken an overdose of sleeping pills in a selfish attempt to end the pain. Selfish, because she did it without considering what it would do to Henry.

Then, two months after Robin’s death, Regina found out she was pregnant with his child. Though initially shocked, having believed herself to be completely infertile, the realisation that she was carrying a child gave her the will to live! She may not have Robin any more, but she could at least have a real, living part of him! What better testament could there be to the memory of the greatest man she had ever known. The only man (apart from Henry) who had shown her what love could really mean.

Throughout her depression, Regina had come to rely more and more on Emma Swan. The sheriff had gone through her own crisis, following the loss of her own love, Killian Jones. The pair of them, having become friends before their fateful descent to the Underworld, leaned heavily on each other over the coming months, closing themselves off to virtually everyone outside their small circle. Reluctant to talk, the two women had spent many evenings together at the mansion. Not necessarily talking, but gaining quiet comfort from each other’s presence, knowing the other was going through the same pain.

It had been Emma who first discovered Regina, following her overdose. Emma who had put her fingers down the mayor’s throat, trying to make her vomit up her stomach contents. Emma who had poofed them both to the hospital, her dad being quietly called to take care of Henry. Emma, who had
stayed with her all night as her stomach was emptied, and drugs applied. Emma, who refused to leave her side until she finally woke, hoarse from the tube that had been extracted from her throat.

“Hi Gina,” whispered Emma, leaning close to her friend. “I’m glad you’re still with us.”

“Henry, is he…?” she croaked, looking completely broken.

“They’re fine. Dad has them, and they don’t know what happened. He just said you were ill and needed intensive care.”

“God, Henry…what have I done Emma?”

The blonde took the older woman’s hand in hers, interlocking their fingers. “Hey, you just did what I thought of doing several times these last few weeks.” She said calmly. “So, I think it’s time we did something about this, don’t you?” Regina raised her eyebrows, silently asking her to continue.

“I think we need some outside help, you and me. Gina, we’re not very good at opening up, are we? Yet all the books tell us that’s what we have to do. To talk about it. I hate the idea, but I think if we don’t, one of us is likely to try something like this again; and I don’t think that’s fair to our family, do you?”

Regina nodded through half closed eyes. “Archie?” she breathed.

“Yeah. Henry’s been suggesting we see him for a while now. So, time we listened to our son?”

The former Evil Queen nodded again, squeezing the other woman’s hand.

Following Regina’s overdose, the heroes tried to maintain silence about it. If the town got to hear of her attempted suicide, not only would it cause immense harm to her son and Roland, but it could also bring to light the fragile state of both the mayor and her sheriff, leading to a fresh attempt to remove them from office.

Victor Whale, the most senior doctor in Storybrooke, had initially insisted on Regina not being released from hospital, pending full psychiatric reports. Until he could ensure there would be no repeat of her suicide attempt. Despite being confronted by an angry Emma and blatantly pressured by Snow and David, Whale had held firm, looking down at the patient, asleep in her bed.

“I know you all want her released. I do too! But believe it or not, this IS in her best interests! I’m sorry, but I will not release her, until I receive a proper psychiatric assessment, confirming she’s no longer a danger to herself.”

“And what if we refuse and just take her out of here anyway?” growled an angry blonde.

“If you refuse to listen, and act regardless of professional advice, you will give me no choice but to go to the General Medical Council and the Town Council, inform them that the mayor is currently mentally unfit and have her temporarily or permanently removed. I do have that authority!”

Snow and David, while wanting to side with Emma, knew that the doctor was within his rights.

“I’ll stop you! Physically if necessary.” Her parents groaned at Emma’s petulant response.

“Don’t threaten me, Emma! You are also past your electoral mandate and your re-election is overdue as you well know. Nobody is above the law, and you can also be removed from office!”

David, seeing anger building, attempted to calm the situation. “Ok, stop it, both of you! This isn’t
helping. Whale, how long would a psychiatric report take to produce?”

“Depends on how soon one of the experts can assess the patient and issue their opinion and report.”

While the three had been engaged in their heated argument, Snow had slipped outside the room to call her friend. “Archie? It’s Snow. We really, really need you here right now!”

Dr Hopper came to the hospital within the hour of Snow’s call, to defuse the situation. He led Whale to a side room for his version of events and agreed what would be acceptable for the doctor to release the patient and maintain silence on the incident. Hearing from one of the nurses that Regina had woken up, Archie returned to her bedside, asking Emma to join him. On seeing the former cricket, Regina slowly broke into a small smile, witnessed by Emma. Regina trusted Archie, knowing that even though she’d had some awkward moments with him in the past, he’d always had her best interests at heart and her son had grown to trust him.

“Hello Regina. Sorry you’ve been feeling unwell.” He said, taking her hand in his own. “I’d like to help you, if you’ll let me? I’ve had a chat with Dr Whale, and I think we have reached an agreement to get you out of here and back home to your family. I know you both…” he said looking towards Emma, encouraging her to join them, “have a problem with Victor, but despite everything, he really is trying to act in your best interests.”

Emma was surprised to find that, instead of her usual sarcastic response, Regina’s smile just grew wider, looking into the eyes of the kindly man addressing her and pulling his hand in towards her chest. Archie beamed his soft, benevolent smile down on her. “He’s agreed to release you tonight, without me giving a formal report, on condition you meet with me daily over the next fortnight. Both of you.” He looked at Emma.

“Both of us!” Emma twitched, annoyed. “I…I don’t recall being the patient here?”

“Both of you,” he said, quietly. “Emma, you’ve also suffered a major trauma, just like Regina. I believe you’re both still going through a very hard time trying to come to terms with your losses. Let me help you now!”

Emma wanted to argue but saw the futility of doing so. Only hours before she told Regina they needed this. Now it was being offered. “Ok Archie. Help us. Help me!”

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So, the daily sessions with Archie started for both mothers. Seeing them individually and sometimes together, the psychiatrist and town conscience brought about noticeable changes in both women. Regina, knowing and trusting his work with her son, was the first to benefit, recognising her desperate need to open up and talk about the loss of her true love. Many tears were shed over the coming weeks, with Archie helping to pull her emotions apart, rebuilding her own self-worth and reasons to live.

Emma though, had been a much harder nut to crack. Sceptical from the start, her early life as an orphan had built up walls which seemed impossible to breach. Several times she stormed out as he probed into her past, which became too uncomfortable. Particularly questions regarding her issues with her parents’ supposed abandonment, and subsequently being passed from orphan home to orphan home. However, slowly the cricket started to get the saviour talking. About three weeks into her sessions, Emma finally cracked and, in a torrent of crying and wailing, the floodgates opened. The following session, Archie merely held the sobbing, grieving woman for an hour. It was painful,
but she definitely felt better for it!

Once he had both women talking openly to him, Archie suggested a joint session, something Emma and Regina were both reticent about, despite their growing faith in him.

“Emma, Regina, I know you’re both reluctant about having joint sessions, instead of individually, so let me explain my reasoning.” The women sat side by side on his larger couch, ready to disagree.

“As I have repeatedly said, everything discussed in this room is completely confidential. You have always had my word on that. However, without disclosing anything, I have to tell you that you can help each other to heal just as much as I can help you. I have before me two people who have gone through one of the worst traumas of their life. Two people who have very similar backgrounds.”

Emma snorted. “Similar? A former queen and an orphan! I don’t think so…”

“I meant in terms of your sense of abandonment and parental love. Your disrupted home life. You have both had to become very independent, much earlier than most, and that often brings…issues. You have both acknowledged it and have started opening up to me. I thank you for that and know it will help. Now I want each of you to be able to open up with someone other than myself, for the same reason. And it makes good sense that it should be with each other.”

“Because we’ve both had a loved one killed?” said Regina.

“Partly, though not just that. You’re both taking sessions with me. You share a son who loves you both dearly. You have put aside your differences, coming together in friendship, having saved each other’s lives several times. And, you have both admitted to me, that you regard the other as your best friend.”

At that, the women seemed to match each other’s pink cheeks, looking to each other and smiling. Seeing each other’s embarrassment, Regina chuckled, Emma quickly matching her. An action that was immediately picked up by the doctor, who also smiled. “Exactly. Emma, Regina, you know each other’s pain and you care for each other, though you’ll both try to deny it.”

At that, Emma reached a hand out towards the brunette, who picked it up to hold, staring straight ahead at Archie. “Talk to each other. Talk about all the things you need to get off your chest. Just like you do with me. But try not to offer each other advice, just try to listen to each other.”

“And that’s it?” asked Regina.

“Yup, that’s it. Until our next session. Goodbye ladies.”

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Later that evening, they did talk. After Henry and Roland had gone to bed, the women sat together in front of Regina’s fire, and talked about their early lives. About their loneliness, about their loves, Daniel and Neal. They spoke about feeling isolated and misunderstood and finally, they talked about Henry. With tears in her eyes, Regina told the younger woman about getting her little adopted boy home for the first time, his early years and her fears that she would never be good enough for him.

“Regina, stop. You were the best thing that ever happened to Henry! The biggest regret of my life was giving him up in that prison. I thank god he came to you. I failed him, but you saved him!” she sobbed.

“Emma!” Regina was also now teary and turned to take Emma’s hands in her own. “You never failed him, I did; you were put in an impossible position, and I was the root cause. Because of me,
Snow and David had no choice but to let you go, or you would die! Because of me, you grew up without your parents. Because of me, you had a horrible life as an orphan. Because of me, you—“

“No Regina, you stop! Whatever happened in the past, I don’t give a shit! Our son loves you, and I’ll always be so grateful you turned him into the most remarkable young man we both love today! You were there for him when I wasn’t. I’m sorry I made him stop trusting you when we first met; but god, he loves and needs you now. Just like I do…” She said the last words in a whisper. And with that, Emma let go of Regina’s hand and wrapped her arms around the older mother, pulling and hugging her to her chest.

Breathing heavily, full of emotion, Regina welcomed her embrace and responded by wrapping her own arms around the blonde. They held the cuddle for a few minutes, both sniffling quietly but holding on to the other, tightly, in comfort.

That’s when it happened. After the long pause, Emma giggled while still holding the other woman, their cheeks touching, not looking up. Regina felt the other’s body shake with laughter, and she responded in kind, aware of the ridiculous nature of their situation. Both of them giggling now, as they slowed, Emma turned her head and kissed Regina’s cheek. Without hesitation, Regina smiled and brought her own lips to the blonde’s cheek. Not letting go, Emma pulled her head back to face the other woman, inches from each other. Green eyes looked deeply into brown, all smiles now gone.

Chests pressed together, the pair seemed to silently communicate. They both guessed where this was heading. Looking directly at the saviour’s mouth, Regina tilted her head slightly to her left, the action matched by the blonde. Their breathing increased as the women brought their faces closer together, their lips almost touching. A moment’s hesitation, then Regina made the first move. Two inches forward, she gently sealed her lips on Emma’s. Silence.

Emma’s eyes closed, as her mouth moved more firmly Regina’s, pressing harder. She was amazed at the sheer softness of the warm, velvety cushion against her lips, which started to move slowly. The same feelings flashed through Regina as she opened her mouth a little more, to feel the saviour against her. Emma did the same, creating a gap soon filled by a moist, warm sensation against the inside of Regina’s mouth. It took a moment for her to realise it was Emma’s tongue! It worked its way gently past her teeth to explore. Regina instinctively responded by sliding her own tongue across the intruders entrance, warm and wet as the two introduced themselves, slowly massaging the other.

The entire kiss was probably no more than ten seconds, when a bright burst of light flashed across the faces of the pair. Emma pulled back, nervous to what had just happened. Regina reacted in the same way, slowly remembering she’d experienced the same flash when she’d kissed Henry’s forehead in the cannery. As had Emma’s vision of the kiss between herself and her supposedly dead son in the hospital years earlier. The women looked to each other, nervous and trembling.

“True…true love’s kiss?” whispered Emma, open mouthed. Regina, equally dazed, slowly nodded her head again broke into a nervous smile. Emma seized the moment and returned her mouth to the other woman’s, now in a more passionate, heated kiss.

Archie had been so right. It was the first day the burden of Robin’s death started to lift from Regina.

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That first kiss seemed like a lifetime ago. Regina now sat on the cream couch in the mansion, thinking through the day. She still couldn’t shake Robin’s face from her mind. His look when he was told by Emma that they’d married; that his true love had married and…moved on. It wasn’t a look of
disappointment; it was one of pain. And that look cut through Regina like a knife. Because she’d felt it too. Pain and despair.

So many things ran through her mind. She loved Emma. She’d been a godsend over the last five years and the love between them burned brightly. They had been married just over a year ago, in New York, and she could tell, sense even, the concern on her wife’s face at seeing their former lovers. How would it affect them; their marriage. After the men’s departure from the diner, Regina felt real despair, loss. It was more than mere shock at the unforeseen presence of Robin. It felt like she was grieving all over again when he left.

She sat stunned, oblivious to the other diners, trying to come to terms with what just happened. So much so, they hadn’t really noticed the departure of Roland and Honour with Robin, until Emma appeared to be having an angry exchange with Henry! Whatever had happened, their eldest son had stormed off in a huff. Regina had almost forgotten until she heard the WhatsApp tone on her phone.

**Henry:** They’re doing a celebration at the Merry Men’s camp. You should be here!

Regina was surprised at the short tone of the message. Emma’s reply even more so.

**Emma:** Who is ‘they’?

**Henry:** The entire town, seems like…

**Emma:** Why?

**Henry:** Dumb question. Why do you think? Forgotten them already?

**Regina:** Henry, don’t take that tone with your mother!

**There was a long pause before his next message:**

**Henry:** Are you coming here or not?

**Emma:** Henry, I don’t like your attitude! Cool it or get your own dinner.

**Henry:** Fine. Don't wait up for me. I'll get my own and I won’t be home tonight. Clearly the two guys who saved your lives don’t matter anymore!

That last barb stung. Regina knew her wife well enough to know what was coming next. An angry retort, followed by a threat. But Henry was twenty and now away most weeks in college. He didn’t need them like he used to, and there were plenty of friends willing to put him up for the night. Even Violet’s father trusted him to stay in the same house as his daughter. The brunette decided to kill the squabble before it escalated.

**Regina:** OK Henry. Be safe.

No response from Emma. Regina knew she would be seething. An hour later, Henry sent another curt email:

**Henry:** Tink’s bringing R & H home. I will be out for the night. May see you tomorrow.

Regina groaned. Her wife and son were so obtuse sometimes, refusing to back down. Though she
smiled, remembering that his actions were more like that of his older mother. *I’m such a hypocrite,* she thought, just as she heard the door knocker.

Opening it, she found the green fairy standing on the porch, Roland by her side looking glum, and Honour fast asleep in her arms. Tinker Bell smiled up at the mayor, though clearly with a look of concern on her face.

“Thanks Tink,” she said, standing aside to let the younger woman in, “I’ll take her from you.”

“No, don’t worry, I’ll just carry her straight upstairs. She’s been asleep a little while now and we don’t want her waking. Besides I need to have a little chat about something.”

Regina nodded as she began to close the door, stopping when she saw her wife striding towards the entrance, phone in hand and a look of thunder on her face, clearly about to say something, loud. Before the other woman reach her, Regina stepped in front of her with a finger to her lip. “Sshh!” she whispered, “Honour’s asleep.”

As the women congregated in the lobby, the brunette again whispered to the others. “Darling, could you take Roland to bed? He looks shattered. I’ll help Tink get Honour settled.”

Emma nodded silently, the anger from her son’s message now starting to dissipate. She took the ten-year old’s hand. “Come on Ro, you look ready to drop.”

Ten minutes later, after whinging that he didn’t want to leave his dad this evening, Roland had been gently persuaded to try to settle. “Ro, don’t worry, you’ll see him tomorrow.”

“You promise?”

“I promise,” she said as she pulled the duvet up around the boy, kissing his forehead. Seeing sleep already start to overtake him, she turned the light off and quietly tiptoed out of the room.

Her thoughts immediately turned to events earlier. Henry for one. Emma was irritated at her son’s stroppy behaviour towards both her and Regina. What made it worse was the fact that he was right. She was avoiding Killian. *How the hell do I even face him?* After the initial shock of seeing her former dead lover, Emma had been overwhelmed. Speechless. This was the man who had saved her life, several times, yet she hardly said a word to him this morning! *Even after five years, he hardly seemed to have aged!* She remembered his beautiful, piercing blue eyes staring into her own, expecting bad news. Then she gave it to him. Her and Regina. Emma felt almost…ashamed. The blonde started to pad quietly down the stairs before stopping, hearing loud whispers coming from below, causing her to stop and listen.

“Regina, you’re going to have to speak to him! This will only get worse for both of you!”

“I can’t, Tink. I just can’t…face him right now! I just feel so god damn…oh I don’t know…guilty! Which is stupid, I know but…this is painful!”

“That’s your soulmate connection - it’s not going to go away! It’s as magical as you are. I told you many times, fairy dust doesn’t lie, no matter how much you avoid it. Now he’s alive again, you are reconnected!”

“I have Emma now! I didn’t marry her as some sort of ‘replacement’ for Robin! I fell in love with her!”
“Yes, I’m sure you did and still do, but until you resolve this, with him, that ache, that pain, will just eat away within you. If he’s among us again, you need to have him in your life, in some form or you’ll...suffer!”

*Or get him out of her life!* Thought Emma as she continued to eavesdrop. *Perhaps she could have a word with Gold. Some sort of memory potion for him. Or Regina. Or something to take the link away.*

“This bond Regina – it’s not going to go away, and every day he’s back it will get more and more painful for you both if you keep ignoring it. You need to talk to him. Soon.”

Emma walked slowly down to join the two women. “Can’t we get Gold to fix a potion for him to forget about you? Or you to forget about him?” She slowly placed an arm around her wife’s waist, both now facing the fairy.

Regina bristled at the suggestion, pulling away from the blonde. “You can’t be serious?”

“Why not? After all, we just need to kill off the Forest Fart’s feelings for you, surely?”

“DON’T CALL HIM THAT!” growled Regina, angrily. “Have you forgotten he has children? Three of them. Two live with me...us! What if something went wrong? Roland’s just got him back! Where do you think he will want to go? And Honour? How the hell would you explain why her father has no interest in her when she grows up?”

Emma was taken aback by her abrupt change in tone, from sad to angry in a flash. “Ok! Jeez, I’m sorry...”

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to snap. I just don’t like you being derogatory about him! Robin...he...he was important to me and he’s the father of two of my children.”

The use of the past tense was no comfort to Emma. “Look Gina, I didn’t mean anything by it. I just feel a bit odd. You know, my wife talking to the fairy here about her former lover. I don’t feel comfortable...”

“I understand. Although she’s right. I do need to speak to Robin. And you need to talk with Hoo...Killian. I’m not looking forward to this. Tink, could you please ask them to meet us somewhere? Not Granny’s – too public. Not here either. Too...”

“Leave it to me; I’m going back to join them all anyway. There’s quite a party going on. I think it’ll be an all-nighter! I’ll text you...” With that, the green fairy turned to the door, hearing Emma mutter.

“You’d better advise the Forest...Robin, not to try it on with my girl while he’s here! I’ve got magic, remember?” Emma said, trying to be funny, but failing.

*Your magic! Oh Emma, you really are in for quite the surprise!*

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The following morning, both women got up early. Very early. Neither had slept, and the face staring back from the bathroom mirror at Emma looked bloody awful. *If Killian wasn’t over me before, he will be when he sees this!* she thought to herself, horrified at her reflection and the dark patches under her eyes. The brunette standing next to her at the second basin looked equally haggard. “I know what you’re thinking, because I’m thinking it too...” she harrumphed. They turned to face each other, Emma about to speak before a loud knock on the bathroom door interrupted them.
“Gina! Emma! Where are my boots?” yelled Roland from the other side.

“By the side of the bed, where I took them off you last…hey! What are you doing awake? Do you even know what time it is?” The blonde croaked.

“Five thirty! I needed to get up early to see papa! I have to leave in ten minutes cos Henry’s picking me up.”

“Five thirty, Henry! Ro, what’s going on?” shouted Regina from the bathroom, aghast that the young man was a bundle of energy so early.

“Papa’s taking the men fishing on Killian’s ship. Henry’s going too. He said we have to catch the early tide!” said the ten-year-old, excited.

“Early tide. Killian’s ship! What the hell? Killian doesn’t even have a ship. Hasn’t had one for well…years,” Emma whispered to her wife before figuring out what to say to the youngster. “What ship, Ro?” she shouted.

“The Jolly Roger, of course! It’s back.”

“That’s impossible. It disappeared ages ago! I think Blackbeard took it.” Emma groaned, knowing she was about to disappoint him. “Roland, I don’t think we can let you go, not until we check this out to make sure you’re safe.”

“NO! I want to be with papa! I’ll always be safe with papa! There’s a lot of people going, even the Sheriff and your dad. You can’t not let me go. I want to see papa!”

At the mention of her father, Emma picked up her phone from the dresser, pressing his speed-dial. He picked up within seconds, sounding bright and alert. Clearly, he’s been up for some time.

“Emma? Hi darling! Has Henry got Roland yet?”

“Um. Dad. No, he’s not here yet. You knew about this trip?”

“Yes, Henry mentioned it last night. He said Roland’s invited. Your brother desperately wanted to go too, so I thought I better tag along, to make sure everyone’s safe. You coming?”

“No. I…I wasn’t invited.” Hardly surprising! “Ro mentioned the Jolly Roger?”

“Yes, it’s bizarre. Hook…oops…guess I can’t call him that anymore, not with that new hand! Killian…he got the Jolly back. I’m walking towards the harbour now with Neal. I can see it from here. She looks magnificent, new sails, all restored and painted. She looks brand new!”

“How on earth…? Anyway…did you go to last night’s party? Did you see him?”

“Killian? No, everyone else in the town seems to have been there, though, and I got the message from Henry. I’m seeing him in a few minutes. I thought Snow and I were the only ones who didn’t make it last night. You too, I guess?”

“Yeah. Regina and I, well we didn’t feel we…” She hesitated, not sure what to say.

“I understand Emma,” she could almost feel her father’s smile. “It’s a lot to take in. Don’t worry about the boys, I’ll take good care of them. I wasn’t sure whether to let Neal go, as Killian…well…you know. But Robin and some of his men are going too, so I know they’ll be safe.”

The mention of the Outlaw made Emma tense. “Yeah, I get it. Though I’m not sure we should let
Rolly go. He’s only ten and I-.”

“Emma, are you serious? That boy has been away from his father for five years! You can’t be thinking about not letting him go? That would be cruel! Speaking as someone who lost his little girl for the first 28 years of her life, I know what I’m talking about!”

“Ok dad, point taken. Gina and I are going to try and have a talk to Killian and Robin sometime soon. To…sort things out.”

There was something in her voice he picked up on. “Emma, you alright?”

“Yeah, of course,” she said, knowing he wasn’t convinced.

“Try not to worry. Things have a habit of sorting themselves out. You and Regina will be fine. Just be completely honest with them. But Emma?”

“What?”

“I know it is going to be awkward for you both, but you’ll come through it, like you always do. That’s why I love you and I’m very proud to have you as my daughter!”

That instantly brought tears to her eyes. “Sod it, dad! Why’d you have to say that right now? I hate tearing up.” As she said it, her wife sidled up to her, wondering why Emma seemed upset.

“Because I meant it, my girl!” he laughed.

“I love you too dad. You’re the best.” She ended the call. Regina moved to face her.

“Problem?”

“No problem. Dad’s going with them. I guess they’ll be ok…”

Ten minutes later, Roland again came bundling down the stairs, a small dark-haired typhoon of energy.

“Henry’s outside! I’m off,” he said, throwing his jacket on and racing towards the front door. He seemed oblivious to the two women who had been the focal point of his life for the past five years.

“Roland, wait!” said Regina, “I’m sure Henry will come to collect you. Just hold on a moment.”

“No - he told me he’ll wait on the road instead of coming in. He’s ready to go.”

As Roland opened the door, Regina looked out across the drive to the road, seeing Henry sitting in his grandfather’s station wagon, ready to go and barely glancing at the house. Regina knew he was probably still upset from last night.

“Hi Rolly, jump in, we need to get going to catch the tide!” Henry glanced up at his older mother, nodding in recognition, but the smile leaving his face. Roland threw his bag in the back and jumped in.

“Henry, wait!” called Regina, though he seemed to deliberately ignore her, driving away. That hurt. It was unnecessary, and she would have to talk to him about it later. Even if Henry was upset with his mothers, there was no need to cold shoulder them any longer. As she watched the car drive off, two slim arms came from behind to embrace her around the waist as a blonde head rested on her shoulder. The blonde knew what was going through her mind. “Seems I can’t do anything right by him these days.”
“You and me both. I’m going back to bed,” huffed Emma.

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Honour woke them two hours later, clambering on the bed noisily and bundling herself between the women. Emma groaned. She’d tried sleeping, but her brain was still swirling from yesterday’s events. So she’d spent most of the time curled up against her wife, also awake but equally anxious.

“Hon…honey…you’re up early,” Regina croaked.

“Mornin! Can we see papa today?” The little dimple-cheeked blonde asked.

“Oh honey…give us time to wake up! We may go a little later,”

“Nooo! I wanna go see my papa soon! I like him! Where Henny an Ro?” Clearly the little girl had already checked in on her brothers’ rooms before coming in to her mother’s.

During the little exchange, Emma lay quite still, pretending to be asleep. After being married to Regina for over a year, she still found it upsetting that neither Roland nor Honour would call her mum or ma, like Henry did. She could understand Roland, having lost both his birth parents. But Honour had known Emma since birth. Despite Regina and Henry both encouraging the little one, she still insisted on calling Emma by her first name.

“Hon, Henry and Ro are out at the moment. We’ll see them later.” Regina explained.

“And papa?”

“Um…yes sweetie, we’ll probably see your papa too.”

Honour seemed placated, though it irritated Emma that Robin had already made such a big impression on their little girl after only a few hours. She was about to suggest their daughter go off and play in her room, when Regina’s phone rang from the bedside table. The brunette picked it up and touched the screen.

“Yes Tink!” Emma watched as Regina listened intently. “Ok, got it.” She yawned. “Two o’clock? Yes, ok. I’ll…we’ll be there. Thank you Tink.”

Emma was surprised, as Regina made a point of never letting anyone else set her agenda, whether she was available or not. She may have changed but she still acted as a queen sometimes, insisting on calling the shots. Ending the call, she turned to face her. “It seems the Jolly Rodger will return to port around one. Tink tells me that Hook, er…Killian, is suggesting we meet them on the ship at two. I agreed.”

“I don’t feel comfortable with this, Gina! Let’s leave it a couple of days?.

“No Emma, I can’t. I know it’s painful, but I do need to talk to Robin. If you can’t face Killian right now, I understand and suggest you stay here. However, I will go this afternoon…”

“Then I’m coming with you!” said the disgruntled saviour, reluctant to leave her wife alone with her former lover.

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An Awkward Situation

Chapter Summary

Robin gets to spend time with his children. Killian Jones goes sailing and Emma and Regina find out the men came back with new talents.

Chapter Notes

Apologies if you got a corrupted chapter. I did something wrong setting it up! Still, thanks for the feedback so far. Enjoy!

An awkward situation

Their Mercedes pulled up at the harbour car park with Emma, Honour seated in the back, and saw the white-sailed two-masted brig in the near distance, maneuvering in to port. Emma gasped at the magnificent sight. “Dad was right, she looks more than refurbished, she looks brand new! And bigger!”

“Emma, how did he get his ship back? I thought Blackbeard had stolen it? They only came back yesterday.”

Emma shrugged, having no answer. She looked at the small crowd gathered at the quayside to welcome the arrival. As the vessel drew nearer, Emma could she the familiar frame of the former pirate at the helm, directing instructions to the crew as they lowering the rigging, slowing the vessel as it crept slowly into the dockside. Five minutes later, the group onboard started to disembark, amongst them most of their friends. Not for the first time today, Emma felt distant. As though they didn’t want to include her and Regina in their fun.

“Hiya!” called Ruby to her lover as Dorothy came down the gangplank to the dockside. “That was brilliant!” she yelled, giving her partner a hug. “First time on a ship, and first fishing trip. Look what I caught!” she breathed, showing her catch.

Several of the merry men followed, the dwarves behind them. Leroy was actually smiling! Then two of the fairies. Charming appeared, holding a beaming Neal by the hand for safety, looking up to see a grinning Snow as she arrived to welcome them. Emma and Regina took Honour out of the car to join them.

“Did you enjoy that, darling?” said Snow, wrapping a loving arm around her son. “You didn’t feel seasick?” David reached across to wrap his own arm around his wife. “No! It was brilliant! We went to a little island, had a barbecue and Uncle Robin showed me how to fish. Like what I got!” he squeaked excitedly as he showed his mum his catch of four decent sized fish. “And we got to swim too!”
“Dad, where’s Henry? Or Honour?” Emma asked, walking up to greet them.

“They’re up top. Killian’s teaching Rolly some rope tricks, and last time I saw Robin he was reading little Robyn a story down below. They’ve all had a great time Emma! They’ll sleep well tonight.” He said, leaning across to pull his daughter to him, giving her a quick kiss on the top of the head.

“Auntie Gina!” Neal cried, bouncing across from his parents to wrap his arms around her waist. “You should have come too! Look at my fish!”

“Perhaps next time, my love” Regina replied, bending down to cuddle him as he was getting heavy to lift. Since Robin’s death, the former mayor had come to depend heavily on Emma’s family, and Neal was a big part of that comfort. Emma’s little brother always treated Regina as his big sister, and the pair had become close over recent years. So much so, that when it became apparent, after a small fire, that Neal also had his sister’s magical abilities, Regina had calmly taken charge of the situation and helped the young boy to control his emotions, channelling his magic with lessons in her vault and the woods until they were under some sort of control. She was determined Neal should not suffer the same trauma and isolation that she and Emma went through when they discovered their own abilities.

Her love for Neal was greatly appreciated by Snow and David, only helping to increase their affection for the woman. So much so, that when Emma and Regina finally admitted they were more than just close friends, it didn’t come as too big a surprise to David, though Snow had serious reservations. After gentle persuasion from David that this is what Emma wanted, Snow accepted the inevitable and Regina was welcomed into the bosom of their family.

“Well they’re not coming down, so we better go up,” said the former queen as she started to walk up the gangplank and on to the ship, holding Honour in her arms. Emma followed reluctantly.

They climbed aboard to find the only person on deck was the Captain’s boatswain, Smee, holding a freshly boiled kettle. “Afternoon ladies!” the ruddy cheeked old sailor smiled, “I guess you’re looking for the kiddies? They’re down below lunchin’ with the Cap’n.” He nodded his head in the direction of the steps down.

Regina and Emma both felt something almost as soon as they reached the steps. Magic! Not just magic but immeasurably strong magic, like a dense field of energy. Concerned for the safety of her children below, Regina put Honour down, stepping directly in front to guard her. She walked down the steps cautiously, feeling herself enter the energy bubble. Emma felt the same thing seconds later as she and Honour joined her wife at the bottom of the steps into the galley.

Regina couldn’t believe the scene before her. People sat or stood around a large oval dining table, on which lay fancy teacakes, tea and soft drinks. There was laughter and the conversation lively. At the head of the table stood Killian Jones, pouring tea into various cups to share out while Henry, also standing, dispensed water and juice to the children. Directly opposite Jones sat Robin, chatting happily to Robyn close on his right whilst Roland sat on his left. What surprised Regina most was the presence of the Blue Fairy, sitting close to Tinker Bell. Well that explains the magic wave. A bit more powerful than usual. What the hell’s she doing here!

“Hope I’m not disturbing?” snarked Regina, unsure why she felt so put out at the happy scene before her. But she did. Something just felt…odd.

“Papa!” yelled the little blonde girl, jumping out from between the two women and launching herself at Robin, climbing around Roland to deposit herself forcefully on her father’s left knee. “Honour, my lovely, how’re you my other beautiful girl? You want some chocolate cake?” He wrapped his left arm around her as she pulled in to cuddle him, nodding furiously. “Yes, please!!”
The little redhead to his right, pleased to see her half-sister, stood, coming closer to Robin’s right side with her arms in the air. “Me too?” asked Robyn.

“Of course, darling, come up…” He scooped her up, placing her on his right knee, beaming at the pair of them while smiling across at Roland. For the first time he and all his children were together.

“Mummy, Emma, can we stay for tea too please?” Honour giggled, delighted to be with her papa.

“Um…well…I’m not sure. We weren’t planning to…Emma?” she asked her wife, who was equally surprised at the scene. Before she could say anything, Regina looked across at the fairies, one of which she’d never trusted and the other a close personal friend. “Blue - what brings you away from the convent?”

“I was invited to sail, Ms. Swan-Mills!” she said simply. “And Robin needed some…magical assistance. I also collected his little Robyn here from her mother this morning. Zelena was…persuaded…that it was in her interest. We’ve had a lovely sailing trip with Captain. Jones.”

“I’m very grateful to you, Blue,” Said Robin, “That’s one person I do not want to face right now! I might do something I’d regret! Still, I have my little girl with me now.” He dropped at kiss onto the little redhead. “So something good came out of…it. I now have not one but two wonderful daughters and my handsome son.” He paused to kiss the other child. “The fact is, I lost five years from these amazing children’s lives, and I don’t want feel any more pain or anguish over the past. I already found out I lost the love of my soul mate yesterday, so I think that’s enough, don’t you?

That last sentence cut through Regina like a knife. Lost the love of my soulmate! She couldn’t understand how he was so calm and objective about the situation when she felt so thoroughly wretched. Although she now had the love of another, Regina still had so many feelings for him.

“Regina, one of the many reasons Blue is joining us here is because she’s told me that you and I have some ‘issues’ to deal with. I know Tink had a similar conversation with you last night. So I suggest we ask Henry or Emma to take the children home later, once we’ve finished our tea. Now in the meantime, why don’t you two sit down and join us before Honnie’s and Roland completely obliterate the cake…”

Emma stood listening in silence. The children were all having a lovely time. Even Blue had been smiling, until the women joined the party. She still didn’t feel comfortable sitting with them, partly because the only two vacant seats now were between close to…Killian! She looked up to find the pirate staring straight at her with those piercing blue eyes. It was awkward, but she felt now was the time to deal with this. “Killian, we need to talk. Can we go somewhere? Perhaps Regina could join us?”

“No. You made it quite clear where we stand, yesterday. I’m not about to mess up a delightful afternoon tea with these lovely people. So, I suggest you and I deal with anything else, later. I’ll be gathering provisions for my trip most of tomorrow. So I suggest just the two of us meet at the Rabbit Hole at six tonight. If that isn’t too much trouble?”

The last comment felt like a barb. He didn’t seem angry, just…resigned. “I guess so.” She replied, her mind confused. She knew she still had feelings for him and wanted a chance to talk, to explain…something.

She’d spent most of the previous night lying awake, remembering all the times they had spent together before his death. The fact he had saved her life, and her family’s, several times. She remembered how he changed from a thieving pirate, to a hero, to a Dark One, then finally making the ultimate sacrifice for all of them. His little kindesses. The flirtation. And finally, the sex. He’d
had been very, very good in bed and after she’d left him in the Underworld it was one of so many things about him she missed so much.

But she’d moved on. With another woman, no less. Three years ago, as her feelings for Regina grew, she realised she was probably bisexual. Though, she’d never actually been with another woman before Regina. There had been that brief time with Elsa, when they made out in the Sorcerer’s mansion, but it had been cut short when Killian had almost burst in. But that wasn’t full on. It was only Regina. From the moment Henry first brought her back to Storybrooke, she had felt something for his other mother, though she couldn’t define it. Regina was just so different.

However, she also still felt drawn to men too. One man in particular. Killian Jones, or Captain Hook, had previously brought something out in her, a fun, wanton, promiscuous nature. It had been a hunger, and she had missed it, and him, terribly when they finally parted. And so, after she and her family finally returned from the Underworld without him, Emma had deeply mourned. Her depression wasn’t as deep, or as long, as Regina’s but it was still a very, very painful time she’d rather forget.

However, five long years later, that man now stood before her.

“Well, if you’re not going to sit-until tonight then.” He said, sitting and turning to talk to the Blue Fairy.

Although she knew she had no right to, she felt hurt by his dismissal. As though their former relationship stood for nothing? And why should it? You moved on from him. Why shouldn’t he move on from you? She thought, and turned to her wife, uncomfortable and wanting to leave. “Regina, perhaps we come back later?” She asked. But Regina couldn’t hear her, just staring open mouthed at the archer.

The two little girls either side of Robin were now sitting on either knee, heads leaning in, smiling and listening intently as he whispered something amongst them, laughing and with his arms protectively wrapped around them. Honour and Robyn were both giggling, and it was clear to Regina that they were both totally smitten with their new father, and him with them, and it made her feel very odd. Robin was just a natural, and she’d forgotten just how good he had been with Roland.

Henry sat staring at the trio, chuckling at Robin’s story, and seemed to be deliberately ignoring his mothers standing opposite. Though he had only known Robin a short time before his demise, Henry had become very much in awe of the archer and as the young man leaned in to add to the story her former lover was telling, Regina felt a sense of loss, remembering what they once shared. And now she was being excluded.

Emma brought her back to her senses, linking their arms. “Gina?”

“Sorry Emma, what? Oh, no…I think I’ll stay a little while longer. I need to talk to Robin about Honour. If you don’t mind?”

“What?” The word left Emma’s lips a little louder than intended. Now she felt like she was being pushed out, excluded from a conversation between her wife and her wife’s former lover. About her step-daughter, no less! “Regina, we can do this later…”

“No,” said the former mayor, with a sigh, her eyes never leaving the outlaw. “We need to talk about this. Robin is back, and he IS their father. Clearly he needs to be with Honour and Roland, some of the time.” Robin nodded slowly in agreement, his eyes now locked on to Regina’s, with a look Emma found distinctly unsettling. “Robin, what do you think?”
“Well, my…Regina.” His clumsy slip-up heard by all. “I agree. There’s much to discuss and I don’t want to do that now. This is the first time I’ve ever had all my children together,” he said smiling at Roland. “I’ll work something with you two of you. I’m the newcomer, so I don’t want to disturb their lives. He paused, kissing Robyn on the top of her head as she snuck in to closer cuddle up. “At some point I need to do the same thing with Robyn’s mother. I will work something out with the three of you. The only thing I ask, no, I insist upon, is a sensible amount of time with my girls and Roland.”

“Papa, where are you staying tonight?” asked Roland. “I want to be with you!”

“I’m staying with Dorothy & Ruby for a couple more nights my boy, then I’ll be living at the convent for a month or so till I get my affairs in order. But I’ll make sure I see you every day.”

At the thought of Robin actually living in the convent, Regina nearly choked. “The convent? What on earth are you going to be doing there? With her?” Regina almost snarled the last word, pointing at the head of the fairies, who she really, really didn’t trust.

The Blue Fairy scowled back at her, arching an eyebrow. Before she could respond with a suitable jibe of her own, Robin spoke up again. “Blue and her ladies are going to be giving me lessons over the coming weeks! A bit of guidance in how to control myself. The alternative was either going to Rumplestiltskin, or the two of you. I don’t fancy the first option and I definitely didn’t see you and Emma feeling comfortable…”

“What lessons? What are you talking about?” asked Emma.

The Blue Fairy stood to address the women and spoke in her most patronising tone. “I’m surprised you both can’t feel it? Use your magic for goodness sake! Who do you feel in the room right now?”

Regina and Emma looked to each other, both closing their eyes to focus their senses. Within moments, both women picked up on the overwhelming energy field in the room, much stronger than usual, Regina opening her eyes to see where it was coming from. Emma was less experienced in detection, but also traced it. A distinct glow emanating from the Blue Fairy. No more than usual, yet a glance to her right Emma saw a similar blueish glow centred around the hands of the pirate. “You? Your hands! Killian! What the hell’s going on?” said Emma.

Killian ignored the question, looking to his left. “Keep going. What else do you see?”

Emma continued scanning the others around the table, around Tink before picking it up. Then she sensed it. Robin!

The white light surrounding him was strong, very strong. *How could I have missed that?* The glow was intense; far more than she’d ever seen except on one person before. *Merlin.* “You have magic, now?” the Saviour gasped, looking at the archer with his two girls on his knees. “And you too Killian? What’s going on?”

“So it would appear, Emma,” said Robin, softly, not wishing to disturb the two little girls looking up at him. “Zeus gave Killian and I a couple of little ‘gifts’.”

“Little? Hardly!” said Blue looking at Robin. “He turned you into a Stage Ten Sorcerer!”

“Stage Ten?” mumbled Regina, looking at her former lover. “What does that even mean?”

“I’m surprised you don’t know, Mrs. Swan-Mills, seeing the amount of time you’ve spent learning the dark arts. You are a Force, or ‘Stage’ Six, in magical ability, as defined by the gods themselves. Your wife here is currently a Stage Seven Mage, seeing as she has certain ‘gifts’ regarding detecting
truth and a specific level of white magic resulting from the true love status of her parents. However, it
would seem that in gratitude Zeus has given Robin a rare magical ability on a par with the Sorcerer
himself!”

“So he’s a ten? What does that do?” yelled Emma at the fairy.

“I’m quite sure we’ll all see in the fullness of time. However, Mr. Locksley has asked me for
guidance, initially. He’s anxious to have control over it, to avoid harm to others, so he will join us at
the convent for a few weeks where we will give him instruction. There’s a lot to learn…”

“I’m very grateful to you Reul,” said the Outlaw, grinning at the fairy. “You have shown me great
kindness this morning, and I cannot tell you how much I appreciate your help with this! I’m looking
forward to your guidance.”

The fairy’s smile grew. Emma thought she almost blushed. Apart from Snow White & David,
nobody ever called Blue by her first name. It was a mark of intimacy, and the way Robin said it
sounded almost flirtatious.

“You’re very welcome. I suspect in due course we may even be taking instruction from you!”

Robin laughed. “I somehow doubt that!”

“Well, we shall see. Mr. Jones, the offer extends to you as well, of course!” said the fairy. “Although
you haven’t been given such strong magical gifts as Mr. Locksley, you do now possess significant
powers. I’m sure we can help you in getting acclimatised to your new abilities.”

“That’s good of you, love.” Said Killian. “Perhaps a day or two would be helpful, though I’m sailing
next Saturday on the first tide.”

“Well then please free to come with Robin on Wednesday morning.”

Hearing her former lover was planning to leave, Emma was desperate to ask Killian where and why.
However, she was interrupted by Regina, who seemed genuinely upset for a different reason.
Scowling and with her eyes remaining on the fairy she despised, she addressed her own former
lover.

“Rob…Robin, why were you asking her to help you with this? Why on earth didn’t you come to
me?”

“Gina, I think you already know the answer to that.” His voice remaining calm. “You avoided me, as
Emma has with Killian. This has all been a shock to you, understandably. I assume you have talked
to Tink?”

“Yes,” Regina croaked, aware of where this was going and now anxious to change the subject.

“Well so have I. I’m aware there are issues between us Regina, regardless whether you…we have
moved on. Killian is planning to meet with Emma this evening so I suggest we do the same.”

“Ok. If Emma is happy with that, why don’t you come over to the mansion at six.” Regina sounded
a little nervous at the thought of him being in her home again.

“Yay, can papa put me to bed and read me a story!” Squeaked a delighted Honour. Hearing her half-
sister, Robyn also piped up. Can I stay with Honnie and Rolly tonight? Pretty please?” she begged.
Regina felt awkward, not wanting to upset the girls, but also feeling this wasn’t necessarily a good idea. “Robyn, I’m not sure. I need to speak to your mother. Your papr and I need to talk. I don’t think he’ll be staying long.”

“Pleeeeeeasse!!” Both girls cried in chorus.

“Gina, I would love to put my children to bed and read them a story. If Emma doesn’t mind of course!”

Emma did mind! She minded a lot. She already knew Robin’s return had brought old feelings out in Regina, that she certainly didn’t want restored. Tink’s comments last night only added to her unease. However, seeing the girls’ hopeful faces, she knew she would live to regret it if she tried to stop their father coming over.

“Um, sure, that’s fine,” She mumbled, unconvincingly.

How the hell do I get fucking forest boy out of our lives for god’s sake? The archer had been complacent enough till that point, but seemed to adopt an annoyed frown as he looked at Emma, as though he’d just read her thoughts.

Can you? she thought, staring right back at him. Can you read my mind? She said it to herself, but froze, horrified when Robin looked deep into her eyes and actually nodded slowly! Letting her know in no uncertain terms, yes, yes I can! Holy fuck!!

“Thank you, Emma! And to your next question, it seems I can! But I will try to control it. Either way, I’m not going anywhere without my family!” Robin said to the blonde, his voice calm but firm calm. Emma squirmed.


“Nothing important,” Robin said, turning back to the children. “Now, let’s polish off the rest of these cakes...”

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Regina and Emma stayed with the little group on board the Jolly for another half an hour or so, the minimum amount of time to be polite, and for the kids to have some time with Robin. Despite that, when Emma said they needed to go and ‘do things’, Honour played up, screaming and shouting that she didn’t want to leave her. Robyn also seemed upset that her wonderful day with her namesake father was coming to a close.

“Robbie, now you weren’t paying attention, were you?” Regina calmed her. “If your mum agrees, you’re going to be having a sleepover at our house tonight? Papa will come later and read you all a story.”

Robin smiled up at her. “I’ll be there. Six o’ clock?”

Emma felt very uncomfortable with the thought of them being alone, an odd look passing between the wives.

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Two hours later, Emma received the text from Killian:
K: We need to push back an hour. Robin’s boys have given me more provisions than anticipated. We’re still loading. Seven o’clock work for you?

E: Ok, but I’d rather we were somewhere a little more private than the Rabbit Hole!

K: The Hatter has a table at the back reserved.

E: Ok. See you at seven.

She wasn’t sure whether she should even go. It had been her suggestion, but now the thought of being alone with Killian made her nervous. This is stupid! You’re a strong, powerful woman for god’s sake! Get a grip! But seeing him earlier had felt downright awkward. Yesterday, Emma thought her former lover would still be devastated, once she told him that she had moved on. That she’d not only found love again, but in the arms of another woman. With Regina, whom she suspected had even had a brief history with Killian, herself.

In the diner, when she told him that they were now married, Killian took it better than she imagined. She thought he would possibly be angry, cursing and shouting or even weeping! But no. His immediate shock at hearing the news seemed to merely morph in to sadness and then, resignation. Emma should’ve been pleased that he’d taken it so well; but now she felt almost disappointed. She knew she was just being stupid, but couldn’t help feeling hurt by how quickly he seemed to get over her. And hurt by how quickly he was welcomed as a hero by the rest of Storybrooke. Hailed as a hero. Hurt by not being invited to his and Robin’s welcome home party. Hurt that he planned to leave Storybrooke so soon. Hurt he seemed to be getting his life back on track so quickly, compared to her years in therapy. Most of all, hurt because she knew she still felt something for him!

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Returning home, Regina and Emma went about their day as though on autopilot, hardly exchanging a word. Regina made up the bedding, so Robyn could stay in Honour’s room, then checked over Roland’s. It saddened her that Robin’s son, now ten, had insisted he stay with his father tonight, in the diner. There was no possibility of persuading him otherwise. Henry had also continued being obtuse with his mothers and Regina had yet to find out why? Her beloved prince, now a 20-year-old man, had insisted he stay another night in the forest along with the merry men, rather than come home. Regina sighed, missing her boys.

Emma had been cleaning the kitchen and sorting out laundry when as she walked up the stairs, meeting her wife coming down. They looked at each other, trying to smile but seemed to mirror each other’s deflated feelings.

“You too, huh? said Emma. “You look like I feel…” she said attempting a grin.

“Thanks!” said the brunette, sarcastically.

“Don’t do that! You’re as beautiful as the day I married you, Gina!” She stepped forward, taking the brunette in her arms, who responded by laying her head on her wife’s shoulder.

“I don’t feel beautiful, Emma. I feel completely shitty.”

“I know. This hurts, doesn’t it? I feel so out of sorts since they came back. I don’t know why, but I just feel so…guilty! I mean, it’s not as though we didn’t mourn them, for god’s sake! All that time with Archie and everything. And you going through it over Robin too!”
“We have feelings for them, Emma, there’s no point denying it. They were our lovers. Our soulmates. Then they were killed! We mourned them. But they came back! And now, this…”

“I love you Regina Swan-Mills! I didn’t fall in love with you as some sort of substitute for Killian. Yes, I loved him, but I also had feelings for you even before I met him. What we have now is real!”

Regina smiled, remembering just over five years ago, when a certain archer said the very same words. *What we have is real!* The man who sacrificed himself. “Yes, you’re right and I love you too, Emma Swan-Mills,” she said, hugging her wife a little tighter and placing a small kiss on the other’s lips. “Though I do believe what Tink said. This, I don’t know what one would call it, but this ‘residue’ of feelings between Robin and I. Whatever is happening, we need some professional advice.”

“You mean Archie?”

“No, I mean Gold.”

“Gold? Why the hell do we need him? Not sure he’s the right one to talk about relationships.” Said Emma, though they both knew the Dark One was probably the only person who could answer questions about ‘true love’ and more importantly, magic and how to remove Regina’s pain.

“We both know why, darling. I need to see him before I face Robin. Find out what I’m dealing with. I would like you to come with me but unfortunately, Henry isn’t back to take care of the girls. Would you mind?”

“Um…ok, I’ll take care of them. Get back soon, yeah?”

“I’ll apparate over there now.” And with that, Regina pecked her wife on the cheek, walked down to collect her handbag and shoes, then released her magic, the purple cloud swirled around her, leaving the blonde alone.

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Moments later, Regina reappeared directly in front of the shop, terrifying one little old lady walking her dog. Mouthing an apology, she turned the handle and entered, seeing the back of Rumplestiltskin crouched over a tray, mending a timepiece. He didn’t look up.

“Wondered how long it would be before you showed up!” he chuckled, still not looking up.

Even after everything he’d been through, the Dark One was always so unbearably smug at the worst of times. “What do you mean? You have no idea why I’m here!” she rasped, glaring at his back.

“Oh, I think I do, dearie! Your true love has returned, and now you’re in pain!”

*Was it so obvious?* Regina was a master at hiding her feelings, but Rumple was a master at uncovering them. *But I haven’t even seen you since they came back!* She thought.

“How do you even know.”

“I know many things. I know the pain of lost love, and the ache of unrequited love. I know the burden of true love and its effects and I know that it will never go away. It will get progressively worse unless it is dealt with. Though there are ways…” he cackled.

“Imp, have you been spying on me?”
The Dark One giggled that annoying giggle, almost deliberately taunting her. “Not exactly, but I know your burden. The Prince of Thieves has returned, and his presence has activated your soulmate and true love feelings! Left unchecked they will not go away. Even if you banish him from your presence, you cannot banish him from your mind. Your pain will grow, as will his unfortunately, and your sheriff will not be able to help you…”

Regina sighed and in a note of despair, leaning on the counter next to him. “Look, can you help?”

“Indeed. Though as you would expect, there is always a price.”

“I never doubted it! What is it? Though I warn you, I won’t do anything that will hurt anyone, least of all Robin. I’m not that person anymore.”

“Hmm, perhaps you really are a fully reformed hero! Thanks to your somewhat annoying wife and her irritating parents. I thank my son for giving Henry some decent genes…”

“Leave Emma and Henry out of this! I don’t want him knowing about this conversation.”

“Oh, I think your son knows many things, Regina. He already knows about Emma’s enquiry yesterday.”

“Emma was here?”

“She was. And she wanted to know how to solve your little ‘problem’! I suggested several ways, some of which she didn’t like. Others, well…” Rumple sneered.

She bristled, desperately wanting to remove that annoying smirk from his face but at the same time feeling concerned that Emma never thought to tell her she had been here. “Ok, out with it, Imp! What did you tell her?”

“Careful with your insults, Regina! I usually tolerate them, mainly because Henry is Bae’s son. However, if you seek my assistance, you will keep a civil tongue,” He growled.

The two stared at each other, neither blinking before Regina decided enough was enough. “Very well. I apologise,” she replied unconvincingly. “What did you tell Emma?”

“Merely the options open to her. Or you, for that matter.”

“Go on…please!” Desperate for him to get to the point.

“Well, dearie, the first and most obvious solution is to remove him to another realm. Preferably one without magic. You will grieve, as you did before, though even more so, knowing you were responsible, yet again, for separating a man from his children. But over time you will both heal.”

Regina remembered the horrible years of depression following Robin’s death. She couldn’t face that again.

“The second option requires my services. A forgetting potion for one of you, removing memories of the other. This is not without risk, as you will recall. Though it will break the pain of unrequited or unwanted love, one way or another. There will of course be a price for my services, as usual.”

Regina hated the thought of owing Rumplestiltskin, knowing his magic always came with a hefty price. Plus the thought of basically drugging Robin was a horrible one. If Henry or his children ever found out, there would be no forgiveness this time.
“Then of course, there is the third and easiest solution. Can you guess what it is?” the Dark One giggled as he waited for her response. Regina rolled her eyes, nodding for him to continue.

“You consummate your true love status of course! Simple and effective…”

A dark brow rose as she glared at him. “You mean that I…I…?”

“Yes, your Majesty! You need to mate with Locksley! Save for killing him, drugging him or exile, that will be the only way to break the magical bonds that exist! You never know, you may even enjoy it!
Henry's Not Happy!

Chapter Summary

Emma's relationship with Henry is under strain and she over-reacts when he challenges her in public. This isn't over...

Henry’s had enough!

Emma left early that evening, deciding to walk across town rather than drive. Although in no rush to meet Killian, she just couldn’t bear to hang around and face Robin Hood when he was due to arrive at the mansion to see his children. God, she hated that! Hated that the guy had, in just over a day, come to be adored by Honour. Roland obviously worshipped his dad, but even Henry seemed to have come under the spell of the smug bastard, hardly speaking to his mothers.

What was his problem? she grumbled to herself. Even most of the ruddy town had come out in force to welcome the pair, treating them like all-conquering heroes. For what, coming back to life? And that miserable shrew the Blue Fairy seemed to be all over them like a rash!

Emma feelings were very confused. She knew she was being petty. On the one hand, she knew Robin was essentially a good guy. He’d raised Roland single handed after losing Marian. He’d fought alongside her and Regina during several battles; he’d even gone to Camelot to help get Merlin, throwing himself in front of Percival’s enchanted blade to prevent Regina’s murder. Then finally the big one, sacrificing himself on Hades’ crystal. He was brave, annoying, fatherly, kind and even she had to admit, a good-looking bastard that loved her wife. And even though she’d deny it, it was obvious that Regina was still in love with him!

So it was, on that long stroll to the Rabbit Hole, walking through the park and looking down morosely, completely lost in her own thoughts, that Emma heard a scream. She looked up anxiously, seeing a small woman yelling at someone.

“ROBIN! Oh my god - it really is you!!” she shrieked with excitement. “Ruby said you came back, but I couldn’t believe it!” The dark-haired woman screeched and ran, launching herself into the open arms of the man ahead, who embraced her in a tight hug.

“Mulan! How wonderful to see you again!” Robin lifted her up like a little sister; she wrapped her legs around his torso and held onto him. Emma looked on at the scene, feeling irritated at yet another welcome for the bloody wonder-boy. He gently lowered his attacker onto the ground. The hardened warrior was smiling, several tears rolling down her face. “God, I’ve missed you! How on earth are you back - Hades killed you?” The warrior continued, gushing like a young smitten schoolgirl.

“He did…but, well, it’s a long story! I know it’s been five years up here but only a few weeks down there. So much has changed. Moo, you look serene! Life’s clearly treating you well.” Emma spotted the warrior’s two companions join her either side, introducing themselves to Hood.

“It’s wonderful! I’m not sure if you ever met Aurora?” Mulan introduced her friend to Robin as the blonde woman offered a hand to him.
“Aurora? As in Princess Aurora?” Robin hesitated, remembering the name of the woman Mulan had fallen in love with. The woman Mulan was about to confess her feelings to, until being told she was pregnant by her best friend. The woman she spent too many evening crying over, on Robin’s shoulder.

Mulan had immediately left Aurora and Philip’s palace to join the merry men, attempting to heal her heart. She’d only lived with them for a year, though in that time she and Robin had become the closest of friends. They had saved each other’s lives on several occasions and Mulan had come to regard him as the big brother she never had, confiding in him about her loneliness and regrets. Robin had seen her at her most vulnerable, as few had done. So, she was now ecstatic to see her brother alive.

“Yes Robin,” said the tall blonde stepping forward, arm in arm with a bearded man of around his own age. “Please call me Aurora, or better still, Rory. And this my husband, Philip, soon to be our husband!”

“Prince Philip? I’m honoured, your Royal Highness!” Said the former outlaw, in polite deference.

“Please, I’ll have none of that nonsense - it’s just Philip to you! It’s a pleasure to finally meet you Robin, or should I say, ‘Lord Locksley’! Mulan has talked about you so many times and any friend of hers is truly a friend of ours…” The man gripped Robin’s hand firmly, shaking it. “Then I’m delighted too…hold on,” he said coming back to something Aurora had said, “our husband?”

Mulan giggled, leaving Robin and walking across to Philip’s left side, placing a small kiss on his cheek. “Yes, It’s complicated. We’re together…the three of us,” She stopped, hoping her old friend wasn’t too shocked, as some had been. “We’re together, and planning to marry later in the year.”

Robin hesitated for a moment, seeing the three of them, arm in arm before him, waiting to see his reaction.

He slowly broke into a broad grin. “I’m delighted! There’s nothing I would want more for Moo than her happiness and I’m so pleased she’s found it with the two people I remember were most important to her!”

Emma looked on, feeling like an eavesdropper. She vaguely recalled Mulan and Aurora in the Enchanted Forest, when she and her mother had been thrown through the portal. The two women had helped them get back to Storybrooke, after all. She knew they had been close, but it never occurred to her that there might have been something else between them.

Yet here again was Robin Hood. Robin-fucking-Hood! Again, being treated like a returning hero. And it bloody irritated her! Mulan, bloody Mulan, who she didn’t think even liked men, in what? A bloody threesome with those two? And best buddies with Hood? The Saviour turned, walking further away, not wanting to be noticed.

Half an hour later, she arrived outside the Rabbit Hole, hesitating before going in to face him. She wasn’t sure why she was so nervous. Her mind had been racing with options, as she sought how to explain to Killian Jones how she had moved on. From him. How do you explain to him how, in his mind only a couple of weeks ago, you had not only moved on from a full-blown romance, to dating and marrying someone else? How was he going to take it? Would he get angry? Weepy? Depressed? After a heavy sigh, she walked through the front door to properly face the man she once thought was her true love.
Mifflin Street

The doorbell rang at exactly seven o’clock. Regina, having changed her outfit five times already, hitched her breath and nervously walked towards the front door. *What the hell has got in to you Mills? Calm yourself, silly woman!* She opened it slowly, when a dark haired, wired bundle of energy came through. “Hi Gina!” yelled Roland, running in and racing past her, heading for the stairs and carrying bags.

“Ro? Roland! Stop! Wipe your feet! Shoes off!” she smirked at her little dervish.

“Sorry!” he muttered, coming back and without undoing his laces, kicked his shoes off in the lobby, ran across to Regina, arms up to pull her down, delivering a quick peck on the cheek before racing up the stairs. *God he’s still so cute!* she thought.

“Roland, slow down!” she giggled as he ran upstairs. “Down in a minute!” he called back.

Regina, after moving his boots and dropping his coat onto a peg, stood up to move to the open door, instantly noticing the presence of the man, standing silently a few feet in front of the door, silently watching. “Robin,” she breathed, looking up and into his eyes, their first time alone together for five years.

A few seconds passed in silence while they both stared at each other, crystal blue eyes meeting dark brown. Him, with his lop-sided grin. Her with a wide-eyed nervous stare, mouth open.

“Hello Regina,” the Outlaw murmured in that soft English accent, his voice low. “You’re just as stunningly beautiful as you were five years ago.”

It was just a simple compliment, but Regina blushed, standing transfixed, unable to take her eyes off him. Not for the first time today, she felt unable to speak. He was no longer dressed in his usual forest garb but in black skinny jeans and a tight blue t-shirt that accentuated his broad chest and muscles to perfection. She couldn’t help but scan him up and down. *Hell, he’s still bloody fucking gorgeous! His eyes - he hasn’t changed a bit!*, she blushed as he looked deep into her eyes, his grin becoming wider. Robin chuckled, slightly red with embarrassment himself. “Thank you…I think!”

Regina was horrified. “What? Robin…oh god…did I just say that out loud?” She grew increasingly nervous.

It was Robin’s turn to feel awkward, realising what just happened. “No…no you didn’t Gina! It’s just…I have these weird new powers. They’re taking a bit of getting used to and I…I…I’m not sure how to turn them off.”

“You can read my mind?” she said, louder than expected. “Robin, that’s…well…incredible!” The brunette was truly astonished, cringing internally as she realised that he must have heard her thoughts a minute ago. “How do you do that? You can hear everyone’s thoughts? I never heard of such a…well, a ‘gift’!”

“You say ‘gift’, but it seems like a bit of a curse, if I’m honest. I have to concentrate on that person but, well, I’ve had a few surprises over the last twenty-four hours! Some nice; one not-so-nice. I keep trying to turn it off just to block out the noise but, well, it’s a little difficult. Blue has been trying to help me, and I’m spending tomorrow at the convent to start my ‘magic lessons’, so hopefully I’ll get it sorted.”
Just the mention of Reul Ghorm set Regina’s teeth on edge. She didn’t like or trust that ruddy fairy, and the feeling was mutual. However, before she could even speak their brief silence was interrupted by two little girls shouting from the top of the staircase.

“Papa!” yelled the little four-year-old blonde, hurtling down the stairs as quickly as her little legs would carry her, followed closely by her slightly older, taller, willowy half-sister. When they both reached the bottom, the pair, little Robyn in pyjamas and Honour in some sort of nightdress with cartoon characters on it, raced across to the archer, who dropped to his knees to welcome them, arms open. Without any hint of shyness, the girls bundled into his arms either side, letting themselves be gathered and lifted.

“Hello, my little darlings - twice in one day! I’m truly blessed. I think you asked for stories?”

“Yes. Not yet though Papa - play first?” Said the little redhead, pouting at her new parent. Robin looked across at the brunette before answering, “It’s your call, Gina. I don’t want to mess up their bedtime routine.” He smiled down at her, silently imploring her to give ground.

She sighed. In the face of three wide eyed faces, she had no choice but to concede. Honour had both she and Emma wrapped around her little finger and she secretly suspected the little tyke knew it. However, seeing the dimple-cheeked pout of her little girl, looking so much like the man holding her, made her impossible to deny.

“Very well. I suppose under the circumstances, you two can play with your fath…Papa…for an hour or so. Just until eight o’clock bedtime mind, after that I need you to promise me you’ll go down without a fuss?”

“Yay,” the little blonde shrieked in delight. “Come on Papa, we’ll go play in my den. Come on Robbie…” And with that the little girls, dropping gently down onto the floor, proceeded to drag him by his hands up to a bedroom. As he stepped past Regina to the foot of the stairs, there was a moment when Robin’s arm brushed her side. Just a slight graze. Yet it seemed to trigger a small wave inside her, a magical pulse. She looked up into his blue eyes and saw that, he’d felt it too!

“Thank you, Regina. Just come up and tell me when it’s bedtime,” his eyes betraying no obvious emotion.

An hour later, having paced around her kitchen, passing her time tidying up where nothing needed tidying, Regina had had enough. She needed to be upstairs with them. To see what Robin was up to with her little girl. Their little girl. So, making him a black coffee to take with her as an excuse to interrupt their play, Regina silently stood at the door of Honour’s playroom, a little annex to the side of her bedroom. Looking in, she found nobody there; only a few scattered toys and figures where they had been playing. Slightly unnerved by the silence, Regina crept across to the bedroom.

The sight that greeted her brought up all sorts of emotions and a lump to her throat. Lying on top of Honour’s double bed, in its centre, lay Robin, fully clothed and seemingly in a light sleep. Honour and Robyn, were tucked tightly in on either side, their little heads resting on his chest. He had a serene, contented look as he held them, his muscular arms enfolding them in a loving embrace. Regina’s eyes filled with tears and she smiled as she looked down on the little snoozing family, now reunited. She sighed, looking across to find Robin’s eyes open, staring straight at her. Into her.

“Sorry,” he whispered, “They both asked for a story, then a snuggle, and fell asleep. I couldn’t resist!”

“I understand,” she whispered, still smiling as she crept across to his right side, lifting little Robyn off
her father to slide her under the blankets. Robin used his free arm to roll Honour onto her side, climbing across and lifting the sheets around her. He slowly stood up to survey his girls, a proud smile on his face.

“I truly never imagined I could be so blessed, Regina! I feel I’m in love all over again,” he breathed, conscious not to wake them. “I can’t believe they’re truly mine!”

Without thinking, Regina walked around the bed to take the hands of her former lover in her own, bringing herself face to face with him; only then realising the effect he still had on her! As she looked at those oh so piercing blue eyes her whole demeanour changed, trembling slightly and looking almost frightened before him. Robin picked up on her anxiety immediately, taking his hands away to rest them on her shoulders. “Regina, calm, it’s ok. I know what you’re going through, because I’m feeling it too! We need to talk, and we need to do it now. Let’s go downstairs…”

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Killian Jones had arrived earlier than expected at the Rabbit Hole. He’d only returned from the Underworld yesterday, and the last twenty-four hours had been a blur. From discovering that the woman he thought to have been his true love, the woman he’d sacrificed everything for, had now moved on, had been a bitter blow. The fact she had moved on with another woman was…a surprise. The fact said woman was in fact, Henry’s other mother and former Evil Queen, was an even bigger jolt.

However, Killian Jones hadn’t become the most successful pirate in all the realms without being a pragmatist. He knew when to cut his losses and move on.

He’d been amazed how people were now treating him. Previously nervous around him, they were now treating him as some sort of local hero and he’d lost count of the number of times various characters, having previously regarding him as pirating scum, had shaken his hand, bought him drinks and wished him well. Even Leroy, that grumpy miserable bastard infatuated with Snow, had whacked him on the back, supposedly in friendly greeting, and left a bottle of rum in front of him at the bar. “Hook, I take it all back! I’ll be honest, when you first came here chasing after the Saviour, me and the boys thought you were a preening, eyeliner wearing, self-absorbed, sadistic little twat! I don’t know whether it’s because Robin Hood has rubbed off on you, but you’ve changed! I was wrong and you’re all right!”

In fact, the only people who he didn’t recall meeting last night had been Snow White and her prince. That had been a bit of a disappointment, as he had come to regard Emma’s father as an ally; even a friend. At first the rightful royal couple had distain written all over their faces when he had romanced their only daughter. Then as she drew closer to him, Emma’s mother positively encouraged them. Even David himself had grown to accept his daughter’s choice. Now, well who knows? I guess they probably just want me out of here as much as she does! He mused.

He was brought out of his reverie by a beer bottle being banged down on the table in front of him. He looked up at a pretty, green eyed, pixie-like face surrounded by blonde hair. “Tinker Bell! thank you yet again. You’ve been a positive life-saver since we got back,” He grinned at her, flirting. “Though I feel I need to repay you in some way.”

“That’s ok, I’m just taking care of one of my ‘boys’”, she winked. He had never really noticed just how pretty she was. She’s rather gorgeous, he thought. “Besides, I probably owe you one. Whatever
you and Robin have done to Blue these last twenty-four-hours has really…I don’t know…softened her up!” She’s almost being human to me now."

“I doubt it’s me, lovely! More likely, it’s our Mr. Locksley. She was acting like a teenage girl on the Jolly this morning, fawning over him like a lovesick puppy! It’s nice to see her smile for once in her miserable life!”

Tink chuckled. “I think it’s the new white magic you both have now. You know, white magic is like a huge aphrodisiac to a fairy! Most of the girls in the convent will notice when you arrive for training tomorrow, so don’t go getting all cocky and arrogant! Blue spent some time with you both this morning and I think she’s a little smitten right now…”

“Really!” The former pirate’s face lit up in a beaming smile, “This day just seems to get better and better!”

“Now stop, Captain-no-longer-Hook!” She glared, but he could see the smirk behind the stare, “You’ve been given a great gift by the God of all the Gods. It’s at this point, so many before you have ruined it all by using it for themselves, not others. Magic is a blessing and a curse, and we’ve all had too much experience of the latter. Behave yourself!”

“I will, Tink, I will. But you’ll forgive me for enjoying the moment? I’ve spent half my life damaged by magic. Besides, I think you should be having a chat with Wonder Boy. He’s the one with the real powers!”

“Robin? I don’t understand…don’t you realise?” stuttered the Green Fairy.

“Realise what?”

“You have magic too! I can feel it coming from you right now! Can’t you?”

“Nope, can’t say I do. Should I be buzzing or something?

“Hell’s tooth, Killian, I can’t believe I’m the one to be doing this! See that bottle in front of you? Imaging moving it a couple of inches to the right. If it helps move your hand as you picture it moving.” Tink stood up, a little nervous and aware what could happen.

“I hardly think it’ll make any difference love, though if it’ll make you happy,” he smiled, closed his eyes as he pointed at the bottle, thinking of it sliding across and flicking his fingers across. Without any wobble, the full bottle suddenly catapulted itself off the table, launching into the wall some ten feet away. The bursting glass and exploding foam opened his eyes and drew a scowl from the barman and cheers from a small group of drinkers who assumed he did it on purpose. Killian stood up, alarmed, staring at his hand.

“BLOODY HELL! That was never me?”

“Afraid so!” the fairy chuckled, “welcome to my world! Now we just have to teach you how to use it carefully.”

“Well, bugger me with a pan shovel! I had no idea! Blue mentioned it earlier, but I just thought she was talking about Locksley. I wasn’t paying proper attention to Zeus after he gave me my hand back,” The slightly bewildered former pirate sat back down while Tinker Bell continued to chuckle.

“Don’t worry, we’ll sort you out! Just turn up tomorrow morning at the convent and pay attention.”

“Aye lass, I will. And thank you Tink, really, for everything.” Killian looked soulfully into the bright
eyes of the fairy as he brought his new hand to rest on hers. She blushed, smiling coquettishly, “You’re very welcome.”

Half an hour later, Emma arrived at the Rabbit Hole, at exactly eight o’clock, as agreed. There was certainly a fair noise coming from inside. Walking through the door, she heard the volume increase dramatically as in the middle of a small cluster of friends, Killian Jones appeared to be playing some sort of game, holding a balloon filled with water between his thighs, whilst attempting to pass it across and into the thighs of Dorothy, the pair of them standing face to face and with the normally fearsome woman giggling like a little schoolgirl. At any other time, it would have looked too intimate, but Emma noticed Ruby, the woman’s true love, standing amongst them, howling with laughter.

“Now clench Dottie…easy does it!” the wolf encouraged her. Dorothy successfully held the balloon as Killian stepped back to let the next player in, “Come on Ash, your turn.” Ashley moved towards the front of the other woman, hitching her skirt up a little, as had Dorothy, to try to ease the balloon off her while Sean, her husband, encouraged her. “Easy does it Ella, easy now!” He turned to Killian, still laughing and as he watched his wife seeming to press in and rub thighs against the other woman. “Killian, I’m not sure whether I’m more nervous that it’s my turn next, or the fact that I think I’m getting turned on in public!” The rest of the group roared with laughter.

“I agree mate! It’ll be harder to hold onto that balloon with a stiffy!”

That did it! Dorothy and Ella cracked up with laughter, and one of them squeezed too tightly. The balloon burst, soaking the fronts of the two women. “You bastard Jones! That was your fault!” guffawed Ella, happy tears running down her cheeks as a couple of bar cloths appeared for the women to dry themselves.

Emma looked at the cheery group and saw that, in addition to Ruby, Dorothy, Ashley, Sean, Ariel and Eric, her son and his girlfriend Violet were watching the performance.

“Henry! What the hell? You shouldn’t be in here!” she blurted, noticed for the first time by the rest of them.

“I’m allowed! I’m not drinking alcohol, neither’s Violet, and yes, her dad knows we’re here and he’s ok!”

“Well I’m not! I may not be Sheriff anymore but I’m still your mother and I’m telling you to go home, kid!”

Henry’s embarrassed face changed into one of pure anger. “KID? KID! You still call me a fucking kid! I’m twenty years old! almost twenty-one…MA! I’m allowed to vote, go to war or even make adult films if I wanted, WITHOUT YOUR PERMISSION! I’m staying!”

Emma felt like she was going to explode at her son. He may be doing nothing illegal and he may be only holding a coke, but he was still showing her disrespect. And in front of everyone else!

“Henry, I will not tell you again, I…”

“YOU’LL WHAT MA?” Henry screamed into her face, as angry as she was. “You’ll smack me? You’ll send me to my room? You’ll take away my toys? It’s time you woke up…ma! I’m not a ‘kid’ anymore, I’m a fucking adult! You don’t like it, too bad! Don’t take your problems out on me just because Robin’s back in town!”
Emma almost spat with anger, launching herself closer to his face and raising her right hand to him. “HOW DARE YOU? Say that again and I swear I’ll…”

Again, Henry didn’t deflect, didn’t seem in fear, didn’t back away! “Go ahead, hit me! Hit me! Think that’ll fix your problems? GO ON, DO IT!”

At that, Emma lost control completely but somehow stopped herself from slapping him. She flicked her wrist, instantly transporting him from her sight, straight into Storybrooke Police Station, into a locked cell!

The previously happy little crowd, astonished by the scene, stepped away from the now trembling Sheriff. Emma shook violently, now in shock, realising what she’d just done. Her legs weakened and give way as she partly collapsed to her knees on the floor, hands covering her face as loud sobs started to come. The small group stood transfixed at the sorry site of Henry’s distraught mother, not knowing whether to leave her be, or comfort her. She felt strong arms lift her from behind as someone else brought a chair over. “Emma, come, sit. It’ll be alright.” Ruby quietly whispered in her ear. “You’re among friends.”

“What’ve I done, Rubes? What have I done? I…I…I almost slapped him around the face! What kind of mother does that?” As she continued to weep, she spotted the young brunette girl, looking angry, kneel in front of her. “Emma - where did you send Henry?”

Emma looked up into the eyes of her son’s girlfriend. “Vi! I’m so…so sorry you had to see that!”

“Um…yeah, not as sorry as I am!” the girl answered with a calm bluntness Emma had never seen before. “And although I understand why you’re angry - Henry was rather rude to you after all; but he did have a point! He’s allowed in here and so am I. My dad thought long and hard before allowing me to come. He is rather protective after all! However, he let me because he trusts Henry, and knows he’s responsible. And the reason he’s so responsible has a lot to do with the great upbringing he had from both his mums. But he’s not a child anymore Emma, he’s a man! Sorry, but as much as I respect you, the fact is he was in the right and you were in the wrong. It’s going to take more than an apology to fix this!”

That hurt. The girl had never spoken to her like that before, and Emma’s own anger had now turned to grief as she stayed silent, looking into her eyes. However, Violet was not to be deflected.

“So where did you send Henry?”

“He hates me,” she croaked.

“Nonsense! He’s just angry with you. Now, where is he?”

“I was just so angry! I just wanted him to stop…”

“By using force? Again, where is he?” The young girl persisted.

“He won’t listen to me? Why won’t he just listen and do what he’s told?”

Killian had heard enough. “Because, he’s not a boy any more, Swan, he’s a man! A bright young man, with ideas of his own! Now bloody well tell the girl what you’ve done with her boyfriend!”

His sharp tone woke her from her self-pity. Ashamed of her actions, he groaned, “I…I sent him to the station! He’s in the cells…”

“The jail? He’s not a fucking criminal! What the hell were you thinking?” Violet stood up, alarmed.
Tinker Bell stepped forward. “Come on, Vi. I’ll take you to him. It’ll be quicker.” With that, the fairy took the girl’s hand and they vanished in a whirl of smoke whilst Emma sat, breaking into more tears.

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**Storybrooke Police Station**

Tinker Bell and Violet apparated directly in front of the police station doors. “You ok?” asked Tink.

“Yeah, I guess, just a bit giddy. Henry’s mums have done that with me a couple of times, but I still find it weird. I’ll be fine.” She marched into the station, unprepared for the scene before her.

Masonry and rubble were strewn across the station floor. Where the two jail cells stood, one had its heavy metal gated door and surround completely blown out, the edges buckled. Leroy sat in the cell opposite, looking traumatised. The station side door, ripped off its hinges, lay just outside. In front of the large hole stood Mulan, covered in dust and clearly in shock. The fairy rushed over to her. “What the hell happened here?” asked Tink, guiding the stunned warrior to one of the desks.

“Henry Swan-Mills happened, that’s what!” answered the former warrior, her face covered in dust and clearly disorientated. “I was sitting at that desk doing paperwork on Leroy’s pull for public disorder, when Henry just appeared in that cell…” She pointed to the wrecked corner. “He stood there less than a minute but seemed too angry to talk, just muttering something about Emma! He swore a lot, then before I could go and calm him down, his eyes went a funny red colour and the metal bars just blew out! Sent me flying! He walked out while I was still lying on the floor. He flicked his wrist and the front door there just blew off! Tink, you know I don’t scare easily, but I was seriously shitting myself when that happened! He just walked out as if nothing had happened. He didn’t even look at me!”

“Oh no” groaned Tinker Bell, sensing a presence in the air. “It’s come in!”

“What?” Violet stuttered, “What are you talking about?”

“Magic. Henry’s magic has come in!”

“Henry has magic?” gasped Mulan.

“I wasn’t sure whether he would, as I never saw much of Emma and Baelfire together, but it seems like he really was her True Love after all! Shame, considering what happened…”

“What do we do now?” Violet yelled, her anxiety growing by the second. “Where would he have gone?”

“I have no idea. But he’s angry, he has magic, and doesn’t know how to handle it! I guess we need help.” Tink pulled out her mobile to text someone. “Regina’s going to go ape-shit!”
Meanwhile, back at the Rabbit Hole

Emma sat, head down in her hands, as Killian passed her a large glass of scotch. The rest of his welcome party had left, some embarrassed at her behaviour. “Here, I think you need this!” He sat opposite, noticing how thoroughly wretched she looked.

“Sorry I wrecked your evening - it seemed everyone was happy till I arrived and screwed it up!” She groaned.

She avoided looking up, expecting some sort of snarky comment and a polite dismissal of her apology. Instead, she was greeted with silence. A silence that finally made her look up.

“They were, and you did. Your intentions were noble, even though they were wrong.”

“I know, I know!”

“Try not to be too despondent, love. Learn from it. Your boy is all grown up now, and needs to be treated as such. I’m guessing living at home with two rather, shall we say, ‘protective’ mothers, is always going to be an issue for a young man…”

“You know nothing,” she snarked, “He’s living in Harvard most of the time, and back during the holidays. He seems to prefer it. Since he went away he seems, I don’t know, colder with me and Regina. Not with Roland or Honour. Just his mothers. The ones who did everything for him! He’s been horrible since yesterday. Since…well, you know.” Emma looked slightly sheepish, trying to avoid Killian’s stare.

“Since Locksley and I returned from the dead?” Killian looked ready for a quarrel, “You think it has something to do with us?”

“Well, yes…no! I don’t think you’re to blame, it’s just…well…got worse. The kid hardly talks to me!”
“A good start might be to perhaps stop calling him a ‘kid’, as he requested. He clearly regards it as condescending, especially in front of other adults. Also, stop trying to order a twenty-year-old man back home like a whipped dog. Not impressive Swan! I’m rather surprised at you...”

Anger passed across the face of the Saviour, and she was about to issue a typically tart response, when she felt a large warm hand rest gently on her own, calming her.

“I wasn’t trying to order him around, just protect him! He over reacted!”

“Did he? I can’t imagine any young man taking well to that sort of treatment, especially in front of his fair lady. You removed his dignity! Argue all you want, but you owe him an apology, and I think you’re angry because you know it too...”

Emma harrumphed, not wanting to answer a simple truth. She picked up the whisky, downing the glass in a single gulp. They then sat opposite each other in silence for a minute, each quietly reflecting. “So...you and the mayor?” Killian finally spoke in his quiet English burr.

“It’s Regina, and she’s not the mayor anymore! Hasn’t been for a long time...”

“Aye, I heard Albert Spencer won the election. Robin said that was a bigger surprise than hearing about you two getting together. In fact, he won a wager with me on that one.”

“What do you mean, a ‘wager’?”

“Calm yourself, Swan. It was in the Underworld. We were dead, talking in that depressing little bar about what would happen to the ones we left behind. Locksley was worried sick about his children, as well as having just left his soulmate behind. We got chatting and ran through all the various characters who would make a play for you both.”

“Go on,” Emma’s eyes lifted, for the first time interested in the conversation.

“We went through the usual bunch of chancers and ne’er-do-wells in Storybrooke, then Robin reckoned you would both probably spurn the selection available, and finally take some sort of comfort in each other.”
“Robin said that?” Emma was flabbergasted. “He guessed Regina and I would be a couple?”

“He said there was always some sort of…what was his word now? Chemistry! Yes, that’s it. He said the two of you shared a certain ‘chemistry’ and a look. There was always a certain intimacy in your conversations. Plus, you’d saved each other’s lives a few times. And you share Henry of course. Personally, I didn’t see it. I laughed at the notion and we even laid a small bet on it; assuming we could get hold of one of those viewing crystal mirror things they have down there to see what’s going on up here! I was surprised to say the least, Swan.” He continued. “I never even realised you were into women. If I’d known, I wouldn’t have…”

“I wasn’t…I’m not!” Emma’s cheeks started to redden. “Only Regina. She’s the first…the only one!”

Jones looked at her in disbelief. “Well, either way, it was a shock, I can’t deny it!”

Feeling irritated and defensive, her voice rose. “You’re shocked because I fell in love with another woman? Or because it was Regina?”

The former pirate seemed nonplussed. “The latter. I wasn’t too surprised about it being your own sex, though that seems to be the fashion in Storybrooke these days! You always seemed more than close to several of the women here. I remember the wolf always seemed to flirt excessively with you. I always assumed she played for both teams, so seeing her with that Dorothy girl was no big deal. But Regina? Yes, I was surprised. Don’t forget it’s five years later to you, but only a few weeks for me! I remember you and the queen forever clashing. First over Henry, then your parents, then over the town…”

“It offends you, doesn’t it? Me being with her?”

He hesitated before answering. “No. Despite everything, I just want you to be happy, Emma. Even if that’s without me. I thought I made you happy once.” He said the last few words in a whisper, his eyes reddening.

Emma also felt it, seeing the distress on his handsome features. She reached across, trying to take his hand. “You did Killian, you really did! I was very happy with you, despite all the shit we were going through! I loved you! So much so, I even went to the Underworld to try to split my heart with you, after I…I killed you!”
“You know you didn’t kill me Emma. I handed you Excalibur and made you run me through. You had to do it!”

“I know,” she croaked, almost in a whisper. “But I turned you into a Dark One in the first place. It was still my fault. I’m sorry Killian; please forgive me!” Tears were now running down her face from the memory of that truly horrible day. The last day of his life. Until now. Visibly distressed, she hunched, taking her face into her hands again to contain herself.

Killian thought to take the grief-stricken blonde in his arms and comfort her, but held back knowing that comfort would likely be misinterpreted, probably making her even worse.

“There’s nothing to forgive. Though if it makes you feel better, I forgive you for avoiding me yesterday. I must admit, coming a fortnight after we last spoke in Hades’ crypt…that annoyed me.”

“Five long years ago, for me! I’m sorry we sprung that one on you. We could have handled it better.” She wiped her eyes before blowing her nose on a napkin, quietly handed to her by a concerned, passing waitress.

“I understand. For me, just three weeks ago, you and I were whispering sweet nothings, pledging undying love and promising to always be there for each other. I understand you moved on. As must I…”

“Killian, it wasn’t that simple! I didn’t just ‘move on’ from you! When we got back from the Underworld, after I had to leave you there, I grieved! We got back and within a day Hades killed Robin. He sacrificed himself, throwing himself in front of Regina to save her life. She and I were wrecked, Killian! Then Henry stole that fucking crystal Hades used and took the magic away, nearly getting himself killed by Gold in the process. We went to New York to get him back. As it was, he turned out to be the hero. Then we had a duplicate Evil Queen bitch to deal with, Jekyll and Hyde and all manner of shit thrown at us.”

“Another day in Storybrooke then?” A small smirk rose from the former pirate.

*Jeez, I’d forgotten how bloody gorgeous he was*, thought Emma, but she wasn’t to be distracted. “No, listen! I need to say this. It took a month, the worst possible month of my life, for me to even start to grieve. It was just the same for Regina. That’s when it hit us. Both of us. We’d lost the most important men in our lives! I don’t care whether you call it soulmates, true loves or any of that other bullshit the fairies spout about. All I know is it hurt! I grieved for you. I was inconsolable. Poor Henry had me and Regina to deal with; two useless, constantly crying mothers. Mum and dad tried their best to hold me together, but it was useless. I ran away to Boston for a week and stayed in
hiding. I didn’t eat, I lost a lot of weight and didn’t speak to anyone…”

He listened, knowing she wasn’t done. Another two large glasses of scotch were brought to the table, along with the rest of the bottle, eagerly snatched up by the blonde, again taking a large slug before continuing.

“Dad tracked me down. He brought Archie with him. Henry and Mum wanted to come, but Dad made them stay as Regina was in a bad way. Archie was great. So, so patient. We spent two days just talking. They eventually brought me back here and Whale was waiting for us. He said I was so sick that he confined me to the sanatorium until I started eating and drinking again. Normally I would have kicked him shitless, but the fight had gone from me. Gold put a bracelet on me to stop my magic making me do something stupid. They had me on an IV for a week! It seems I did some damage to my kidneys with all the drinking and no food or water. It took about six weeks before he released me.”

Jones was shocked. Had his death really had that much of an effect on her? “I’m sorry, Emma. Nobody should have to experience that.” But she continued as though she hadn’t heard him.

“I was going downhill fast. So was Regina. She locked herself away for days at a time, ignoring everyone. Henry tried, bless him. Like me, she didn’t eat. She’d wander aimlessly around the town and several times mum found her at Robin’s grave of an evening, just sitting there. She’s never been overweight, but she lost three stone in one month! Mum and Dad tried their best to take care of her. Even Zelena. It was hopeless.”

Killian looked at the tired eyes of the Saviour, her hunched shoulders, her vacant gaze into her whisky glass.

“If you don’t want to talk about it, I quite under…” But Emma ploughed on regardless.

“One week, Henry stayed with mum and dad - anything to get away from his own mums and their problems. Dad was great. He took him everywhere, and they even went to Boston for a weekend, mum keeping an eye on me. Henry was away, and Robin was gone. I think that’s what took Regina over the edge.”

“The ‘edge’? I don’t understand…”

“Regina. She took an overdose…”
“I’m sorry?”

“She took sleeping pills. A lot of them. She tried to kill herself!”

“Because of Robin? How could she do that to Henry?”

“Because she flipped, Killian! Regina was so depressed, in so much pain and despair that she just wanted to end it all! It wasn’t that Henry wasn’t important to her any more, it’s just that she was so lost and out of control she wasn’t even aware what she was doing to others! That’s what depression can do, Killian. It can destroy you when you lose all hope. I should know!”

Jones was astonished things had got this far. “What about you? Surely, you never thought of-”

“No, though I came pretty close! I can thank Archie for that one!” Emma’s voice started to tremble as she remembered those horrible weeks.

“Seems you owe quite a lot to the Cricket! Funny how such a quiet chap can have such an effect…”

“I came back with dad. Archie also had me assessed by Whale. I wasn’t broken like Regina, but they still kept me in. Archie threw everything at us; grief counselling, therapy, massage, the lot. As I picked up, he suggested Regina and I took them together as we were both going through similar problems and could relate.”

“And that’s when you two…got together?”

Emma sighed. “Not quite. The man you derisively call the ‘Cricket’, made us work through everything with him. Childhood, estranged parents, abuse, anger, everything. I’m not good with talking about that sort of stuff…”

Killian just stared at his former lover, who looked washed out and tired. He wanting to say something comforting. Some sort of reassurance but he saw how Emma wanted to get it off her chest.
“We spent so many hours just talking. She’s had an even more shitty life than me, Killian! You know about Daniel, right? How Cora murdered him? Sent her over the edge?”

“I do, sadly. I worked for her mother. Cora was one of the nastiest pieces of work you could ever imagine. To think I saved her from Hades! I’m aware just how bad Regina had it.”

“After a while, Regina started to recover. She got Roland back from Sherwood Forest, as Little John told her he felt he needed a mother in his life, after Marian and everything. John stayed, and the Merry Men followed shortly after.” Emma started smiling at the memory. “It’s funny. When John, Tuck, Will, Mulan and the guys came back it seemed to lift everyone here.”

“Aye, they’re a decent bunch. Locksley knows how to pick ‘em…”

“After that, Roland moved in. That seemed to help her, giving her something to do, someone who needed mothering. Like me, she was still a bit unstable. Zelena moved out to a cottage on the edge of the forest with baby Robyn. I helped a little, looking after Roland so she could go back to working part-time. Then she found out she was pregnant with Hope. Everything changed after that. I started helping more, then…”

“You moved in with her?”

“Eventually, yes. We were both a bit raw, but we helped each other recover. We became closer.” Emma spotted his reaction and knew where his mind was going. “It was gradual, Killian. I know you’re itching to ask me the question, so let me do it for you! Was I previously interested in women? No, neither of us were. Had I been with Regina, or any other woman for that matter before I met you? No. It was quite simple really. A couple years after Honour was born, I moved in and after about three months I realised my feelings for her were…changing. I’m not going to tell you everything but suffice to say, Regina had growing feelings for me too. That’s when we decided we wanted to be together. It grew from there.” She paused to take another swig on the scotch.

“And then marrying her? That’s quite a big change, Swan.”

Emma looked up at him, her tone hardening and a note of steel entering her voice. “It’s Swan-Mills now. Yes, well, what can I say? I fell in love with Regina Mills, another woman! Shock! Horror! Hold the front page! Yes, it happens, Killian! Sometimes two women can fall in love, you know?”

The former pirate didn’t drop his stare, unaffected. “Indeed, I do. Wind your neck in, I wasn’t
judging you, despite your ridiculous tone. I’ve lived nearly ten times longer than you and I’ve known plenty of women, and men, who’ve preferred their own kind. Personally, I couldn’t give a damn whether you’re with a man, woman or whatever, but…”

“But what, Killian?” said Emma, waiting for his barbed comment.

“But it still hurts knowing that, for me, only three weeks ago we parted with you in tears declaring your undying love! Then I come back to find you shacked up in the arms of the same woman who spent most of her life trying to murder your mother! And even forced me to murder my own father! Whose sister murdered Robin Hood’s wife. Then Baelfire! Remember him? Henry’s father? Together the pair of them are responsible for the deaths of hundreds, if not thousands of people! And yes, Swan, or Swan-Mills or whatever bloody moniker you choose to be known as these days, I know you will remind me that she has changed and is not that person anymore. But she was responsible and anywhere else but in this stupid fucking realm, she would be tried, convicted and in prison now. But she’s escaped any sort of rightful justice, just because she now feels bad about it. How convenient! And it’s not as though your idea of law is going to do anything about it, because the former mass murderer shares a bed with the Deputy Sheriff!”

Emma listened dumbfounded to her former lover’s rant, rolling her eyes then looking at him like a teacher scolding an errant schoolboy. He ignored it.

“Glare at me, and roll your eyes all you like, but which part of what I said is untrue? None of it! Your wife murdered people, lots of them! Men, women and yes, children. Don’t believe the bullshit about never harming children because I saw their broken bodies! No execution for her, and she doesn’t even sit behind bars! Her sister, that foul bitch, also roams free! I guess life’s just dandy if you’re former royalty, or connected with the Charming family! No apology, no punishment, no retribution! Leroy goes to jail when he gets pissed off an evening, but for your lover, sorry…your ‘wife’, nothing!” His tone remained calm but had turned icy.

“THAT’S UNFAIR!” She yelled. “She changed! You’re just sore because you lost me! Well get over it!”

“Trust me, Emma Swan-Mills, I’m now ‘over it’ as you so succinctly put our past! Believe it or not, my life doesn’t just revolve around you. Don’t worry, four days from now I’ll be gone. I’ll be history, just like Baelfire! Then you’ll enjoy the rest of your perfect life, with your perfect wife, in peace. No nasty men buggering up the place, eh?”

She was about to attack him for the slight on Regina, but stopped when she realised what he’d just said.
“Don’t you dare bring Neal into this! I loved him! Wait…what do you mean, ‘gone’? Gone where? Where are you going?”

“Neverland. I sail Saturday on the first tide. With Pan now dead, there are still kids stranded there, you may recall. Then on to Arendelle to drop them off. Then Agrabah, then, wherever fate takes me…”

Emma was stunned. Although she had moved on from Killian, knowing he was now alive and leaving her again brought very confused feelings. “You…why are you leaving so soon?”

“It’s not as though there’s anything here for me! Not now, anyway…”

“When will you be back?” Emma’s voice turned to a whisper.

“I don’t intend on returning. I have some tasks and things I have to do.”

“Tasks you have to do?” she mocked. ”What does a former pirate have to ‘do’?”

“You may have noticed Zeus restored the Jolly to its former glory? And my hand of course! Well, he also left me with a few, how can I put this…extras!” Killian placed his new hand directly in front of her, opening his palm slowly. A small clutch of gold coins slowly apparating in his palm.

Emma gasped, looking up into the pirate’s piercing blue eyes. “You…you have magic too? Like Robin?”

“So it would seem. Reul will give me a few lessons over the next couple of days. Nothing like as powerful as Locksley’s though. Not sure why, as he already gave me my hand and the Jolly back, so I’m not complaining. Fortune hunting is no longer necessary for this pirate to survive. However, Zeus has also given me a list of tasks he wants me to perform. Good deeds, if you will. So, given how things have changed here, it would be churlish to refuse…”

Emma was aghast. Their relationship was over, but the thought of never seeing him again made her feel unbelievably sad. “Killian, you don’t need to leave! Not forever! We may not be together as a couple anymore, but can’t we still be friends? Surely I still man something to you?”

“Do you seriously think I could bear being near the woman I love, knowing she’s now with
someone else? That you can never be mine? No Swan, that’s unacceptable. I lost Milah, and I’ve lost you. It’s time to move on. Zeus has given me an opportunity. It’s time I took it!”

With a deep sigh, Killian Jones stood up from the table, dropped money on to the counter, then slowly turned away, with a final glance back at his former lover. “Have a good and long life, Emma Swan. Be happy.” With that, he strode out, leaving Emma staring blankly at his departing figure.

Then her phone went off. Violet. “Um…Vi? What’s up?”

“Get over here! Now!” barked her son’s girlfriend, her tone almost unrecognisable.

“Where? What’s happening?”

“The jail! Where you fucking well locked up Henry! He’s gone!”

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After Robin settled his daughters, he joined Regina downstairs for their long awaited, and dreaded ‘chat’. Remembering how he’d acquired some sort of ability to read minds, Regina deliberately chose to spend as long as possible talking about Honour and Robyn rather than anything else. She talked about their habits, favourite stories, toys and games; all to avoid what was to come. However, Robin recognised obfuscation when he saw it and decided to cut to the chase.

“Gina, let’s stop beating about the bush, shall we?” He said, looking intensely at her and placing his hand over hers as it rested on the table. Regina looked resigned, but downright nervous.

“I guess so. Robin, I’m sorry, this is a little…difficult for me.” She felt her throat dry under his stare.

“It doesn’t have to be. It’s probably easier if I go first, ok? Yesterday, I discovered the woman I thought was my true love and soulmate has now moved on with someone else. And married her no less! I’ll admit that hurt, though as it’s been five years and as you thought I was dead, I understand. And I now appreciate what you went through when Emma brought Marian back. Or who we thought was Marian.”
Regina’s thoughts went back to that horrible day. The day she lost him the first time.

“However, to also discover I now have another beautiful four-year-old daughter is just incredible! Honour is perfect and regardless, I will always be grateful she has you for a mother. You took such good care of her and Roland!”

The woman smiled at that. “Roland has been a savior himself, for me and Emma. He’s such a sweet loving boy. One of the things that pulled me through!” Regina sounded almost wistful as she thought about it.

Robin, on the other hand, just picked up on the other name. “Emma. Yes, well. I’m not completely surprised, given what happened. Does she make you happy?”

Without hesitation, the brunette responded, “Yes! Yes, very much. I love her Robin!”

He smirked, “Well I would hope so, seeing as you married her!”

“Robin, I didn’t mean I didn’t’ love…um…what I mean to say is…” she stuttered.

“Don’t fret yourself Gina, I understand, I really do! I get it. I died, you went downhill, then recovered and gradually found a new love. Believe it or not I happen to like Emma! Even if she hates me.”

“Emma doesn’t hate you Robin, it’s just - she finds this difficult!”

“I’m afraid she does, Regina! I’m sorry but her hatred is quite intense at the moment. Remember I can sense this sort of thing now! I can actually hear her. Her mind was flipping a bit and when she walked past me in the park earlier today. I could sense the visceral hatred. She actually wished that I was still dead. Reading her mind, she was figuring out how to remove me. A memory curse, drowning on the Jolly, that sort of thing…”

Regina was horrified, glaring at him, “No! I can’t believe that’s true! Emma would never…”

“I never said she _would_ harm me Regina! Only that her mind considered it. She was disturbed for a
time. I don’t believe she would ever try to harm me either. She’s a good woman but she had a shock seeing me yesterday. She clearly thinks I’m a threat, so, in a way I am responsible. I’m sorry.”

She didn’t know what to say. Emma would never actually think about harming her former love! *Impossible, surely?*

Robin carried on regardless. “Gina, what’s done is done! I was dead and you moved on. I get it. Remember for me, it has only been three weeks! Unfortunately, I am still in love with you and this is painful; but I would never do anything to harm your marriage. You’re with Emma now. I respect that…”

Regina missed the last part of what he had said, the mind frozen by seven words, easily said. *I am still in love with you!* Tears started to fall as she tried to concentrate on what he had to say next.

“But I do have three children now, not just Roland. Had it not been for Honour and Robyn, I would take Roland and sail away with Killian this week. He has a lot planned. However, that’s no longer an option for me. I’m a father and I absolutely insist on being able to see my daughters. Nothing will deflect me from that. I’ll readily share whatever arrangement is necessary with yourself and Zelena. But I will not abandon them!”

“Of course not, I would never expect you to…” Her nervous reply was interrupted by the mobile phone ringing loudly. “Sorry, just give me a moment.” She said, angrily pressing the answer button.

“Tink? Can I call you back? I’m a little busy right now and…no…it’s…what? What? Tink, calm down! What do you mean, Henry? He’s gone? HE’S DONE WHAT?” Even Robin could hear the excited rant of the green fairy on the line. “Stay there, I’m coming! You’re still in the police station?”

Robin sensed agony in her mind as she panicked, slamming the phone down. “Robin, I need to-.”

“Go! I’ll keep an eye on the girls, till one of you comes back. Roland’s safe with Little John. Go sort things out with Henry!”

“Thank you, Robin.” Without thinking, she leaned forward to put her hand on his shoulder and kiss his right cheek. Robin responded, attempting to also chastely peck her cheek too. However, for a moment, it felt to Regina like a magnet, pulling her mouth slightly to the right, as did Robin’s. The accidental touch of lips on lips, albeit with mouths closed and puckered, brought a sharp spark of light and buzzing energy which they both felt. Surprised, they both tilted their heads back, looking in
to each other’s eyes. Regina trembled at the effect, muttering, “I need to go,” before releasing Robin
and disapparating from his arms in a whirl of smoke.

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**Back at the police station**

After Henry had ripped the jail cell apart like butter, also leaving a large hole in the front of the
station, Mulan and Tinker Bell had both texted and called his mothers. Within one minute a large
white smoke plume appeared, revealing an exhausted looking Emma. Then quickly followed by a
purple plume as Henry’s other mother appeared. Regina was the first to speak, looking to her wife,
then the warrior and fairy.

“Where is he? Where’s my son? What’s happened?” Regina grew nervous as she surveyed the level
of damage to the station. “Who did this?”

Emma stayed silent. Tinker Bell was the first to speak up. “Henry! He has magic now.”

“What! No, that’s impossible! He couldn’t have. How is that possible? Emma?” She looked at her
wife.

Mulan stepped in, “Mrs. Swan-Mills, your son appeared in the cell over there, magically. I tried to
talk to him, but he seemed very angry. He flicked his wrist, the cell exploded, and he just walked
out.”

“You didn’t try to stop him?” Regina could glare for her country.

“How would you suggest? He blew me over. He has magic. We don’t.”

“What was my son doing in a jail cell anyway?” Regina couldn’t help but notice the stares the other
women bore into her wife. “Emma, what’s going on? Where is he?”

Emma looked at the brunette, eyes laden with sadness and guilt though before she could say
anything, Violet stepped in front of them.
“Yes, Emma! Why don’t you tell her why Henry was in a prison cell in the first place? Against his will? Why don’t you tell her who ‘poofed’ him there? For being an adult in a bar!”

Regina had never heard her son’s girlfriend be angry before. Violet had always seemed so calm, so mature for her age. But in front of her now was an incandescent ball of fury about to explode and seemingly at Emma.

Regina stepped in front, trying to calm her. “Violet, wait…Emma? You…you put Henry in the jail cell?

“Gina, he was being disrespectful! Downright rude! I just…I just lost it, ok?” Emma tried to justify herself.

That’s when Violet lost it completely, walking straight into Emma’s face, bellowing: “HE’S A TWENTY-YEAR-OLD MAN, NOT A FUCKING BOY! TREAT HIM LIKE A MAN, AND HE MAY TREAT YOU WITH RESPECT! YOU POOFED HIM AWAY IN FRONT OF EVERYONE, INTO A JAIL CELL BECAUSE YOU DIDN’T LIKE HOW HE WAS TALKING TO YOU!” the young woman spat before storming out of the building trying again to call her boyfriend.

Regina was shocked by the sheer fury of the girl. Violet had never spoken to them like that before.

“Emma, you put Henry in a cell? You locked our son in a cell? Just…tell me what happened.” Regina looked at her wife’s face, seeing the small silver tracks, puffy eyes and tiredness etched on her face. She was clearly distraught but trying to stay strong in the face of the latest crisis, moving her hands to her face as Regina moved to hold her.

“Gina, this is all my fault!” the blonde gulped as tears started to fall. “I saw Henry in the Rabbit Hole when I went to meet Killian. I thought he’d been drinking but he hadn’t. I told him to go home. He yelled at me. I yelled at him and I guess I made him look stupid in front of our friends; so, he swore at me. I overreacted, like I usually do and I…I poofed him into a cell. I didn’t think.”

Regina groaned. She knew her wife and son well enough to picture how that would have gone. Unfortunately, with age Henry seemed to have acquired both his mothers’ quick tempers and he was certainly no longer afraid to challenge either of them.
“Emma, I understand. And although Violet overreacted, she’s right. Henry IS a man now. Young and very proud and I can’t imagine he took well to being forcibly removed and locked up against his will.”

Tinker Bell couldn’t help but add, in a voice she hoped was sympathetic. “And his magic’s come in. We have a very angry, rather unstable sorcerer on the loose…”

Regina tried to ignore the implications. “Ok, let’s try to remain calm. First, we find him!”

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About an hour later, the knocker on Gold’s store rattled loudly, accompanied by continuous banging on the glass, loud enough, as it seemed to the owner, to wake the dead.

Rumple was working on a timepiece at his desk, a jeweller’s loupe held in his right eye. Irritated by the interruption, he quietly huffed, flicking his left hand to magically release and open the front door.

Regina immediately strode into the back of the shop, not seeking permission to enter, with Emma followed closely behind. “Gold, I need your help!” She barked.

Gold’s head didn’t lift from his task, though with a suppressed irritation in his voice said, “And good evening, Mrs. Swan-Mills and Mrs. Swan-Mills. Thank you for not breaking the glass. Oh wait, I forgot. Normal manners and courtesy don’t apply to you, do they?”

Regina tried to ignore the comment, even if it was justified. “Gold, this is serious, I…”

“It usually is with you. Not interested. Go away!” His voice gaining a harder edge.

Regina knew she had to play this differently if she was to get any help from him tonight. “Rumple, look I’m sorry! I’m sorry I barged in, but you know I would never willingly come, unless I had no other option.”

“What have you managed to screw up this time, that makes you seek help from one you detest?”
Emma never liked hearing Regina being criticised; she stepped around the brunette, getting closer to Gold, angrily. “Now look here Gold, Regina and I may not like you but...” Her voice stopped immediately, as she felt her entire body lift from the ground, her throat held in a vice-like magical grip.

“I didn’t give you permission to speak, Deputy Sheriff! You forget yourself,” he growled, his Dark One voice emerging. “I’ve heard quite enough from you recently and its partly thanks to you that my second son is still missing, my first son having died to save your worthless arse! Mills, I will give you one minute to explain yourself before I remove you both from here.”

Regina recognised the old anger in her former mentor. Seeing her wife struggle in his grip, she had the good sense to answer, instead of argue.

“How have you mistreated my grandson this time?” His eyes rose finally and bored into her.

“I resent that! I’ve done nothing to him whatsoever. Emma and Henry got into an argument, he lost his temper and it seems he now has magic. He’s upset and disappeared. I need to find him before he accidentally does anything rash or foolish.”

“My grandson is neither rash nor foolish, unlike his mothers. Any other details you missed out?”

Regina considered Emma’s eyes and sensed the silent struggling woman trying to shake her head to avoid telling him all the facts.” “I don’t think so.”

“So, you don’t intend telling me how your wife humiliated him at the Rabbit Hole this evening? How she spirited him into a locked jail against his will? How Henry destroyed half the police station to escape using his newly discovered magic? You don’t think any of that relevant?”

*How the hell does he always know?* Before she could answer, Rumple twitched a finger, Emma falling to the floor, her voice restored. Regina moved quickly to her, helping her up.

“I will not help you, not after what she has done.” He pointed to the blonde. “That woman
encouraged Belle to leave my protection to go to the convent, then helped delay my getting into the convent with a shield. Thanks to her, Belle gave birth to my son without my knowledge and allowed the blue moth to take him away. Thanks to her, my son was captured by the Black Fairy. Partly thanks to her, Baelfire is dead! Not that she cares. She took up with the rum soaked, disease-ridden pirate within days of his death. She blackmailed me to get you into the Underworld for him but not my boy, not my Bae! And now she’s shacked up with you, whilst trying to act with my grandson as though his father never happened! So no, I will not help you. Take her away now, or I will destroy your wife where she stands!”

Emma realised this was getting out of hand when her senses told he wasn’t threatening; he was serious.

“Gold, look. I’m sorry, but…” Emma started to stammer but within a moment another flick of the Dark One’s hand transported both the women directly back into the police station, which appeared to magically repair the bars as they materialised within the formerly destroyed jail, the lock firmly securing the metal door. The blonde composed herself momentarily and blasted the lock with magic. Nothing happened.

“What the hell?” Emma shouted as she tried again, her magic merely bouncing from the metal bars.

Regina stood next to her. “Together!” The blonde nodded and they combined their powers, as they had so often. The white and purple magic swirled together, as it had so often, forming a knot as it hit the heavy metal. However, the magic was repelled once again.

Regina looked closely at the lock and bars, that were not even scorched. She could sense the magic. Rumple’s magic. And it was very strong indeed and the brunette realised this wasn’t going to open without outside help. “Emma, he’s sealed this with blood magic. We’re going to need help!”

As the two women looked around the small cell for anything that would help them escape, a single sheet of paper fell slowly down to the floor between them. Emma picked it up, opened and read the handwritten message aloud to her wife:

“Mrs. Swan-Mills,

Not nice being transported against your will, is it? It’s also not very nice being forced into a small cell. Trust me I know, having experienced the same several times as the result of the Mills family. Perhaps you should think twice before ever doing that again to Baelfire’s son?”
Try as much as you like, your magic will not open the door. However, it will open in twenty-four hours, regardless. Meanwhile, basic facilities have been provided.”

As Emma read the last comment, a basin of cold water and an empty bucket appeared next to them. Regina sighed, exasperated. “I’m certainly not using that!” Emma continued with the note:

“Henry came to me today, very distressed. Not surprising really, considering how you have treated him. You may recall, he told you yesterday that his father died exactly six years ago to the day. He intended to go to the grave, but it seems you either forgot or chose to overlook the passing of the man jointly responsible for creating your son. The man who gave his life for you and most of the town. It doesn’t surprise me that the former mayor overlooked that fact, but I expected a little more from you. Oh well.”

Emma’s voice had reduced to a whisper, now realising one of the reasons for Henry’s anger. “No wonder he hates me!” Regina lifted the letter from her and continued to read:

Mark my words carefully, Emma Swan-Mills. Despite the many difficulties I now face as a direct result of you, your wife and her vile sister, I promise that I never harm them, or you, provided three basic rules are maintained.

1. You will never again use magic to control my grandson.
2. You will never again come into my shop or house uninvited. Henry is always welcome. You are not.
3. You will never interfere in my relationship with my estranged wife or my son, if I find him, ever again.

Fail to observe the first two points and I will punish you. Fail to observe the last point and I will END you.

Henry has asked to stay with me until he returns to college and I have agreed. I will help him with his magical induction if he so wishes. He is free to come and go as he pleases, and I will not interfere in his life. Never again interfere in mine…

Rumplestiltskin

Regina looked at her wife, anxiously. “Emma, we can’t just let Henry stay with him! It’s out of the
“I agree, but he is also Henry’s grandfather. Henry’s safe until we get out of here. What about Honour?”

“I’m not so worried about her. Honour and Robyn are with Robin. He’d never let anything happen to them. They’re safe and Roland’s in the forest with John. But we do need to get a message back to Robin so he knows where we are. You have your phone on you? Mine’s missing.”

“So is mine. Gold, I guess! We just have to wait till someone comes in…” Emma said with a resigned sigh.

“One thing’s for sure,” groaned Regina looking at the silver pail, “I’m blowed if I’ll use that bucket!”
A Few Home Truths

Chapter Summary

Henry reconnects with his grandfather before having a serious talk with his imprisoned mothers. The fairies take Killian and Robin under their wings as they develop their new powers. A VERY special visitor is due to arrive in Storybrooke.

Chapter Notes

I'm so pleased some of you have written and PM'd me to say you're enjoying this story! As my first ever published story that means a lot! Enjoy.

A Few Home Truths

Rumpelstiltskin calmed remarkably quickly after his outburst at the women, his features breaking into a satisfied grin as he transported them from his shop and to the cell.

In one rather convoluted spell, he’d managed to transport them, whilst repairing the jail door and walls, whilst sealing them in with his magic! All in one spell! Trying not to look too smug, he glanced to a side of the room.

“Come out now, lad - they’ve gone!”

From the corner of the room, Henry stepped out from within the invisible bubble that had been shielding him from sight and any magical detection. “I guess you heard all of that, young man?”

“Yes, grandpa. Sorry I’m being a nuisance, It’s just that…Emma…she…she just made me so mad! And then that…weird feeling. I didn’t mean to destroy the station gramps! Honest. I just lost it completely!”

“Yes, dearie, that was your magic come in. Everything’s gone a little haywire. However, I’ve already sorted the station, so don’t worry.” the Dark One said calmly, placing a comforting hand on his grandson’s shoulder.
“Where did you send them?”

“Back to your cell. I think your younger mother could do with time to consider her recent behaviour. Again, don’t worry, they’ll be released tomorrow.”

Henry considered asking his grandfather to release them now. However, considering his treatment by Emma recently, he thought it may do them a little bit of good, being controlled instead of controlling. “It’s strange, grandpa, I just spent the last day being almost invisible to my own mothers. Mind you, if I’m honest it feels like it’s been a little like that for the last year or so. I feel like I’ve been invisible ever since they got married…”

Rumple wasn’t sure what to say to the quietly morose young man as Henry’s mood darkened.

“Gramps, you know what day it was yesterday, don’t you?” Henry looked sadly at him.

“Of course. Six years to the day since that ginger shit killed my boy. I could never forget.”

“Nor me, gramps. You know, I reminded Emma a week ago that we needed to get some flowers and go to the grave. I even left a note. Yet she completely forgot. Or didn’t care…”

Rumple seethed, a flash of anger in his eyes. “I’m afraid your mother does seem to possess a unique ability to move on with her life. She started dating that diseased pirate within a week of Bae’s funeral. Your father, the man who saved the town! And then she moved onto your adoptive mother once the pirate disappeared. I’m sorry Henry; I don’t wish to speak ill but Emma has brought about a great deal of pain for me. I still can’t trace where Gideon’s gone and that tore my marriage apart. All partly due to your mother.”

The men descended into their own silence for a few minutes before Henry piped up again.

“Gramps. About the magic? I’m…I’m scared.”

Rumple instantly moved forward to wrap an arm around the back of the young, though now much taller and muscular, man. “I understand, though you don’t need to be, my boy. Magic is all based on your emotions and I will help you to learn how to handle them and control it. Hopefully, you’ll listen
a little more attentively than your other mother and her sister. We’ll take it steadily, but you will learn
to master it.”

“Thanks gramps. And for letting me stay. I’m sorry I’m being a pest; and for not spending more time
with you. I feel that mum’s family just completely took over and I didn’t fight for my dad’s side. I
owe him that…”

Rumple felt truly humbled by his grandson’s confession and it made him a little teary eyed.

“No need to apologise. I’m a very difficult person to be around but perhaps I can now do this little
something for Bae. There’s a spare room here you can use until you’re ready and you can come and
go as you please. You don’t need a key as our blood magic will open the doors. I’ll also set up one
of the bedrooms in the main house for you to use. Treat them like your own homes, even if and
when you go back to your mothers.”

Henry, overwhelmed by his grandfather’s generosity, choked slightly. He wrapped his arms around
the older man’s shoulders to bring him into a tight hug, in an attempt to hide a tear. “Thanks gramps.
You’re the best.”

Rumple was similarly overcome with emotion. It had been a very long time since anyone but Belle
had hugged him, and certainly no man other than Bae. He relished it. “You’re most welcome, my
boy.”

After a good half minute, the men broke apart, both smiling slightly with shared embarrassment.

“Now Henry. Just so you are aware, Emma and Regina currently reside in the cell you vacated a
little earlier.” He flicked his fingers to reveal a large globe next to them on an adjacent table. A vision
appeared on the globe, showing the two women sitting side by side on the small cot, Regina
apparently reading a letter. “Your sisters are also perfectly safe. It seems Mr. Locksley is babysitting
tonight, and I’m sure he won’t be leaving them until someone returns to take over.” The vision on the
globe changed to show Robin sitting on a chair next to the large double bed occupied by his little
sisters. Henry thought to ask him how he was able to see everyone else’s business at will, though he
thought best to save that for another day.

“I also took the liberty of sending in a letter to your mothers, confirming that they will be released in
twenty-four hours. I’m afraid that I also made dire threats as to what would happen if they treated
you like that again. They are quite safe, and food and drink will be provided shortly.”
“You threatened them? Grandpa, you wouldn’t really harm them, would you?”

“Of course not,” He grinned, “But they don’t need to know that, do they?”

Henry smirked. His grandpa really was a wily old bird. “Would you let me release them? I’d like to have a little ‘chat’ with them before I do though.”

Rumple chuckled. “Of course. You’re more like your father than you’ll ever know! I’ll give you your first magical lesson, a short spell to let them out. Use it whenever.”

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Robin grew increasingly concerned. He hadn’t heard from Regina and had left two messages for her using the cell phone Tink and John gave him yesterday. He tried the fairy, with no success. So, after popping back into their bedroom for the third time to check his girls were still soundly asleep, he found Mulan in the phone memory and tried her. She picked up almost immediately.

R: “Mulan, it’s Robin. Have you seen Regina or Tink? Or Emma? I was expecting them back ages ago,”

M: “Robin? Well, I saw them a couple of hours ago. You heard about the station?”

R: “Sort of. I heard Henry had some sort of problem there.”

M: “Problem! That’s one way to describe it! He and Emma had a row. She poofed him into a cell at the station. He completely lost it and I reckon that’s what brought his magic in. He blew the jail apart and the front door’s off its hinges. They went looking for him. I’ve been scouting the edge of the forest but there’s no trace.”

R: “Shit! Henry’s got magic? Where’s Regina and Emma?”

M: “Not sure. They went over to Gold’s two hours ago. Haven’t seen them either.”
Robin didn’t like the sound of that. Regina’s run-ins with Gold were usually fiery. Something wasn’t right.

R: “I’m here minding the girls. I can’t help until someone gets back. Is Tink with you?”

M: “No. Look, I’ll call Rory & Phil. Perhaps one of them can come across to help. The girls know them, so if they wake up they should be ok.”

R: “Thanks, Moo. Someone needs to get over to Gold’s. Get Tink or Reul to go with you just in case he’s up to something. Perhaps call Belle as well before you go over there? She’s the only one I know who can control him. Didn’t they have a baby?”

It took a moment for Mulan to remind herself Robin was five years behind. He clearly had no idea of the Gold’s current arrangements.

M: “Belle and Rumpelstiltskin separated some time ago. Well, he kicked her out. She lives between the convent and the library these days.”

R: “Well I never thought they’d finally do that, not with a child. How did Gold react? I can’t imagine he’d let anyone separate him from his son. Not after Baelfire…”

M: “Robin, Belle had her son five years ago! The birth was accelerated by…well…let’s not go into that. Belle thought Rumple would turn the baby dark, so she asked the Blue Fairy to take it away. Blue was attacked by the Black Fairy and the baby, Gideon, was kidnapped. He’s been gone ever since!”

R: “Oh god, poor Belle. Poor Rumple – losing two sons!”

For the first time, he genuinely felt sorry for the Dark One. He was a father, regardless of his past.

M: “Well that finally split them. He told her to go. Gold blames her, and Emma and Blue. They took Belle to the convent covertly and put up spells to stop him getting in. Blue took the baby off before he could reach them. He was too late.”
R: “Even more reason why we need to see him. Regina & Emma may be in trouble!”

M: “I'll call Rory. I'm heading back to the station, or what's left of it, if you need me.”

R: “Ok, thanks. Stay safe! Don’t tackle anyone magical without back up!”

Fa Mulan hung up, smiling to herself at his concern. She loved Robin as the big brother she never had. When she left Aurora and Philip’s palace all those years ago, she joined the Merry Men partly to get away from her unrequited love. She had fallen in love with two people already in a relationship that her involvement would ruin. Especially with a baby on the way. So, she left, and Robin offered her a place with the Merry Men.

Robin had been a godsend. The one man, until Philip, she would confide in about her life, her feelings and her pain. He and his men took her in as a true equal, whilst giving her new skills that didn’t just involve swordsmanship and fighting. Like archery, carpentry, forestry, hunting, bush craft, animal husbandry, an appreciation for nature and most of all, friendship. A brotherly love so missing from her life for so long. He had saved her life, and she his, on several occasions. Mulan had never known Robin’s former wife Marian, but from Friar Tuck’s stories of his past it was clear their love was great indeed and it was a tragedy she died so early, leaving Robin a widower with a young son.

She had watched Robin raise Roland with love and devotion from a tender age, seeing the beautiful, dimple-cheeked boy grow into a remarkable, kind and surprisingly intelligent young man. Mulan acted as one of Roland’s adoring ‘aunties’ on many occasions, especially after Robin’s tragic death. When it was decided Roland would live in the Enchanted Forest with the men, partly due to Regina’s complete mental and physical breakdown, she decided to travel with them, partly so she could help and support him. And now, five years on, the former outlaw was back in their lives. Mulan was determined to do all she could to help and support him and his son in the difficult months ahead.

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Twenty minutes later, the former warrior and now Deputy Sheriff arrived back at the station to find a new front door and a bemused Blue Fairy standing beside Tinker Bell, looking just as surprised.

“Tink, Blue – what’s going on? Did you do this?”

“No, Mulan,” sighed Blue, “Though magic was definitely involved here. Strong, dark magic. I didn’t want to go in until someone arrived. There’s something wrong here.”

“Well we won’t know until we go in,” said Tink, gingerly grasping the handle and slowly opening the door to move inside. The other two women followed.

As they stepped into the station, Mulan was surprised to find that the earlier masonry, metal and rubble on the floor had been cleared up completely, floors looking polished and desks tidy. Walking through to the office, she was even more surprised to see a gleaming set of bars and new door on the jail cell, plus two new occupants sitting on the single cot.
Regina was sitting upright on the small bed, her back against the cold wall. Emma lay next to her, her blonde head resting on her wife’s lap, with the brunette seeming to talk to her with her hand on the other’s shoulder.

“Regina! Emma! What the hell?” shouted Mulan at the imprisoned pair. However, it seemed the royal couple couldn’t hear them. Mulan strode quickly across the room to try again and was met with a strong wave which bounced her back, pushing her to the floor.

Blue walked slowly up to the invisible wall, reaching out to touch it. “They can’t hear you Mulan. They may not be able to see you either. It’s dark magic, definitely. Maybe a little too strong for me to fix on my own.”

Tinker Bell saw the rather sullen look on the former mayor’s face as she held her wife, who had her eyes closed. The Blue Fairy needed to attract their attention, so raised a small, brilliant white ball of fire within her palm, with an intensity that made Regina look up.

“Emma! Look!” The brunette gasped. “Someone’s arrived! We should be out soon.” Regina looked relieved. She knew she needed the loo and definitely didn’t want to go in that bucket! She was a queen after all, and there were things you didn’t want even your own partner to see!

“Thank god!” groaned Emma, lifting herself up to look at her rescuers. “I need a pee, I’m desperate!”

Regina’s initial relief at seeing the fairies was tempered by the fact the women were shouting at her, but she couldn’t hear them. She groaned, “Emma. The little bastard has built in a sound barrier too! They can’t hear us, either.”

“Gina, my magic’s not working in here! Help me make a loo, or a screen or anything? I can’t wait!”

“Emma, mine doesn’t here either! Look at your wrist? We’ve both been blocked. I must admit, you have to hand it to him. When he does a spell, he doesn’t go half measures!”

“Well too bad. Sorry Gina but I have to pee!” With that the blonde moved over to the bucket and started undoing the buttons on her jeans while gesticulating wildly to the audience on the other side of the cell to turn around while she relieved herself. Regina too, looked to them mouthing ‘she needs to pee, turn around’ to them, hoping they’ll cotton on quickly to save any further embarrassment.

On the other side of the shield, Tink & Blue had tried joining their magic, all in vain, to break it. Mulan, seeing the actions of the silent prisoners within, intervened. “Erm, guys. Look, I think they’re trying to tell us something!”

“What?” said Blue distracted, then looking to what Emma was about to do, turned to the embarrassed Tink. “Let’s look away now.” Offering Emma at least a little dignity, all of them turned their heads to face away.

Just as they turned, Mulan heard heavy clumping steps enter the room as a tall and familiar figure came in. “Henry! Where the hell have you been?” Tink yelled. “We’ve been worried sick!”

Henry glanced across at the three women in front of him, relieved to see the mess he’d left behind had been cleaned up. *Thanks, grandpa*, he thought silently, as he moved towards the cells. The sight in front made him blanch. There was his brunette mother looking straight at him, mouthing something silently to her partner on her right, her cheeks flushing. Henry looked down and, instantly realising his blonde mother’s predicament, quickly looking away, before flushing slightly with embarrassment. “Guys, someone tell me when she’s finished!”
After waiting a good minute, he slowly turned his head back to the cells, to see his elder mother looking straight at him, mouthing something which he couldn’t hear, while his other mother finished reorganising her jeans, her face beetroot read, clearly realising Henry had unfortunately spotted her, with embarrassment for all concerned. “Emma, he can’t hear a word. None of them can. At least Henry can get word back to Robin, so the girls won’t get worried when they wake up.”

“Jeezuz! So, what do we do, just sit here till tomorrow night?”

“I don’t think we have any alternative. Unless the blue and green moths here come up with something.”

On the other side of the invisible shield, Blue stepped calmly up to Henry and collected his right hand in hers. Looking concerned and sincere, she gazed up into the young man’s eyes. “Henry, I heard you have just discovered your magic. That’s a very traumatic experience for anyone. Are you alright?”

“Erm, yes, thank you. I’m OK now and I’ve calmed down a bit. I have my grandpa to thank for that.”

“You’ve seen David? What did he say?”

“Not him, Blue. My other grandpa. He helped me. Now before you say something about him being the Dark One and everything, you need to know that I don’t share your opinion of him. Nor my mothers’. He’s my grandfather and he would never harm me. Thanks for your concern, but I think I need to speak to them on my own now.” He announced stiffly. “Would you excuse us? We need to be alone for this...”

His words were said with such calm authority that neither Blue nor Tink challenged him, though Mulan spoke gently in reply. “Henry, they’re locked in and it’s soundproofed. We can’t break in and they don’t seem to be able to break out. It’s completely sealed!”

“Not to me! This is blood magic created by my grandfather. Tink, could you please see Robin and let him know what’s happened and make sure my sisters and Roland are all ok? And then perhaps you could let Vi know that I’m alright? I know I worried her.”

The fairies looked to each other and the Green Fairy nodded. “Ok Henry, I’ll be back in an hour.”

Regina and Emma watched the silent conversation taking place between their son and the three women only feet away. Henry seemed calm and apparently in control, the others merely nodding and turning to leave the room. “What! Where the hell are they going? Gina, we need them to get us the fuck out of here!

They watched as their son slowly closed the door. Regina noticed, with alarm, a small flick of Henry’s wrist, recognising a small red flash as he also sealed it behind them. “Oh hell, no!” she muttered.
Henry walked slowly to the cell door to face them, pulling up a chair, then straddling across it to sit facing them. He had been carefully briefed by Rumple on how to conduct the spell, but he couldn’t help inwardly enjoying this moment, closing his eyes as he pretended to concentrate. Raising both arms, he slowly lowered them, making the invisible magical shield disintegrate while leaving the magic on the lock untouched and the bracelets on their wrists intact. Regina was horrified. Their son was obviously a quick learner.

“Mums.” Henry said it calmly, as though nothing was amiss.

“Henry!” yelled Regina, instantly over reacting. “What’s going on? What has the imp said to you?” Henry looked to his other mother, who unusually appeared to keep her counsel, looking down, a little ashamed.

“Hello to you too, mums!” He saw her glance with contempt at the letter from Rumpelstiltskin.

“Henry, you’re not staying with him, and that’s final! He’s…he’s…”

“My grandfather, mum, and yes, I am.” He appeared unusually calm, continuing to stare at Emma. “Mums, I love you both, very much. But I don’t like how I’ve been treated recently. I don’t like how I’ve been treated since you got married. I love Rolly and my sisters too, but you two need to finally get it in to your heads once and for all that I’m an adult now. An adult! Well even though I am an adult, something happened to me today. Didn’t it, Em-ma?” The blonde flinched at the last word, lifting her head to look at him.

“I was having a nice time with my girlfriend. With Killian and the others. It was fun. I wasn’t doing anything wrong. I wasn’t drinking alcohol. However, one of my mothers walks in, then starts to order me about, telling me to go home, shouting at me in front of them. Treating me like a fucking child!”

“Henry, you know your mother would never…” Regina started to reason. He ignored her.

“She magicked me into a locked jail!” he spat. “That’s inexcusable. I don’t care how you try to justify it!”

Emma said nothing because she knew he was right. Regina again tried to calm things by changing the subject.

“How did you undo the seal?”

“Blood magic. I am his grandson.”

“Yes, but your magic! How? It could only work if Emma and your father were…” Regina stopped, realising the implications of what she was saying and didn’t want to go there.

“True loves, mum?” The boy sounded hurt that he even had to explain it. “You’re not limited to one True Love in your life, as you well know! But I guess it doesn’t matter anymore. After all, mum has forgotten all about my dad anyway, haven’t you?” he said, his tone bitter.

That hurt Emma more than he knew. His angry glare felt like a stab. “Henry,” she croaked, “That’s not fair! You have no idea what I went through when your father died!”

“Not enough to visit his grave, though. Six years, mum, six years! You didn’t even get the flowers!”
“Henry, I got distracted! Killian and Hood had just come back from the dead yesterday!”

“Killian. Oh, right. The man we went back to the Underworld for; to split your heart if I remember? Nice guy. Shame you couldn’t do the same thing for my dad, someone who actually saved the whole town!”

“Henry, don’t! Neal wasn’t there, you know that! He even told me not to go, he said he’d moved on!”

Henry so wanted to continue goading her, but seeing instead his mother’s sad, dejected expression, he sighed, looking at her with something resembling pity. “Look, ma,” he sighed, “I’m sorry I’ve been a bit stroppy with you but I’m angry! You treated me like shit today, and in front of Violet. I thought you were better than that.”

Emma continued to crumble at her son’s angry rant. It reminded her of how she was spoken to in her various foster homes, unsure whether to shout back or concede defeat. Looking at the disappointment in the young man’s eyes, she decided on the latter.

“I’m sorry Henry,” she almost whispered, looking in to his eyes, silently asking forgiveness. “You’re right. I lost my temper and shouldn’t have spoken to you like that.”

Henry wasn’t letting her off that easily. “You forcibly removed me from there and poofed me in to that cell!” he shouted, pointed to her current predicament. “How dare you?”

“I’m sorry!” She repeated, her wife now moving in to wrap an arm around her shoulders in sympathy.

“Come on Henry, your mother apologised!” Regina appealed, though he still seemed unconvinced.

“Yeah, I heard. Not sure she means it though,” he spat, “I wonder if she’d be saying it if she wasn’t stuck in her own cell? Not nice, is it?”

Emma cringed and stayed silent, no answer for her damning son. Regina felt nothing but anguish for her two loves. “Please, Henry, stop! I love you both and I hate what you’re doing to each other. This must stop. We’re a family and I can’t bear this. Please forgive her? Please forgive me? You have no idea what the last few days have been like, my love! We’re stressed. We do stupid things when we’re stressed!”

Henry closed his eyes, trying to calm. “Ok.” He slowly rose from the chair.

“Did Gold show you how to undo the spell? I need to get back to your sister.”

“He told me the spell would automatically dissolve at ten o’ clock tomorrow night. Although yes, he did show me how to get you out sooner.”

Emma stood up at the news. “Well what are you waiting for? Get us out of here!” She yelled. Regina cringed.

“Not yet. I have something to say first and I need you to listen. I mean LISTEN, mum!”
The blonde stayed silent, knowing her sudden about-change had irritated him.

“Tonight, I asked Grandpa if I could stay at his house and he said yes. I asked him, he didn’t ask me. My magic came in today and I need a lot of help learning how to use it properly. Neither of you trust him but I do! Besides, I want to learn more about dad’s side of the family. He’s the most powerful mage around, don’t deny it. Although from what Blue was saying yesterday, Robin’s probably going to be pretty powerful himself soon.”

“Henry, no!” barked his older mother. “Rumpelstiltskin is dangerous! He isn’t called the Dark One for nothing. You can’t stay with him!”

“He’s cursed, mum! You remember what she was like when she was the Dark One?” he said, pointing at his blonde mother. “Or you for that matter. The two of you both killed as many people in the last ten years as grandpa.”

“For god’s sake Henry!” Emma was back on her feet. “Cruella was going to kill you! And what do you mean? Your mother never…” She was stopped by Regina’s hand on hers as the brunette glared at her son. Oh shit! Henry, don’t go there, she silently thought, scowling at her son’s goading.

“Still never discussed Graham Humbert, huh? Mum, YOU always told me not to keep secrets!”

Emma froze, pulling gently back from her wife as she remembered the tall handsome sheriff passing away in her arms seven years ago. “Regina? It was a heart attack…wasn’t it?” She trembled slightly at the thought her own beloved could have been responsible in any way.

“I guess it was, ma! Easy to have a fatal heart attack when someone else was holding on to your heart to control you! She crushed it the day you two had a fight over him. Didn’t you, mum?”

“How the hell did you…”

“I’m the Author! I saw the book yesterday. You removed his heart after he refused to kill Snow White! You locked him up then used him as a toy, your personal slave, for years. Then, when he finally stood up to you, you took his heart and crushed it. You murdered Graham Humbert. An innocent man. Not back in the Enchanted Forest, but here, as Regina Mills.” He said it so calmly, but with steel.

Regina went white, buckling on to the cot and silently putting her hands to her face in shame, as she recalled that terrible day. Her marriage to Emma must surely be over now, Emma could never forgive her for this!

Emma just silently stared ahead, stunned by the revelation. Henry continued, his voice calmer now.

“Look…mums…I didn’t say all that to hurt you: though I know I did, again. I’m sorry for that, but I’m trying to make the point that just as my grandfather has a dark past, so do you. Both of you. And just as you have changed, so has he. The trouble is you refuse to see it. Now I don’t want to argue with you anymore, but I will be staying at grandpa’s house until I go back to college. I will come back home to stay from time to time, but I need this. I need the space. And before you threaten me with stopping university fees if I don’t fall in to line, you need to know that grandpa has offered to pay them if you get ‘awkward’. So, this is happening mums.”

It was said with such finality that neither responded. After a good minute of awkward silence, Regina spoke, her voice wobbly and nervous. “Henry, please get us out of here? I just want to go home.” Her tired voice sounded like she was almost begging.

Henry knew he had pushed them too far. Nodding and raising his right hand, he remembered the
incantation Rumple told him. A gold swirl of smoke captured the mothers, removing them from the jail cell. “Bye mums.” He said, sadly, as he quietly opened the door and left the station.

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Moments later, the two women reappeared in their own living room, crashing onto the floor unceremoniously as they had both been unprepared for their son’s sudden use of magic. Emma crashed noisily against a wooden cabinet, twisting her ankle as she went down. “Fuuuck…Ow!”

Robin, who’d been quietly sitting on the sofa reading, when they appeared, jumped up to help them off the floor. “Ladies?” he said, offering a hand first to Regina to get her on her feet. She took his hand without hesitation, immediately sensing a strong magical charge surge through her body. The jolt shook her, eyes wide now and looking straight into Robin’s chiselled face, mere inches away. He had clearly felt it too, fighting an almost overwhelming urge to kiss her. He distracted himself by going over to the blonde. “You ok, Emma?” he breathed, sensing her shock. Before she could draw breath to answer, Robin gently stood back, moving down to where Emma lay, clearly in pain. “Here, let me,” silently placing his left arm around her back, under her arms, his right arm went under her knees to gently support her as he started to rise.

Emma winced as she felt him lift her cleanly from the floor, her left ankle stinging. Robin moved gently across to the sofa, placing her back down gently while still supporting the legs. He pulled a cushion under to support the wounded ankle. “You fell pretty badly there! Perhaps we should some ice on that?”

Regina was still in shock at what had just passed between herself and Robin. Looking down at how he was now attending to her wife and to avoid Emma seeing her reddened cheeks, she turned her back to them, moving quickly to the kitchen. “I’ll go. I’ll make an ice pack to stop it swelling! Back in a minute…”

Robin was now left alone with Emma. Looking at her white, washed out face. He raised his palm, resting it on her forehead, checking her temperature. “Emma, you’re very pale. Can I get…?” His voice suddenly stopped, as his open palm touched her forehead. A small spark arched between them, a brief yet blinding flash of golden light racing across her face. In that moment, Robin saw it all! It was almost like one of the Dark One’s dreamcatchers Regina played before him. Except these pictures were being played in his mind! He saw the Saviour’s life flashing past, rolling backwards at high speed, slowing until he saw an image of Emma walking up to Regina’s mansion with a young dark-haired boy in town.

It seemed like a film was being played before him, millions of videos slowing and speeding. up almost at will. Robin felt guilty, like some sort of creepy voyeur spying on his prey. Images flashed past, speech too, recalling the former Sheriff’s life since arriving in this strange little town. It was bizarre! Details, some intimate, raced through but somehow, he was memorizing them, learning all about the life and times of Emma Swan, without wanting to. He felt slightly ashamed, not even sure how to stop the visions. Looking down into hazel-green eyes, he also felt all the emotions Emma had been going through over the last few years. Then noticing the emotion she felt now. Fear!

Robin took his hand off her immediately. Although it had been there merely seconds, he’d unintentionally gained so much knowledge about her, her life with other people, her actions, her fights and battles, her fears and emotions, that he felt he had truly invaded her privacy. Like a stalker. Like a pervert. “Zeus, what the fuck have you done to me?” He groaned to himself.
Emma was equally stunned, looking with astonishment at her wife’s former lover. She felt the memories racing through her mind, being forcibly pulled out, and by the look on his face, realised that Robin had witnessed them too. “You…you saw all that?” she whispered.

Robin looked at her, guiltily. “I didn’t intend to! Zeus seems to have given me some sort of…power…that I can’t seem to control. I don’t want them, but I don’t know what to do. I’m sorry Emma!”

She could tell he was being honest and meant every word, although she was also horrified that he had seen so much. *He’s seen everything! My thoughts…my time with Regina. Oh God!*

“Emma, I didn’t want this! I’m going to go now, but I need you to know something. I know how much you hate me right now; how much you want me gone from all your lives. I understand that, and I sympathise, but you need to know that I will *never* leave my children again! They’re all that I have, and god help anyone who stops me from being with them.” Emma lay transfixed. “For me, only a few weeks have passed since Regina and I were, together. I won’t lie and pretend I don’t still have feelings for her! I do. However, I now know that your love for her is just as strong! I remember when I thought Marian had returned, and what that did to her. You genuinely love Regina and have cared for her, and our children, these last few years. You’re a good woman Emma Swan, and I can see why she fell in love with you! It’s because I also love Regina that I want her to be happy, so that’s why I am going to get out of the way. I’m going to get some help from Blue to control whatever the hell I have become. I didn’t ask for magic but now I have it. So, we are going to find a way for me to see the children without screwing up your lives.” He stood. “Just make her happy Emma, that’s all I ask.”

As he turned, he saw Regina a few feet away. She’d heard him and now looked down, her cheeks reddening at his declaration. *Robin still loves me? After this?* She felt elated but also guilty for being thrilled at the admission.

Emma knew everything Robin had said was true. She wanted him gone, but she also felt guilty for thinking badly of him. He’d done nothing wrong. On the contrary, he had sacrificed himself for her. It wasn’t his fault the timeline got so fucked up. Hell, if he and Killian had come back from the Underworld, he’d probably be married to Regina. Perhaps she and Killian too.

He moved to the hall, pulling on his jacket to leave, “I’ll see myself out. No need to tell me what happened. My presence is making you uncomfortable, so I’m sure Tink & Mulan can fill me in on the details tomorrow. Oh, and Emma?” The blonde lifted her eyes to him. “Henry will forgive you, I’m sure. Just give him a little space.”

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**The following morning – The Convent**

“Bravo Killian, Bravo!” screeched Blue as she watched Jones levitate a large rock from the shrubbery, slowly placing it on the grass in front of the small group of nuns who had gathered to witness the legendary pirate’s first magical moving spell. “For your first attempt, that’s excellent!”

“Aye love, I guess I’ll be moving on to topiary next,” smirked the pirate to the assembled women. He knew it was small, but just realising this new power was within him was *awesome*. “Ladies, any of you need window boxes or rockeries built, I’m your man!” The nuns chuckled at his self-
deprecation. Silvermist, who had been watching the lesson from the back of the group, encouraged him, “Small steps, Captain Jones. Small steps!”

“Indeed,” the blue fairy smiled. “I’m sorry you’re going to be leaving us in a few days. Magical ability is very tricky to master at this stage. I would ideally like you to stay a little longer, if you could?”

“I’d like to, love. However, all things considered, I think I’ll be on my way. There’s not much for me here anymore and besides, Zeus sent me a few interesting ‘tasks’”

For the next hour, Killian Jones was taught the rudiments of magic by the assembled fairies before being joined by Robin Hood, Mulan and Ruby. The group watched as Blue directed the two men in a variety of white magic spells, moving and transforming various things, and themselves, with the assistance of the other fairies. It was a pleasant morning out there in the sun, though as they sat down for a picnic lunch spread out on the lawn, Robin sensed there was something that the senior fairy was holding back. Something important.

“Reul? I’m very grateful for all your help today, and the ladies, of course.” He smiled around the gathering, placing a hand gently on hers, “but I can’t help thinking there’s something you’re not telling me? You seem a little…anxious. What is it?”

Blue looked across to Nova, her cheeks pinking. The other fairy nodded gently to her, encouraging her to open up and tell him. Few were aware that fairies could mentally communicate with one another, a fact that saved their lives on numerous occasions. ‘Tell him, Blue! He’ll find out soon enough. You don’t want him thinking you were holding out,’ she silently communicated to the older fairy. Silvermist, also part of the telepathic conversation, also nodded to her sister fairies in agreement with Nova.

It was then they heard him. Heard Robin speak to them, mentally! He could hear telepathically?

‘Yes, Blue, please tell me! One of you tell me. I know you’re holding something back. Please don’t make me start trying to read your minds. I accidentally did that with Emma last night, and it wasn’t good. So, whatever it is, please tell me!’

The fairies looked at Robin, completely aghast. No human, apart from one, had ever spoken to them telepathically before! Only…him! “Rb…Robin,” stammered Blue, “You’re right, there is something! But nothing bad I assure you. I just didn’t know how to tell you. It’s just…well…you remember I told you Zeus appears to have sent you back here with VERY considerable powers?”

Robin just nodded, anxious to see where this was going.

“Some of these powers are, frankly, beyond my understanding. Like you being able to mind-read and communicate with us through thought alone. That’s fairy magic. You’ve been given extraordinary gifts, which I’ve only ever seen one other human possess. So, we need to get help from him, to help you!”

Nova stepped in front of Robin. “Zeus gave you this magic for a reason Robin, and we need to figure out what that reason is.” She looked at the six fairies gathered around them. “In the wrong hands, your level of white magic could be extremely dangerous. So, someone will join us shortly…”

Robin frowned. “By someone, you mean Rumpelstiltskin?”
“No Robin, definitely not him!” said Blue, scornfully. The Dark One may now be a little ‘lighter’ these days, but he has both light and dark in him and, it would appear, your level is even higher than his!”

“There must be some mistake! I don’t feel different, apart from the noises in my head from everyone’s chatter. I don’t feel powerful!”

“That’s because your magic has been ‘suspended’ since you arrived here. In hibernation. That’s why we’re here to help. To transition your powers.”

Robin could sense the fairy’s honesty. *Lie detection! Is this how Emma usually feels?*

“Ok. I won’t pretend to understand any of this. So, this…‘person’? When does he arrive?”

“He should be here very soon. He doesn’t leave the World Without Magic so much these days,” said Silvermist, clearly excited. “But I know he’s really keen to meet you!”

“Well now you have me at a disadvantage! I’m intrigued. A man from the world without magic, who knows more about magic than all of you, than Regina…or Emma?”

Blue chuckled. “He probably has more magic than all of us combined! But he deliberately chooses to live away from it. He’s actually a doctor…a surgeon in their world. Just be patient, he’ll be here soon, and I assure you he will help you come to terms with these new powers. Now, let’s have another couple of hours practise, before he gets here; we don’t want to spoil the surprise!”

And with that the small group worked with Robin Hood and Killian Jones. From small spells, casts, counter spell blocking techniques and chants, through to moving objects and several times, moving themselves. The small group regularly cheered and encouraged them whenever they succeeded, as though they were a couple of screen idols. They wouldn’t admit it, but the two men loved the attention.

After the three hour-session in the warm morning sun, Blue arranged for a small picnic on the convent lawn. Waving her wand, a second large oval table appeared, followed shortly by a white tablecloth, plates, chairs and finally a wide selection of food and drink. Robin and Killian were impressed. “I have to say love, that’s my favourite spell so far! You have to teach me that one.” The pirate winked flirtatiously at the Blue Fairy, who giggled, pink faced. “We’ll see!”

Blue walked over to Mulan and Ruby, who had been watching the lesson in awe. “Miss Lucas, Miss Fa? You're very welcome to join us.” The two women nodded in thanks, moving to empty chairs around the now food and drink laden table.

As everyone moved to sit, Nova gasped, sensing a change in the air. Her sister fairies also sensed it, growing excited. “He’s just crossed the border, I can sense him!”

Blue smiled. “Ladies, gentlemen, our very important guest has arrived just inside the town line! That’s why we’re detecting his magic. Tinker Bell, would you kindly go and escort him in please?”
Moments earlier, at the town line, a large black Audi with heavily tinted windows slowed up at the invisible border with Storybrooke. “Dad, why are we stopping?” said the young woman in the passenger seat.

“Because we’re here. I can sense their magic shield,” said her father, patting her knee.

“I can’t see anything! Just more road.”

“Just watch closely, we’re moving across about…now.” The car crawled slowly over the invisible boundary. As it did so, an entirely different view emerged, showing a ‘Welcome to Storybrooke’ sign on the right and a slight, blonde and rather nervous woman in a sparkly green dress standing next to it. She felt an unmistakable pull of magic as the driver stopped and out stepped out of the car.

“My Lord! Is it…is it really you?” breathed Tink, nervously.

The man stepped up to the fairy, “Tinker Bell!” he exclaimed, his arms opening to lightly clasp her shoulders. “It’s lovely to see you again. You’re looking as enchanting as ever!” The fairy smiled back at him, like a teenager meeting her pop idol for the first time.

“Thank you, my lord!” she blushed. “I’m here to escort you to Blue and the rest of the fairies. Don’t worry about the car, I’ll put it somewhere safe.” It was then Tink noticed the other woman sitting in the car, watching their greeting. ‘Oh, I’m sorry, you’ve brought someone with you?” It was then she noticed the young woman’s piercing blue eyes. “That can’t be, surely not? You’ve brought Celia with you?”

“No, this is Annabelle, Celia’s youngest sister.” At this Anna slid the electric window down to greet the other blonde, putting her hand out the window to shake while remaining seated. “Hi, nice to meet you, call me Anna!”

“Tink beamed back at her, taking her hand warmly. She could see the resemblance between the woman and her father now. “I’m Tink! The honour is all mine.”

The father moved around the car, opening the passenger door. “Anna, let’s get you out now. Tinker Bell’s a dear old friend of mine. She’s going to take us to meet some very special people.” He opened her door to slowly ease the woman from her seat. “So, I think we should apparate there directly.”

Tink noticed Anna move slowly, turning and wincing loudly. She struggled badly, clearly in great pain and discomfort as she slowly climbed out, her father’s arm helping lift her as she rose. “Oh,
you’re injured! Please let me help. Are you ok?” Tink rushed to take her left side in support.

“I will be! I was in a car accident two weeks ago, and I hurt my back. I’ve got some spinal damage which won’t heal without some serious surgery, so dad thought it best to bring me with him, to somewhere with magic, so he can use his ‘other’ methods!” She winced as the fairy took her hand. “Would you rather we go to the hospital first?”

Her father stepped forward. “No need, Tink, this will be quicker. We’ll heal her as soon as we get off the road here.” With that the man took his daughter’s other hand. “OK, lead on!” With that, the familiar pale green smoke swirled around them as they, the car and their luggage were all transported from the town line.

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Even Killian and Robin felt the air change. A warm pulse, a tingle. Within seconds, a thick column of silver smoke appeared several feet in front of the table, expanding rapidly to eventually thin out, revealing three figures. They all watched as Tinker Bell appeared, holding hands with a young blonde woman, fair in appearance, wearing an elegant shawl over an ivory dress, but noticeably hunched over. She appeared a little nervous to see an audience looking at her, only feet away. Stepping back momentarily, a large arm wrapped itself around her back and shoulder. “It’s OK my love, we’re among friends here!” he said. She tried to relax, nervously attempting to smile at these strangers.

Robin studied the new arrivals, already feeling very strong energy coming from them; lots of it. Roughly six feet tall, seemingly in his early fifties with silver hair and a neatly trimmed silver-grey beard, the man had an owlish look and a formidable presence about him, as he gently held the young woman to his side. Looking at their eyes, he could see they were related.

With tears in her eyes, the normally cold and composed Blue Fairy stepped nervously over to the man, stopping just in front of him, bowing her head while bending her knee and lifting the edge of her dress as she delivered a perfectly executed curtsy. “My Lord, we are truly honoured!”

Killian couldn’t help but notice that as soon as their leader showed obeisance to him, her fairies, including Tink, did the same, all curtsying to the pair as one. The stranger, his eyes now twinkling, smiled widely as he stepped forward, taking Blue’s hands into his own gently as she straightened. “Reul, it’s lovely to see you again, my dear! And you’re looking as gorgeous as ever!” Blue’s cheeks flushed, like a school girl on her first date having her dress checked over. “Thank you, my Lord!”

“Hey, none of that ‘My Lord’ nonsense. We’re friends! First names only, please.”

Very well. Welcome back…Merlin!”

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Killian and Robin looked at each other, concerned, as Tink and the others gathered like groupies around the new arrivals, introducing themselves. Stepping to Robin’s side, Killian whispered, “Merlin? Doesn’t look like Merlin!”

“Indeed,” whispered the archer in return. “Older, greyer, bigger, whiter, even more…English?”

Although they spoke some distance away, it was clear the middle-aged man had picked up on what they had said, a smirk appearing on his face as he looked over at them, then turning back to the fairies.

“Sorry, where are my manners?” He took the young blonde woman’s hand in his own, drawing her
gently in to the group. “I haven’t introduced you. Ladies, I would like you to meet Doctor Annabelle Sage, my daughter!”

Killian then properly saw the young lady standing to ‘Merlin’s’ side. She had one of the most beautiful faces the former pirate had ever seen, even compared to his former Saviour! Long, golden curls wreathed the most beautiful complexion. Her eyes a piercing sky blue and her skin as smooth as ivory. Although she appeared to be in some sort of pain?

“Hi. It’s lovely to meet you all! Dad has told me so much about you...” She said in a slightly husky voice, her accent as English as the man she called her father. Robin recognised her accent as English Home Counties, slightly clipped, yet confident.

Killian returned her smile but couldn’t help noticing some of the fairies seemed slightly intimidated by her, apart from Tink who looked positively smitten, smiling intensely as the young woman’s eyes met hers.

“Anna, it’s really you? My god, you’re all grown up!” Blue squealed. Anna didn’t recognise her. “I’m sorry, have we met before?”

“Yes, but you were a baby then, so you wouldn’t remember me. I’m Reul Ghorm, but most people know me as Blue. I also met your older sisters. How are Rosalind and Celia?” she chirruped. The fairies then crowded around the girl, introducing themselves.

As Anna relaxed and started to talk to them, her father stepped away and across to the two men. Merlin looked at Killian’s left hand, chuckling. “Seems Zeus patched you up pretty good there, Jones!”

“Aye, he did. Sorry mate, I don’t wish to be rude, but have we actually met?”

The older man seemed a little surprised, then rolled his eyes as he realised the problem. “Oh right, the face! You don’t recognise me? This is one of my true forms; but we did know each other in Camelot. Here let me…” For a moment his eyes flashed gold, as his face and body transformed into another image altogether. A darker skinned, shorter and slimmer figure, close cropped hair and looking at least thirty years younger. The other men stepped back in amazement.

“Bloody Hell! So it really is you! Merlin…” the pirate choked in surprise.

“Yes, Captain Jones! Recognise me now?” the familiar figure with the same accent.

“Of course, but…but…didn’t I…?” he stammered, trying to get the words out.

“Kill me? Yes, you did…but…not really.”

Killian’s mind was racing, remembering his short time as a Dark One. How he’d plotted with Nimue to kill the man now standing in front of him. *Is this some bloody joke?* He thought as he remembered the consequences of that terrible time, anger rising within. “Was that some sort of sick plan? Emma and me? I was killed, dammit! I went to the Underworld! Emma was nearly…Robin died…what sort of sick bastard does that?” His voice getting louder.

“Calm yourself Mr. Jones, there was no ‘plan’. I just reacted to what was needed. You did kill me, though Zeus brought me back, as he has done on numerous occasions over the last millennium. As he has now done with you and the revered outlaw here,” he said looking to Robin.

“Well…” Robin hesitated, “‘Revered’ may be putting it a bit strong, but I’m pleased you’re back with us! However, I don’t understand. In the Underworld, Arthur mentioned you now live in the
world without magic?”

“I do, and have for many years now, coming back and forth when needed. In my world I’m a surgeon, based in London, though I also work in New York several months of the year. It keeps me balanced.”

“Balanced? With your powers! Why on earth would you live somewhere without them?”

“Too much power affects the mind and soul! I’ve lived a very, very long life and it’s rather therapeutic living without your powers for a while, as you will both discover very soon. You’ll soon find…” he was interrupted by Anna, loudly wincing in pain, Blue moving to support her. Merlin stepped briskly away from the men and across to her back.

“Oh sorry my love, I became distracted! Anna, just rest your arms on Mr. Jones’s shoulders here, with your back to me. This shouldn’t take long.”

Robin and the fairies watched in silence as a warm golden glow emanated from Merlin’s hands, as they floated gently across his daughter’s lower back. Anna winced in agony several times. Then, as the pain eased, she slowly stood straight, inches from Killian’s face, her face now finally relaxing as the pain eased.

*God, she is absolutely stunning!* Killian thought, as she started to smile with relief. “Thanks Dad. I wish we’d come a week ago! And thank you Mr. Jones! Flattery will get you anywhere.” She winked at him.

It was the former pirate’s turn to blush, realising she had somehow read his thoughts. “Erm…you’re welcome.”

“Excellent,” said Merlin, clapping his hands, relieved to see his daughter no longer suffering. “Now then, it seems Reul and the ladies have prepared a delicious spread here. Let’s eat!”

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**Earlier the same day – The Swan-Mills mansion**

Emma and Regina had had yet another sleepless night. After Robin left the previous evening, Regina had asked her wife what had happened between the pair of them. Emma refused to discuss it, instead hobbling up the stairs to bed, the magic restraining bracelets still held on both their arms. They had lain in the dark, holding each other as Emma’s ankle throbbed, the swelling still painful.

“Emma, please. What happened down there? What did Robin say to you?”

“Regina, I’ve had a horrible day! I screwed up Killian’s leaving party, I upset Henry and Vi, I got thrown in a police cell, I just found out my reformed wife murdered a good friend of mine and my son saw me pissing in a bucket! So frankly, I just don’t want to talk about it!”

The brunette sighed. “We promised each other no secrets, remember? We’ve been through too much. Emma, I saw something. Tell me what happened! Did he hurt you in some way?”

Emma sighed herself, wanting to avoid the subject but knowing her partner would not let up.

“Not hurt me exactly. I don’t think he meant to. He just, sort of, violated my privacy.”

“He did what?”
“He…he kind of read my mind! I don’t think he meant to, it’s just…he put his hand on my head and I felt all of my life flash through his palm. I know it sounds crazy, right? He seemed as shocked as me, although I could tell from his face he got to see everything. Everything! He definitely read my mind on the Jolly yesterday too. The Blue Fairy wasn’t joking, Gina. He’s powerful now! He’s got magic and he’s got Roland and the girls eating out of his hand. Added to which, my son hates me, and would rather spend time with Rumpel-fuckin-stiltskin than his own family. And now even he’s got magic!”

“Henry does NOT hate you Emma! Whether we like it or not, the imp is also his family, the only living relative on his father’s side. It’s not so unusual he wants to spend time with him. Gold would never hurt him, even if Belle no longer has any influence. But we have to help our son, especially now he has magic too…”

“Which he doesn’t want us to help him with! Gina, I poofed him out of the bar and locked him in a jail cell! He’s angry and I can’t blame him! What kind of fucking mother does that?”

“The kind that loves her child and wants to protect him! Yes Emma, you did something stupid, but Henry WILL forgive you. He always does. He’s just sore…”

“And what about Hood? How do we fix him?” Regina felt the anger in her wife’s voice

“What do you mean, ‘fix him’? Robin would never harm you, or the children, you know that! What are you worried about? He hasn’t threatened you in any way, has he?” Her tone hardened.

“No, of course not. But this isn’t the Robin you knew. He’s, well…”

“He’s the children’s father, Emma. And he’s done nothing wrong!”

“Forget it. Just…just go to sleep!” With that, she pulled back from her, rolling and turning her back. Regina felt more than irritation at her wife’s coldness. She felt anger.

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Neither woman slept much that night, but neither spoke further. The cold shouldering continued till the morning, when Regina woke after a brief snooze to the sound of Honour knocking on the door. “Mummy, can we come in?”

Regina rolled to Emma’s side to find it empty and cold. She'd clearly been gone some time. "Of course, sweetie!” Immediately, Honour & Robyn burst through the door, Honour jumping excitedly on to the bed. “Morning Mummy…where’s Emma?”

“She had to get up early sweetheart. Did you sleep well, Robyn?”

“Yes thanks, Auntie Gina. Papa played with us last night, read us a story then made one up in his head! He was very funny…”

“I’m glad you had a nice time. Well Robyn, we need to get you back to your own mummy this morning. I promised that we would meet her at Granny’s for lunch, so what would you like to do this morning?”

Honour bounced excitedly. “Can we see Papa again? Robyn wants to come too…”

Regina hesitated. She didn’t want to upset them, but she felt, after Emma’s outburst last night, that she was somehow being disloyal by meeting Robin yet again. Especially after last night!
"I don’t think so, honey. Your father'll be busy today, I’m sure. Perhaps a little later in the week.”

The little girls looked crestfallen. “Please mummy? Roland's with him. Why can’t we go too?”

“Roland is…well, he’s a bit older than you, so he’s safer in the forest with John and Will. Maybe another time.”

The sad pouting on their faces made Regina feel guilty as hell. Robyn slipped off the bed. “I have papa back, Auntie! I want to go see him again. Would mummy let me?

“You'll have to ask her. We’ll see. Now, who fancies going to the park and the swings?”

Neither girl answered, turning glum, Honour slipping back off the bed. “No thanks,” she muttered as she turned to leave the room.

“Oh, come on! Why so glum? You’re going to see a lot more of your Papa very soon, I'm sure. Please don’t be sad. Honnie, please come with me? Am I really that boring?"

Honour picked up on her mum’s ‘upset’ voice, even at that age. “I’m sorry, mama. OK, let’s go to the park.”

Regina smiled back at the girls, trying to hide her upset over their reluctance. Henry wasn’t talking to her or Emma, Roland was with John and the men in the woods and now her little girl wanted to be with them! “Thank you, honey. Let’s have breakfast and get ready.”

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**Storybrooke Docks – Same Morning**

David Nolan had always been an early riser. The former Prince Charming had given up his role as a deputy sheriff some years ago, within weeks of Emma being removed by the new Mayor, Albert Spencer. His heart just wasn’t in it. He and Snow had bought a farm near the town boundary and life was relatively good, although he still missed the old role. Now, as he took his usual early morning jog, he decided to take the route through the dockyard, as the early fishing boats came in to harbour.

As he jogged across the jetty, he spotted her, sitting on the bench overlooking the water. Instantly recognisable golden-blonde hair cascading over yet another red leather jacket, she sat hunched forward on the seat, clearly deep in thought. Stopping his run, he walked over, speaking softly so not to alarm her. “Penny for your thoughts?”

The blonde snatched her head up. “Dad! Oh hi...sorry, I was miles away.”

David sat down next to his daughter, wrapping an arm around her shoulder and pulling her into him. “Something wrong, princess?”

Emma half-smiled, looking into her father’s eyes and giving his cheek a little peck before letting herself be pulled in, her head resting on his broad shoulder and chest. She’d never openly admit it, but Emma loved her dad’s hugs and cuddles. He was the strong, silent type, who could calm her during her most anxious times. He could put up with all manner of her shit, of verbal abuse from her wife, of unreasonable behaviour from her mother, with a soft smile and a simple hug. Since they married, David even started to treat Regina in the same way, like a stroppy teenage daughter who just needed love and affection from a father figure. The first time David dragged Regina into his arms, the then Mayor froze the way she always did, panicked, and even threatened him, which Emma found hilarious and adorable. David of course, ignored her protestations and carried on regardless, hauling her wife in for a bear hug whenever he felt like it. After several weeks Regina
finally confessed, after many drinks, and as Emma had long suspected, that she rather liked the unhesitating affection and love her father-in-law provided his difficult and tempestuous daughter-in-law.

As she looked up into her father’s eyes, and it was obvious she’d been crying. “Emma, what is it? What’s wrong? And please don’t just say ‘nothing’! Talk to me!” he said, pulling her in a little tighter as he heard her starting to break.

“Oh Dad. I’ve screwed everything up! I think I’m losing her!” The tears started to flow again. David, true to form, just waited, holding her steady as her sobs continued. He wasn’t going to rush it, knowing that she would eventually calm and tell him, all in good time. What she needed right now was the simple, protective love of her father.

Ten minutes later, Emma did indeed calm. Drying her eyes, she eventually told him about the incident at the Rabbit Hole. Her overreaction; about Henry’s magic and him destroying the station, falling out with Gold, her being locked in the jail and finally her spat with Regina.

“Wow – you’ve had quite the night my love!” he said, kissing her forehead. “Though you know Henry and Regina will understand. Your mother and I have had many spats over the years, but we’ve always forgiven each other, as will you! You two have true love too, don’t forget that.”

“That’s just it dad! Since Robin-fucking-Hood came back, she’s different! I know she’s still in love with him! They were also soulmates, for god’s sake. He gave her a daughter and even bloody well DIED for her! How the hell can I compete with that?”

David thought carefully before choosing his next words. “Emma my darling, I don’t know what to tell you. But I do know that Regina loves you. Really loves you! I’ve seen the way she looks at you and I’ve had enough experience to know that what you have is real. Don’t doubt her, Emma.” He pulled out a handkerchief to wipe her face and now runny nose before silently putting it back in his pocket. “I know Robin’s return was a shock, but I think I know him well enough to believe he would never try to harm you or your relationship with Regina. It’s because he loves her, he just wants her to be happy and I’m sure he’s already realised that is with you! But he has children here Emma, so he isn’t going to up and leave them, and he would be a poor man if he did. My love, I think you should talk directly to Robin and tell him your thoughts. I’m sure he will understand, and stay back from the two of you, provided he has full access to Honour and Roland, And little Robyn of course.”

“That’s just it dad, he already knows my thoughts. He read my mind. Literally!” Emma went on to explain what had happened the previous night with Robin.

“OK. That’s definitely more serious. Blue told Snow and I that he has magic, but I didn’t realise it was that powerful! I’ve heard of this before. Emma, no matter how frustrated you get, you must talk to him! But you mustn’t fight Robin under any circumstances! Do you hear me? If he’s still unsteady with this power, he could seriously hurt you, even if he didn’t mean to. And you need to talk to Blue again. Or even Rumpelstiltskin...”

“I can’t talk to Gold! He’s already threatened me once, and he’s still angry with me about Belle’s son. Last night he said he’d ‘end me’ if I get in the way ever again. My superpower knows he meant every word!”

“Can’t you ask Belle to talk to him?”

“Not anymore. Belle walked out on him once too often. He still blames her, and me, for getting Gideon kidnapped in the first place, so we can’t use her to control him. She doesn’t even have the
dagger any more. He virtually slammed the door in her face. And that’s the man Henry’s turned to, to control his magic!”

“Gold’s his grandfather too. Henry will be the key to sorting this out. He has a way with Gold, unlike anyone since Baelfire. Now, why don’t you come home with me, have some breakfast and we’ll then figure out what to do? Like we always do.” he smiled, pulling her in even closer.

The Saviour slowly nodded. “I’d like that. Love you Dad, you do know that, right?” she said, smiling for the first time that morning. “Indeed, I do. But I love you more!” He whispered, in no rush to move from their seat.

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The morning spent in the park had been pleasant enough, but as Honour and Robyn played on the slide and swings, Regina’s mind kept drifting back to yesterday’s events. Especially Robin. Try as she might she couldn’t get him out of her head, remembering that horrible day he gave his life for her. “Come on girls, time to take Robyn home!” She texted her wife for the fourth time that morning, still receiving no response. “For God’s sake Emma, stop sulking and talk to me!” she muttered.

A short time later, the former Evil Queen felt a powerful wave of magic wash over her, just as she and the girls walked in to the Diner. It was strong - very strong! And she knew from experience, that meant somebody with magic had just entered Storybrooke! She sighed, loudly. “Here we go again!”

Emma, now at her parent’s farmhouse, also felt the wave, while eating a bacon and egg sandwich. She shivered. “Emma, what’s wrong, what is it honey?” said Snow, concerned at her daughter’s sudden violent twitch.

“I don’t know, mum. I think… I think someone has come into town. I’m sensing magic, lots of it!” The annoying thing was that, like Regina, Emma’s magic-restricting bracelet was still in place, preventing her from doing anything else but detect it. Her mother recognised the magic-restricting bangle for what it was. “Emma, why on earth are you wearing that thing?”

“No, Snow!” Charming shouted, a little too forcefully. “I mean it, don’t go there! Belle’s destroyed any influence she had over him. Leave it to our grandson. I’ll go check on the town line and ask around and see who’s here. Emma, I suggest you stay here, and try to call Regina before you leave. Without magic, you may not be safe!”

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Rumplestiltskin, hunched over his desk while working on yet another repair, also felt the magical pulse and immediately recognised what it was, and where it came from. The town line. “Henry? I need to go check on something. Mind the store, please?”

“Sure Grandpa. Something wrong?” The young man saw the nervousness within the man.

“I don’t know for sure, but I think we have an unwelcome visitor. I’ll be back…” A silver-grey cloud quickly enveloped him and within seconds the Dark One was gone, leaving a mystified grandson. Moments later, Rumple apparated at almost the exact spot where Merlin and his daughter had disapparated only minutes ago, leaving a frustrated Dark One trying to identify the last traces of magic left behind. “Damn!”
After an excellent lunch in the convent gardens, Merlin sat back in his chair. “My goodness Reul, I haven’t eaten so well in ages! I am replete. Thank you so much, and for the excellent company too. Let me get settled in and Anna and I will return the compliment!”

“You’re very welcome, my Lor…Merlin. We’re just so honoured to have you amongst us again. I can’t remember when we…when we…sorry, did you say, ‘settled in’? Are you staying with us for a while?”

The other fairies gasped. Merlin was more than a famous name amongst the Fae. He was the most powerful and famous sorcerer of all time. He had saved their entire species centuries before. Nearly two thousand years old, this seemingly middle-aged man in front of them, represented the peak of heroism. Of loyalty to the point of death. Merlin’s deeds in Camelot were well known to humans. But the fairies knew of his other lives. His ability to travel through time correcting misdeeds. His willingness to sacrifice himself for all, his encyclopaedic knowledge of magic. Merlin was Zeus’s standard bearer, having been sent back to earth numerous times to right wrongs. He was a god, surely? Or failing that, a demi-god. All the more reason fairies adored him.

“Well yes, that’s my intention. Annabelle here had a major accident a few weeks ago, she’s healed but she needs time to recover fully.” He beamed a proud smile at his daughter, who rolled her eyes at him. “Anna has magic, like her brother and sisters, but as we all mostly live in a world without magic, it is good to come somewhere like Storybrooke and just ‘recharge’, remind ourselves what we are. She’ll fully heal quicker here, so when I got your call to help young Robin and Killian here, we decided to also take a little break, perhaps a month or two, let her rest up before we head back. If you don’t mind, that is?”

“My Lord…I’m…overwhelmed! The Blue Fairy started to fawn. “We would be truly honoured…”.

“Nonsense. The honour is mine. We’re among friends.”

Annabelle stepped forward. “I think I’m going to like it here. Perhaps I could visit your hospital too, like a sort of ‘busman’s holiday’?” she smirked.

‘Hospital? Busman? I don’t understand.” Killian seemed confused, bringing a glorious smile from the beauty.

“She’s a doctor, Mr. Jones.” Blue explained. “In their world, Anna is Doctor Annabelle Sage, and her father is Professor Sir Merlin Sage, royal surgeon, knighted by the Queen of England herself!”

“Sir Merlin? Then I am indeed honoured to meet a real-life Knight of the Realm.” He bowed courteously, remembering good form from his time in His Majesty’s Royal Navy. “And perhaps ‘Lady’ Annabelle?”

The girl laughed softly. “No, it doesn’t work like that anymore, Killian. Only the wife gets the title!”

“And sadly,” Merlin interrupted, “Anna’s mother passed away some years ago.”

“I’m sorry to hear it. Seeing your daughter’s beauty, I’m sure she was a goddess to behold.”

“She was indeed. I miss her terribly but fortunately, I still have four children to remind me of her.” Annabelle placed a loving hand on her father’s in comfort, with a sad smile. He sighed, then rallied. “Anyway, to business! Blue, you asked me to teach these two reprobates a few things about magic?”

Merlin smiled at the men, a twinkle in his eye. Before she could respond, Robin stepped forward.
"Merlin, I’m very grateful for any help you can give me, though I’m not sure I have all this ‘power’ everyone talks about! I’m seeing things, hearing everyone else’s thoughts, their history even. I’m confused. Help?"

"Don’t worry about it, Lord Locksley,” the Sorcerer assured, “a few hours and we’ll soon straighten you out.”

"‘Lord’ Locksley?” Killian butt in, smirking. “Surely our renowned thief isn’t also part of the aristocracy?”

“Indeed, he is, Captain. The Locksley family go back a long way, through to King Richard the Lionheart, in fact! One of this man’s forebears even had an ‘affiliation’ with Richard’s Queen, the fair Berengaria. As we now know, the King preferred men, particularly King Philip of France, so we must assume Richard had no issue with it, as the family were rewarded for their bravery and loyalty. Robin of Locksley is actually a direct, albeit illegitimate, descendant of Berengia. It could be argued he has more claim to the English throne then the current holders!”

Jones roared with laughter. “I knew it! Rob, you old dog, I always knew that old supercilious, superior attitude of yours came from somewhere! I should have guessed. Well, well, well, we’re in the presence of royalty. I bow to you, my liege!” He gave Robin a mocking bow, grinning widely.

“Cut it out, pirate,” he returned, without malice. “I don’t care who my ancestors were, or who they slept with. I’m no royal! Despite my feelings for Regina, I hate the whole concept of royalty. All of that self-important, self-serving crap that comes with it. Ludicrous ceremonies, honours and titles made up to keep certain people in top jobs to protect their position. It’s a nonsense. They all collapse in the end...”

Merlin chuckled. “Personally, I agree with you. It’s one of many reasons I choose to live in a non-magical world. Plus, having magical powers in additional to nonsensical hereditary ones, without some sort of control, gives you a very unfair advantage over others. It goes to your head. You start to believe you are wiser than your fellow human beings, then you start to control them without their permission. Then start to harm those who disagree with you. Eventually you start to take lives, including innocent ones, while justifying to yourself why it needs to be done. Magic leads to madness, then darkness if there isn’t some means of controlling it!”

“That’s why you live in New York?” queried Robin, “To escape the magic? To avoid going mad with power?”

“Not quite, but you’re close. We actually live mostly in London in England. I chose a career in medicine. I have a surgery in New York for three months of the year, and travel another three. I find it helps keep me ‘grounded’, as they say. I come to lands such as Storybrooke to ‘recharge my magical batteries’ from time to time. Anna and her brother and sisters grew up there, though they all possess certain powers too. So, coming here is almost like a health trip for us.”

“I’m confused,” said Robin, “Zeus gave Killian and I some ‘powers’. Blue has been enormously kind and understanding helping us, though apparently, I have some higher level of magic, which I need more help with? Apart from an annoying ability to overhear people’s thoughts, and read their memories, whether I want to or not, I can’t seem to tell the difference.”

The old sorcerer smiled benevolently on the younger man. “So impatient, Mr. Locksley…Robin…that’s because we haven’t removed the control Zeus also set upon you! He knew that gaining this strength would be awkward at first, and he wanted one of us to be with you when it happened.”

Merlin looked to Blue and the fairies. “Ladies, what say we remove his chains and let our thief soar?”
Ruby lowered herself to Mulan’s ear and whispered, “Chains? Soar? What’s he talking about?”

“I think he means Robin’s magic. Merlin’s about to fully release it for him. To turn it on!”

Merlin took Robin’s hands in his own, closing his eyes. “Relax. Just leave the rest to me. There may be a bit of swirling, lights and a little dizziness, but just enjoy the show!” Robin closed his eyes. A moment later, piercing golden light started to grow from somewhere behind his eyeballs. The light seemed to coil around itself, warmth spreading down and throughout his body, leading to a tingling sensation. Then a feeling of overwhelming…power…energy. “Holy Fuck! Does…does it always feel like that?” he said, opening his eyes as so many new senses assailed him. The surrounding fairies also sensed the change. Tink brought her hands to her mouth as she felt the shock wave of the released magic. Blue merely smirked, wide eyed, having seen this release once before.

Merlin chuckled. “At first, but don’t worry. I’m now going to teach you to control it. I’m going to show you powers you cannot imagine!”

“You mean the sort of magic Regina and Emma can do? Or even Rumplestiltskin?”

“Even more so, my new magical friend! That’s why you need help. Zeus didn’t give you this ability for nothing. He has plans for you! There will be major battles to fight. He knows there will be challenges ahead for you…”

Robin groaned. This must be how Emma feels, everyone always expecting her to act as their saviour! “Don’t tell me. Magic always comes at a price, right?”

“Well…sometimes, though when you are truly doing something for the genuine benefit of others, the gods seem to know and expect no payment.”

He was too bewildered to argue; just grateful these people were there to help. Merlin took his pause to turn now to Killian. “Now Mr. Jones, I sense the ruler of Olympus also gave you some powers?”

“So I believe.” Killian muttered, “Though unlike my archer friend here, I don’t seem to be reading minds. Moving rockery seems to be all I’m good for! Though is shouldn’t be churlish. I do have a nice new left hand, my beautiful ship restored and an ability to make my own coin. So, for that I am very grateful…”

“Indeed, you should! Though you also have some additional powers you hold I need to release. Not quite the same as Locksley’s here, but powerful, nonetheless. Now, let’s release them and see what we have!”

With that, Merlin moved across to take the former pirate's hands in his own, closed his eyes and cast the release spell.
The Diner

The release of Robin Locksley’s magical powers wasn’t just felt by the fairies. Coming a good hour, at least, since the first wave of energy, Regina now felt another, equally strong wave. *Powerful, yet somehow…familiar.* Like a hot hair dryer blowing over her body. She now sat in Granny’s Diner, her sister opposite and their daughters to their sides. From the stunned expression on Zelena’s face, she’d clearly felt it too!

“You felt that, right?” said the red-head.

Before Regina could reply, her daughter piped up. “Mamma, what was that?”

Regina looked at Honour’s surprised expression, realising for the first time the implication of her four-year-old’s little comment. Zelena picked up on it too. *She has magic! Which means she’s the product of True Love!* Little Robyn seemed oblivious to the sensation.

“Not sure, darling. Don’t worry about it,” she said, looking nervously to her sister.

“Gina, You better speak to Emma! Something’s happened! You think Gold’s up to something?”

Zelena remembered Rumplestiltskin’s vow to kill her if she ever entered his shop. Only Henry’s direct intervention with his grandfather had made the Dark One finally agree to allow the former Wicked Witch to remain alive, solely because of Robyn’s existence. Henry had argued that his own father, Baelfire, would frown on the killing of a mother, despite that same woman being ultimately responsible for his own death. *Odd, seeing as in his darkest moments, Henry wanted to kill her himself for taking his father away.*

“I’ve tried. She’s upset with me.” The brunette whispered. She picked her phone up and texted again.

*Regina:*  
*Emma, please? Call me. Something’s wrong!*

“Regina, that first wave, an hour ago. It felt somehow, *familiar.* Like I’ve come across it before!”
“I know what you mean. Someone’s arrived in Storybrooke. Someone powerful. But I need to know Emma’s safe, before I find out what’s going on. I also need to get Roland back from Little John this afternoon.”

“What about Henry? Where’s he?”

At the mention of her eldest, Regina seemed crestfallen. “It’s…difficult…he’s…not talking to us.”

Regina recounted to her sister the events of the previous day, trying to hold back her emotions. *God, hadn’t she cried enough yesterday?* The redhead listened intently before summarising her sister’s predicament. “So Sis, let me get this right. Your eldest isn’t talking to you because Emma tore him out of a nightclub and put him in jail! He got angry, and now his magic’s come in, and he’s staying with Gold. *We both know how that can turn out!* The imp has cuffed you both, until he sees fit to release you. I know how that feels! He threatened to murder blondie if she so much as sets foot near his shop. Well that’s two of us then! You upset Emma, so she’s ignoring you; the Thief, and father to our children, now has magic. He kissed you, then read Emma’s mind. *How the hell did he learn to do that?* Roland’s staying put with his father,” she stopped to look down at her little dimpled redhead daughter, mouth now happily smeared in chocolate ice-cream and oblivious to the adults’ conversation. “And finally,” she said, now almost whispering, “This pair never seem to shut up about seeing him again and it seems as though yours has magic too. Apart from that, everything’s fine and dandy!”

It was then the little blonde piped up. “Mamma, where’s papa?” she said looking around the diner. Regina had seemed oblivious to her a moment ago. “Um…he’s not here sweetie! Perhaps later?”

“But I felt him! I smelt him…he’s here!”

The two sisters looked to each other, goggle-eyed, as realisation dawned. “Regina, I thought that wave was familiar. Something about it. It must have…must have been…”

“Robin!”

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**The Charming’s Farm**

When Regina felt the second wave, Emma felt it too, and flinched as a warm, earthy-smelling wave swept over here. The second major wave in less than an hour. *Something strong. Something dangerous!*

David saw her flinch. “What’s wrong?” He stepped over and gently laid a hand on her shoulder. “That’s the second time! Emma, talk to me please. What is it?”

“I don’t know. I felt something, some sort of magic pulse. You’re right, I felt another one an hour ago. Somebody’s crossed the town line.” For the first time since morning, she thought of her family, groaning when she realised she’d left her phone off for the entire morning after she stormed out.

“Dad…sorry, but I need to go make sure Gina’s OK! With that, she raced out of the Charming flat, just as his phone started to ring.

can’t be, he’s dead!”

As Mulan excitedly started to fill in the details; about Merlin and his daughter, then Robin & Killian’s newly acquired magical skills, Charming’s thought went back to Emma’s breakdown earlier that day. It felt odd to him that the entire town and the fairies seemed to have rallied around the newly returned men, completely bypassing Emma and Regina, or himself for that matter. *After everything they had done for them.* “Emma’s just left, but she switched her phone back on. Send her a text, let her know what’s happened, and tell her I’m going across to the convent. I’ll call Regina.”

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Emma’s phone came back online. *What the hell were you doing, switching it off after storming out on her! You’re such a fucking child, Swan!* She cussed herself. Numerous texts came through from her wife. Initially angry, then becoming increasingly concerned till she read the last :-

*Regina:*  
*Emma, just call me! Something’s wrong!*

She looked down at her wrist, at the magical cuff stopping her from just poofing over there; so she hit the first number in the phone’s memory. Her wife picked up almost immediately.

“Where the hell are you? I’ve been worried sick!” Regina didn’t sound so much angry, as frightened.

“I’m sorry! I’ll explain. Where are you? Do you still have the cuff on?”

“Yes. The Imp said ‘24 hours’ and you know the little shit will stick to it! I’m at the Diner with Zee and the girls. Just get here!”

Ten minutes later, after racing across town while taking a call from Mulan, she ran into the diner, slamming the front door behind her as she caught site of her wife, getting up to meet her. The two women stood facing each other, almost nose to nose and both looking sullen. Emma frowned, guilt in her eyes. “I’m so sorry!” Tears started to form, reflected in her wife’s face. Regina understood completely.

“Don’t! Just come here.” Regina lifted her arms, draping them around her wife’s neck and shoulder. The time had long passed when either woman felt awkward showing each other affection in public. Emma just pulled herself into Regina’s embrace, bringing her arms around her. The pair held each other tightly, quietly, with tears threatening and neither intending to let go. “I’ve been an asshole. Please don’t leave me?” Emma whispered, shocking Regina, who pulled her head back to look at the blonde, though her arms never left their hold.

“Emma, that is *never* going to happen!” She whispered back, before pulling Emma’s open mouth directly on to her own in a fierce kiss, oblivious to other diners, who sat agog at the display.

“Check please for the Scissor Sisters!” yelled Zelena.

“Ladies, there’s other diners present! Please?” Dorothy’s voice came from behind the counter. She may have a girlfriend herself, but she knew you didn’t kiss someone like that in public. Simple courtesy to others applied. However the two women seemed oblivious to those around them.

“My love, please don’t talk like that. I will never leave you, you know that! We’ll get through this… somehow.”

“Gina, what about Robin? You can’t deny what you feel for him! I spoke to Tink...” she almost whimpered.
“Emma, it’s complicated, but I know Robin! He would never do anything to…”

“He read my mind, Gina!” the blonde interrupted. “Last night. He saw my life…my emotions…my feelings…us! He saw everything! I saw it flash by…to him. He…he knows even more about me than you do! I feel like I’ve been…invaded somehow. Sort of mentally…I don’t know…raped!”

“Then talk to him Emma! Tell him how you feel. Robin’s not a bad person, he’s just not in control. I’m sure he wouldn’t have done it deliberately. He’s as freaked out by this as we are…”

Emma harrumphed in grudging acceptance. “Might also explain why Merlin’s here!”

“Merlin? What…he’s dead! We saw him die!”

“Apparently not. Mulan says he’s with Robin at the convent right now. I’d poof straight over there, but these fucking bracelets…” The pair broke apart to look at the small wrist bands stopping their magic.

“Well, then how about we do it the way we’re supposed to?”

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It took over an hour for the pair to walk back home, take the Mercedes and drive over to the convent. As they pulled in to the little car park at the side, Emma spotted a cluster of people gathered in a circle at the far side of the front lawn. As they parked, Regina’s mobile started to ring. Zelena, her voice blaring out loud over the hands-free.

“Hello, dick heads! Missing anything?”

It was then both women’s eyes widened, realising what they’d just done. “Honour!”

“Well done for remembering you have a daughter, sis! You two idiots walked out without even saying goodbye to them! Or me. Thanks for that! You just trying to lose your children one by one or something? Henry yesterday, Honnie today. Though never mind, I guess I’ll babysit her the rest of the day then?”

Regina felt thoroughly ashamed, cringing at her sister’s harsh tone, which was entirely justified. “Zee, I’m sorry! With everything that’s been going on, I just…just…” There was no excuse.

“Just save it! I heard it before you took off. You’re going to the convent to see Merlin and Forest Boy. Just don’t let your wife piss him off, like she did the imp yesterday. If the blue moth was right, your old flame’s powers are huge. He could burn your missus to a crisp if he loses it!”

“Noted. We just need to talk to him. And Merlin and find out what’s going on!”

Two minutes later and Mrs. & Mrs. Swan-Mills were walking from the car park to the small gathering. Ballroom music seemed to be playing loudly from a portable radio on a nearby table, with six couples dancing in formation while an elegant middle-aged, grey-haired man seemed to be orchestrating them. Emma & Regina looked at each other, bewildered.

What the hell was going on?

Getting closer, Emma recognised five of the six women, each partnered with a sharp-suited man, in identical clothing. Reul Ghorm, Tinker Bell, Nova, Mulan and Ruby were all dressed in period dresses, similar to what she and Regina had worn in King Arthur’s Camelot court. Mulan, wearing a dress? Dancing? What the fuck was going on?

Next to an unusually laughing Blue Fairy, danced a tall, curvy, long haired blonde woman she
didn’t recognise. She was extremely beautiful and graceful and radiated magic. Quite powerful magic.

It was only when she looked to see who Mulan’s male partner was, she heard Regina gasp loudly. She looked up to see Robin, dressed in similar period male formal dress, holding the smiling warrior’s hand as she circled below it in a delicate twirl.

Yet that wasn’t the reason the former mayor gasped. Looking across, she saw that each woman was dancing with an identical Robin Hood! Five identical Robin Hoods!

Regina jaw slackened, not believing what she was seeing. Five Robins? For Emma, the biggest shock was seeing who the beautiful blonde was dancing with. Killian?

Looking to the far left, Emma saw a sixth Robin Hood! This one was sitting at a nearby table with his eyes closed, hand to his brow, deep in concentration, while appearing to be directed by the grey-haired man, standing behind him with his hands resting on the seated Robin’s shoulders, talking to him.

“Bravo, Robin,” he said, as the music came to an end. “A fine display! Remember, you need to release them to respond individually to their partner. Focus on their independent sights and smells, then release them by thinking of a cord between all of you being cut, as we discussed. Now open your eyes.”

Robin gazed in wonder at the sight before him. Under Merlin’s tuition, he had duplicated himself five times, giving each clone an ability to respond and speak to their dance partner individually. He laughed as he thought about the absurd situation. Robin imagined it would take years to master the skills Merlin had spoken of. However, by allowing the Sorcerer to ‘mind-meld’ with him, as he called it, Merlin had managed to pass on centuries worth of magical skills in a matter of minutes. And now Robin was exercising those skills.

“Merlin, this is truly bizarre! The feeling, the sensations running through me are just...just...astonishing!” he sounded as though he was high on drugs.

Emma stood transfixed as they watched the bewildering scene. This was strong magic! As the music came to an end, each woman curtseyed to her respective dance partner and she could hear the Robin Hood dancing with Mulan, as he bowed in response. “Moo, that was so much fun! Anybody would be privileged to have you as their dance partner. We have to do something like this at your wedding!” The warrior, resplendent in an eggshell-blue ball gown, smiled warmly at him. “I’d like that. Rob, I’ve never even worn anything like this before! Big ball gowns are normally Rory’s thing…”

Regina and her wife watched in disbelief as each Robin paid similar courtesies to each of their partners, all seeming to act independent of one other. Emma assumed the sitting archer was the real thing. Walking closer to the two men, she heard some of the instructions given by the grey-haired man.

“Excellent work! Now finally, picture your hands taking those silver ropes separating your other selves. Picture drawing them in toward you and absorbing them into your body.”

The five duplicate Robin’s, each bidding farewell to their dance partner, seemed to become transparent, disappearing in the clear air, to leave the one sitting Outlaw. Their dance partners ball gowns transformed back to the clothes they arrived in. “Shame, I was enjoying that!” said Ruby, chuckling.
Robin opened his eyes again as a small round of applause broke out. He smiled at the success of the spell, standing up to join everyone. That’s when he noticed Regina and Emma, looking at him in astonishment. He nodded to them, a little embarrassment showing in his reddening cheeks.

Unusually, Regina was speechless. She’d just witnessed magic she had only ever heard of! A separation of the physical body into multiple hosts, independent of each other? It had been spoken of by Rumple, but she never saw him perform it. Now here was her former lover, her soul mate, showing powers way beyond her own. Emma also stood transfixed, as she felt the strong magical field coming from them. Were they in any danger?

“Emma? Is that you?” said the grey-haired magic man, as he walked across to face her. She felt her wife’s hold on her arm tighten significantly. “Sorry, do I know you?”

He laughed in response. “Yes, Killian had the same problem! This is one of my true forms, but we’ve met before, although the time I looked like this….” In a flash, his face and body were transformed into a darker skinned, younger looking man with the same English accent. “Recognise me know?”

“You really are Merlin!” You’re dead!”

“Hmm…well, only a form of me. As you can see, I’m very much alive and kicking! This will take a bit of explaining…” he transformed himself back to the middle-aged man. “Come. Sit with me. You too, Regina.”

But Regina wasn’t listening. She was too busy watching the beautiful blonde woman who had been dancing with the pirate, approach Robin excitedly, planting a kiss on his cheek while giving him a hug. His face lit up in equal excitement, as she gabbled happily to him. She caught part of the conversation.

“Oh well done! Daddy said you’d be a quick learn. Apart from him, I’ve never met a Force Ten Mage before, never mind a brand new one! How do you feel?”

“Like I’m ready to run a marathon, Anna! I’ve never felt so much energy. I still can’t believe this is all real. Your father is an astonishing man. I’m still not sure about learning by that ‘mind-meld’ thing though!”

“Yes, that gets a little bit weird, doesn’t it? But it helps you learn quickly. Dad lives most of the time in the non-magical world, so he gets a bit ‘enthusiastic’ when he gets his magic back! He taught me that ‘seer’ future gazing stuff when we were in Glastonbury last year. That was just fucking weird! My brother and sisters have got it too. Dad just thinks we should pick things up gradually. He’s very much a believer in ‘too much magic makes you go mad.”

Robin laughed, having been close to magicians, both good and bad. “He has a point! Tell me about your siblings? You’re a big family, I take it?”

“I’ve two older sisters, Rosalind and Celia. I think mum and dad were going through a Shakespearean thing at one time. Rosie’s a lawyer, and a part time teacher at a school back home. She’s the bossy one. Cee is something in IT, doing something I still don’t quite understand. She’s the loud one. Then there’s my brother Charles, or Charlie. He’s an author and teacher too, of sorts. He teaches handicapped children how to play music. He’s the intense one. His magic is very strong, so he tends to wear his own cuff, by choice, from time to time. We’re a strange bunch but close, though.”

“And your mother? Sorry, I don’t mean to pry. Ignore that.” Robin knew how loss could be painful.
“Mum died about ten years ago. Dad took it real hard. She didn’t have magic, but she was definitely one of dad’s true loves in our world. She came from New York. He met her when he was working in a hospital there.”

“I’m sorry. I know how painful loss can be. I have a son, Roland. He doesn’t even remember his mother, Marian. I’ve just missed the last five years of his life. I came back from the Underworld two days ago, but it was only three weeks down there…” Robin’s brow furrowed.

“That’s harsh. But he’s ok, now?”

“Yes, thank goodness. My soul…well, my former…” Robin hesitated. “Um, well someone very important to me has looked after him these past five years. He seems to have had a good life so far. I have two little girls up here, who I’m also only getting to know since I’ve been back. It’s a bit complicated…”

Regina stood listening intently to their conversation. This stunningly beautiful woman who seemed more than interested in Robin. Her stomach knotted at the angst in his voice. Yet she felt something inside her as she listened. There was clearly a burgeoning friendship between these two, as they continued to talk about their lives. Regina felt jealous. Who is she? Why is she still holding on to Robin? My Robin! But, he’s not even mine anymore. Why do I care? Although…

Robin, understanding his new-found powers a little more, could actually hear Regina in his mind. He looked across to his former brunette lover. Feeling her anxiety, he stepped back from Anna, taking her hand and bringing her to face the brunette. “Anna, I’d like you to meet Regina. She's my daughter, Honour's, mother. Gina, this is Annabelle Sage, Merlin’s daughter. She’ll be staying with us at the convent for a little while, before she goes back to New York. She’s convalescing from a car accident.”

Anna offered her hand for the brunette to shake. “I’m honoured to meet you, Regina. Dad told me a little about you. So, you and Robin have a daughter? How lovely. I really want children of my own, some day.”

Regina took the proffered hand and looked her in the eyes. Late-twenties, she guessed, the blonde was not only stunning and clearly intelligent, but had a good deal of magic within her. Clearly a product of Merlin and a true love! she guessed. However, she hesitated in responding, Robin sensing her difficulty.

“It’s nice to meet you too, Miss Sage. Yes, Honour’s five…”

“Regina and I aren’t together any more, Anna,” said Robin, information Regina thought unnecessary. “After I died, she married Emma Swan, the blonde woman over there, while I was in the Underworld. Honour lives with them now…”

Regina felt hurt by the explanation, even though it was nothing but the truth. “May I ask how you actually got through the boundary to get here?”

Anna smirked, sensing the tension between the two of them. “Oh, magic boundaries don’t really affect dad! Nor Robin now, as it happens. I don’t travel to magical lands outside the UK very often. You can come to New York or London to see us sometime!”

“I’d like that,” said Robin. “I’d love to take all the children to see England sometime. I think I need a change of scene…”

Again, Regina felt slighted. She knew he was more than entitled to spend time with all three of his
children, but the confidence with which he spoke seemed different. This Robin was different, though she still felt that strong pull, and a feeling of jealousy that he seemed to be getting on so well with this woman.

“Well, we’ll see! Honour has never been outside of Storybrooke yet. All the more reason to wait until…”

“Honour is our child, Regina!” Robin emphasised, quietly but firmly, his eyes a little colder. “We both have a say in her life now!” As he said it, Emma had just joined her wife, and listened to the slightly heated exchange. She noticed the familiarity between Robin and Merlin’s daughter, plus his irritated tone as he spoke. She held back a small grin. Perhaps it could play to her advantage!

“Where’s Honour, Regina?” asked Robin.

“He’s with Zelena,” she saw him stiffen at the mere mention of her sister. “She and Robyn went home. I’ll see them later…”

“I’d like to come too, if it’s alright with you? I promised to finish her bedtime story. If she’s with Robyn that’s even better. I could come over and…”

“She needs her rest, Robin.” Emma stepped in for the first time. “You can see her another time…”

He glowered, the first time any hint of anger passed his face. “Forgive me, Emma, but this isn’t your decision! I’ve been away from my children for the last five years. I fully intend to see them. Today.”

Now her own anger rose. “Look, Hood, you don’t just come in here and expect to take over!”

The dismissive tone of the blonde, and the use of his nickname, infuriated him. “Take over? What the hell are you talking about? I am their father! Roland, Honour and Robyn’s father! I’ve just spent five years away from them, picking up shit in the Underworld, as a direct result of backing YOU up on a rescue mission! You may be a good woman, Emma, but in this you have no say! You married Regina. I accept that, and I have already said I will not interfere with your lives.” His voice turned to steel. "But know this. You will NOT interfere in any way when it comes to MY contact with MY children!"

Emma bristled, feeling the suppressed anger washing off him. And his magic! She looked deep into his darkened eyes. Shit, he looked angry and...hurt! Regina had stayed silent during the exchange, placing both hands on her wife’s arm to calm her. “It’s OK, Emma; Robin should see them! He has every right…”

Emma realised, once again, she’d gone too far, letting her emotions and bitterness towards her wife’s former lover get the better of her. “Sorry! Of course, you have the right to see them. It’s just that…”

“It’s OK,” he calmed just as quickly, “I get it. I know this is difficult for you…”

The pair faced each other, the brief anger turning to sadness at the situation. He moved closer and she seemed to freeze as his eyes pierced into hers

“No! Now...please? This can’t drag on...” She nodded in response, then Robin waved his arm to the right encouraging her toward the edge of the small lake nearby. “Let’s sit over there.” With a small
flick of his eyes a large rug appeared on the lawn, far enough away from prying ears, even Ruby’s. The pair walked away from the group in silence. When they reached the rug, she sat, crossing her legs, with her head down and avoiding eye contact. Robin sat opposite, unsure how to start; so Emma did it for him.

“You saw everything!” she started. “My life. My thoughts. Everything I am!” Her voice was flat, trying to keep her emotions in check.

“Yes, though you know it was unintentional...”

“You violated me!”

“I can only apologise. Remember, it only happened when I touched your brow. I was concerned about your injury, Emma, nothing more. Zeus gave me some powers I wasn’t even aware of and frankly, it feels like more of a curse than a gift. Merlin’s only just shown me how to turn it off, and how to stop reading thoughts accidentally.”

“Can you imagine what it’s like, Robin?” Emma didn’t appear to have heard him. “To know that you know everything I’ve ever done? Because now you were there too! Everything! My sh*t childhood; going to prison; getting pregnant. Henry. My bloody sex life, for god’s sake!”

It was Robin’s turn to look down, feeling guilty. “Again, I regret that. And I apologise-”

“I DON’T WANT YOUR FUCKING APOLOGIES!” she screamed. It was then she noticed that the group on the lawn never even looked at them, apart from Regina, who never took her eyes off the pair.

Robin saw where the blonde was looking, holding back the urge to scan her mind. Thank you for that, Merlin.

“I’ve put a soundproofing spell around us,” he explained.

“What, out in the open? How?”

“Merlin showed me. It’s like an invisible dome. We can walk in and out but within it no one can hear us.”

Emma’s brow raised. “How did you get to learn to read minds and create bloody spells so quickly?”

“Again, Merlin passed his knowledge, or at least the relevant bits, to me through his thoughts. Like a very condensed bunch of lessons, directly into my mind. I seem to have scanned hundreds of years worth...”

“So now what? You know everything! Your children live in my house; my own son hates me; my wife is still in love with you; you now have magic; more magic then me, it seems! What now Robin? Do I just up and go? Do I just give in and walk away? Leave Regina?”

“Of course not! Emma, I’ve told you several times I will NOT come between you and Regina. Yes, I love her, but she loves you, and I want her to be happy. I know you hate me and wish I was still dead, but I’ve children here! So, I’m not going anywhere, and neither are you. We’ll find a way to manage this. Somehow.”

“I don’t hate you. I hate what you are! So fucking perfect, everyone’s hero! Gina loves you, I know that. You’ve probably listened to her thoughts, too!”
“Yesterday, yes. I heard everybody’s thoughts, not just yours. As I said, I couldn’t stop it!”

“How would you like it if I knew everything about you, huh? About you and Marion? Or should that be Zelena? If I knew what you were like in bed with them? Would you feel invaded? I’d like to read your mind, so you have some idea! But no, perfect easy life for you, the perfect Robin fucking Hood!”

At the mention of his first wife, something clicked in Robin, his anger rising again. “You want that? Fine! Read my bloody perfect, easy life! See for yourself!” Then without warning, he pulled Emma’s right hand out of her lap and slapped it on the centre of her forehead, willing his memories to come.

The flood of brilliant light that flashed across her eyes made her breath hitch. Daylight fell away, to be replaced by images and sounds racing by. Images of a young boy in a small castle. Images of beatings by a strict father. Images of a young man being dragooned in to the King’s army, against his will. Images of training as an archer and swordsman. Images of the man being told of his father’s death. Of his mother’s death. The loss of his sister, kidnapped and held to ransom. Images of his escape from the army, his near starvation. Images of him helping the poor and destitute in the forest. Of creating a band of brothers to help him in his fight to stop the poor starving to death by stealing from the rich to feed them. Of Marion, of falling in love and their wedding in the forest. Their physical intimacy was overwhelming, including several episodes with a younger girl! Of Marian giving birth to a little boy. The tragedy on hearing the news of her death at the hands of the Evil Queen. Of meeting the same transformed, beautiful brunette years later. Of their romance. Then onto his time in Storybrooke after the curse. Of rekindling their romance. Of Marion’s brief return from death, only to be cruelly shot away when the Wicked Witch was revealed to have killed her. Of his return to Storybrooke and his True Love, His travels in the Underworld and eventual murder at the hands of Hades. His time in the Underworld with King Arthur and Killian, and his final return thanks to Zeus.

Hundreds of thousands of visions, all including the sounds, feelings, pain, trauma. Including the pain of his last two days. A whole life flashed through her mind in a matter of moments.

Emma’s hand fell away from his head as she reeled in shock. Slowly opening her eyes, Emma now saw the man before her, having witnessed his life completely.

“I’m sorry…I had no idea,” she mumbled as he leaned across to take her hand.

“It’s OK. I thought under the circumstances, as you felt I ‘violated’ you, you should at least have the chance to ‘violate’ me!”

Her feelings of anger were now replaced with overwhelming sadness. Robin slowly stood, offering his other hand to help the blonde stand. As she did, she lifted her face to him and he could see several tears raining down her cheeks, eyes red.

“Hey, it wasn’t so bad. I survived!”

Surprisingly, Emma raised her arms up and around his neck, pulling him into a hug. He understood, having felt the pain of her memories yesterday. His arms went around her lower back and they held each other quietly. The pair remained gently entwined, comforting each other, for several minutes.

The gathering on the lawn remained focused on Merlin and his daughter, as Killian performed several new tricks with his magic, and the pair entertained them with stories. However, Regina couldn’t take her eyes off whatever was going on between her wife and former lover. Robin had seemed to be doing most of the talking, Emma with her head down. Then she saw her yell at him, cheeks bright red and anger obvious. However, no noise came. Clearly a spell was in place. But a silencing charm
in the open? *She’d never seen that before.*

She saw how Robin remained calm, until Emma said something that riled him. Regina was alarmed when he picked up her hand and slapped it on his head! Feeling the need to rush over as Emma sat stunned, the brunette felt a hand wrap around her upper arm. Snapping her head around, she immediately encountered the warm, twinkling eyes of Merlin. “Everything’s OK, Mrs. Swan-Mills. They need this.”

“What? How do you know what’s going on?” She realised the answer was obvious. *He’s the Sorcerer!*

“They’re healing each other! They’re learning to come to terms with each other. For your benefit!”

She raised an eyebrow, glaring at him. “You read their minds as well?”

“Yes, but not this time. I know where your all your paths go…” He continued that annoying smug grin.

Regina had forgotten about Merlin’s powers, but standing so close to him she could now sense the enormously strong aura surrounding him. “You still time travel? You can foresee the future?”

“I can but It’s dangerous, so I use it very selectively. Usually I just foresee lives and events.”

“You know what will happen to all of us?”

“Mostly. Obviously, I cannot discuss anything relating to your futures specifically; but I can tell you that you will achieve happiness Regina, in a most unexpected way. And those two over there will always be a critical part of it,” he said glancing across them. It was at that point she saw Robin pull Emma slowly to her feet.

Seeing Emma hug Robin was a surprise. Seeing Robin respond in kind by hugging her back was an even bigger one. Watching the pair continue to remain still and entwined really threw her. She could see it was comfort, rather than intimacy, but it still left her feeling confused. Even slightly jealous.

Robin stepped back, one side of his shirt soaked in tears. “We should head back. Your wife's going to be worried.” He smirked, relieved when she smiled back. “Yeah. This is going to look odd?”

Linking her arm with the Outlaw’s, they started back up the incline from the lake back up to the rest of the party.

Regina watched them approach, arm in arm. *They appeared to be red-eyed but smiling.*

Regina felt unsure of herself. “Merlin - what skills, over mine and Emma’s, does Robin now possess?”

Merlin smiled. “Do I detect envy, your Majesty? I thought that was your sister’s area of expertise?”

“I’m just curious! I want to know what you’ve done to him.”

“Nothing. I’ve merely released everything that’s now in there. Well, almost everything…”

“The blue moth yesterday mentioned that Robin’s something called a ‘Stage Ten Mage’ now? I’ve never heard that term. What is it? Is he on a par with Rumpelstiltskin? Are we going to have problems?”

“Quite the opposite! Robin has magic with a clean slate. It’s hard to compare light and dark magic,
although if you did, Rumplestiltskin is probably a nine. For example, he can’t scan minds or time-travel.”

“I knew about the mind scanning but Robin can time travel?!” Her eyes flared in wonder and the Sorcerer gave a small nod. "But that’s impossible without…” The woman’s mind went back to all the problems the heroes faced when her sister succeeded in travelling back in time.

“It’s the most powerful of all magical abilities after true love, and the one thing left to teach him! As for reading thoughts, I’ve shown him how to stop and control it. He’s also telepathic now, of course…”

“How did you fit it all in, it’s only three in the afternoon?”

“Magic, Regina, pure magic! Think of it like reloading a computer” grinned the Sorcerer, as they were joined by the pair, still arm-in-arm, “lifetimes of experience crammed into moments…”

Before Regina had a chance to talk to Emma, who was now looking sheepish, Merlin tapped on the cuff attached to her wrist. “Who did this?” He seemed genuinely annoyed.

“Gold. Emma has one on too. We upset our Dark One yesterday, so he slapped this on each of us for one day! We can’t take them off until then. Tink tried, so I guess we just have to…” She stopped talking as Merlin merely lifted her wrist, placed a finger under the cuff and prised it off her wrist like it was a trinket. Regina knew removing a cuff of the Dark One was no easy feat. She’d tried it before herself, but recognised in Merlin, despite his mild, diffident manner, serious magical ability well beyond her own.

“Thank you,” she said, turning to her wife to witness, to her surprise, Robin removing her own cuff with no effort. Emma didn’t see the significance, though Regina certainly did! She looked across at Merlin, who saw what her mind was thinking.

“Stage Ten Mage now, Regina!” he said, nodding toward the Outlaw. The brunette scowled, “Are you reading our minds now too, Sorcerer?” Merlin merely laughed, “I didn’t need to. I just saw the look on your face!”

As Robin flipped the cuff from her wrist, Emma felt her magic charge through her body once again, instantly making her feel stronger. Looking up to him, she smiled. “Thanks.

“You’re welcome. Are we good now?” said the Outlaw with a smirk, “Now we know everything there is to know about each other?”

Emma grinned. “I guess so,” before slipping his arm and moving to face her wife.

“Well what was that all about?” Regina asked, her eyes wide and quizzical. “You seem a little… brighter?”

“I am. We sort of…cleared the air.” Emma still seemed slightly sheepish, as though she was hiding something. She stepped towards her wife, wrapping her arms around the other’s slim waist and kissed her cheek. Regina responded in kind, wrapping hers around Emma’s back as the pair stood silently staring into each other’s eyes, waiting for the other to speak. “Robin put your hand on his head. What happened over there?”

“A lot. It’s a little difficult to explain but I’ll tell you later; just trust me. I love you!” Putting her hands on the brunette's cheeks, she turned her head to give her wife a kiss on her lips, accepted readily by Regina. “And I you,” she whispered back, conscious of the near presence of her former lover.
Robin found the intimacy between the two women hard to watch, so turned to face his magical mentor, now joined by Anna. “Merlin, thanks again for all your help today. Is there more? Will you be staying a while?”

Merlin looked to Anna, giving her a silent nod. It was then Robin realised what had been happening. The Sorcerer and his daughter had been communicating *telepathically*, having recognised the signs and looks between them.

“Now you know, some people could interpret *that* as rude!” he said, still grinning.

Annabelle giggled. “Sorry Robin. Force of habit! Dad and I were just having a ‘chat’ about you three and your ‘situation’. It’s just, knowing what we do…”

“Annabelle!” her father interrupted, a serious tone now in his voice. “We do NOT discuss the future with those involved! Ever!”

“Sorry dad, it’s just…so…so exciting!” she pretended to be suitably chastened.

Robin smiled at the father and daughter. *Would he be like this with his own girls one day? Would he be so close to them he could speak to them without words? And if so, would that make Roland feel like an outsider?*

“Robin, Anna and I will be staying for a while, so I suggest we get our accommodation sorted out, then we need to speak of other matters. Reul has kindly let us stay here, but I don’t want to be a burden…”

Blue appeared at his right side. “I assure you, My Lord, you and Annabelle are no burden! We’d be more than honoured to have you both here. We have plenty of spare rooms and everything you need. Please stay?”

“Well, perhaps that could work. Thank you. I was thinking of staying in Storybrooke for a little while, anyway. Annabelle is recovering from her accident after all. She could do with a break.”

Blue smiled at his daughter. “Then it’s settled. Both of you are welcome to stay as long as you like. Please treat this as your home while you’re here.”

Anna, ever the most tactile one of Merlin’s daughters, stepped up and hugged Blue tightly. “Thank you, Miss Ghorm. Dad always said how lovely you were…” Blue’s cheeks pinked as she thought how the girl was just as charming as her father. “Call me Reul. or Blue. Any child of Merlin’s is a friend of mine!”

“Perhaps I can help while I’m here? Now dad’s fixed my back, how about I help in the hospital? I gather there is one? I don’t need paying while I’m here.” She looked to her father to see him nodding.

“Good idea, my love. But probably best if you speak to the hospital management first. Perhaps Regina here can make the introductions. She was mayor after all.” Said Merlin. “Now I propose we wrap up for the evening and I’ll continue with Robin and Killian tomorrow morning.” He stepped closer to the former pirate.

“Captain Jones, forgive me but I sense a little ‘injustice’ in your mind?”

“Aye. Well, more like confusion. Zeus gave me powers, a new hand, a restored ship and a second chance. I’m a former pirate. A murderer. I’ve done some pretty shameful things in my life. I can understand Locksley here being bestowed these gifts, but not me…”
Merlin smiled. “A former pirate! A former murderer! You are redeemed, Captain. You’ve gone on to sacrifice yourself for these people! I know most of your story. You’ve helped many in purgatory move on to their afterlife. You’ve more than compensated for your earlier misjudgements. If Zeus thinks you’ve earned this, you have. And I know he has plans for you. Wonderful plans…

Annabelle stepped in front of Robin, her face breaking into a huge grin. “I’m so pleased I’ve got to meet you! After seeing all the films, the cartoons and TV, my brother is going to be so jealous I got to meet the real-life Robin Hood!” As with Blue, Anna wrapped him in a huge hug, pecking a kiss on his cheek. “You’re one of his all-time heroes!”

Robin, enjoying the flattery, blushed. “Erm, I’m not sure what to say to that?”

“Well, I suppose you could give me your autograph!” she giggled.

“My auto - what?”

“Your seal, your signature, mate!” interrupted Killian, as he appeared to her side. “This beautiful doctor here intends to wind up her little brother, having met the famous thief of legend.”

Realising the former pirate was up close, it was Annabelle’s turn to blush. “Oh God…I mean…um… I would like yours too Captain? If you wouldn’t mind?” She avoided his eyes and her cheeks became deep red, obviously flustered, much to Robin’s amusement, realising a serious crush when he saw it.

“I’d be delighted, love,” he smiled, oblivious to the effect it had on her.

“Th…thanks!” she stuttered, easing her hand out as a small writing pad and pen appeared in her hand. She offered it to Robin. “A short note will do. His name’s Charles. Charlie. A simple message will do.”

Robin took the pen and paper, before twitching his wrist to magically produce a small slate to rest it against. For a moment he deliberated, before writing:

_Dear Charlie, I have been delighted to meet your lovely sister and father, who have taught me so much today! I hope one day I will have the opportunity to meet you and the rest of your family. Until then keep them all safe! Live well, Robin of Locksley (Robin Hood)._

“Bit formal!” said Killian, as Robin passed the slate, pen and pad across to him. He wrote:

_Charlie, I’ve lived two centuries; believe me when I tell you, I’ve met many women but your sister is one of the most gorgeous! Something you probably don’t want to hear! Here’s to a shared rum one day! Killian Jones, formerly Captain Hook. PS. Your dad’s not to bad either!”_

Robin roared with laughter. “I apologise for my friend here, milady. He never was subtle!”

Anna looked at what he had written, her cheeks still red. _He likes me!_ However, seeing her father glance back, she recovered her composure. _Come on girl! Confidence! You can do this! “Nothing to apologise for, I assure you. Now, Captain Jones, I’m new to this place. Is there a decent bar here? How about I buy you a drink, or are you too set in your ways to let a woman buy you one?”_

Killian, pleased by her forwardness, briefly glanced across at Emma who he noticed had, while holding rigidly to her wife’s hand, clearly been listening in, their eyes meeting before he replied.

“Doctor Sage, you misjudge me!” He feigned his upset. “I’ve been around a while. I’m more than happy for a beautiful woman to buy me a drink, any time! In fact, I know just the place. It’s a grubby
little dive called the Rabbit Hole, but they serve a decent rum.”

Anna visibly relaxed, trying to mask her nerves. She was by nature very confident, but this guy in leather was definitely having an effect. “Sounds great. Now, you two. May I have a selfie please? I’ll WhatsApp my sisters, just to wind them up!”

The former outlaw and pirate looked to each other, equally confused. “Erm…‘selfie’? ‘What’s up?’ Sorry love, I don’t know what the hell you’re talking about!” said Killian.

“Oh, for goodness sake!” Ruby cackled from the side. “Anna wants to take your picture? A selfie’s a photo she can take with her phone and send it over to others! Here, I’ll do it. Robin, give me that phone I lent you!”

He handed it to Ruby without further ado. “Now, you two, get either side of Anna, get close, look at me and say ‘cheese’!”

Killian appeared dumbfounded. “What has cheese got to do with anything?”

Tink giggled loudly. “Just smile, you fool!”

Amid more laughing and a couple of pictures, once Killian got the idea, he mouthed something at Robin and asked, “One more please, Rubes!” Just as she did, Killian and Robin both turned their faces to place loud and blatant kisses on both Anna’s cheeks. She giggled. “Cheeky!”

“Perfect,” said Ruby, “I’ll definitely have a copy for myself.”

Merlin didn’t seem bothered by Killian’s blatant flirting with his daughter, knowing she was more than capable of taking care of herself, or any overenthusiastic male attention. However, Regina couldn’t help but notice the annoyed look on Emma’s face as she saw the pirate and Merlin’s daughter flirting so openly. She was about to ask Emma what was wrong when Robin turned to address the gathering.

“Well, ladies and gentlemen…and…Jones,” he said with a wry smile at his friend as the group laughed. “It’s been a long but educational afternoon. At least for me. I’m just going to check in on my children, but I’ll see you in the Rabbit Hole in an hour or so. Our former pirate here told me he is buying the drinks for all tonight, so everyone’s welcome!” He smirked at his friend, who narrowed his eyes at him.

“You cheeky bastard, Locksley!” Jones called, eyes narrowing but without any obvious venom.

“Well, you can both magic up ready cash now,” he whispered back, “It’s in a good cause, and it’s not as though we’re going to leave you broke, is it? So, come on, get her hand in your pocket for a change, pirate!”

“Fair point, thief.” He replied before turning to the small gathering. “Ladies, gentlemen and…erm…Outlaw.” More chuckles from the fairies. “I set sail for Neverland and Agrabah on the first tide Saturday. As I have no idea when I will come back, or indeed if I will come back, I would be honoured to buy all you a drink or two at the Rabbit Hole this evening. All are welcome! Oh, and Robin’s buying the food!” Another cheer rang out as Robin theatrically sighed with a resigned grin.

Blue was about to decline on behalf of the fairies, when Merlin interrupted. “That sounds a grand idea! I hope the beer’s decent? It’ll give me a chance to catch up with everyone else. Come on, Reul, let’s party!” he said, with a slightly flirtatious grin.

“Well, how can I refuse?” she smiled back.
“You can’t.” said the old master, enveloping her in a hug. The rest of the fairies looked shocked, never having seen their chief look affectionately at anyone before, let alone being cuddled by a man. And so, so, girly! Clearly Merlin and Blue had some sort of history, Tink thought to herself.

As the group prepared to leave, Anna took Killian’s arm for him to lead, when they heard Mulan’s shrill yelp.

“ROBIN?” she yelled, racing towards him as, without warning, his face blanched, eyes closed and he slowly buckled, collapsing on to the lawn in front of them. Mulan bent down quickly to her old friend, as he blanked out, unsure what to do.

At Mulan’s screech, Regina looked down, horrified, letting go of her wife’s hand, before rushing forward and kneeling down to the stricken man, now lying quite unconscious. “ROBIN! Oh, my God, Robin!”

As the fairies crowded around Robin’s still body, Regina placed a tender hand on his cheek. “What…what just happened?” she breathed, looking across to Mulan on his other side, knowing she had no answer.

“Umm…oh dear. I was afraid this might happen! Erm…Reul? Perhaps we could take Robin somewhere else?” Merlin stuttered, a little anxious. “Perhaps your hospital? Could you guide me in?” he said, reaching out for Blue’s hand. The fairy held it without hesitation. “Of course,” she muttered, white smoke instantly enveloping the pair and Robin’s body, leaving a stunned Mulan and Regina kneeling either side of where Robin’s body had lain moments ago.

“Where…where did they take him?” screeched Regina, looking up at the equally bewildered group.

Merlin’s daughter looked down at the distraught face of the brunette. “Um…the hospital, I think he said!”

Regina turned to her wife, “Em, please collect Honour from Zelena. I’ll see you at home…” then disapparating, without giving her a chance to answer. Emma was too stunned to respond.

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**Storybrooke Hospital**

“Holy fuck!” screamed Whale as three figures, one floating on some kind of stretcher, appeared from a white smoke shroud directly in front of him. Recognising the Blue Fairy, he realised something was seriously wrong.

“My apologies, er…Doctor?” said the bearded man, quickly. “We are in need of assistance. Our friend here has fallen into a coma. Would you oblige?” his strong English accent commanding Whale’s attention. “You know Blue of course,” Reul politely smiled and bowed her head. “I’m Merlin Sage.”

Whale’s jaw dropped. “THE Professor Sir Merlin Sage?” he breathed, having read many of the man’s medical treaties and recognised a master in his field.
“Indeed. And you are?”

“Doctor… Victor Whale. I’m very honoured to meet you, Professor!” he gushed, shaking the man’s hand. “I’m a great admirer of your work.”

“Thank you, Doctor Whale, but please just call me Merlin. Now, my friend here is in need of some rather urgent assistance. He collapsed some moments ago; now I think I know the reason, which is almost certainly magical rather than medical. However, to be sure, do you have facilities to carry out a PET scan?”

Victor Whale looked at Merlin with wonder but tried to focus on the question. “Er… yes, we have a fairly new scanner here. Oh, and please call me Victor!” he stuttered. “Can you give me some indication what we are looking for? Who is the patient and how did the… accident… occur?”

As the Sorcerer was about to answer, Regina quietly appeared in the doorway, having apparated in front of the reception desk some moments ago. She continued to listen in silence.

“This is Lord Robin of Locksley, rightful heir to the old Sherwood throne, and recently returned from death.”

Victor’s eyes widened as he looked again at the patient, annoyed with himself for not having recognised him immediately. “Robin Hood? Well I heard he was back. What happened?”

“Young Locksley here was sent back by Zeus himself; A great honour. He sent him back with magical abilities. It’s hard to explain, but basically, I switched that magic on fully today. He’s also absorbed a vast amount of information. As a result, I think that has overwhelmed him. He became unconscious only a few minutes ago, hence the reason for the rapid scan. I believe he will come out of it. Eventually. But I need to be sure.”

Leaning over the Outlaw, Whale slowly raised each of the unconscious man’s eyelids, whilst shining a small torch to check the state of his pupils, then producing a stethoscope to listen to the man’s heart. After several quiet minutes giving him a detailed examination, “Well he’s under pretty deep. His heart seems to be beating remarkably slowly. So I think he’s unlikely to come round anytime soon. Have you seen this sort of reaction before?”

“Yes, over five centuries ago. A beautiful young woman was similarly gifted by the gods. She never woke up.” Merlin wiped a tear from his eye as a hidden memory surfaced.

Victor sensed his pain. “A close friend?”

“A wife.” The wizard muttered quietly.

“Oh, I’m so sorry. Well hopefully our facilities are a little better these days. I’ll do my best for him. Robin Hood did my family a great service many years ago. I owe him.”

It was only then they noticed a trembling, broken voice from the doorway. “Are you saying - Robin could die?”

Looking up at her, Victor Whale stiffened. “Not on my watch, Regina.

The room descended into silence as the four of them looked at Robin’s lifeless body. Blue, silent until now, moved across to gently stroke the cheek of the supine outlaw, while Regina remained frozen with worry.

“You know, there is so much unwritten about this remarkable man,” the fairy said, morosely. “Robin
came from a truly royal family, fought in countless battles, saved hundreds of lives by rescuing so many from starvation and poverty. Fled the kingdom he had the right to rule, saved my fairies from a rather horrible foe and, even produced a Saviour of his own. Kept my…” she was interrupted by Regina.

“Please stop talking about him in the past tense. He’s still here!” She croaked, irritably, moving to Robin’s right side and taking his hand in her own, tears threatening to spill. Blue nodded and stayed silent again.

“Indeed he is, and hopefully you will have your true love back with you again fairly soon,” said Merlin, trying to lift the mood.

Regina stilled at that. “Oh…no! He isn’t my…um…well, I’m married now…” she stuttered before continuing, “Robin and I…well, we were together. But now, he’s…well…” she dried up at her own comments, blushing slightly. The Sorcerer merely smiled.

“A friend, a confidant, a lover, a past & future soulmate! I know what you were, are and will be, Regina. I’ve seen it!”

*What the hell does he mean by that?* She thought. Feeling flustered and embarrassed, she avoided giving Merlin a response, instead turning to Whale. “Doctor Whale…er, Victor…may I be allowed to stay with him till he wakes up?” she asked, more nervous than usual. Victor and Regina were usually caustic towards one another, for so many historical reasons. However, seeing the anxious woman in front of him, he couldn’t help but feel sympathy.

“Of course, Regina. We have a room with an armchair. We’ll move him in to there after the scan.” He smiled, “We should be able to take him down in a few minutes, so I’ll best get cracking. Professor, sorry, Merlin, would you care to join me? As we’re dealing with magic here, that’s more your field I think!”

“I’d be delighted Victor. Reul, care to join us?

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An hour later and still unconscious, Robin was wheeled back into his room, Regina waiting anxiously. Two nurses moved quickly to secure the bed and attach IV lines into his arms and a respirator and mask over his mouth.

“Nurse, is that necessary? I thought he was only unconscious?”

“A little deeper than that, Miss Mills…sorry, Mrs. Swan-Mills. He’s in a coma and his breathing is weak, so this is standard hospital policy. I’m sure Doctor Whale will be in shortly; he’ll bring you up to date. There’s a button next to the bed if you need me.” The nurse then turned and left the room, leaving her alone with her ex-love.

Looking at Robin lying there, with the heart monitor bleeping and the gentle hiss of the oxygen supply, Regina felt so many emotions, though mainly sadness. Pulling a chair closer to the bed, she took his hand in hers.

“Oh Robin, how on earth did we get here?” she spoke softly. “I’ve missed you so much. The last five years were truly horrible without you. I thought losing Daniel was bad enough, but you! Why the hell did you go and do that? Throwing yourself in front of Hades like that? Did you even think about Roland? You gave your life for me but at what cost? That boy has been to hell and back every
bit as much as we did.”

Her voice grew steadily louder as memories resurfaced, tears now openly falling down her cheeks. “How could you do that? I took an overdose Robin! I tried to kill myself!” she felt ashamed. “Me, the Evil Queen! You left me Robin! You, you left me! Why?” She was almost yelling at the supine patient now, when a deep, calm voice behind made her jump.

“To save you Regina, and the life of his daughter! And, your unborn daughter, as it happened!” said Merlin, walking to the other side of the bed. “Without his sacrifice, you would now be dead. Your daughter would be too. And what of little Robyn? Do you begrudge her life, too?”

Regina felt slightly ashamed. “Of course not! She’s one of the things that kept me going.”

“Well there’s your answer.”

“Merlin, I just…” Unfortunately, her response was interrupted by the steady gentle beeping of the heart monitor attached to the patient, changing to that dull single tone.

Robin’s heart had stopped!

“OH GOD, NO!!” screamed his former true love, as Whale raced in to the room with the crash team.

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A Matter of Life & Death

Chapter Summary

Robin isn't out of the woods yet. Regina makes a discovery and Merlin gives Emma some advice.

Chapter Notes

That last chapter was a bit long, right? This'll be a little shorter. You'll see...

A Matter of Life & Death

Emma had watched as her wife, panicked by Robin’s collapse, spirited away to join Merlin and Blue at the hospital. So many thoughts raced through her mind. The main one being, just how much of a hold does Robin have on her? Where does that leave me?

Sullen, she was just about to poof over to Zelena’s cottage to collect Honour, when she felt a hand on her arm. Sensing her distress, Mulan stepped closer to face her. “Emma, she loves you, you know that? It’s just, when it comes to Robin, she…”

“I KNOW!” she reacted, angry that her thoughts were so easily read. But Mulan was not to be put off.

“She’s feeling mixed up. And so are you. Talk to her!”

“And tell her what? I’m terrified she’s going to dump me? Why shouldn’t she? After all, it’s not like the guy sacrificed himself to save her, is it? Oh, hold on a minute - yes, he did, didn’t he?” she growled sarcastically. “Mr. Golden Bollocks just comes back after five years, and everything we’ve been through counts for nothing! The pretty forest boy just appears and that’s it? My marriage, our home, all gone? He’s Honour and Roland’s father! Even Henry loves him more than me, his own mother! Everybody in the whole fucking town loves him; he can’t do anything wrong and now the bastard even has magic!” Her angry words trailed off as she held back the tears. “I feel like I’m being cast aside.”

“Aye, love - hurts, doesn’t it?” said Killian, appearing at Mulan’s side, arm in arm with Annabelle. However, Killian, seeing his former lover look up, red-eyed, immediately regretted his barbed comment, though it was clearly too late. Emma winced, knowing it was true. She had treated him just like that yesterday.

At a loss for words and unable to look at him, she flicked her wrist. A white mist engulfed her as she disappeared, leaving a guilty looking former pirate. Turning to Anna, he groaned, “sorry love, I just…”

“It’s OK, Killian…I do understand. I know your history,” she said in sympathy, and within earshot of Mulan.
“My history? How do…what…?” he gabbled, unsure of himself.

“I’m Merlin’s daughter, remember?” she snickered. “Don’t worry, your secrets are safe...”

“My secrets? Don’t tell me, you’ve seen my past AND my future, like your father? Well you don’t need to speak to me of the latter, love. My best years are definitely behind me!”

Anna laughed, loudly this time, attracting some attention from the rest of the group. She lowered her voice. “Are you kidding me? I assure you the best is yet to come for you, Captain Jones! Emma may no longer be your love, but an even better one and adventure await!”

Killian grinned. What the hell does she know? “I’m all ears, love! Spill!”

“Sorry, no can do! First, dad would have a blue fit if I said anything. Second, it could change the course of history if I did and trust me, you don’t want yours changing! All I’m going to say is that you will have your happy ending, Captain Jones.” She turned to look at the warrior. “As will you too, Fa Mulan!”

Mulan had been too focused on Killian’s grin to fully react to what she’d said. “What? Me? Sorry, I don’t understand. I’m perfectly content...” She said, stony faced as usual.

Anna’s own face broke into a broad smile as their eyes met, the blonde’s twinkling almost flirtatiously, as she glanced down just below Mulan’s waist before looking up again, with a small nod. “Your suspicions are correct,” she whispered to her. Mulan’s cheeks flushed, as her jaw dropped in shock. She had missed her period last month and the next was due shortly. Or so she thought. The normally stony-faced Asian’s lip actually trembled. “Really? I’m…I’m...” she mouthed silently. The blonde nodded slowly before also mouthing back silently, “Pregnant? Yes!” She took Mulan’s hand with her free one. “Perhaps you should talk to your um...partners...first! Then I’ll set you up to meet Dad at the hospital. This is sort of his field of expertise.”

Mulan, too shocked to properly process, just stood, wide eyed and stunned. The Captain came into her view. He hadn’t heard what Anna had said, but years of dubious activities had taught him to lip read well enough. He smiled at the small but powerful warrior, leaning in to whisper. “Well, you have my congratulations, love, if this is indeed something you wished for! Though I have to confess, I’m a little surprised!”

His inference was obvious. She had faced it repeatedly since moving back to Storybrooke with her friends Ruby & Dorothy. The stares from others, particularly whenever she was seen talking to another woman. The loud whispering as she left. “I’m actually bisexual, Captain Jones, not homosexual, as you have no doubt assumed...”

“I assume nothing, love, I assure you,” he still spoke softly, resting a hand gently on her arm. “I don’t judge you. Remember, I’ve lived over three centuries and personally experienced both sexes in my time. I just hope you’re happy with the news! I wish you well,” he bowed gently to her. “I’ll tell no one of your ‘condition’.”

“Thank you,” a smile creeping onto her face. “I’d better be going, I need to be somewhere…”

They watched her run off, without saying anything to Ruby or the fairies, who were now gathering to leave.

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Emma materialised in front of a small white stone cottage on the edge of fields near Storybrooke. She could hear noises of girls playing happily inside. Hesitating before knocking, she steeled herself,
Putting on a fake smile. As she moved to knock, a voice called out. “It’s open - come in sis!”

Opening the door and stepping in to the lounge, she found the former Wicked Witch on her knees, facing Honour & Robyn with their arms out, as a small side table was floating between them, wobbling from side to side. That’s it, Honnie! Steady now. Calm. Imagine it just floating there. Yes, yes, that’s it! Now keep your eyes closed and picture it gently going down on the floor.” The table banged down hard on the floor, noisy but undamaged. “Well done! Gina, did you see? She almost had it!” The redhead glanced over her shoulder to see the visitor wasn’t who she expected.

“Oh, it’s you…” she said to her sister-in-law, slightly disappointed.

“You’re teaching her magic? Does Regina know?” Emma blurted out, alarmed.

“And hello to you too, Saviour!” snarked Zelena. “Not yet. This little poppet has been having a few accidents today. It seems some of her magic has come in. I’m surprised really, but I didn’t want her panicking. She was a little frightened, so I thought best to show her it doesn’t have to be dangerous.”

Emma ignored her. She’d never felt comfortable around Zelena, even though she’d supposedly changed for the good. Although she hadn’t actually murdered Neil, she was largely responsible for his death, depriving Henry of his father after they were reunited such a short time. She’d tortured Gold, holding him in a cramped cell for months. This was the woman who raped Robin, to exact some bizarre revenge on her own sister. Emma only tolerated her because of Regina. She could forgive, but she could never forget.

“Where’s Regina? She said she was collecting her.”

“She…um…had to go to the hospital. There was a problem?” Emma didn’t want to discuss this.

“A problem? With Gina? What’s wrong with her?”

“No! No, nothing’s wrong with her, it’s just…” Emma was interrupted by a loud gasp from Honour.

“Papa! No…papa! Em…Emma? Papa’s poorly!” she blurted, tears welling. “He not well!”

Zelena’s eyes darted to Robyn, now standing in front of her cousin looking equally distraught. “Mummy, we go see papa now! Please?” she implored. She seemed to be trembling slightly.

“Robbie, I don’t understand! What’s wrong?” blurted the redhead, who couldn’t fathom how two happy little girls playing had become frightened and anxious in a matter of moments. “Emma, has something happened to Robin?”

“Um…no…yes, well, Merlin was giving him some magic lessons at the convent. His daughter Anna’s with him too. He seemed fine but collapsed. Merlin took him to hospital though, so I shouldn’t worry. That’s where Regina’s gone…”

Zelena, looking at the teary anxious little faces, realised something was seriously wrong. They’re sensing something, but how? Robyn doesn’t even have magic? “Come girls, we’re going to the
The redhead summoned her magic, teleporting them, including Emma, to the front lawn of Storybrooke Hospital, without the blonde even having a chance to argue. Two minutes later, after abusing an unhelpful receptionist, Zelena charged into the small emergency ward to see a group of nurses and doctors surrounding a bed, their frenetic activity now coming to a halt. She turned to Honour, Robyn and the Saviour.

“Emma, keep them back!” she ordered.

“Doctor Whale? Victor! Please? Enough!” yelled one of the nurses to the lead doctor, who was now kneeling on the bed with heart paddles in his hands. “It’s been over ten minutes! You know we’ve lost him!”

The man crouching over Robin Hood’s body, slowly nodded and leaned back, visibly deflating, his shoulders hunched. Zelena noticed tears of frustration starting to fall down the doctor’s cheeks.

“OK. Is everyone agreed?” he looked bleary-eyed at the other medics, who all nodded, some tearful.

“Very well. Time of death, seventeen forty-eight!”

“NO! NO! NO! NOT AGAIN!” screamed a tearful Regina, previously unnoticed and standing by the window.

Hearing her wife’s scream, Emma immediately sought to move into the room and comfort her. Though the medical team, crash trolleys and equipment were all in the way. “Gina!” she yelled.

The former queen didn’t even hear her. She just stood at the side of the bed, stricken, tears falling in despair. “Robin!” she croaked, picking up his hand. “I’m so sorry. You never deserved this! We never even had a chance to talk. We never…” her voice trailed to silence, her eyes closed, obviously in great pain. Emma and the crash team watched silently. Though this was her wife, she felt like an intruder between two loves at their parting. From the opposite side of the room, another figure moved toward the bed. Merlin. He seemed calm and with an odd, knowing look on his face, oblivious to the sadness all around him.

He’s almost grinning, what the fuck! Thought Emma.

“Regina,” he spoke softly. “Regina!” a little louder. The brunette looked at him, her face wracked in grief.

“Regina, you know what to do!” Merlin spoke softly, but firmly.

“Wh…what?” she said through her tears.

“About Robin, Regina. Bring him back! You know what to do. Don’t leave it too long…” His instructions were almost an order.

She hesitated, trying to get his meaning. Bring him back? How the hell? Then she realised what he meant. True love’s kiss? “I don’t…er…I’m not…”

“Just do it, Regina!” Merlin said, more forcefully, as though he already knew the answer. “Quickly now, before his brain starts to deteriorate!”

In her frenzied state, she didn’t notice Merlin seemed unduly calm, his voice urging her on. Nodding slowly, with tears falling and slightly trembling, she lowered her face to the former outlaw’s lips,
knowing that although it would be a pointless exercise, at least she got to say goodbye. The last man she had truly loved. The man who had given his life to save her. The man whose loss had broken her. The man she had disappointed by moving on to love another. “I’m so sorry, my darling,” she whispered close to his face, “For everything. I have never stopped loving you, and I never will.” As several tears landed on the dead man’s cheek, Regina placed her lips over the top of Robin’s for the very last time, mumbling. “Until we meet again, my love!”

Seeing the group of five medics surrounding the gurney, Emma fought to keep a wriggling Honour & Robyn behind her from moving forward, while leaning over the shoulder of Zelena, to get a proper look at what was happening. She’d seen Regina and Merlin move either side of him; had heard Whale call time of death; heard the Sorcerer mumble something to Regina, but she still couldn’t see what was happening.

Finally stretching around her sister-in-law, Emma grew wide eyed at the site of her wife bending over and placing a kiss on Robin’s mouth. Although surprised, a small body twisting around her left side made her snap out of it and look down at the little blonde. Honour shouldn’t be seeing her dead father like this!

“Daddy?” cried the four-year-old, knowing there was something seriously wrong.

Regina, still staring at the dead man’s still-handsome face, was brought out of her reverie by her daughter’s cry. Turning to her, “Honnie? Not now, my sweet! Please, I don’t want you to see…” her words were brought to a halt by a huge burst of hot, octarine light from behind her, washing over everyone in the room. All those present with magic felt it, stepping back at the force of the magical wave and being stunned momentarily. Even the medics, although having no magic, felt a warm breeze.

Victor Whale was the first to pick up on the possible result, leaning over to turn the heart monitor back on and moving quickly to put his stethoscope on the bare chest. Moments later, the previous single flat line tone was now replaced by a regular beeping sound. “Aaaaaand, we’re back!” he yelled. Five seconds later, the deceased man’s chest jerked up from the bed as he loudly inhaled, his eyes now open and bulging as he sought to gain breath. Looking shocked, and unaware of his surroundings, he stared into the teary red eyes of the woman he had never stopped loving. “Regina?”

Regina’s face creased into the widest smile he had ever seen, her tears, this time in joy, resuming.

“Welcome back, Lord Locksley!” said Merlin from his other side. “I was wondering when you would join us!”

Robin turned his head slowly to see Merlin smiling down on him. “How?” he croaked, his throat as dry as parchment, then looking back to Regina, who was too stunned to say a word.

“True Love’s kiss, of course!” the Sorcerer continued. “Your mind was overwhelmed with all your new magic. It was no wonder it reacted the way it did. Hopefully your new lease of life will not be interrupted again!”

“True Love? Regina...did you...?” his voice trailed off as he reached for the brunette’s hand. She nodded slowly, her smile never leaving her face. “Welcome back, thief!” she sobbed, picking up his hand to kiss it. However, before either of them could say anything more, Regina detected a swirl of white magic from the edge of the room, near the door. Instantly recognizing the trace & smell, she looked up to see her sister looking straight at her. “Zee! Was that Emma?”

The redhead nodded slowly, more in sadness than surprise. “And before you ask. Yes, she saw
Robin, exhausted but happy, reached down to her, accidentally disconnecting one of the drips attached to him. “I’m better, beautiful, come here!” He said, lifting her onto the bed to his right. Robyn appeared on the other side, with her arms extended. “Papa? Cuddle?”

“Of course, my love, you too. come here.” He turned to attempt another lift, when Merlin appeared behind the girl. “Here, I’ve got this,” he said, lifting and depositing Robyn on Robin’s left. The two girls moved to rest their little heads on either side of his bare chest, as he grinned in contentment. Regina, distracted by the display, stared back at the happy scene. The girls reunited with their father, once again. Even Zelena seemed to smile, although worry seemed to grow on the brunette’s face. A look immediately picked up by Robin.

“Regina, you need to go. To Emma! She’s bound to be upset,” He reached out a hand. “Go to your wife! Don’t worry about me, she needs you more right now. The girls are perfectly safe here...”

Regina’s emotions were so confused. On the one hand, she was ecstatic to see Robin alive and the girls snuggling into him. She so wanted to do the same. To feel those big safe arms around her. To rest against his chest and listen to his heart again. However, there was someone she also needed right now, who she had probably just hurt, very deeply. Seeing the slightly lost, bewildered expression on her face, Merlin stepped in.

“Regina, please let me go and talk to her? You will be surprised, but I have some experience with what she is going through right now, and I believe I can help her while you clear your thoughts.” Without waiting for an answer, the Sorcerer flicked his fingers slightly before being engulfed in his signature gold mist. “Wait!” she yelled as his image disappeared, “But...he doesn’t even know where she’s gone!” she said to the room.

“He’s the Sorcerer, your majesty!” the Blue Fairy piped up, the first time Regina had even noticed her. “He’ll find her easily enough.”

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Emma Swan-Mills sat on the stump of a felled tree, close to the water’s edge, next to the site of her son’s former ‘castle’, looking out to sea. The fishing boats and cannery off to her left; then beyond that, the docks, a small number of boats laying within its protective walls. At the far side, the most auspicious being the three prominent masts, sails folded, of the Jolly Roger. Emma couldn’t take her eyes off the magnificent ship, her mind drifting off to happier times, sailing with Killian. Killian, the man who gave his life for them all. Guilt at his treatment since his return overwhelmed her. She had moved on without him. Or had she?

“It gets better, you know!” said a voice, attached to a man, appearing next to her from a mist. Emma jumped out of her skin. “What the fuck!” she gasped. Looking up she saw the calm eyes of Merlin, the man slowly moving to sit down beside her.

“Emma, it’s time we talked...”

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As Merlin disapparated before her, Regina looked down at Robin as nurses carefully removed his needles, fluid lines and monitors, Whale having now left the room, after smirking back at Regina while he did so. Realisation dawned on her. *I woke him! I woke him with True Love’s Kiss! So, he’s still my True Love?*

She couldn’t help but smile, as she saw his two little girls now settled either side, with their heads resting on his chest. Looking up to his face, she couldn’t avoid those beautiful piercing blue eyes penetrating right into hers. Though content to be enfolded by his little beauties, Robin looked concerned. “Regina,” he spoke softly so not to wake the girls. “I promised Emma I wouldn’t come between you both, nor harm your marriage. She’s a good person, and good for you. I’m glad she was there for you, so that’s a promise I intend to keep.” He emphasised.

The brunette sighed unhappily. “I think it’s now a little more complicated than that, Robin.”

“Perhaps. Though it doesn’t have to be. Go to her. Go and be with your wife.”

“Mmm. Difficult when said wife just witnessed you kissing your former lover back to life!” snarked Zelena, previously unnoticed in the corner of the room, to her sister. “Though I agree with the thief, you need to talk to her before she, or you, do something stupid!”

Regina glared at her sister, wanting to retort but, seeing Robin’s eyes widen as he looked at the redhead with a flash of anger. His head turned sharply to look at her. “Regina, the girls will be fine. I’ll see they’re safe. Besides, I need to have a little talk with your sister…”

“I don’t think so,” snapped Zelena, “I only came because Robbie thought there was something wrong with you! I’ll wake her and take her home in a minute, now there’s nothing to see here…”

Regina was astonished at the instant change in Robin’s expression, now showing suppressed anger. “I should have rephrased that, Zelena. We will have that talk. Sit… down!”

Zelena bristled at his tone. “Know your place, thief! Who do you think you’re talking to? I don’t know what…” her voice was instantly silenced by the loss of a mouth from her face, whilst her hands pulled to her sides by an unknown force, a plastic chair appearing next to her. “SIT… DOWN!” he hissed, trying not to wake his daughters.

Zelena wasn’t stupid. She instantly realised the force controlling her was far stronger than she’d ever encountered, including the Dark One’s! Robin had her magic completely suppressed. Unnervingly, he seemed to be doing it with just his eyes. No hand movements, which merely rested on his daughters. Just his eyes! This magic was strong. Very strong!

Regina saw Robin’s pupils darken dramatically, his voice ominously calm. The whites of his eyes had almost disappeared! “I’m looking at the woman who tormented her own sister out of spite, almost killing Henry. Was largely responsible for the death of Henry’s father, a real hero, Baelfire, who I knew and liked. The woman who murdered my Marian, leaving my son motherless. Who then disguised herself as my wife, wrenched me from my second true love, sexually abused me to break Regina’s heart, then led Hades himself into our world to ultimately kill me. Depriving me of five years of my son and daughters’ lives. So, I’m asking you, witch, give me one good reason why I shouldn’t just kill you, right here, right now?”

For the first time, in a very long time, Zelena was absolutely terrified. The magical bonds that held her grew tighter in intensity, constricting her whole body. An invisible force washed over her face, restoring her mouth and making her inhale loudly and urgently. Before she could recover, another force lifted her from her seat by her neck, tightening as it pushed her against the wall. The redhead, unable to breath or fight back, looked to her sister for help. But Regina was transfixed by the sight of
Robin completely dominating the witch.

As her sister finally caught her eye, Regina spoke, softly, realising from the suppressed rage in Robin’s face that his was no empty threat; her sister’s life was truly in danger!

“Robin…please? This isn’t you! I know what Zelena did to you in the past, but this isn’t the way! Whatever she did, she has changed; she isn’t as you knew her; for heaven’s sake, like it or not she is Robyn’s mother! You can’t do this! You can’t kill her mother, Robin. Please?”

At Regina’s pleading, he glanced down to his redhead daughter, snoozing quietly on his chest. It seemed to have a slightly calming effect, as without moving, the pressure surrounding Zelena seemed to reduce, though not diminish completely. The witch twitched, slightly relieved though now wary of saying anything to him that may trigger him again. His eyes were so intense, even Regina wasn’t sure how to proceed. Her sister did it for her, her anger now recovering.

“So that’s how it’s going to be?” she hissed, “now you’ve got magic, you’ll threaten to kill me every five minutes?”

Robin, now slightly calmer, didn’t respond immediately, just studied the shaking witch, like a specimen in a jar.

“Not nice, is it, being bullied? Well, that’s what it’s been like living with all of you magical bastards for so long!” He knew Regina was listening but couldn’t stop himself. “Have either of you ever stopped to consider all the lives in this town that remain wrecked, because of what you did all those years ago? Nobody could stop you because you had magic. They had to obey and indulge you because you had magic. They lived their lives in poverty, scavenging for food in the forest when you lived in luxury, because you had magic. I know at least twenty families whose fathers you, Rumpelstiltskin and…” he looked across at his former lover, “yes, you too Regina, murdered. Bullied? You have no idea!” His chest heaved with indignation. “You three and your revolting mother have managed to fuck up the lives of so many people whose lives remain wrecked even today! And you dare to look down on others!”

Neither woman reacted. They knew everything he said was true. “And people like me are just expected to act as though you’re transformed?” Now he turned to face his not-so-former True Love. “Regina…I know that you are truly repentant for everything you did in the past. I see it in the faces of the people around us. I see it in the way you are with Henry and Roland. And Honour. I know you have truly changed. It’s one of many reasons I fell in love with you…”

His eyes then went back to the older redhead, calmer but still menacing. “But you,” he hissed, trying not to wake his daughter, “It’s still only three weeks since you tried to steal my daughter from me! I still need to see proof that you have changed. I need to see proof that you are making some sort of reparation for your past crimes! I tell you this, Zelena. I will not kill you. Regardless of how it happened, you are still the mother of one of my children.” He glanced down at the quietly snoozing little bundle on his chest. “However, if you ever attempt to keep me from my child, or prevent her coming to me as and when she wishes, I will revisit that decision!” His voice had steel in it now. Zelena knew he wasn’t bluffing.

“It’s time for you both, and Rumpelstiltskin, to make REAL reparations to the people of this town.”

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Merlin sat next to Emma on the log for at least half an hour, without a word being said. The Saviour just sat staring in to space. Finally, after a heavy sigh, and without looking at the man. “How did you find me?”
“I’m the Sorcerer?” he chuckled, drily, “I’ve been around a long time…”

Emma nodded slowly, still avoiding his gaze. After another silence, another sigh. “So…it’s True Love! Again…”

“Mmm?” said Merlin.

“REGina…and Robin. It’s true love again?”

“Well it never goes away. And she did bring him back with a kiss. So, I guess so…”

“So that’s it then?” she muttered, still looking ahead.

“Sorry, I don’t understand. What are you trying to say?”

“My marriage! Regina and Robin. They’re bloody true loves, or soulmates, or both; whatever. Basically, that means my marriage is over…”

“Why would you think that? You can have more than one True Love, you know? Think of your son. Haven’t you and Regina both woken him? Emma, just because she’s his True Love doesn’t mean she isn’t yours as well. Do you seriously think Regina would be unfaithful to you? Do you doubt her love, after all that you two have been through together? And do you seriously think Robin would try to break you up?”

She didn’t answer. Her head slumped into her hands. In her heart, she knew Regina would remain true, even if it killed her in the process. “She loves him and she’s hurting. Hurting for him. I saw the look in her eyes ever since he came back. I can’t compete with that.” Her face remained hidden.

“She loves him, and he loves her. Everyone regards the sainted Robin Hood as a hero; the guy Zeus sent back; hell, even my own son, who won’t talk to me. He’s a father to the rest of them. Roland, Honour, Robyn. And now he has magic too, and from what I’ve been told, much more powerful than anyone else around here. He even read my mind, for fucks sake!” She raged now. “I can’t compete with fucking ‘Superman’!”

“Compete? Why on Earth would you compete? There is no competition! I regard myself as a superb judge of character - I’ve been around two millennia after all!” he chuckled, “and I’m absolutely certain Robin of Locksley would never deliberately attempt to harm you or your marriage.”

She grimaced, knowing she was being petty. “Yeah, that’s what he told me! But there’s Regina. He’s here, she’s depressed and she’s just…well…changed. I see the look in her eye. That longing. She wants him! And then Gold said she wouldn’t get better with him around until they…they…well…did it!”

It took a moment to dawn on Merlin what she was referring to. “Ah, you mean the ‘True Love seal’?”

“The what?”

“The True Love seal. Yes, it does involve a physical element,” he sighed. “But Emma…you know I have the power of foresight, don’t you?”

That brought her out of her thoughts. “Well, sort of…what…what do you mean?”

“I see your futures. I cannot tell you what’s in store for you, as it risks damaging your timeline. However, I can see your battles ahead and your triumphs. Emma, I can’t answer your questions directly, but I can tell you that you will get your happy ending. I’ve seen it!”
Emma rolled her eyes. “Yeah, right,” she said, sarcasm heavy in her voice. “Happy ever after, yes?”

“Well yes, as it happens! You will be happy in a way you cannot possibly imagine!”

Emma looked hard into his eyes, with disbelief. “So, you can’t tell me…anything? No clues, no words of advice? So how do I achieve this so-called happy ending? Cos from what I can see, I’m losing my son and my wife. Give me some bloody pointers for god’s sake!”

Merlin smirked, albeit with sympathy. “Well, I can’t disclose specific information, but I guess I can give you a few ‘tips’. Let me think…” He stayed silent for a matter of seconds.

“OK, here goes. Tip number one. Go and apologise to Henry! You humiliated him, so he humiliated you. Apologise, but this time, mean it! His magic will become powerful, Emma, so you would do well to recognise it! I will go with you and speak to Rumpelstiltskin. You’ll have no problem with him, provided you apologise to him as well. Show real humility! That poor man is still cursed by an immense force constantly trying to control him. He’s lost both his sons and his wife – you have no idea the torment he’s in…”

Emma, ignoring the fact this man shouldn’t have known what happened to Henry, just slowly nodded, knowing that what he said was true.

“Tip number two. Talk to your wife! Tell her everything you’re feeling. Everything. And encourage her to do the same. She is feeling even more confused than you are, and will need you. Emma, despite everything, she is your True Love too. Remember that, and remember that provided you continue to love her, she will love you!”

The blonde smiled, feeling a little encouraged. “Go on…”

“Tip number three. Talk with Fa Mulan! She may be willing to share some information with you, about her life that may help you see things in a different way…”

Emma frowned. “Mulan? I don’t understand; what ‘different way’?”

“Sorry but I can’t say. Timeline, remember? However, that leads me to the last but most important one. Tip number four. Sit down and talk, actually talk, to Mr. Locksley.”

Emma groaned. “Robin? I don’t see the point; he’s read my mind already! He knows everything!”

“Yes…well. He told me about that, and I know he still feels bad about it. He had no control over his powers then, but he does now! I’ve shown him how to turn that particular ‘skill’ off most of the time, so it should no longer be an issue.”

“Easy for you to say!” she challenged. “You don’t have a love rival knowing everything about your sex life!”

“Emma, Robin is also a rather key element in your future! Don’t treat him like an enemy, because he really isn’t. He’s the father of two of the former queen’s children and, as well as playing a critical part in her happiness, will also have a major role in your own. He’s…” Merlin stopped himself abruptly.

Emma immediately picked up on his hesitation. “He’s what? What were you about to say?”

“I’ve said too much. Just realise, he’s on your side too. Talk to him! But first, let’s go see your son.”

“I can’t! Gold threatened to kill me if I ever set foot in his shop again!”
“That’s why I’m going with you. I have some information for him which may help...”
Rumple gets an Offer he can't Refuse

The Antiques Shop

The last twenty-four hours had been the most awe inspiring of Henry Mills life. He and his grandfather had never spent so much time together before, and it was clear Rumpelstiltskin relished it.

Not only had he discovered how to better control this new magic, but also that his grandfather was a really great teacher! Whereas Regina often told him how much the Dark One had bullied her after she begged him to teach her, Henry had only found him to be calm, patient and understanding. He assumed this was mainly because he was Rumple’s last link to Baelfire, the son he let down so badly.

The previous night, the ever-inquisitive Henry had asked many questions about his father. How he behaved, his friends, his adventures. Even about his mother, Milah. Rumpelstiltskin talked openly and effusively about Baelfire with tears in his eyes. As he recounted their parting, due to his own cowardice, Henry saw a few tears roll gently down the man’s cheeks. He’d never seen his grandfather vulnerable, and it wasn’t long before a few tears of his own started to fall. It was so very sobering.

Rumple quietly stood, wiping his eyes and walking over to the Victorian crystal drinks tantalus resting on the side table. Pouring himself a generous measure of scotch, he looked to his grandson. “Whisky, Henry?”

The young man nodded. “Please, grandpa.” Standing up, Henry walked over to the man and quietly placed his large muscular arms around his shoulders to bring him into a gentle hug. “I hardly had a chance to know dad, grandpa, but I really wish I had him with me right now!” he sniffed, quietly.

“As do I my boy, as do I! In so many ways, he was a much wiser man than me. A day doesn’t pass when I don’t think about my Bae.”

The two men continued the silent hug for several minutes before Rumple stepped back, to look into his grandson’s reddened eyes, his own still moist. “He would have loved you, my boy! I know he would have been a truly great father. Far better than I was to him.” He turned away to fill a second heavy glass with the old single malt before handing it to the younger man. Solemnly, he lifted his own glass to tap against Henry’s.

“To Bae, my wonderful son! May he rest in peace…”

“To my dad. Till we meet again!” Harry downed a large dose of the amber liquid, coughing a little at the burn.

His mothers had strictly forbidden him from drinking alcohol, until he reached twenty-one, although they both knew he had indulged in University. He never told them, obviously. However both his grandfathers had a far more liberal attitude. David’s view was that it was better to learn how to drink in moderation early, allowing him to share in a glass or two of wine during dinner. Rumple, on the other hand, held the view the young man was now old enough to imbibe and should learn to handle everything in moderation. He also strongly believed that teetotal adults should always be regarded with suspicion.

Rumple looked at his grandson intensely, considering the similarities between Henry and Baelfire.
Henry was taller and more muscular, those genes no doubt inherited from his other grandfather, Prince David. Nonetheless, his eyes, smile and character were so very much like Bae’s. Before either man could say anything further, the moment was broken by a loud rapping noise on the front door of the shop.

“We’re closed!” yelled the Dark One. A moment later the rapping started again. Irritated, Rumple walked into the shop, seeing a tall grey-bearded figure at the front door. “I said we’re closed!”

The grey-haired taller man ignored the yell and rapped the door a third time. Sensing trouble, Rumple turned his head to face the side room. “Henry, remember the cloaking spell? Do it now lad!”

Henry knew his grandfather would only use that voice if something was wrong. He didn’t argue. Instead, he silently mouthed the incantation taught to him only hours ago, wrapping himself in a short silver mist which left him invisible to all. Hearing voices, he stepped back into a corner of the room to watch. Rumple angrily wrenched open the door, to be faced by a tall man in his fifties, with grey hair and a close-trimmed silvery beard. As he looked into the man’s eyes, about to tell him to bugger off, he felt it. Magic! An overwhelmingly powerful aura of magic surrounding the stranger, who stood calmly before him. An aura so strong, he could feel heat coming from him. Before he could react, the man spoke.

“Mr. Gold, or should I say, Rumpelstiltskin?” said the stranger, his eyes piercing into those of the Dark One, who for the first time, in a very long time, felt quite intimidated.

“Indeed. And who might you be?”

“My name is Merlin. You may have heard of me?” Rumple froze, knowing the Sorcerer’s reputation. He was facing a force at least as powerful as his own, possibly more so. “I’ve come in peace, with a small request. And in return for it being granted, I have some information on your son!”

Rumple stiffened at the mention of his boy. “My son is dead. I hardly think there is anything more to be said.”

“Sadly, he is indeed, sir. However, Baelfire has not moved on…”

Rumple’s jaw dropped in shock. “He’s in the Underworld! The Saviour said…” he stumbled.

“Emma was deliberately misled by your son, in an attempt to keep her, and your grandson, safe. Baelfire never wanted her, and especially not Henry, to risk their lives in the Underworld.”

“Come in.” He walked the man into the back room, forgetting, with so many thoughts screaming through his mind, that Henry was cloaked in the corner, able to see the pair walk in. Rumple nodded silently for the man to continue.

“Before we start, I have a small request. Would you please allow Emma to come and talk freely to your grandson, without any further threat or hindrance?” Before the Dark One could even respond, the Sorcerer turned to face the corner of the room. “Good day, young man! It’s Henry, I presume?”

Rumple was stunned. How the hell did Merlin see through his own cloaking spell? Henry was also surprised, assuming himself invisible to all, although he stayed standing in the corner, slightly nervous.

“Yes sir. Is that true - you have news about my dad?”

“I never lie, Henry!” Then, to Rumple, “Do we have a deal?”
Rumple nodded. What else could he do. “Aye, bring her in,” sensing Emma’s magic outside the building.

A minute later, Merlin returned with a nervous-looking Emma at his side. She clearly recognized that, as far as magical ability was concerned, she was in the company of much older magical talent that far exceeded her own. Rumple wasn’t going to let this opportunity go without at least a barb. “Mrs. Swan-Mills! I have told my grandson that he is welcome on my properties, at any time, and is free to come and go as he pleases. You, your wife and the rest of your family are not! If you wish to speak to me at my home or shop, in future you will no longer barge through my door and demand things. You will knock and request my attention, or phone me beforehand. Is that quite clear?

Emma nodded. “Crystal clear…and I wish to apologise for my recent behaviour!”

“Very well then. If Henry wishes to see you, he is free to do so. Henry?”

Emma nearly jumped out of her skin at seeing her son suddenly emerge from the corner of the room. He definitely wasn’t there a moment ago. “Henry!” She moved forward to embrace her son, but Henry put up his hand to stop her, his face showing no emotion.

“You have something to say to me, ma?” He didn’t look angry now, just sad. She didn’t seem herself, just wretched, hunched, with a haunted, tired look in her eyes, like she hadn’t slept for a week. She also seemed nervous. Close to tears. So unlike his usually feisty, ebullient mother.

“Henry. I’m so, so sorry! I shouldn’t have…” as she choked back, he saw her eyes starting to redden, tears welling. She’s suffered enough, he thought and finally moved to bring his arms around her. She fell into them, gratefully.

“Hen, I’m sorry!” Tears now falling, nose running, as she rested her head in his chest. “I’m sorry I’m such a shit mother.” Her sobbing grew louder as her son pulling Emma into an embrace.

“You’re not, and it’s OK mum. I forgive you.” He whispered, stroking the back of her head like his grandpa always did.

The two men looked at the touching reunion, before Merlin turned to face Rumple. “Mr. Gold, perhaps we should leave them and retire to another room to talk?” said the Sorcerer, to which Rumple nodded. “This way.”

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The Convent, earlier that day…

After Merlin spirited an unconscious Robin to the hospital with Blue, the fairies had muttered amongst themselves, awaiting news of the archer. At Annabelle’s suggestion, Ruby, Dorothy and Tinker Bell joined Killian and herself in a walk to the Rabbit Hole, arriving half an hour later and settling around a table as drinks were served.

“So, you’re really leaving Saturday?” said Ruby, hoping it wasn’t true. The wolf had a soft spot for the reformed pirate and, having seen his handsome face change when he first heard Emma tell him she had moved on and had married, grieved for his broken heart.

“Aye, love. There’s not really much here for me now,” a sombre but resolute Killian replied.

“Where are you going? Anywhere exciting?” Dorothy asked, trying to life the mood.
Well, Zeus himself has asked me to undertake some tasks. Starting with Neverland, then Agrabah, then who knows? It seems unwise to deny a God, especially as he’s given me my life back, a new hand and certain new ‘skills’,” he said, a small rum flask appearing from nowhere within his new limb. The group giggled.

Tinker Bell seemed as down as Ruby at the news. “When are you coming back?”

“Well, in that case love, let’s drink to it!”

The small group clinked glasses together and cheered Killian Jones’s safe return. Anna seemed to have an innate ability to lift everyone’s spirits. She also had a wonderful knack of flirting with everyone, men or women, without anyone taking offence or making assumptions. She mingled with these people as though she’d known them for years.

“So, Anna, what are your plans? Are you staying with us for a while?” said Tinker Bell.

Anna smiled at the fairy. “I am, actually! Dr Whale asked dad for a bit of advice as he just lost his main gynaecologist and wanted help finding someone else. Dad offered to help out as he’s on a sabbatical before going back to the UK, so he’s planning to stick around here for a few months and asked me if I wanted to stay too or head back to New York. I have magic here, so as I’m no longer injured, I think I would also like to get involved at the hospital if there’s something for me to do.”

“Your father’s a gynaecologist?” blurted Dorothy, looking across to her girlfriend.

“Well, yeah!” giggled Anna. “And an obstetrician. One of the best actually! Professor Sir Merlin Sage, Royal College of Surgeons? Although he spends more of his time teaching, he still operates and he kind of divides his time between New York, London and Rio de Janeiro. I think he just likes keeping busy! My brother and sisters keep telling him perhaps it’s time to take it easy but, well, he is an immortal, he’s going to outlive us all, so what can you do?”

“He’s immortal? So, you are too?”

“No. That’s the bummer! Unfortunately, though we’ve all got used to it. Dad’s nearly two thousand years old! He’s seen and done just about everything there is. Over the centuries, he’s had over seventy wives and several hundred children, so we’re just resigned to knowing that he’ll outlive us.”

“That’s horrible,” said Ruby, “I can’t imagine how awful it would be to outlive your children!”

“I guess. Though dad has some sort of communication thing going on with Zeus, so he gets to speak to all his children, even after they have passed on! His former wives too! I don’t understand it, but it sort of works, and we’re happy! The multiple deceased wives thing is tricky, but he’s actually a pretty great dad!”

Over the next hour the small group questioned Annabelle about her father and her siblings. She held them captivated with tales of Merlin’s adventures. Killian supplied countless jokes and the atmosphere was lovely. Everyone was having a great time and the drinks continued to flow. Everyone was getting quite tiddly. Taking advantage of the atmosphere, Ruby leant closer in to Merlin’s daughter to whisper something in her ear, pulling Dorothy in closer so she could hear them. “Um…Annabelle…you’re a doctor too, right? Can I ask you something?”
“Of course,” she whispered back conspiratorially, “what do you want to know?”

Ruby’s cheeks reddened, clearly a little anxious that they weren’t overheard. Her girlfriend held her hand, nodding in support for her to continue. “Magic babies! Are they real? I’ve heard about them.”

Anna smiled back as she realised where the conversation was taking them. “Magic babies! You mean babies created with magic, or babies created without a ‘father’?”

“Well, both, I guess.”

“Hmm. Well, this is definitely dad’s area of expertise and he certainly knows about the ‘magic bit’. I’m a cardiologist, but I know a little about MRT.” Ruby and Dorothy looked confused, so she tried another angle. “Life can be created without sperm, though the research is in its infancy and not really available to the public.”

Ruby looked crestfallen, clearly having hoped to hear something different. Anna saw the look in her eyes. “However, in the magical world, things can be a little different! You still need the male contribution of course, but there is a way to, how can I explain it, ‘fuse’ key parts of the DNA of two separate eggs together.” She could see she was still losing their understanding, so she simplified. “In other words, you could take eggs from both Ruby and you, then combine them by magic before adding the sperm. So, for example you could have a baby with Dorothy’s eyes and hair, but with your legs and physical strength. The two of you would make up fifty percent of the baby’s genes and the rest from the sperm donor you choose.”

Ruby & Dorothy sat digesting this, a little quirky smile breaking out on Dorothy. “Hear that, Wolfie? We could have a baby of our own!” she whispered excitedly, trying not to attract the others’ attention.

Anna giggled at the excited pair, before adding. “Again, talk to my dad. He knows about that stuff.”

Another hour passed when the Rabbit Hole opened its doors to another group of heroes, as Mulan entered the bar escorted by a very happy Aurora and Philip either side. Killian and Anna looked to each other with a knowing smirk, before Merlin’s daughter stood to invite the trio to join them.

“Mulan, lovely to see you back. Please come and join us? There’s plenty of space.”

The Warrior looked slightly nervous. Although a master with the sword and most forms of self-defence, Mulan could still appear shy to most; even more so within a group; and even more so when two of those knew her ‘condition’. However, again Anna had an ability to put everyone at ease. Looking at Prince Philip and Princess Aurora, “Hello, I don’t think we’ve met? I’m Annabelle Sage, Merlin’s daughter.”

Philip smiled, “We guessed. Hi, I’m Phil and this is my wife Aurora. Mulan has told us much about you.”

Killian couldn’t help notice how tightly Mulan clung on to Aurora’s hand. “Can I order a drink for you all, as it is my evening after all. At least according to that damn Outlaw!” he smirked as he spoke, clearly making light of his friend’s earlier comment. “He already knows!” Mulan whispered to Aurora, though not taking her eyes off the pirate. Aurora stiffened, “Well I guess there’s no point in keeping it a secret then.”

Aurora stepped forward towards the group. “Er…Annabelle, what you told Mulan earlier today. Well, let’s just say…it’s emboldened us to make an announcement.” She looked sideways to her
husband, who merely smiled and nodded. “Perhaps we should have done this a little earlier. A few people know about this already, but, well, we want everyone to know that we’re together. Mulan, Philip and I! We’re together. The three of us. I know it’s a bit unusual but…”

“I’m delighted for you all, truly!” interrupted Anna, “I know you’ll be very happy!”

“And may I be the first to offer my congratulations.” Killian added. “Phil, I know your wife is quite something merely from her reputation. And as for your girlfriend…”

“‘Fiancée’, Killian! Rory and I asked for Mulan’s hand in marriage, and I’m delighted to announce that she accepted!” Philip said, looking adoringly at his partners. The room erupted in cheers as Mulan’s quirky smile turned into a huge happy grin. Killian rose to give Phillip a heart slap on the back, Mulan and Aurora meanwhile being hugged by Ruby and Dorothy. “Landlord, a couple of bottles of your finest champagne if you will? We have something to celebrate!”

As things grew more boisterous, more new arrivals joined the party. Ruby was surprised to see Emma walk into the bar and, more surprisingly, hand-in-hand with Henry. Clearly, the pair of them had cleared the air as they were both smiling. Emma called over to the barman, “Frank, can I have a pint of the usual and for Henry - actually, make that two pints!” Henry looked at her approvingly, before they walked to the group table.

“Everything ok now?” asked Mulan, pleased to see the lack of tension since last time.

“Um, yeah, we’re good. I’ve been a bit of a dick recently, especially towards Henry. I apologised; Henry’s accepted my apology, so we’re good.” She still seemed a bit nervous. “We are good, aren’t we, Hen?”

The Author smiled down to his mother, bringing one of his long muscular arms around her shoulder. “Yeah ma, we’re good.” Seeing Frank deliver two bottles of champagne and glasses to the table, Henry asked “So, what are you celebrating? It can’t be about me and ma already.”

“It’s for Rory, me and Philip, Henry! They proposed to me and I accepted! We’re toasting our engagement,” she said, beaming at her fiancées.

“Cool! A poly wedding - that’s fantastic! Never been to one of those before! Drags Storybrooke screaming into the 21st century, at last!

Aurora chuckled. “Well Henry, no date’s been set yet, and we need to figure out how to do this; Archie said the legal bits shouldn’t be too difficult; this is Storybrooke after all!” she said, looking at her husband and fiancée for support while Mulan seemed a little uncomfortable at the attention. Killian popped open the two bottles and filled most of the glasses, passing them around. Annabelle collected her glass and stepped in front of the trio. “Well, I would like to propose the toast. To Mulan, Philip and Aurora. May our gorgeous ‘thruple’ here be truly happy together!”


“Fair enough, love. Here’s to the Happy Thruple!” he raised his glass to them as the rest cheered.

Emma smiled awkwardly at the happy trio, remembering what Merlin had told her only two hours ago. ‘Talk to Fa Mulan. She may be willing to share information with you that may help you see things in a different way.’ As she looked at the warrior, she noticed that unlike her two partners she
was merely lifting a champagne glass to her lips without taking a sip. She wore one of Aurora’s slip dresses while her left hand subconsciously rested on her abdomen. She also noticed the glowing appearance. No way! She moved closer to the woman.

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Robin felt slightly ashamed of his blatant bullying of Zelena. But hell, it felt so good and the bitch really had it coming to her! Would he have followed through? Could he actually kill the mother of one of his children? Probably not, but it did redress the balance. Marian and Baelfire were lost forever after all.

Regina and her sister had now left with the children. Victor Whale had informed him that, as his condition had seemed to be magical rather than medical, he was free to leave whenever he was ready. “Robin, it’s not often I discharge someone who I called time of death on only a couple of hours ago!” he grinned.

He decided to head straight for his son. Stepping out of the hospital entrance, he remembered his new gifts. Picturing Roland in front of him, he concentrated, visualising himself flying across the forest to join him and was pleased to see it worked, the swirling gold mist coming off him as he appeared in front of the now awestruck boy. “Wow, dad! You can do it too, just like Mum and Emma?”

“Appears so, my boy.” He chuckled, enveloping his son in a bear hug. “You’ve no idea how I’ve missed you!”

“I missed you too, papa. So very much. I still can’t believe you’re back,” his smile then disappearing as he remembered, “and I’m sorry Mummy Gina’s not with you anymore. I mean, you died. I like Emma, it’s just…”

“I understand, Rolly,” he said as he wrapped his arm around the boy’s shoulders. “But she’s happy. And that’s all I want for Regina and if that happiness comes with Emma, then so be it. Now then, it’s the first time I’ve had you all to myself for a while. I want to know everything my young man has been doing with himself these last five years. Tell me all!”

They spent most of the night talking in front of the campfire, with Little John, Friar Tuck and Will joining them. The Merry Men were finally reunited with their leader and all seemed right in the world. However, Robin couldn’t help noticing the dilapidated condition of their tents and hides, seemingly untouched after five years.

“John, how many of us are there here now?” he asked his best friend.

“Including all the families? About sixty, plus some of the former lost boys nearby. Why?” the gentle giant responded.

“Well, I don’t understand why you’re all still living in these tents? When we arrived with the curse, this was only meant to be temporary until we defeated the Sheriff and sorted ourselves out. After five years, I would have thought you fellas would have organised some building? We have Will, Alan and all the guys with skills here to do it and we’re surrounded by forest! These tents are pretty damp and it’s not the best way to bring up children. Surely you don’t enjoy living like this after all this time?”

Friar Tuck was the first to speak. “Rob, after you were killed, The Witch sent us back to the Enchanted Forest with Roland, thinking that’s what we wanted. This place was in danger yet again, so we left willingly. However, trust me, you don’t want to go back there! We had to survive on our
wits. A year later, young Henry Mills decided Roland should be united with his new sister, so bright lad that he is, he figured out a portal to get to us. Rumplestiltskin helped him.”

Little John took up the story. “We came with him, Rob, to keep him safe and hoping things were better here. However, when we arrived, your Regina was in a really bad way, so King George took advantage. He called an early election and won it. Regina was in no way fit to contest it! Once he got in, the first thing he did was force the Saviour to step down. Something about it being wrong that one family held all the power in Storybrooke and an election for Sheriff was well overdue. He put Nottingham in to run and won it. Some of the residents say the vote was fixed. We’re not allowed a vote as it seems we’re not residents. Bloody crooked if you ask me! Anyway, we started to fell some trees to build housing. Within days, Keith Nottingham arrives with orders that we’re forbidden to build anything without a licence from the Mayor and that we’re trespassing. Said they’d torch anything that went up. Threats of arrest, the usual stuff. He’s left us alone so far but with the Charmings out of action, the Saviour all but lost and Regina the same, it’s been tough.”

Robin sneered at the thought of dealing with his old foes. “Some things never change, John. George and that bastard Nottingham were always devious little shits never to be trusted. So, perhaps it’s time for change.”

The Outlaw stood up, facing the gathering, magic starting to crackle in his palms. “Gentlemen, let’s build ourselves a village!”

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Rumplestiltskin couldn’t believe his ears; pulling out his prized 30-year-old single malt to replenish Merlin’s glass. “So Baelfire’s still in the Underworld? I don’t understand; Emma Swan said he’d moved on!”

“He told her that to protect her. Baelfire wanted her nowhere near the Underworld, and told her not to go. He was furious when she ignored him. He felt she put Henry’s life in danger.”

“Hmm. That I can believe. She even blackmailed me to help get her there; just to rescue that disease-ridden pirate! If I had only known my son was down there, I would have never left till I got to him back.”

“Well, to be fair he wasn’t in the Storybrooke Underworld. Remember, there are underworld versions of all realms, magical or otherwise. As I said, he’s on a mission from Zeus himself. What Robin and Captain Jones did in your version of the underworld after you left, so Baelfire is still doing in their versions of Neverland, the Enchanted Forest, Agrabah and several others. You should be very proud of him, Rumpelstiltskin. Your son is quite the hero, even in death! He has already helped many hundreds move on to a better place…”

“By no doubt correcting the many errors of his father,” groaned the Dark One, recalling how many guilty and innocent he had sent down there over centuries.

“Yes, well…his adopted grandmother’s errors, too. Plus, many others. He’s quite the character, your boy!”

Rumple smirked at that. ‘Aye, he is, most definitely. I miss him so very much.”

“You’ll see him again, I’m sure of it. Hopefully a little sooner than you think if I have anything to do with it.”

The Dark One raised his eyebrow to the man, waiting for more.
“In return for your assistance in some more serious matters, I intend to intercede on your behalf with Zeus directly. Seeing as Lord Locksley and Captain Jones were returned for rectifying many of Hades’ crimes, I’m hoping the Lord of the Gods will grant a similar favour to Baelfire.

Rumple’s eyes glazed at the thought of seeing his boy again and he knew, as did the Sorcerer, that there was nothing he wouldn’t do to get him back. “Tell me what you need. If it returns my boy to me safe and sound, you can take the clothes off my back, my magic, anything!” Rumpelstiltskin hadn’t pleaded with any man since he became the Dark One. However, the man in front of him, Merlin, had white magic at least as powerful as his own dark; he had access to the gods. He could, just could, be his last chance to get Baelfire back.

Merlin looked deeply into the Dark One’s eyes, knowing he was deadly serious. “Well, hopefully it shouldn’t come to that, though there are a few major battles ahead and I would appreciate you by my side. However, in the meantime, there are some issues here in Storybrooke I would like to address. I need to amend the curse used to create it.”

Rumple seemed confused. “You mean the curse the Evil Queen cast?”

“Indeed. She may have cast it, but you created it, which means you can amend it! I can show you how. There are anomalies here which need correcting. Most lives have improved since the Enchanted Forest, but others have fared worse. Storybrooke is also a magical magnet for all the misfits and malcontents of our worlds to enter. You can help me stabilise it.”

“And if I assist you, you will help me get Bae back?”

“I will try. As I said it will ultimately be a decision for Zeus. I think I can encourage him to reward your son. However, until then I can also help you in other ways; one being to locate your youngest son.”

“Gideon? How?”

“Well, it’s hard to explain. You know I have the ability to split myself and enter other realms simultaneously? Up to ten at a time, I recently discovered when I taught this particular gift to Lord Locksley. So, it is my intention to search each realm that has had a magical portal with Storybrooke over the last ten years. We may be apart, but I and my other ‘souls’ are able to communicate with each other. It may take a while, but I believe that, provided he is still alive, I, or should I say ‘we’, will be able to locate him.”

The Dark One snorted in disbelief. “I spent years trying to find Bae. What make you think you can…”

“I am Merlin! I don’t wish to boast Mr. Gold, but my powers are considerable and extend to many other realms. Now do we have that deal or not?”

The Dark One, feeling hope for the first time in forever grasped the Sorcerer’s hand. “The chance of getting my sons back? We most definitely have a deal.” He said, raising their glasses.

“Very good. Tomorrow morning, I wonder if you would kindly join me in the forest? I believe young Locksley and his men may require our assistance. But first, may I have another drop of that most excellent scotch?”

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It was around eleven o’clock in the evening in Mifflin Street when Emma arrived back in a swirl of mist, on the porch so as not to wake anyone inside. Regina, sitting in the living room, immediately sensed her wife’s magic, plus someone, or something, else. Although she had tucked Honour into bed some hours before, the brunette rarely went to bed early or slept for long these days, especially when her wife wasn’t there. She opened the door. “Emma, who are…”, she stopped at the sight of her son, the first time she had seen him in two days. “Henry?” she gasped, surprised to see him with his other mother.

“Hi mum,” Henry spoke softly as me moved to her and enveloped her in a hug. “Is Hon asleep?”

He was now a good six inches taller than his mothers. Regina gasped at the contact, grateful for his love. The last time she’d seen him he’d been angry at both of them. She looked to her wife, now showing a small grin.

“Henry and I got talking this evening. I apologised to him for the jail cell. For being a dick. Everything. I think we’re good now?” she said nervously looking at the Author. Henry reached a hand across to his other mother, “Yeah, ma, we’re good.”

Regina held him tight. “So, you’re coming home? None of that nonsense with Gold?

She immediately regretted her choice of words as Henry abruptly stiffened, pulling away from Regina though not letting go of her shoulder. “Mum, ‘Gold’ is still my grandpa! Please don’t go there; you really have no idea! I’ll stay tonight though.

Regina teared up at his words. “Henry, what are we supposed to have done? We’re your family! Why?

“Listen; I mean really listen to me for a change! I had three parents, three! Two mums, one dad. A dad I hardly got to know. You have no idea how that still bugs me. Dad let ma go, so she could break a curse and get her family back. He never even knew I existed till I was ten!” Emma flinched, remembering how she’d lied to him.

“He was shot and nearly died trying to protect everyone, helped save me in Neverland then died trying to prevent your sister destroying our family yet again! He’s a hero, yet now he’s lying cold in the graveyard. This week, it was six years since he died, and I was the only one, apart from grandpa, who remembered! And on the rare occasions you two do talk about him, it’s always something snide from ma here, or you making some stupid sarcastic remarks!”

It was Regina’s turn to flinch, looking wide-eyed to her wife for support. “I’m sorry, Henry. I didn’t know it upset you so much. I never really got to know Neal…so I can’t judge!”

“Maybe not. But the least everyone could’ve done was to remember him. He did save all of you!”

“You’re right,” piped his blonde mother, “and I’m sorry you feel you went through that alone. I wasn’t in a good place and neither was your mum. I know your dad and I had a difficult relationship, but I really did love him once, you know? He gave me you! Don’t forget he did die in front of me!”

“Yeah, didn’t stop you taking up with Killian a few days later though, did it?”

“Henry!” his mothers’ responded simultaneously, one in shock and one in pain.

Henry immediately regretted his choice of words, knowing he’d gone too far, yet again, especially when he saw the hurt in Emma’s eyes. “I’m sorry ma, I shouldn’t have said that! I’m just… just feeling sore about dad! Especially as he hasn’t moved on after all…”
“WHAT?” cried both women. “Henry, I saw him in my dreams! When we were on our way to the Underworld. He told me that he’d…” blurted Emma, not liking where this was going.

“Dad said that to stop you going down there! To stop you getting killed. Dad’s still there, doing what Robin and Killian did. But in different underworlds. He’s saving people. He’s working like King Arthur to fight off local demons and move the souls on. He’s sort of acting for Zeus…”

“Henry, how do you even know this?” said Regina, aghast.

“Merlin visited Grandpa earlier this evening. I heard a bit in the shop, before I left with ma to go out. I called grandpa back to let him know I’d be staying here tonight, and I asked him what Merlin had said about dad. Grandpa wants to go back down there, but Merlin told him they can’t be sure which underworld realm he’s in. There’s thousands of them! Though he knows my dad isn’t in the Storybrooke one.”

The wives looked anxiously at each other. Emma, don’t even think about going back there again! Regina thought. Emma seemed to pick up on it, as she moved to take Regina’s hands in her own to calm her.

“Henry, I think that under the circumstances…” However, her son interrupted again.

“I get it; I don’t expect you to go down there! Not again. After all, it’s only my dad down there this time.”

Emma flinched again, feeling like she’d been slapped, though Henry ignored her. “Besides, Grandpa will sort it, if he can. With Merlin’s help. Anyway…” he hesitated as his phone chirped with a new text. “It’s Rolly! He’s still at the camp but Robin’s just arrived, so he says he’ll stay over another night, if that’s ok?”

When it came to Roland, Emma always deferred to Regina, feeling it wasn’t her place to decide, as he was Robin’s son. “Of course,” she sighed. “I’m sure he’ll be happier with his father right now.” Though it would be nice if he had called me! It’s like I’m now non-existent! She thought gloomily as her eldest son pecked her cheek and walked up the stairs before calling out without looking back, “I’m going to join them tomorrow. G’night mums.”

Now the two Swan-Mills women were finally alone, Regina not having seen her wife since she kissed Robin awake. They needed to talk, something she had failed to do since Emma spirited off from the hospital. She stepped closer to the blonde, taking her right hand in her left, before slipping her arms around her slim waist, to pull her closer. “Emma, I know what you saw in the hospital! When Robin…”

“Gina, it’s ok. Yes, I was upset and just needed to get away! It was a shock but, well, I got to thinking about things. He was always your True Love after all, and that stuff doesn’t just go away! It just hurt to see it in front of my own eyes. He loves you and you love him!”

The brunette pulled against her even tighter, concerned. “I love you, Emma! I didn’t marry you as a substitute for Robin. I fell in love with you!”

“And I fell in love with you, Gina! And I still am, but…”

Regina’s eyes watered, praying her wife wasn’t going to say something they would both regret. “Emma, don’t you DARE even think about leaving me!” her voice trembling. “I couldn’t bear it!”

“No, Gina, I would never leave you. That’s not it. It’s just…well…I know you love me, but you also love Robin too. There’s no point denying it! I see it in your eyes. He’s a True love and soulmate. So
I got to thinking…”

“Emma, I will not leave you for Robin. I swear to you…”

“Gina, let me finish! This is hard for me to say, so just shush a minute. This evening I got talking to Mulan…”

“Mulan? What’s she got to do with this…” She stopped, realising from her wife’s glare, she’d interrupted again.

“When I took Henry to the Rabbit Hole to apologise, Mulan came in with Rory and Philip. They’re all engaged.”

“To be married? What, the three of them?” Emma nodded. “How does that work? I thought she was a lesbian? Wasn’t she with that girl from the supermarket, Mel, Melanie or something?”

“Marie; and no, they were just casual. They split up quite some time back. She’s been living with Aurora and Philip a good six months now. I had a chat with her about things. Apparently, she and Philip were very close back in the Enchanted Forest when Rory was under her sleeping curse. Nothing sexual. Phil’s a bit too much of a stuffed shirt to do something like that.”

“You mean too much of a stuffed shirt to break his own marriage vows? To commit adultery? Well what a bastard!” Regina replied sarcastically. “Personally, I like Philip. After your father, he’s one of the most honourable people I’ve ever met!”

Emma ignored the jibe. “Anyway, we know Mulan later had the hots for Rory, when a curse got him but she also didn’t do anything about it. From what I gather, when Phil recovered, Aurora got pregnant, so Mulan took off. She spent some time with the Merry Men before travelling and winding up with Ruby in Oz.”

“Mulan was involved with Ruby?”

“Maybe. Not sure. Probably not like that. Just as friends. When Ruby brought Dorothy out of her sleeping curse with true love’s kiss, Mulan eventually wound up in Storybrooke, not realising Phil & Rory were here. Apparently, after a night out and too many drinks, they confessed to Mulan that they both had feelings for her. She did the same and then she moved in with them a year ago. She’s now nearly ten weeks pregnant and we’re invited to the wedding!”

“Mulan’s pregnant as well? I never saw that coming. However, fascinating though that is to have Storybrooke’s first ‘three-way’ wedding, what does that have to do with us?”

“Um…well it got me thinking about us. About you, me and Hood. Now I know it’s not the same thing but…well…Mulan had to learn to ‘share’ Aurora…with Philip. They learned to somehow make it work between the three of them. So I thought…”

“Emma, you said yourself that Mulan was close to Philip before. They may have been lovers for all we know. It’s different. Besides, you hate Robin! You can’t even call him by his proper name! What are you thinking?”

“Hold your horses. I don’t actually hate him and I’m not suggesting he move in or anything! I’m just saying that…well…he is a True Love as well as your soulmate. So, he…”

“WAS my soulmate, Emma! Was! You can have more than one in life you know? I have you!”

“Of course you do, but that doesn’t change anything. You are in love him too, and please don’t insult
me by denying it. Gold already said that all the anxiety and stuff between you, all the depression, would only increase until you finally…”

“Emma, please! Yes, I get it…”

“Gina, listen, I’m not suggesting anything permanent. Just that, well, I love you and I need you to be happy. I couldn’t bear you going back downhill, not after everything we both went through. I guess I’m saying that like Aurora, it’s possible for you to have more than one love in your life. I know you love Henry and Honnie. And me. But Robin isn’t going anywhere. He’s her father and under the circumstances, I’m sort of adding a bit of, I don’t know, flexibility into our marriage vows so you can also be with Robin when you need to…”

Regina stared into her wife’s eyes in astonishment, unable to formulate a response, until eventually, teary eyed, trembling with emotion, “I don’t know what to say.” Stepping forward, she wrapped her arms around her blonde wife’s waist, pulling tightly against her. “You’d really do that for me? Share me…with him?”

Emma silently nodded her head and gave a small smile, which didn’t quite reach her eyes.

As a small tear slid down her cheek, Regina drove her mouth aggressively on to Emma’s, sealing their lips in a kiss. It wasn’t overly passionate, it was just needed. The two women just held each other in their tight embrace, silently reassuring each other of their love until Emma’s lips peeled away to speak.

“Let’s go to bed – now!” And with that, holding onto her wife with one hand, the brunette waved her fingers with the other, instantly transporting them to their bedroom. As the purple mist disappeared, Emma reciprocated with a twist of her own fingers, leaving the pair of them still holding one another but now entirely naked, their clothing appearing in a single neat combined pile next to the bed. Both women started at the feeling of flesh against flesh and Emma smirked, as she gently pushed her partner back onto the bed, lifting her legs onto the mattress. Regina silently beckoned her wife to lay on top of her, Emma obliging by gently parting the brunette’s thighs before resting herself in between them, breast to breast, hip to hip, in their favourite position, at least to start, enjoying maximum skin contact while able to gaze in each other’s eyes.

Regina stared up into the blonde’s eyes in total adoration. “I love you so much, my darling Swan!”

“And I’ll love you, my queen. Forever…” she whispered back, before resuming their kiss.
Chapter Summary

There's a lot going on in the forest. Robin and the Merry Men have been busy...

Chapter Notes

I'm so glad a number of you have stuck with my story, despite all the twists and turns! I've received some lovely PMs and some recommendations, which I'll try to take on board.

In this chapter, the Merry Men are starting to make changes for themselves. With a surprising magical team to help them...

The Mansion

Henry Mills woke early. Since his magic came in, he found sleeping difficult. Having been around his mothers and his grandfather for so long, he finally understood the pull, the drug that was ‘magic’. Looking down at his fingers, feeling energy twitching throughout his body, he had to get up and do something. Anything!

His thoughts were disturbed by a familiar ringtone coming from his phone. Roland. Smiling at the picture of the boy he’d taken before the trip to the Underworld, he remembered how they’d met. His mother, having fallen totally in love with Robin, also fell for his little curly-haired son. The then five-year-old seemed to have an innate ability, even better than Henry’s, to woo anyone to care for him, Henry included.

He thought of the terrible things Roland had faced in his young life. His mother, the famous Maid Marion, had died in the Enchanted Forest before he even got to know her. On being rescued by Emma's time jump, the Wicked Witch had then gone on to kill her without a second glance, cruelly replicating her for the sole purpose of destroying her sister by getting herself pregnant by the man Regina loved.

Henry never trusted Zelena, despite her supposed reformation. Robin had died trying to save his mother from the psycho woman’s satanic boyfriend. Storybrooke mourned the death of a true hero, though Roland and Regina never truly got over it.

“Hi Ro,” he whispered, trying not to wake his mothers in the next room. “You know what time it is? You could’ve woken mums! What the heck are you doing calling this time of the morning?”

“Hen, you have got to get over here. Quickly. You gotta see this!”

“See what? What’s going on?”

“Dad’s built a whole new town! It’s incredible! Just…just get over here. Now!”
“Built a town? What? Ok, where are you? You’re at the camp, right?”

“Well…sort of. It’s changed a bit. You remember that old oak on its side? Well, head there. I’ll see you in twenty.”

Henry hadn’t heard the boy so excited in years. Quickly dressing, he crossing the landing, tiptoeing past his mothers’ bedroom. He’d heard the familiar grunts and moans from their room last night and definitely didn’t want to peek in to tell them where he was going. They had often forgotten to set a sound-proofing spell on their bedroom after retiring, and Henry had regularly had to head off Roland and, more recently, Honour from going in there, thinking one of the women was being attacked in some way!

As he crept gingerly across the landing towards the stairs, a little voice broke the silence. “Henny! Where you going?”

He looked down to see his little sister, cuddly toy fox in hand, looking up at him, all dimple-cheeked and puppy eyed, just like her brother. Henry, like everyone who met her, found it very difficult to resist Honour. “Shush,” he whispered, “don’t wake mums! I’m going off to see Rolly.”

“And papa? You’re seeing papa?”

“Well…yeah, I guess.” He knew when he was being railroaded.

“I come too!” she said, a statement, not a question, again looking at him with those adoring eyes. “Please!” she pleaded, now holding on to his belt. The young man crumbled, as he did so often when his little sister was concerned.

“Well…ok…I guess. But we’d best let your mums know, so…”

“I’ll ask them now,” the little blonde blurted, turning to head for the master bedroom.

“Hell, no! Honnie…don’t…” he rushed forward to stop her charging in on his mothers. Roland had done the same thing two years ago, just after Emma had moved in with Regina. Finding the two women naked on the bed, very much preoccupied, had burned an image in the boy’s mind he really didn’t want there. “Honnie, stop. We’ll leave a note for them saying where we’ve gone.” And with that, Henry twitched his fingers, a small notepad and pen appearing in his palm. Honour’s mouth gaped in surprise.

“You have magic too?” she gasped. “Like me!”

“Yes, magic just like you, sis. But we need to be careful because we’re just learning. You could get hurt if you don’t listen properly.”

“Mummy and Emma are teaching you?”

“Erm, not quite,” Henry felt guilty as he remembered he hadn’t discussed help with his magic with either of his mothers. “Grandpa’s teaching me.”

“Grandpa has magic!”

“No, not Grandpa David. My other one, Grandpa Rumple.”

Honour remembered how her mother and Auntie Zelena had often told her not to go near Mr. Gold, as he was dangerous and could hurt them. She’d already been told by Henry that he was his daddy’s dad and he would never harm a child, but nonetheless she was still wary when she saw him in the
street. “Mummy told me never to go near Mr. Gold; he’s a bad man!”

For a moment Henry felt a flash of annoyance towards his mothers, and the Charming side of the family. The side that refused to acknowledge the debt they owed Rumpelstiltskin; or his son Baelfire for that matter.

“Honnie, I know your mums say that, but my grandpa is not as evil as they say! His magic is more powerful than theirs or the fairies, and that’s one of the reasons they’re frightened of him. He’s been teaching me magic over the last few days, so…” he explained, not sure whether the four-year-old could really understand. However, it didn’t matter as her attention had already moved on.

“Can you poof us over to Rolly now?” she interrupted. “Can you Henry, can you?”

‘Erm, well I sort of know how to ‘poof’ myself, but I’ve not done it with anyone else before! I’m not sure whether I should…”

Honour just looked at him, lifting her arms up. “You can do it - picky up me! Please Henny! Poof me too!”

Henry chuckled. He knew he was being played. She’s going to be such hard work when she’s a teenager!

And with that he lifted her into his arms and, hoping he hadn’t forgotten Rumple’s instructions on travelling distances, pictured the log in the forest where he’d agreed to meet Roland. A silver mist enfolded them and moments later he appeared within feet of their intended destination. Yes! He patted himself proudly, as he set his sister down.

Looking around, he saw nobody, but heard voices in the distance. Loud voices and laughing.

Stepping through the familiar glade, Henry’s jaw dropped in astonishment, as he saw a broad mall of timber framed houses, in the shape of a large horseshoe, in the middle of the woodland! All the timber and roofing looked brand new, like the set of movie! “These weren’t here last week!” he said to himself, gasping at the sight.

“They weren’t here two hours ago!” said a laughing voice behind him. Henry spun around to see Friar Tuck, holding a tray full of food, beaming at him. “Hello young Henry, back so soon? And you’ve brought little Honour I see,” the red-faced, balding priest moved in to tickle his sister under the chin. “Hello, my dear, you come for a swim?”

The young blonde giggled at the attention from one of her dad’s friends. “Hi Tucky! Henry brought me here with magi…what?…a swim?”

The ageing priest chuckled as they walked towards the brand new settlement. “Yes Honour, a swim. Thanks to your father and Mr. Merlin, we have a pool and lake here now, and houses! In fact, we now have a whole new village for ourselves. No more sleeping under damp canvas!”

Henry was stunned. “That’s bloody brilliant! What are you going to call it? Don’t tell me! Locksley? Sherwood?

“Oh, it’s too early for that. Rob says we should have a draw or a vote of some kind. It’s not even finished yet. These are just the buildings. We still have to put in all the water, the taps and, I think he called it ‘plumbing’ or some such thing. He said he needs to speak to the builders and handymen in Storybrooke to understand what else we need. Remember, he’s only just got his magic, so he’s still learning how to use it.”

Henry nodded, “Still, he’s done more in one day than Storybrooke has done for them in six years.
I’m impressed. I’d love to help!”

“That’s much appreciated. I’m told you now have magic too?”

“Well yes, but I’m still learning. I know I’m not in Robin’s league.”

“No matter, you still have gifts from the gods. I hope and pray you use them wisely. Magic can be both a great and terrible thing, as your family know too well…”

“I know what you mean. So, where’s Robin?”

“He and the lads have taken off to the lake to cool off. Roland’s with them. Come along, I’ll show you around.”

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Despite a promising start, Emma & Regina had had an unsettled night. They’d cuddled, they’d kissed, they’d fondled and they’d attempted to make love several times. But Regina’s heart just wasn’t in it! She knew why; his image kept appearing in her mind frequently, and she started to realise Rumple’s words had been correct. She couldn’t shake him out of her thoughts now, even when she was trying to concentrate on the efforts and ministrations of her gorgeous wife. A woman who she truly loved.

Eventually, Emma sensed what was wrong and gave up, rolling off the brunette’s side and turning away, feeling disappointed and a little rejected. Regina knew she’d hurt her feelings and cuddled into her back, both still naked. The warmth was at least comforting. “I’m sorry Emma…I just feel so very…tired,” she whispered into the blonde’s ear. “I know,” Emma responded. “It’s all right, I understand.” They drifted to sleep. Eventually.

Regina awoke only a few hours later, looking across at the curled up blonde with a sad sigh. She slowly rose, putting on her dressing gown and creeping out of the room, to make coffee and figure out what to do. Remembering Henry was home, she tiptoed silently across to look in his room, the door ajar. She’d missed him terribly during his last three months away, and with all the recent distractions, with Gold and his own magic coming in, and with the return of him, she felt so very guilty for not spending enough time with her boy.

They’d only been back a few days, yet all the problems with Robin and Killian’s return had put a complete spanner in the works. Emma losing her temper with Henry at the bar hadn’t helped. He was still sore at her, despite pretending otherwise. Regina needed to talk to him. So, walking across to his door, she prized it open to be greeted by silence. The bed was ruffled. It had been slept in, but now he was gone. She moved across to Honour’s room, bypassing Roland’s as he’d stayed over with the Merry Men, yet again. Seeing the girl’s empty bed, she started to panic. Where the hell is she? Stepping downstairs, calling her name, she saw a large folded note on the kitchen worktop, next to the coffee machine.

_Mum,_

_Honnie woke up early and I couldn’t sleep. Rollie said there’s some big things going on at the camp and Robin and the men are building something. Honnie was wide awake and was going to disturb you, so I’ve taken her with me as she was desperate._

_Text me if you want me to bring her back but you know where we are if you need me._

_Love, Henry x_
It took a moment for Regina to realise what he had meant by that last comment. Oh…OH!

She cringed in acute red-faced embarrassment, realising he’d heard her and Emma in the bedroom last night, as they attempted to make love. Shit! It happened to him once before, when she and Emma were first dating. After that, one of them would always try to remember the soundproofing charm but on one occasion recently they forgot, and Roland had recently bumbled into their bedroom, alarmed at Emma’s screams to discover her vigorously going down on the blonde. That experience had shaken all three of them, although Roland never mentioned it again. She suspected Henry had had a gentle word with him a little later, as he’d never attempted to come into the room again, unless invited. Even then, he always seemed reluctant to enter their bedroom, even on Mother’s Day and Christmas.

“Everything ok?” said a sleepy voice behind her, startling her out of her reverie.

“Um…this,” she said, handing the note to her wife. Yawning, she then gulped as she read the last bit.

“Jeez, I guess Henry’s slowly becoming quite the expert on lesbian technique!” she groaned.

“Emma, it’s not funny! We have to be more careful when they’re around. It could have been Honour!”

“Yeah…God forbid she’d get to find out her mums have a healthy sex life…or not these days…”

Regina bristled. “Emma, that’s not fair!” she moved to step away from the blonde, who immediately regretted the caustic remark. Taking her hand and pulling her closer, “I know! I’m sorry! It’s just a lack of sleep and…and…everything.”

“Yes…well, I’m not happy with the situation either. However, we have two children right now doing god knows what in the forest, and a young man with whom nothing we do ever seems good enough!”

“Henry? What do you mean? The kid’s fine, Gina.”

“The ‘kid’, as you refer to him Emma, which by the way he has repeatedly asked you not to call him, is not fine! He’s fighting against us; he’s becoming distant. I know you apologised to him yesterday, but I can’t help feeling he doesn’t want to spend time with us anymore. He seems to spend all his days learning god-knows-what from the Imp and the rest with Little John and the men. We’re slowly losing him Emma, and I hate it!”

Her wife frowned. “I know it’s tricky, but we aren’t losing him, Gina. He’s just, well, gaining his independence. He’s more pissed off with me than you at the moment and, now that his magic’s come in, he’s trying to prove himself. I’m angry at myself for forgetting Neal’s anniversary. No wonder he latched on to Gold. That’s the only part of Neal’s family he has left!”

“So what do you suggest we do? Say fine, let the master of dark magic educate our son? Let him go out drinking until all hours? What the hell does that say about the way we bring up our boy?”
“That’s part of the problem. He’s not our boy anymore; he’s our man. He also said something to me about being pissed off that every time he gets a father figure, he loses him. First Neal, then Killian, then Forest Boy!”

“Emma!” The brunette hated her being derisory about Robin. “Don’t call him that! Robin saved my life! I’ve stopped calling your old flame Guyliner, or the One-Handed Wonder, so kindly do the same for me!”

Emma decided not to reply, knowing it would only make things worse. She nodded instead. “Sorry.”

“First, let’s get changed and go find them.”

“Well, breakfast first. I’m not facing that lot on an empty stomach…”

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At 11.00 sharp, Merlin apparated outside the front of Gold’s shop as agreed, the Dark One stepping out to meet him with a cursory nod. Rumple immediately noticed a beautiful young blonde woman beside him.

“Good morning, Professor. I assume this young lady is your daughter?”

“Good morning to you Mr. Gold. Indeed, this is Annabelle, my youngest girl. Or Doctor Sage, to give her professional title.”

Anna stepped forward, offering her hand and a disarmingly warm and flirtatious smile. “It’s a pleasure to meet you Mr. Gold; please just call me Anna.” The Dark One, flattered, smirked back. “Beautiful, intelligent and polite! It’s nice to meet you too, Anna. You must call me Rumple then.” Then turning to her father. “So, you said you needed my assistance?”

“I did. Our young Locksley is making some ‘changes’ in the forest. He’s going to be needing our help. I suggest we head over there first, before certain ‘obstacles’ present themselves.”

Rumple knew Merlin was a seer, like himself. “Obstacles? Could you be a little more specific?”

Merlin smiled. “Now he’s come into his magic, Robin is using it to do some building to improve the lives of the forest dwellers. Not just his men but the several hundred people living in those parts. There are people in authority who would not wish for him to succeed.”

“You mean people such as the Mayor, our former King George for example?”

“Indeed. It is amazing how easily people in positions of authority tend to disregard those they are supposed to serve. His recent appointment of the former Sheriff of Nottingham as Sheriff of Storybrooke hasn’t helped. A rogue, working for a crook, if ever I saw one. Interesting how he seems to have brought in a good number of his former guards to work for the city, too…”

Rumple smiled, enjoying the thought of disrupting things for two individuals who he’d never liked. “Then lead the way. Shall I apparate us there?”

“Perhaps not. Let’s walk, if that is ok for your leg? I would like to talk more about your younger son,
so I can hasten tracking him down.”

Rumple sighed. “If you are able to track him down! As days go on I begin to lose all hope. After Bae…”

Anna interrupted. “Dad, I’ve been thinking about…well…what we know about…the future.”

“What of it?”

“Well, Mr. Gold’s a seer like yourself. I remember you saying no one’s allowed to see their own timeline?”

“True, though it’s not about not being ‘allowed to’, it’s just the laws of magic prevent it.”

“Yes. Well, could Mr. Gold be allowed to see a snippet of your timeline? Perhaps something relevant to him?”

Merlin grinned at his daughter, understanding where she was going. “You clever girl! I think I know just the thing.” He turned to the Dark One. “Mr. Gold, I would like to offer you something special, in return for a deal.”

“I’m listening,” said a cautious Rumple. “What sort of deal.”

“I will show you a vision from my own future eyes, my timeline, that directly affects you! I’ll show it to you on condition that I be allowed to wipe it from your memory immediately after.”

“Why on earth would I make a deal to see something I won’t be allowed to remember?”

“Because it will change your view of the future! I will allow you to make a note of your feelings after the vision, but without giving any specifics which could affect the outcome. You can either write ‘Trust Merlin’ or ‘Do not trust Merlin’ straight after the vision. Do we have a deal?”

Intrigued but not seeing any harm, he shook the man’s hand. “Very well, we have a deal.” As the two men clasped hands, they both felt the magic bind their handshake, securing the agreement. No written contract would be necessary. Both knew that to break such a deal, would be on pain of death.

The moment their hands shook, Rumpelstiltskin felt the vision start opening up before him:

In place of the morning chill, he felt the sun on his back, as he stood near the edge of the new Storybrooke Lake. In front of him stood a small marquee with people standing around in small groups, drinks in hand. He was at the annual town summer fete. He browsed around, looking for anyone he recognised. Various familiar faces swam into view. Snow White and Charming were chatting with the former Cinderella and her husband. At Snow’s side, a young blonde boy, possibly eleven or twelve-years-old, looked bored and said something to her, before leaving to walk across to a small group sitting on the grass surrounding a picnic of food, and a very young child sitting amongst them.

As the boy sat down next to the blonde, turning to face Rumple, he immediately recognised him as Charming’s son and Emma Swan’s brother, Neal; the boy they named after his own son. The boy, Neal, picked up a small toy, a doll, from behind the small baby girl and brought it towards her face, tickling her on the nose with it. As she giggled, he watched the rest of the little family laugh. Looking across, he saw two older girls, pre-teens, one blonde and one redhead. After seeing the three children, he figured he was looking at an image set some five or six years ahead. Hard to be precise with
Looking up from Emma for another familiar face, he saw the former queen, Regina. Having aged little, she looked over to her wife whilst passing a plate across to another young blonde girl. This one must have been about five or so, but looked similar in colouring to one of the older girls. Well that’s a surprise? Did the Saviour get pregnant again?

As he watched the happy scene, a broad shouldered, bearded man carrying a tray of drinks gingerly crept into the family circle before kneeling down and handing them around. Yet another little girl, of similar age to the blonde, held on to his leg. The man, Robin Hood, passed Regina a drink. She leant across, said something and gave him a soft yet open kiss on his lips. Well, well, well! The thief and the queen are back together? Not the greatest surprise, as Rumple had always expected the pull of True Love magic would prevail. However, what happened next did surprise him. Passing the Saviour her own drink, a pint of beer, Hood said something to her before she also gave him an equally enthusiastic kiss on his lips, with Regina smiling at the pair. Well that was odd!

Continuing looking over the villagers, his eyes went over to another child, a dark-haired baby boy, probably six or so years old himself. The boy clambered over an older man, appearing to tickle him, as he lay happily on his back on the grass, laughing. Even on his back, Rumple instantly recognised himself!

That’s me! How can I be seeing myself? That’s impossible - the timeline! He thought, before reminding himself that this was Merlin’s vision, not his. Nonetheless, his eyes moistened as he saw his happy older self, playing around with someone who he guessed was his son? I have another son? From the side, another, younger and bearded man appeared and gently lifted the boy off the other Rumplestiltskin, turning the toddler in his arms before planting a kiss on the baby’s head, giving him what appeared to be a tickle when the little one twisted, giggling in his arms. Rumple’s jaw dropped further, barely able to breath as the man’s face came into view. BAELFIRE!

“BAE! BAE! IS IT REALLY YOU?” he yelled, trying to race over to his desperately missed son, before realising this was a vision and Baelfire couldn’t see or hear him. He felt tears stream down his face at the sight of his son was alive, cradling what he guessed must be his grandson. “My boy? My boys!” he croaked, unheard by the group...

Then came the final shock. Another young, clean shaven man with similar looks to his son walked across, beer in one hand while dropping his other arm to help the prone Rumple on to his feet. A man with clear blue eyes he recognised, as he looked to his side, at a shorter woman moving across to pull rumple’s other arm, the two helping him stand. Trembling, Rumple froze, desperately hoping the dark haired, slight woman would turn, so he could see her face. Let it be her!

As she turned, Rumple saw the beautiful features of his estranged wife, Belle, come into view. She dropped down to plant a kiss on the lips of the Dark One. My Belle! Belle and Bae and my gideon? All together?

Completely choked, broken with emotion, tears continued to flow as the mists slowly closed around the vision, leaving him standing unsteadily in front of Merlin and Anna. The young woman had a
tissue ready for him, guessing how he would react. Rumple sobbed gently. “How…how long was I gone for?”

“A matter of moments,” said Merlin, “You know how these things work.”

“Indeed, I do. Though you swear this vision hasn’t been adulterated? That this was your true vision?”

“I do indeed swear on my soul. This will be your future, Rumplestiltskin, if you take the right path…”

The Dark One silently twirled his fingers, a small note pad appearing in one hand and an ornate fountain pen appearing. He wrote three simple words.

‘Trust Merlin – completely!’

He signed the simple note with his trademark flourish, before showing it to the Sorcerer and pocketing it. “Very well. Do what you have to,” he sighed as the Sorcerer took the wonderful memory away.

It was just after noon when Regina and Emma turned up at the Merry Men’s camp. Expecting to see at least a couple of merry men at the now abandoned campsite, Regina grew concerned for the safety of her children, until she heard the noise of shouting and laughter nearby.

Edging through the glade towards the noise, they were both completely astonished as new buildings hove into view, where none had stood before. There seemed to be about forty beamed houses, all varied, all brand new, set into what appeared to be a horseshoe shape, with a large building in the centre with tables outside.

“Gina, is that really…”

“A inn, an English pub! Yes, it would appear so.” Said the older woman as she gazed with wonder at all the detail. Clearly strong magic was involved here. “I cannot image how else all this would have been done so quickly. Or why, for that matter.”

As the women edged closer to the hostelry, they saw the large wooden sign swing outside, bearing a recognisable coat or arms. A crest, with a gold inscription below. The Earl of Locksley.

“You like it?” said a voice from her right side. She looked across to where it came from and saw Merlin’s daughter walking towards her. “The pub name,” she said proudly, “That’s my idea! Though I haven’t actually told Robin yet. Do you think he’ll like it? It seems fitting, after all he did just build the pub.”

“Robin built this?” Emma gasped.

“Well he built the whole village actually. Well, all the buildings at least. My dad and Mr. Gold are sorting out all the fittings inside. They’re both here somewhere. All the toilets, plumbing, electrics and stuff. Robin said he had no idea how all that works so asked for any help he could get.”

“Gold and your father are working together?” Regina couldn’t believe her ears.

“Odd isn’t it? The most powerful light and dark sorcerers working together! Dad persuaded him to help out. They’ve been talking quite a bit these last few days…”

“Help with what? Plumbing? I can’t imagine Gold helping anyone other than himself!” said Emma.
That’s hardly fair now, is it?” Anna kept an innocent tone to her voice.

“Fair? You have no idea! After all the things he’s done to us!”

Anna’s eyes narrowed, though she maintained the smile. “And all the things you’ve done to him, too, of course! Would make anyone a little ‘bitter’…”

“Things we’ve done to him?” Emma gasped. “What are you talking about?”

“Well, consider. His betrayal by his first wife Milah. The loss of his son for decades, imprisonment in a cage underground for months by your own wife here,” she said, looking at the brunette. “Then she went on to imprison his lover, Belle, for twenty eight years, telling him she was dead. Her own mother tried to kill him. Her sister then imprisoned, raped and tortured him, and went on to murder his son. Then he loses Belle, partly because you, Emma, blackmailed him into going to the Underworld to save your boyfriend.”

Emma baulked at that, but the young man wasn’t done. “Then you helped Belle keep him away from his second son, resulting in little Gideon getting kidnapped and he hasn’t seen him since! So, you know, I’d say he’s more than entitled to be a bit sore towards you, don’t you think?” she continued the easy smile, but with a steely tone in her voice.

“How the hell do you know…” Emma started angrily, only to be interrupted again.

“Know all about you two and your families? That’s easy. My dad’s a master of all light magic. You think you have magic? With the greatest respect to you both, you have bugger all compared to him! And like him, I’m a seer, so I get to see some past, present and future. So, to be blunt, I know that you two, and the Mills family in general, have been the biggest, self-absorbed, self-righteous pains in the arse that Rumplestiltskin’s ever encountered.”

“How dare you!” Regina snarled, her anger rising. "You have no right to…” though she was also interrupted, this time by a familiar voice.

“She’s right though, mum.” Henry interjected, “Even if it is an uncomfortable fact!”

“Henry? Where did you come from?” said Emma.

“I’m helping the others in the pub. But don’t change the subject. Anna’s right! Grandpa may be the Dark One, but he’s my last link to dad. He’s changed, but neither of you noticed. Mum, everyone knows some of the abominable things you did as the Evil Queen. But you’re not her now! You changed. Well, so’s Grandpa, and he deserves the same respect. I know it’s hard, but just try! Merlin trusts him, and they’re working together, so that’s good enough for me.”

His mother sighed loudly. Annoyingly, he did have a point. It’s just…just…Rumplestiltskin. “I’ll try Henry, I’ll try. Now, to change the subject, again, what are you doing here?”

“Building a village, with the other guys. Gepetto’s teaching me carpentry! He’s fixing doors and things here and it’s great watching a real craftsman at work. I’ll best get back to him.” With that, he stepped away toward the large pub front door, before Regina called back.

“Henry! Where’s Honour and Roland? Shouldn’t they be with you?” she knew they were probably safe with John and the men, but they were nowhere to be seen.

“Probably by the lake. Or the pool. Just go through that glade by the new clinic over there,” he
shouted back, pointing to a large barn on the edge of the new development. “See ya later!” he called as he went back inside.

Clinic? Pub? Lake? “Lake? I don’t remember a lake near here!” Called Emma, but he couldn’t hear her. So, the women walked around the building, following their son’s instructions. Emma looked across at Regina, who looked glum. “Honey, you ok?”

“Not really.” She looked positively guilty. The blonde gently took the older woman’s arm in her own.

“What’s up?”

“It’s just…I feel like I’ve failed everybody here…” she groaned.

“Failed everyone? I don’t understand.”

“Emma, I built Storybrooke! Rumple created the curse, but I cast it. I built the houses I wanted and gave some people reasonable homes to live in. But I did nothing for the people out here! The poorest of them all. Usually the very people worst affected by my past. The Merry Men came here and helped them, but I still did nothing. Robin comes back with magic and has done more for them, in one day, than I did in thirty-five years! He’s helping them Emma. In a way that I should have! They’ll have housing, clean running water, even a damn hospital! And in all my time with magic of my own, I did nothing! I guess I’m feeling ashamed…”

Emma pulled her arm around her wife’s shoulders as the glade widened. “Well, I didn’t exactly help. We’ve been a little busy with our own lives, I guess. Perhaps now we can…h-he-HOLY FUCK!” she said as a new vision presented itself. In front of them lay a large lake that definitely wasn’t there two weeks ago!

The lake was a good half mile wide with a sandy shore. On the bank nearest to them sat a small cluster of people in recliners. Some stood close by, shouting and laughing. Looking closer, Emma noticed a small, hardy group, swimming in the water. “Bit cold for a swim, don’t you think?”

Regina’s mind raced back to a time five years ago, to a certain figure in her life who loved nothing more than swimming in icy water. He never seemed to feel the cold, probably hardened by a lifetime spent under canvass. She walked closer and instantly recognised the delighted screams of her little daughter, paddling at the edge. Roland, the son she hadn’t seen in two days, was lifting her up and dropping her down with a splash, both of them laughing. It was a lovely sight. Emma also smiled when she spotting Dorothy, skirt raised as she splashed alongside the girl, yelling something. The former Prince Philip was also swimming in the shallow water close by, a little deeper, before standing to drape an arm around Mulan, his and Aurora’s new fiancée.

Regina shouted to them, knowing her daughter hadn’t yet learned to swim. “Roland, please keep her safe! Don’t let her go too deep!” However, before the dimple-cheeked boy could reach his sister, the surface of the water was broken by someone coming up from below, lifting the girl into the air. “Roooaarrgh!” yelled Robin, giving his best impression of a sea monster, tickling the girl in his arms. She screamed loudly, laughing as he brought her into his wet arms and chest.

“Whaaa…Daddy! You’re freezing! You scared me!” she yelled, though giggling and laughing throughout. The small group laughing with them.

“Sorry my little love, Couldn’t resist!” Robin cuddled his daughter close, bringing her cold cheek to his chest and kissing the top of her head. Honour snuggled into him before raising her eyes to his. Regina, now closer, watched the little scene. It was obvious that after only three days together,
Honour was completely smitten with her father, a look of absolute adoration. Robin spotted it too and it was clear to him that, like Roland before her, this little one would have him wrapped around her little finger in no time.

“Grub’s up! Come and get it, you ‘orrible lot, or starve!” bellowed John from the makeshift barbecue assembled by the glade.

“Great, I could eat a horse!” yelled Roland. “Come on, Honnie, hot dogs and burgers!” Robin gently placed his girl down and she paddled the last few feet to her brother while Robin turned to dive back down below the surface for a final swim.

Emma saw the look on her wife’s face, totally enraptured by the little scene being played out. Regina never took her eyes off Robin until he disappeared below the surface for the best part of a minute, both now waiting patiently for the archer to surface again.

When the water’s surface broke, Robin stood slowly, now appearing to be holding an arrow with two large fish, still flapping, spearred on it. “Ooh, nice catch Rob!” Mulan called, “I think I’ll have some of that fish rather than the burgers, if there’s plenty to go around?” Robin smiled at her before slowly stretching and walking up the little beach.

Emma followed Regina’s line of sight, back to the man emerging from the water. For the first time, Emma really looked at him. His swim shorts, the not overdeveloped muscles on his arms and legs, the soft brown hair on the broad, muscular chest, still glistening with water. His light beard not quite masking the dimples. The strong jaw and ready smile. He really is very handsome, she thought. Her eyes couldn’t help dropping to his abs, then to the generous bulge resting under his trunks. Generous, considering he’s just come out of freezing cold water! He’s rather lovely. I can see what Regina sees in him! Without thinking, she licked her lips, wondering how he looked out of those trunks. Wait…what…what the hell! Stop! He’s Robin Hood, for fuck’s sake!

Looking up to his face, she saw Robin looking straight at her with those piercing eyes. A small smile playing on his face, as he moved closer to the married couple. Fuck! Please say he didn’t read my mind THAT time! Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Emma, just stop! Just stop…thinking!

Her cheeks now reddening, she turned to face away. From him, anywhere but look at him! It was then, as she turned away, she realised Regina was also staring intently. At her, wide eyed and brow raised!

Regina, having also just admired her former lover’s torso as he came closer, blushed and, not wanting to be caught staring at him by Emma, turned to look towards the children when she saw Emma staring. It was her turn to study her wife and she recognised that look as the blonde stared at Robin. The way Emma raked her eyes across his body. Across his lower half. It was when she subconsciously licked her lips that Regina knew beyond doubt that Emma’s look was one of…of admiration. Even lust! That was weird, watching her True Love blatantly checking out her ‘former’ True Love! As he came closer, she even appeared to look away, embarrassed. Then the blonde realised Regina had spotted her. Caught in the act!

“Emma,” she whispered. “You ok?”

“Oh, yeah…I’m…fine.” She mumbled. “Um…let’s go get some food!” She was about to lead her away when he reached them. Emma could hardly look at him, nervous that she had been caught staring.

“Gina, Emma! Glad you could come! I hope you like what you saw?” said Robin.
“What do you mean? I was just...just...” Emma squeaked in discomfort.

“Big, isn’t it? Hope you’re suitably impressed? I’m surprised I got it up the first time trying!”

Emma couldn’t believe his arrogance. *He may have caught me looking, but there’s no need to boast!*

“Annabelle said it should be the focal point of the village! I tried to remember the one we had in Sherwood. Henry and Gepetto are sorting out the bits we missed, and Merlin said he’ll sort out the inside and plumbing.”

“Oh! The pub? Thank God! Um...yeah...it looks great!” Emma bumbled, much to Regina’s amusement.

Trying to suppress a laugh, Regina took her wife’s hand, fingers interlocking as they walked up to the barbeque where the rest of the party had gathered. “Yes Robin. It’s rather brilliant. And I’m surprised you’ve managed to dragoon so many people here to help you! Though I don’t mean to burst your bubble, I can’t see Mayor George standing by, letting this place happen. Spencer is unlikely to approve it. There are planning rules, you know? You can’t just build wherever you want to. This is public land.”

“Actually, it’s private land. I checked with the previous freeholder.” He said, nonchalantly.

“Private? Freeholder? That’s impossible, I would have known! The only person other than me would be...”

“Would be me, Mrs. Swan-Mills!” said a familiar voice. She turned to see a stone-faced Dark One, standing next to Merlin. *Where the hell did they come from?*

“You? You don’t own the forest! I checked years ago...”

“Check again, Regina! I think you’ll find I own several tracts of land. Including the one you’re standing on, which I sold this morning!”

Emma sneered. “So, what’s in it for you? There’s always a catch. You going to increase rent once they’re settled? Threaten to terminate the lease if they don’t do what you want?”

“Hmm. A tempting thought, dearie, but no. I have sold this entire settlement of some 200 acres to Lord Locksley and his Merry Men. He paid me in full this morning, and the land you are standing on is now theirs in perpetuity! So, I’ll leave it to him to decide rents...”

Regina couldn’t believe her ears. “Robin, you bought this? How?”

“That’s not important,” said Robin. “But what is important is that once we get some legal things sorted out, I will give the land to the people who live here. They won’t pay rent, just guarantee to preserve it for others to inherit in due course.”

“Well get an independent lawyer to go through it with a fine-toothed comb. I still don’t trust him!” Regina couldn’t resist yet another snarky comment. Rumple was about to respond in kind when he felt a light hand on his shoulder.

“Actually, Mrs Swan-Mills, another of my daughters, Rosalind, is a rather accomplished lawyer.” Merlin interjected. “She will be joining me tomorrow, to assist Lord Locksley in achieving his aims. In collaboration with Mr. Gold, of course, who has been extremely helpful. However, we’re both in need of refreshment. Robin, how about we all retire to your new pub?”
“If you supply the beers!” said Robin, to cheers from the rest. “It’ll take a few weeks to brew our own!

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The Grand Opening

Several minutes later, Robin, Merlin & Rumple led the group to the pub’s large solid oak front door, before Robin turned to face the growing crowd outside. “Ladies and gentlemen, would you kindly wait here while these gentlemen and I put the finishing touches? We shouldn’t be more than a few minutes.”

Minutes later, the growing crowd watched as various colours flashed across the pub windows. Emma and Regina recognised the familiar magical colours of octarine, gold, purple and indigo, just visible behind the windows. Ten minutes later and the three men reappeared outside, closing the door behind them. Robin turned briefly to face the door, a white ribbon appearing across the front and scissors in hand. “I think a simple cutting ceremony is in order, don’t you?” Stepping onto a small stool to see over the top of the crowd, he delivered a short speech.

“Ladies and Gentlemen. I would like to thank you all, especially those who have assisted us this morning, in the building of this little community. I think it has been long overdue, especially to those less fortunate than ourselves, who have struggled unnecessarily.” Regina couldn’t help but feel that last barb was aimed at her.

“Where I come from, the pub was the very centre of the community, where business and friendships were forged and families are welcome. In some way, I feel sorry for the people of Storybrooke, who have places to eat, places to drink, but nowhere that can really ‘unite’ everyone. A pub is very different to a bar. It is a place that welcomes everyone, provided they behave themselves!” Several laughed at that last comment. “So, it only remains for me to ask someone to cut the ribbon.” That surprised everyone, as they assumed Robin to be the obvious choice.

“For that honour, I would like to ask someone who has made an enormous impression on me. Someone who has changed, and thanks to recent things I have learnt, someone who has in the past denied their own happiness to save the lives of others. Someone who has known true sacrifice and, I believe, worked in their own way, for the good of others, even though those efforts have usually been unrecognised or overlooked.”

Emma looked across at Regina, knowing she didn’t want to do this, even if Robin did have good intention.

“So, Mr. Gold, I would be honoured if you would kindly cut the ribbon and open our public house?”

A loud gasp went around the crowd. Emma thought Robin had lost his marbles. Henry just shouted “Yes!”

“ME? You’re asking me to cut your ribbon?” Rumple couldn’t believe it. Nobody had ever treated him with this sort of respect before. Nobody. At least nobody who wasn’t forced to do his bidding. He was astonished, jaw dropping slightly as Robin nodded and gave him the scissors. “Please?” said the archer.

As Rumple approached the ribbon, still stunned by the request. “Well…Lord Locksley, this is a surprise! Having never done this before, I guess all I need to say is, I declare this public house open! Bless all those who will eat, drink and make merry in her!” he closed, cutting the ribbon to a loud cheer from the crowd.
The doors slowly opened, and people started to filter inside. They were met by the sight of a large open fireplace on one side, high oak beams, stained glass windows and a ceiling with carved mosaics featuring country scenes, and one of the most beautiful bar fronts imaginable, featuring extravagant, flamboyantly carved portraits. *Clearly the work of Gepetto, and possible a little bit of Henry*, thought Regina. *How could they have done all of this in just one morning?* The beautiful bar was one of the best stocked she had ever seen, Tuck and Little John standing proudly behind it.

As everyone slowly filed in, numerous loud gasps were common. “Wow! This is awesome!” declared Emma as she stepped up to the bar. “What’ll ya have, Emma? First one’s on the house, though you’ll have to pay after that!” said John.

The former sheriff slowly shook her head in disbelief at the bar. “You have hand pumps? You’re making beer here?” She felt like a kid in a candy store, not sure what to try first. A voice at her side answered.

“Sort of,” said Henry, smiling. “Merlin and grandpa magicked the beer and drinks in today, but there’s a microbrewery just behind the pub. They should be brewing their own beer in a few weeks. It’s going to be great! They thought of everything! I’d want to work here during the holidays…”

“You want to work in a bar? Henry, concentrate on university first, young man! Then we’ll see,” said his older mother, appearing on his right. “Though I do agree, this place is astonishing. So much detail. How did you and Gepetto get all the carvings done so quickly?”

“Well, that’s the weird thing. Merlin’s able to ‘slow down’ time. Gepetto’s been at it for two weeks now, though it felt like two hours in our time. August drew some of the carvings, and Merlin magicked them into the wood to save time. Gepetto tidied it up. Grandpa and Merlin stocked up the bar temporarily and built the brewery. It’s fantastic!”

The two women could only agree. A foaming pint of draught ale was pushed in front of Emma and a golden pint of hand drawn cider placed in front of Regina.

“No, I’m sorry John, I don’t think I should! I’ve got the children to take home. Best not…”

“You'll be insultin' me! Don’t fret, Gina,” said the gentle giant. “Rob’s got ‘em both outside and there’s bedrooms for all of you here. Everything’s taken care of, so just relax and enjoy it. Let your hair down you two,” he said looking across at Emma, “you deserve it.”

Emma grinned at Robin’s best friend, then leant across the bar and kissed him on the cheek. “Thanks, John.” Since Robin and Killian’s deaths, the bear of a man had been a true friend, acting as a babysitter, counsellor and shoulder to cry on for both of them during the difficult years that followed. Regina also smiled at him, blowing a little air kiss in gratitude before lifting her glass of, what looked like cider, to her lips.

“Mmmm,” she breathed as the cool fresh apple taste swam across her palate. It was wonderful! Looking to her wife, who was experienced a similar experience. “Gina, I think we’ve found a new bar!”

“It’s a pub Emma, not a bar!” said Will Scarlett, appearing on her left. “There’s a world of difference!”

Emma was used to bantering with him, but she was frankly too comfortable to bother. “Well, you may be right. Either way, this place may well put the Rabbit Hole out of business.” Neither of them seemed to notice, nor care, that their son, now perched between them on the stool, was now nursing his own beer. Regina thought to warn him about the perils of alcohol but, seeing his happy contented
face, didn’t want to ruin the moment with lectures. This was a peaceful moment for them.

Or at least it was, until Alan-A-Dale ran into the bar, shouting. “Guys, the Mayor and the Sheriff are here! There’s something going down! To action, gents!”

Emma was surprised how, for such a big guy, John flipped himself nimbly across the counter towards the door, having taken his bow and quiver from behind it. Tuck seemed to have followed suit. Regina realised who was also outside. “Honour, Roland!” She breathed to Emma as she also turned to head outside, worried for their safety.

As she stepped into the sun, in the courtyard, Regina saw the current mayor, Albert Spencer, mounted on a white charger, talking down to Robin. Next to him on another steed, stood the current Sheriff, Keith, the former Sheriff of Nottingham. She was surprised to see all four of the sheriff’s deputies standing either side of the pair, one hand on their guns. Robin, in the centre, held Honour by his side although Roland was a little nearer to the sheriff.

“I understand you are responsible for these monstrosities?” said Spencer, looking down at Robin with a sneer.

“If by that, you mean these buildings, then yes, I am.” Robin replied impassively.

“Did you request any sort of permission to build them?”

“I did not. This is private property, which I have now acquired.”

“It is no such thing! The forest is a part of Storybrooke, and as such, public land. You have no right to build here! You will take it down immediately and disperse. Or else there will be consequences.”

Rumple again appeared from nowhere, his eyes glowering at the former king. “I am afraid it is you who is wrong, Mr. Mayor, as you can see from these deeds. I owned this land and sold it to this man this morning! You have no jurisdiction here, so I suggest you be on your way…”

Spencer fumed. He was an arrogant man who didn’t like to be contradicted. However he knew from experience not to cross the Dark One. “He cannot build a town within Storybrooke, or its surrounding land, without permission!”

“I think you’ll find I can, and I have, Spencer. Now leave!” Robin was starting to get irritated. “You are trespassing!”

“It’s Mayor Spencer, or Your Majesty to you, Hood!” spat Keith.

“You’re neither a mayor of this village, nor a king any more!” said Robin, trying to hold back his temper and looking to the man on horseback. “George, you are, and always have been, a pointless and ridiculous excuse for a man! I know you won an election in Storybrooke, but I have no doubt you fiddled it. Your sheriff here is a jumped-up little shit, promoted far beyond his abilities. Now for the second time, I request you leave!”

George was incandescent with rage at being spoken to like that by a mere peasant, a thief! The sheriff was even more angry, boiling with fury at being ridiculed. “You’ll regret that,” he said, purple-faced. “We’ll burn down every property here! Now it was Robin’s turn to anger. However, it was Roland that spoke first.

“So, it’s true! Henry always said you were a couple of arseholes!” He cheekily smiled at them both. Several in the crowd laughed at that.
That did it for Keith, turning to the boy and grabbing him by his neck. “You cheeky little bastard!”

Emma and Regina both gasped, Regina instantly forming a fireball in her hand, ready to launch. *How dare he touch my son! He’ll die before he hurts him!* However, before she could even release it, the sheriff flew backwards through the air, pushed by an invisible force which held him in place against a wall. The four armed deputies were hauled up by an invisible force, suspended upside down a few feet from the ground!

The crowd gasped, shocked at first, then started to cheer as they realised who had done this. Robin walked slowly up to the cocky, arrogant, sheriff, before leaning in to him and growling in a voice Regina had never heard before his encounter with Zelena.

“You lay one hand on any of my children or my family, and I swear by all those present that I will *end you!* End you! The same goes you, Spencer. You are nobody here! Leave and NEVER come back. Ever!” With a blink, the invisible bind suspending the men ceased, all five crashing to the ground. The mayor cursed as he stood up.

Spencer wasn’t stupid. He knew they had no chance against him. Not when Rumple seemed to be aligned to them. However, before he formulated a response, the grey bearded man who had been standing next to Rumple looked at the fallen group before speaking. “Mr. Gold, I’m wondering. When are the next mayoral elections due?”

“Next month, Professor Sage. The sheriff’s role is also overdue for election...”

“Then I suggest it is time to find new candidates...”
Chapter Summary

The Earl of Locksley is a big hit. Ruby and Dorothy find a way to become a family, Killian prepares to leave and Emma resolves to fix Regina's problem...

Chapter 12

Early that evening, Doctor Whale arrived at the new settlement, driving from the town in Ruby’s pick up, the old friends travelling together. Although he’d often entertained romantic thoughts towards the young wolf in the past, Ruby’s return to Storybrooke with Dorothy three years ago made him realise her affections lay elsewhere. And frankly, he knew she deserved better than him.

Despite this, a firm friendship grew between the doctor and the two women over the next few years, as he helped Ruby, with Archie Hopper, cope with depression following her grandmother’s death and suddenly having the responsibility for the café she’d inherited. Dorothy too found the transition a shock. In turn, they had helped him wean himself off his alcohol addiction.

He was looking forward to this evening in the forest. Unlike the residents of Storybrooke, the merry men and the forest dwellers generally treated him with courtesy and respect. Anyone devoting their life to helping others, was always welcomed and he’d made many new friends here. The latest being Caroline, the young widow of a former fletcher who’d died when the merry men battled with Zelena’s monkeys. Ruby knew Caroline was interested in the doctor, though Victor was still plucking up the courage to actually ask her on a date. “Vic, I’m telling you she really likes you. Just ask her out! She’s definitely gonna say yes. Why are you waiting?”

“Nerves, Rubes. It’s been a while since I’ve done this, and I don’t exactly have a great track record with women now, do I? Since my brief time with Snow, I’m not sure what she said but everyone thinks I’m a sleaze and only after one-night stands! Then I wanted to ask you out, but before I plucked up the guts, you turned out to be a lesbian! I guess I just lost my self-confidence after that.”

Ruby snickered. “Don’t be daft, Vic! Snow’s never bad-mouthed you, even if David acted like an ass about it! You were both cursed, anyway. And as for me, you know full well if I’m anything, I’m bi, not gay. It just happens I finally fell in love with another woman. Plus, I love David too, he stopped me being killed by half the town, for god’s sake! Just because I wore short skirts and flirted a bit, then fell in love with a woman, everyone assumes I was shagging half the girls in Storybrooke! Dot was my first real relationship and my last. So just ignore the moaners, and get out there. There’s someone for you too, Victor Whale, if you just get on and pluck up the courage. I
for one think it’s a particularly feisty blonde with long legs and a cleavage to die for!”

Victor finally laughed. “I needed that! Though I’m not sure I feel comfortable you admiring Caroline’s boobs! You’ve got a fine pair of your own, two pair if you include Dot’s. That’s more than enough!” Ruby chuckled too, as they parked up at the end of the track where the Merry Men’s tents used to be. Seeing the new buildings, the pair looked at the crowd outside what looked like a gorgeous English pub set in the middle ages.

“Holy shit!” said Ruby

“Bloody hell!” said Whale. “The perfect pub - and it’s your round!”

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Over the course of the evening, word spread to Storybrooke, and it seemed everyone had come to see the new village. Roland and his friends had corralled some of the children to show off the new lake, escorted by their unfortunate parents, as most really wanted to get into the pub. As Ashley had volunteered to look after the little ones, Honour was tucked safely up with her daughter Alex, one of the girl’s best friends, in one of the new master bedrooms. Everyone in the large bar downstairs had broken into groups, seated and standing. In one corner on a comfy red couch, sat Regina and Emma, looking at everyone milling around.

“It’s astonishing,” Regina whispered to her wife sitting by her side, beer in hand and looking at Robin, who currently seemed to be surrounded by a small group, including Philip, Mulan and Aurora. Plus a tall, elegant blonde woman seemed to have attached herself to his arm.

“What woman?”

“Nope, can’t say I’ve seen her before, though I’d hardly say she was trampy!”

Ignoring her, Regina never took her eyes off Robin and his admirer, scowling when the unknown woman’s arm went around Robin’s waist at the back. Robin didn’t step away but instead slid his own arm around her shoulder as he listened to Aurora. Clearly, she was not unknown to him, which made Regina even more anxious. “Why’s she pawing him?” She growled, unheard by anyone but Emma.

Emma felt a little hurt by Regina’s behaviour, and was about to make a snarky remark, when a large frame appeared in front of her, banging another foaming glass of beer in front of her. “‘Ere Em, ‘ave another pint on me! Looks like you two need it” said Little John as he also laid a glass or red in front of the brunette and eyeing the scowl. “Something wrong, Gina?”

Without acknowledging the gift and continuing to glare at the group, “John, who is she?”

He followed her gaze, “Ah, Caroline? She’s Rob’s cousin. She was always thick as thieves with his sister Maria. Carrie’s his father’s niece. We thought they’d both died. She’s a lovely girl, you should meet her. Come on, I’ll introduce you.” Then, brooking no room to argue, he lifted their drinks up in one hand and turned to take her hand, encouraging her to join him. “Er, no John, it’s fine! I don’t want to disturb them, they’re…”
“Nonsense. Come along…you too, Emma! You’ve both sat there chewing wasps for the last half hour. Come and join the party!” With that, he wrapped his arm around her, moving her to join the group, Emma bringing up the rear. John had a wonderful quiet self-confidence, that always had a calming effect on the former mayor and sheriff. “Now then you lot. Come along. Rob, Phil, Rory, widen up and let us join in! Carrie, let me introduce you to our friends Regina and Emma Swan-Mills. Ladies, this is Lady Caroline Locksley,” With that he gently pressed Regina’s back, encouraging her to step closer.

Trying to avoid looking directly at Robin, she was a little surprised to see the blonde step directly in front of her, proffering her hand. Looking up she couldn’t help but notice an obvious similarity between the woman and Robin. The same piercing pale blue eyes. The same full smile, which was almost flirtatious. She immediately felt a little stupid and ashamed for the ridiculous snide remarks she’d made about the woman. Now closer, Regina could see that Caroline was actually rather beautiful, *it must run in the family*, she thought, and rather elegantly dressed too!

“John, I’ve told you so many times! Please drop the handle?” she gently admonished him, albeit with a smile. “Hello, Mrs. Swan-Mills. I hate titles, don’t you? Just call me Carrie. I’ve been dying to meet you. I’ve heard so much about you!” She said, taking Regina’s hand in her own, while bringing her left hand to gently grasp Regina’s forearm. Regina could feel the genuine warmth of the woman and smiled back.

“Please, call me Regina,” she hesitated with a small smile, before sensing a light touch on her arm. “I’m sorry, Robin never told me about you. I can see the family likeness!”

After a moment’s intense look between them, which the brunette felt almost searched her soul, Caroline gently released her grip, moving across to Emma. “And so, you must be Emma, her beautiful wife and Saviour, I gather?” Carrie gently gripped the Saviour’s arm in a similar manner.

“How do you know me?” said Emma, as always straight to the point, and a little irritated at the woman’s warmth towards Regina.

“I met Roland and your gorgeous little girl today! He told me so much about you both. Such a bright boy. I also met Henry. My, he’s an intelligent young man, isn’t he? You must be so proud!”

Robin watched the exchange, seeing the look of confusion on Regina. “Gina, Carrie’s my dad’s niece; his brother’s daughter, hence the name. I was sure she’d perished along with my sister. Some years earlier, Carrie came to live with us and I’ve always regarded her as another sister.” He said with pride, again hugging Caroline’s side. “She’s just given me some astonishing news. I’ve just learned Maria escaped the fire…” he sounded tearful as he explained. “I never told you about Maria, or some of my family history because the memory was just too painful…” he trailed off, looking down.

“Dad refused to submit to King John’s rule during the persecutions,” Carrie added. “So, he and my mother were murdered by his guards. Robin’s father got us out in the nick of time and they raised me as one of their own. Robin, Maria and I grew up together. Until Robin was forced to leave to fight for the king…” she hesitated, not wanting to continue.

“Well we’re here now, safe.” he whispered quietly, placing a kiss on her forehead and hugging her closer. “However, now I know Maria’s alive, I have to find her…”

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At the other side of the bar, Ruby and sat hunched around a small table with Merlin, the women having pigeonholed him the moment he was alone. Ruby, although embarrassed to begin, had begun
telling him about their wish for a baby, and his own daughter’s comments. Merlin sat back, pulling his pint as he considered his response. “Well, Anna was partially correct. It is possible.”

Dorothy sat up with excitement. “For Ruby and I to have a baby ‘together’?”

“Well, yes…and no! Life can be created in a laboratory with DNA from two women only, or two men for that matter. But currently, it would not be fully viable; any child resulting would have limited natural defences. However, you live in a land with magic. So, there is a way…”

Ruby & Dorothy sat, attentive.

“Basically, we remove fertile eggs from you both. We fuse their cells in pairs, one from each, using magic, before returning them back to your ovaries. Then we introduce DNA from a donor and, all being well, at some point you conceive. The resulting child would have fifty percent genes from the male and fifty percent from the combined females.” He paused before continuing. “Though there is a catch.”

“The baby wouldn’t be healthy?”

“Actually, the baby would be as healthy as any other. However, as the eggs will have been created with magic involved, it would require sperm from a donor who also possessed magic. Plus, even though the child would not have been the product of true love on all sides, it is also quite possible it would possess magic too.”

Dorothy frowned. “So, we need sperm from a guy with magic? That sort of limits us, doesn’t it?”

Ruby wrapped a comforting arm around her partner. “Don’t despair just yet, Kansas. Let’s see, who do we know with magic in Storybrooke?”

“Well, there’s Gold?”

“Out of the question!” Ruby gasped at the thought. “The Dark One? No chance!”

“Robin?”

“Great genes, perfect father material, but I can’t see him going for it somehow. He has three kids in town already. Plus, you’ve seen the looks Regina keeps giving him? I could see those two hooking up again at some point and I wouldn’t want to make an enemy of her!”

“Henry?”

“Too young. Can you imagine how Emma and Regina would react?”

“Jefferson?”

“Again, good genes and a good dad. But he’s gone off again. Nobody’s seen him for months.”

“Then the only other guy I know with magic is our sorcerer here,” Dorothy sighed. The women looked up at him. “Merlin, I can’t imagine you would…”

“Ladies,” Merlin placed a comforting palm on top of their joined hands. “While I would be honoured to be considered, there are certain factors which would prevent that. Also, there is one more male with magic that you may have overlooked.” With that, the pub door opened, and the women looked across.

“Alright, thief! Where’s that bloody drink you owe me?” yelled Killian across the bar, to cheers from
Ruby raised her brow, smirking at her girlfriend. “Worth a try?”

Dorothy nodded. “Let him get a drink or two inside him first, then we’ll talk.”

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“Mu, I’m so delighted for you!” Robin said, as he wrapped his friend in a warm hug, “you’ll make a wonderful mother, just like our Rory here,” glancing at Aurora & the prince. “Phil, you’re a lucky old dog!”

Aurora smirked. “Dog? So, what does that make us? His ‘bitches’?”

Philip roared with laughter. “Now if I’d said that, they’d kill me!”

Regina watched them intently, “I didn’t realise you knew Mulan so well, Robin?”

Mulan answered for him. “I’ve known Robin quite some time. After I left these two,” regret crossing her face, “Rob offered me a place among the men. These guys are like my brothers!” She looked with affection at John and Will. “They pulled me out of a very dark place. Plus, Neal of course.”

Emma’s ears pricked up. “Neal? You mean my Neal?”

“Henry’s father, yes. Rob and I met Neal when he arrived in the forest, injured. He was shot in this land and passed through a portal. He was so desperate to get to Neverland to save Henry. The only man I knew who ever managed to escape that accursed place, twice. He was one of the bravest men I ever met. He and Rob helped me to open up to my real feelings.” A knowing look passed between her and Aurora.

“Aye, he’s sorely missed,” agreed Robin. At which point a shout rang across from the door.

“Alright, thief! Where’s that bloody drink you owe me?” yelled Killian, to a cheer from the bar as he walked over to Robin with a grin. “Someone said you’ve been doing some building? Nice little shack, by the way!”

Robin wrapped the man in a brief hug. “Hello, pirate. Missing me already?” before looking across at who was manning the bar. “Gilbert, could we have a pint for this old reprobate please? Nothing too strong, he can’t take his drink, this one!” More laughs from the crowd.

“Oh, I take that as a personal insult!” said Killian with a fake frown. “It’s our thief here who can’t take his ale! Any decent rum behind that bar?” he shouted.

“Later Jones, later.” John calmed. “But first you’ll try a drop of the freshly, magically brewed for this week only, Locksley Ale.”

“Locksley Ale, in the Earl of Locksley pub?” snarked Killian, but with no malice. “Not getting a little grand with the titles in your old age, eh thief?”

“Oh, do shut up!” harrumphed Robin, “I had nothing to do with the name. It was Annabelle and the guys. And as for the pub name, that’s got to go!”

“No!” yelled John, Philip and Gilbert Whitehand together, as the latter handed Killian his beer, along with another for Robin.
“Absolutely not!” said Mulan.

“Robin, you’re one of the most humble men I’ve ever met. None of us even knew you held the title or came from royalty. I say we keep it!” said Aurora.

“Well I like it.” Said Regina, speaking up for the first time. “I agree with Aurora. You should keep it!”

Robin had avoided Regina’s gaze all evening, as it seemed to bring out a sadness in him. And a longing. A longing he was desperate to supress.

She’s a married woman now!

Before he had a chance to reply, John had already stepped up onto a chair near the bar.

“Ladies, Gents and the rest of you ‘orrible lot! Your attention please!” The hubbub of the pub stopped to listen to the gentle giant. “Rob has given us this fine pub and village here today!” cheers rang out before John waved his arms to continue. “However, he’s not too keen on the name of our new hostelry!” Robin cringed, his face in his hand as the man continued. “Now I know it’s supposed to be his decision, as it is his pub. But knowing what a very ‘democratic’ fellow he is, I’m sure he would agree with a majority vote here? So, all those in favour of permanently naming this fine establishment the Earl of Locksley, raise your hand and say Aye!”

“AYE” rang out loudly from all but one, their hands raised in the air.

“Motion carried…my Lord!” shouted John to Robin, as cheers and laughter rang out on all sides. Robin slowly rolled his eyes in resignation.

“You’ve been well tucked up there…My Lord!” chuckled Killian as everyone turned to Robin, expecting a reply.

“All right, all right! You win! The Earl of Locksley it is. But on one condition. You all drop that ‘My Lord’ crap! Some of my forebears may have come from royalty, but I didn’t, even if Merlin say’s the title’s mine!” Cheers followed. “Now enjoy your drinks - not too many mind, as tonight’s is on the house. But tomorrow, I expect help from all those able, to build our new clinic!” More cheers and slaps on the back

Emma stood back watching the group clustered around Robin, when her eyes drifted across to Henry, now seated at a side table, deep in conversation with the Sorcerer and the Dark One. What the hell’s that all about? she wondered. As the was about to step over to them, a hand landed softly on her arm.

“Hello, Emma.” She looked up to see Killian Jones, “can I speak to you for a moment?”

“Oh. Come to make me feel guilty…again?”

“No. I came over to apologise…” That was a surprise.

“Let’s go over there,” she said, moving toward a side table. “So we’re not overheard.”

“Emma, when I came back on Saturday, for me we’d only been parted three weeks, even though for you it was five long years. I said some stupid things to you, because I was angry and hurt. But you didn’t deserve them. You grieved, and you had the right to move on, but I guess for the last few days, Archie said I was grieving too, for what we had, but my grief was condensed into hours, not years. I lashed out at you. When you had a falling out with your boy, I just twisted the knife. That was wrong of me. I want to apologise.”

“Killian…”
“No, Swan, let me finish! I know we’re over, and I can finally accept that. But I want you to know I’ll always treasure the time we had. You changed me, Emma Swan! Me, a murderous pirate. I’ve done some pretty vile and despicable things in my time, that I’m not proud of. But you seemed to see something in me, and I’ll always be grateful for the love we had. Yes, it’s behind us now, and I’ll be leaving at the weekend. It’s unlikely you’ll see me again, Emma, so I just wanted to say that, despite this week, I want nothing more than for you to be happy. You seem to have found love, and if that love is with Regina, then so be it. I wish you well.”

Emma knew he meant every word. “Thank you” she almost whispered the words. “I did love you too, Killian. With all my heart. It’s just that…”

“I know - you don’t need to say anything.” He picked up her right hand, placing a small kiss on the back. “Be happy, Swan. I’ll always remember you.” It sounded like a final parting, bringing a lump to her throat and a tear to her eye.

On the other side of the room, Henry finally had the Sorcerer and Rumple to himself. “So I don’t get it? How come I have magic? I get that grandpa David and grandma Snow have ‘True Love’, so my ma got magic from them, and became the Saviour. But my dad and my ma? They never had true love, did they? She got pregnant in prison and they spent most of my life apart. How could I get it? And Zelena and mum? Cora was horrible and never loved anybody! How come they all had magic?

The Sorcerer looked at him kindly. “Henry, it’s much more complicated than that. Magic can be inherited from strong genes, as in the case of Cora, Regina and Zelena. From receiving a curse, like Mr. Gold here. Or even a rare gift from the gods, like Robin and Mr. Jones.

“Henry, you cannot be sure Baelfire and Emma didn’t have true love.” Added Rumple. “It comes in many forms. Your mothers both woke you from curses. That was true love. A love a father feels for his child, that can be true love. You can have many true loves in your life…”

“And if one of those loves is also a ‘soulmate’, that’s a much stronger combination! A soulmate knows you better than anyone else. Some think you can only have one soulmate, but I disagree. Over hundreds of years I have seen many people with more than one soulmate and I believe your Princess Aurora up there is an example,” the Sorcerer said, looking up at the happy trio.

“So if my dad were to come back…”

Henry,” said Merlin. “It is only a slim possibility that your father would return. Do not spend the rest of your days waiting for it to happen! You have two mothers, both living, who love you beyond measure. Use your time with them wisely. You will miss them so much when they are no longer around to guide you.”

Henry’s smiled dimmed as he thought about the last three days. “Yeah. But I don’t think they want to be with me too much right now! I’ve been kinda horrible to them. Since Robin and Killian came back. I said some pretty nasty stuff…”

“How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is to have a thankless child!” Merlin interjected, earning a raised brow from Henry, before adding, “Shakespeare, King Lear.”

“You think I should apologise?”

“Without question, regardless of where blame lies! Henry, whatever your slight, I’m quite sure your mothers will forgive you almost anything. And you should do the same. They are only human. And so are you…”
As Emma sat, watching Henry talking to the two men, nursing her beer, she saw him glance back at
her. *She was clearly a part of the conversation.* She hardly noticed someone sit down beside her on
the next chair.

“Emma, may I talk to you?” said Robin, his voice low. She nodded for him to continue.

“I meant what I said yesterday. About not getting in the way of you and Regina. I know I’ve caused
some difficulties for you these last few days, but…” it was Emma’s turn to interrupt.

“It’s ok Robin, I get it. I believe you. You read my mind accidentally and let me read yours. But no
matter what we say or do, the fact remains Regina IS still in love with you! She is with me too, but I
saw her bring you back from death with that kiss in the hospital! Nothing will change that. True
love’s kiss and all that bollocks! She is still in love with both of us and I guess I have to deal with it
somehow…”

“Emma, I have the same feelings for her. That’s why it’s just too painful to be around her now. She’s
a married woman, so that’s why I’ll be staying away from Storybrooke, permanently. I’ll live here in
the village and forest. So you, Regina and I need to figure out some sort of schedule for us all to
spend time with Honour and Roland. And little Robyn, though that leaves me with another
problem…”

“Robin, that won’t be enough! You’ve talked to Tink. What Gold said is unfortunately, true. The
only way we’ll prevent her sliding into depression again is by Regina ‘being’ with you. ‘Mating’
with you. And frankly, I’d rather she did that than watch her be unhappy the rest of her life! There’s
even a strong likelihood that if she doesn’t, she’ll slip into depression and possibly…”

Her eyes started to redden. Robin gently put his hand on both her arm, wanting to comfort her but
not wishing to make her uncomfortable. “But what about you, Emma? What would that do to you?
Knowing your wife had lain with me? I’m sorry, I couldn’t do that to you!”

Emma listened, knowing he meant every word. He was a genuinely nice guy and, looking at the
sadness in his eyes, she now fully understood. Though he hid it, he was clearly going through all the
pain and heartache that Regina was. Desperate to stop him seeing a tear, she pushed her head down,
niffing slightly. He moved closer, bringing an arm around her back, gently pulling her in. She
rested her forehead on his upper chest, trying not to be noticed. It worked, until a voice came from
beside her.

“Emma, Robin? What’s wrong?” Regina whispered close to the blonde’s ear, trying not to draw
attention to them.

“It’s ok Regina. Emma was feeling a little ‘off’”, Robin deflected.

“Emma, talk to me. What’s wrong?” Emma separated from Robin, her head still down.

“It’s ok, Gina. Just…let’s go,” The blonde stuttered. “I’m not feeling so good.”

Robin, sensing their discomfort, stepped in. “Tuck’s reserved the master bedroom for you both,
Regina. It’s the first big door on the first floor. It’s all made up for you. Honour’s asleep in the
adjoining room with Alexandra and Ashley’s in with them, so she’ll be expecting you.”

As Emma stood, Regina moved closer, taking the blonde’s right hand in her left. As Robin moved
to bid them goodnight, he placed a hand on each of their free arms as a simple gesture.

That’s when all three felt it! A quick pulse of energy, that seemed to travel through between and
around them. *Like a jolt of electricity.* They all shuddered, looking at Robin as it seemed to happen
the moment he touched them both. He stepped back. “Sorry. Did I cause that?”

The women both stared at him, open mouthed before looking to each other in shock. Regina seemed the first to recover. “Don’t worry. You’ve magic now, so it could be anything,” she lied. “Emma, I’ll come up with you.”

The pair bid goodnight to some of the other guests, before walking across the room towards the large corner staircase leading to the first floor. As he and Merlin sat at a table close by, Rumple drained his scotch. However, out of the corner of his eye, he spotted the Sorcerer surreptitiously twitch a finger in the direction of the women. A pale white flash passed in an instant behind the waists of the pair. It lasted less than a second, twirling quickly around them twice, it seemed to pull two colours, purple & blue, from the women before the colours meshed together and dissipated. As the light was light octarine, a colour difficult to detect by non-magicians, no one else seemed to notice, least of all Emma and Regina.

The Dark One smirked, addressing Merlin, though still looking down at his glass. “A fertility spell?”

“No, a potency one actually.” He whispered back. “I gave the archer one as well, a little earlier.”

“For what reason, may I ask?”

“For reasons which will be revealed in the fullness of time.” he answered, cryptically.

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At another round table close by, Killian Jones sat opposite Ruby & Dorothy, all three hunching closer to avoid being overheard. “So, ladies, let’s see if I’ve got this right. Merlin’s going to combine, or fuse, your eggs together, so if either of you got pregnant, you would both be his or her natural mothers?”

“Yes. Though we would still need the seed, the sperm, from a magical male source to actually get pregnant.”

“Male source. You mean the father? So, what role would he, or I, have in the life of this child?”

Ruby hesitated before answering. She hadn’t thought of that. What role would he have?

Dorothy stepped in.

“Well, as for raising a child, Ruby & I would do all that. I’m sorry, that sounds selfish. Look… I understand if you have a problem with this and sorry to have brought it up.” She sounded embarrassed and started to stand. “Ruby, perhaps we should go...”

Before she fully rose, Killian placed his hand on hers. “Calm yourself! I just want to understand. This is a big step, but I am willing...”

“You are!” Ruby tried to screech with excitement. “Oh Killian, thank you, thank you...”

“Hold on love! Let me finish. I have a couple of conditions though. Firstly, if this is successful and one of you does go on to produce said child, I want you to be completely honest with him or her, from the start, as to who their father is, or was, and how they came to be.”

“Well obviously!” said Dorothy, getting defensive. “I don’t intend lying to our child, but I...”

“I have no problem with you both taking all responsibility and I realise I would have no say in the raising of him or her,” Killian interrupted. “For the record, I think you would both be rather brilliant
mothers. However, I do believe that a male influence in a child’s life is also a good thing. So, if he or she wants to spend time with their father, I want you to promise to allow it and not hide them from me or prevent me seeing them.”

Ruby was surprised at how quickly their request had moved on. Far from being reluctant, the former pirate seemed more than willing. “Killian, when we asked we weren’t sure you would even say yes. And I certainly didn’t think you would want to be involved after. I guess Dorothy and I need to talk it through.” The wolf said, looking to her girlfriend. However, Dorothy gave a smile before nodding at them both. “Killian’s right. I agree with him. I lost my dad very early and I still miss him.” She looked across at the Captain before softly placing her hand on his. “If Killian is really prepared to do this for us, the least we can do is let him be a father figure if our child wishes.” She raised a grateful smile to him. “Anything else?”

Killian returned the smile before looking to her partner. “Well…perhaps one more. Though I won’t insist upon it if you really have an issue…” The women nodded for him to continue.

“You probably know about my issues with my own father; he abandoned me after my mother died. Well the one person who kept me sane was my brother, Liam. He was my rock and his loss devastated me more than you can imagine. He protected me in life and his death was caused by supposed great men and a fool for a king. It also turned me to piracy and the darkness.”

“Killian, I don’t understand. What’s that have to do with…” Ruby started, unsure where this was going.

“If, or when, you decide to give this child a sibling, I’d like to be invited to provide the necessary contribution once again.”

Dorothy, slack jawed, looked at him with watery eyes. “You would do that?”

“Aye love. For all I know, I may have fathered many children in my time. It would be nice to actually know one…”

Ruby leaned across the little table and placed a kiss on his cheek. “Thank you, thank you.” Dorothy also stood, leaning across and kissing his other cheek and hugging his side. “That goes for me too. You’ve made us both very happy, Killian Jones!”

Jones slowly stood, taking their hands in his. “Oh, there is one additional…‘request’!!”

The women’s eyes widened as they looked at each other. What now? Dorothy nodded at him to continue.

“Well…we have agreed that I would remain a father to this child, as and when it wishes.” He hesitated before continuing. “Now call me old fashioned but I do believe in matrimony and…”

“Killian! Stop. I’m in love with Dorothy, neither of us could possibly…” Ruby almost yelled at him.

“Not me, ye daft dolt! Dorothy!” She looked confused. “Rubes, I’m surprised that after five years of true love, you haven’t already made an honest woman of our Miss Gale here!” and with that he withdrew his hands and opened them, palms upwards. “Now then, let’s see if I’ve remembered anything the Sorcerer taught me!” he glanced over at Merlin before picturing several items he held in a particular secure locker on his ship, the Sorcerer looking on with interest. Two swirls of blue mist appeared in his palms, before solidifying to reveal two small boxes. He offered them to the women sitting opposite, each taking one.

Dorothy collected the small leather box, opening it to reveal a sparkling diamond & sapphire carved
half hoop ring. She gasped, looking up to her love who was looking down, open jawed, at her own opened box. It contained an equally stunning emerald & diamond clustered ring. Ruby’s hand went to her mouth in shock.

“Killian. These are wonderful! But we couldn’t possibly…”

“Of course you could.” He was emphatic. “And before you ask, they’re not pirate’s ill begotten treasure but both belonged in my family. My mother’s, actually. Liam and I had always intended for them to go to our future wives or the mothers of our own children. So, with his sad passing and me unlikely to sire elsewhere…well, let’s just say it’s fitting for them to go to you both. Take them with my blessing!”

A teary Dorothy pulled herself into his arms, kissing his cheek again before whispering, “You’re a very special man, Killian Jones!” She pulled herself away before her beloved took her place in the former pirate’s arms. “Thank you so much Killian, I can’t tell you what this means to me. To us.”

“Well then, Ruby, you know what you have to do!”

Brushing a tear from her face, she turned to her true love, nerves clearly showing. This clearly wasn’t something she had intended to do in public. But, what the hell!

“I do actually.” She turned to the tall brunette, dropping down on one knee as she took the ring from the box. “Kansas, I’ve wanted to do this for some time, but perhaps our pirate here has given me a bit of Dutch courage. Dorothy Gale, I’ve loved you from the moment I first set eyes on you back in Oz. Sorry for all the clichés, but you are my life, my rock and my port in any storm! I want to spend the rest of my life with you and, hopefully, raise a family with you by my side. Will you do me the honour of being my wife?”

Dorothy hardly noticed that the rest of the room had gone silent, realising what was about to happen. Dropping down on her own knees and taking Ruby’s hand in her own. “Oddly enough, I was about to ask you the same thing!” She smiled as laughter reverberated around the room.

“Ruby Lucas. You brought me back from eternal sleep with true love’s kiss. I fell in love with you then and I’m still in love with you now. I have never stopped loving you and I would be honoured to be your wife!”

Ruby latched her lips on to Dorothy’s as cheers rang around the room. Their friends moved forward to offer hugs and congratulations. As they swarmed around, Killian smiled and stepped slowly back, to allow the women to receive good wishes from all. As he did, he felt a pair of hands wrap gently across his upper arm. He looked to their owner and saw Annabelle looking at him with a warm smile. “Well, well, Captain Jones! You continue to surprise me. A traditionalist and an incurable romantic! Who would have thought…” She smirked.

“Shush!” He whispered, “Keep it to yourself.”

---

Doctor Victor Whale had watched his friend’s proposal, happy but with a heavy heart. He knew how much Ruby loved Dorothy but had always held a candle for the wolf himself. He sighed at the exchange and a little lump came in his throat as Dorothy accepted. He was truly happy for the pair, two of the very few friends he had in Storybrooke. The town had always made him feel like an unwanted but necessary outsider though the forest dwellers had always welcomed him as a friend, not just a physician. As he continued to watch his two friends story play out, he heard a soft voice to his right. “Victor, have you been ignoring me?”


Whale turned and, on recognising her, gave her a warm smile. “Carrie! I’m sorry, I…it’s lovely to see you.” Instantly nervous around her. “What are you doing here?”

“Same as you, I guess. Seeing his wonderful new village and what my cousin has been up to!”

“Your cousin?”

“Robin, Robin Hood.”

“Robin Hood is your cousin?” Thinking about it, Whale could see the resemblance.

“Yes, I know! I didn’t link Robin Hood to my Robin until a year ago. As I came through another portal I just assumed he wasn’t my cousin. I found out he had died, sacrificing himself for someone. Bloody typical if you ask me! When I found out yesterday and Will said he was back from the dead, I just…

“Carrie, nothing surprises me about this place anymore. I can see the resemblance.” He smiled at the beautiful woman and was captivated as she gave a wonderful grin back. *Sod it, he was just going to go for it, just as Ruby had suggested.*

“Carrie. Um…er…well…I’m sorry, I’m not very good at this.” He stopped, steeling himself for rejection. “Carrie, would you consider having dinner with me? Sometime…um…If you’re free?” he gulped.

Caroline face broke into a broad smile. “Victor, I would love to have dinner with you! Perhaps this Friday, so I can get a lie in after?”

“You would? Wonderful!” he gasped in relief, “Say I pick you up at eight?”

“It’s a date!” she chirped happily. “Where are you taking me?”

“Somewhere that’s not Storybrooke or the forest. You like French food or Italian?”

“Il n’y a rien de mieux que la cuisine française.” She breathed.

“J’accepte!” he replied, “J’ai hâte de passer une belle soirée avec une belle dame.”

“You old smoothy! I didn’t realise you spoke French?” she breathed, her voice low and definitely sexy.

“You never asked.”

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As Regina went through her evening cleansing routine, she looked around the master bedroom’s bathroom. The attention to detail on taps, the towels, dressing gowns, and bedsheets was exquisite. More like a five star hotel than a pub in the middle of a forest. *This was clearly the work of a woman, probably Merlin’s daughter!* she thought as she re-entered the bedroom, seeing Emma texting someone.

“What are you doing? I thought you were tired?”

“I am, but there’s something I need to do first. I’ve just asked Robin to come up.”

“Robin? Here? Why? We’ve only just spoken to him.”
“I spoke to him, Gina. You didn’t. I just need to say something. To both of you.”

“I don’t understand. Why would you…” she was interrupted by a knock on the door, Emma opening it.

Robin stood in the doorway, holding a small tray with three glasses and a bottle of, what looked to be, brandy.

“Emma?” He looked across at a confused Regina, so he clarified. “You asked me to come up to talk, and bring a couple of drinks? Seeing as it’s late, I thought Cognac would probably be best…”

“Thanks Robin.” Emma replied, taking the tray and avoiding her wife’s gaze. “Er…take a seat, both of you.”

He and Regina sat at opposite sides of the small vanity table, she feeling a little self-conscious in her nightdress and he a little flushed for the same reason. Each trying desperately to avoid looking at the other.

Emma poured three good measures of Cognac and handed them around. Although she knew she had to do this, she still felt nervous now they were all together. Downing her own glass in one and feeling the burn, she coughed, regretting treating it like scotch. She took a deep breath before starting.

“Okay. This is a little difficult, but I’m going to ask you both to be quiet, until I’ve said what I need to say. Let me finish first…” Although lifting her eyes to her wife, Emma spoke to Robin.

“Robin, there is no point beating about the bush. Five years ago, you gave your life to save Regina. First, I cannot thank you enough for that, because if you hadn’t, there’s no doubt she would be dead. We all knew she was your True Love, and it left her utterly devastated. You cannot image how painful it was for her.” Her gaze never left Regina’s.

“I went through something similar with Killian, but it was nothing like as bad as Regina’s. Killian and I clearly never had true love, despite what I thought at the time. You now know we both had counselling, and, with Archie’s help, we slowly started to pull our lives together. On the way, Regina and I somehow fell in love. I still love her and know that, even allowing for Neal and Killian, she is the best thing that has ever happened to me. I will always love her. Nonetheless, Regina and you have something that will never die. A love as powerful as my mum and dad’s and that is really saying something. She still loves you Robin, and she still needs you in her life.” She saw Regina wanted to interrupt but her hand went up, silently asking her to remain silent.

“You are Roland and Honour’s father. They love you and need you too. I’ve thought long and hard about this and it’s because I love Regina that I need her to be happy again, and the only way I can be certain she will be is if you are also a part of her life. I hate to admit it, but Gold is right. You and Regina need to be together.”

Regina was shocked. “Emma, you can’t be serious? Are you leaving me?”

“Absolutely not! But everything I’ve said is true. You know it. Robin knows it. Damn it, he’s struggling with this as much as you are. I know because I saw into his own mind…”

Robin had heard enough. “Emma, I’ve told you several times already and you know it’s true. I will not come between you and Regina! Yes, I’m still very much in love with her, but I have to learn to live with that.”

Regina eyes widened at his open admission. He’s still in love with me! But she couldn’t do that to
Emma. It would break her. This was hurting. She had to say something.

“Emma, I love you! Please…”

“Regina, I love you too, and that’s the reason I’m letting you be with him. And me. I’m letting our marriage become, more ‘open’ so you can have Robin in it. You can be with Robin. And me. I know we spoke about it yesterday, but I mean it Regina.”

The brunette was lost for words. She looked across to her former love and could see him as confused as her.

“Robin, I’m sorry. Would you allow me a few minutes to speak to Emma alone?”

“Of course. I’ll go check on the little ones and we’ll talk again in the morning.”

“No Robin! Just give us fifteen minutes,” Emma insisted. “Then please come back.”

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In one of the smaller bedrooms, hidden away on the west wing of the new building, Henry Swan-Mills lay in bed with Violet. John had given him a room for the night, so he took advantage and invited Violet back. After a hasty bout of lovemaking, they lay back, spent and panting. The two had gone to separate universities, one to Boston and one to New York. Although they had initially regarded themselves as in love, both realised that with the passage of time and separation, they were more like very close friends. Very close friends. Friends who had agreed to continue having sex when it suited them, perhaps until someone more permanent came in to either of their lives. They were content with the arrangement.

“So, anyone on the scene yet? Are you seeing anyone?” asked Henry.

Violet laughed. “No, you dick! Do you seriously think we would be doing this, if there were?”

Henry chuckled too as he pulled her to his chest, kissing the top of her head. “Guess not.”

“How about you Hen? Anyone spark your interest?”

“Not really. There’s been a few one-night stands. Nothing serious.”

“Same here. There’s someone who was pushing me for something more, but I wasn’t really feeling it.”

“But he was?”

“She, actually. And yeah, she wanted me to move in. Bit soon for me…”

“Oh, not you and all? Seems every bloody woman in Storybrooke’s shagging other girls instead of guys…”

“Don’t be silly,” she giggled. “It was just a ‘thing’. Anyway, there’s no one out there for me yet. I guess you and I are going to be fuck buddie’ for a little while longer…”
“I can live with that.” He said, pulling her closer, the pair lying quietly for a few more minutes before Violet’s hand went back inside his shorts to slowly massage him. “So, Hen, you have magic now? How does it feel?"

“It feels weird but good. But nothing like as good as your hand right now. Another round?”

With a happy giggle, she silently nodded as she parted her thighs for him to move over, settling himself back between them.

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Ruby and Dorothy, after receiving congratulations from everyone for their engagement, headed up to one of rooms above, to meet the sorcerer as agreed. “Ok, let’s get started. This is a magical, not a medical, procedure, so it will be fairly quick and painless. You don’t need to remove your clothing, just your underwear, for obvious reasons. Then lie side-by-side on the bed, with your knees up. I know you’re feeling tense, but try to relax.”

The women did as instructed, lying back, side by side, fingers entwining. Merlin propped himself on one side of the bed, leaning over to place a warm hand on each of their abdomens. “Remember, try to relax.”

He closed his eyes, mumbling something incoherent. Feeling a small tickle inside, Ruby watched as a pale blue and silver stream of light in a smoky shroud seemed to emerge from between her thighs; from within her. It rose above them, forming a small column above her hips. Looking across, she saw that a similar stream of light had emerged from Dorothy’s lower half, dark red and silver. Raising his hands from them, he gently moving his hands around the columns without actually touching them. The women watched in awe as his hands forced the columns to slowly come together in a swirling pattern, coiling around each other like two translucent snakes in some sort of bizarre mating dance. Slowly they combined, their colours mingling to produce a darker, silvery hue. Merlin drew his palms apart, the combined cloud slowly separating itself into two columns again, this time with colours matching. As he slowly brought his palms down to again rest on their lower bodies, the streams turned down and gently moved down, back under the women’s skirts. The whole procedure had taken less than two minutes. Merlin stood up, smiling.

“Ok, that should be it. You can get dressed. I’ll see myself out.” And with that he bowed, before gently opening the door and stepping out, leaving the pair still a little awestruck.

“Well that was odd!” Ruby turned to face her fiancée, who nodded in agreement. “Yeah, but so very intimate! I can’t believe I now have a part of you inside me, and me inside you.” The women rolled to face each other, Dorothy placing a warm, earnest kiss on her partner’s lips while pulling her into a hug. “I truly love you, Ruby Lucas.” “And I you, Dorothy Gale - I can’t wait to become your wife!”

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“Emma, I’m not doing this! I know what you’re thinking, but no! It’s not fair to you and it’s not fair to Robin. Hell Emma, have you considered the consequences if this turns ugly? We all have children, for goodness sake! If Robin feels he’s being used, he could get angry and leave. What if Roland were to go with him? Or even Honour? It’s just…just…wrong!”

“It isn’t wrong at all, Gina! You know Robin would never take Honnie away, magic or no magic! I don’t see the problem. You love him, and this is just sex, after all! He’s good looking, fit, has a great body…,” Emma realised she may have gone a little too far with that last remark, which was picked
“Up by Regina.”

“Yeah, I saw you looking at him. By the lake…”

Emma blushed, “Me? I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Don’t play the innocent with me, Emma Swan-Mills,” she sniggered. “Of course you do. I saw it. You were definitely checking him out, eyeing him up and down when he came out of the lake!” Regina enjoyed watching the blonde’s cheeks redden. “I understand the attraction. Hell, I was doing it too; just don’t deny it!” Regina didn’t so much sound angry as curious. She glared at her wife, expecting an answer.

“Well, what if I was? As I said, he’s a handsome guy with a buff body.” Emma blurted before she could stop herself. “You like him too, so what’s the harm? We’re both bi Gina, we’re not exactly man-haters…”

“Indeed not. But admiring is different. What are you suggesting I do, seduce him? He’s a man of honour, Emma, not someone looking for a quick tumble. I can’t see him going for this, even if, as you say, he’s as tormented as I am. He promised not to undermine our marriage. I can’t see him going back on that.”

Emma harrumphed in frustration, laying back on the bed. “Shame. I reckon ‘a quick tumble’ is what we both need after the last few days!”

“We? What are you saying Emma?” The blonde had never seen her wife’s brow arch so much. Realising her comment could have been misinterpreted, Emma tried to backtrack. “Um no! What I meant was…was…you sort of getting past this true love curse thing…um…” she mumbled, looking guilty.

“If I didn’t know you better, Emma, I would say you were interested in getting a bit of time with him yourself!”

“What…no! Regina, no…seriously!” Her cheeks were positively blazing with embarrassment.

Enjoying herself, Regina decided to twist the knife a little more. With her best lascivious grin, she breathed, “Mind you, I’ve never had a threesome before. Could’ve been interesting!”

At that point, it finally dawned on Emma that she was being set up. So, she decided to come back in kind. “Huh, like you would even consider it! Far too risqué for you…”

“I’m sorry? Are you implying I’m unadventurous in the bedroom?” Both eyebrows raised to warning levels

Emma wasn’t going to back down now. “Definitely not. But you in a threesome? You’d run a mile…”

Regina smirked evilly, knowing the blonde had fallen right into her little trap. “So, Emma, darling, what you’re saying is that you are quite prepared for me to be allowed to sleep with Robin Hood, partly for my own sanity, but I would never do the same with my own wife involved? Despite said wife clearly finding the thief rather attractive herself! I think it’s you who wouldn’t dare, my dear!”

The blonde couldn’t resist. “Is that a challenge, oh wife of mine? If so, bring it on…” She heard the words come out but couldn’t believe she’d said.

“Very well. Let me go get Robin back up.”
Emma stared intently into her wife’s chocolate brown eyes. *Hell, she ain’t kidding!* “Er, Regina, you’re serious about this aren’t you?”

“Robin’s already told you he will not put our marriage under threat. I’ve already told you I would never cheat on you! So, it isn’t adultery if you’re here with me, indulging too…”

Emma saw the wicked gleam in the brunette’s eyes, worthy of the Evil Queen herself, and smirked right back.

“Ok then, you’re on…” she said, winking at the older woman. “Let’s get him up here!
Oh, what a night!

Chapter Summary

Killian performs a service for Ruby and Dorothy. Emma, Robin and Regina get together.

Chapter Notes

I've never written a sex scene before, so I've been a bit nervous about getting this right. However, there'll be more to come so I need the practise.

Many thanks for all the PMs and words of encouragement. It's really appreciated...

Merlin asked him to join him in a room upstairs, for privacy, to explain everything.

“So, let’s get this right,” said Killian Jones, with a grimace, “rather than the usual rather pleasant way of helping a lady get pregnant, I am expected to release myself into one of these little ‘cups’? Multiple times?”

“It's called a flask, and I’m afraid so, Captain.” Merlin couldn’t quite hide the smile. “You see, it may take several attempts to get one of the ladies to successfully conceive. They haven’t decided which of them wants to be the birth mother yet, and as you are intending to travel shortly, two or three samples would be required, to make sure. Just ejaculate into to each of the containers. I suggest you do it in the room close to theirs, so we can administer the first dose. The containers go into this larger flask, then we’ll freeze the rest for use at the right time, under medical conditions. They can give me the remaining samples as soon as possible and I’ll freeze them.”

“Who said romance is dead?” he sighed.

“I know, it’s all a bit functional but, on the bright side, Ruby tells me you would like to have a role in the child’s life, if you and the child so wish! Speaking as a father, that sounds like an added bonus!” He said, patting his shoulder.

“How many children do you have, Merlin?”

“Living now? Currently four. Three girls and one boy. Of those that have passed on? Well, I’ve lived an awful lot longer than you. In my lifetime, I’ve had forty-six wives and one hundred and sixty four children.”

“Bloody Hell! That’s a lot of birthdays to remember!”

Merlin roared. “It certainly is! But one of the great advantages of being of service to Zeus is that I get to see nearly all of them from time to time! It makes family gatherings one heck of an experience.”

“Forty-six wives? That’s a lot of family rows! How on earth…”
“Except they’re not on earth, are they? They are all now in a better place, a place where if we are lucky, most of us will end up and I can assure you there is no jealousy or fighting there. There is no ownership of others, a place of true peace and tranquility. Your soul is divisible, so you will be reunited with Milah, your brother, your family and everyone else you have known who has been worthy. It’s a little hard to describe it, but true.”

“Milah? That would be something. I waited for her to appear from the River of lost Souls in the Underworld. I missed her.” He grumbled.

“You didn’t. Her soul drifted further downstream. She was actually rescued by her own son’s intervention.”

“Baelfire?” I don’t believe it! I thought he’d moved on long ago!”

“He had! But discovering what happened to Henry, led him to try Zeus’s patience a few times. Bae appeared in a dream to Emma to persuade her to turn back from rescuing your soul. She didn’t listen…”

“She always was stubborn.” Killian sadly recalled how she put her own family’s life at risk to rescue him. A time when he, not Regina, was supposed to be her true love.

“Well, I’ve spoken to Baelfire several times since you entered the Underworld. He’s still furious that she took Henry down there with her. Her family have no idea how close they came to being killed!”

“Emma saw it a little differently…”

“Of course she did, but parenthood is a sacred trust. The parent takes responsibility for the child, despite a teenager’s wilfulness. She was the parent, he was the child. Bae was right - It was a stupid, unnecessary risk.”

Killian wasn’t sure how to respond so he said nothing. An uncomfortable silence hung in the air. Finally, he looked at the Sorcerer with a guilt expression. “So, Merlin. I guess I also owe you an apology.”

The older man looked up in surprise. “What on earth for?”

“Killing you, of course! Crushing your heart…”

“That was Nimue, my dear chap! You were controlled and not responsible. As you can see, I didn’t die. One of my ‘shells’ died, like one of the clones you saw Robin replicate in the park yesterday? You couldn’t fight the Dark One’s vengeance. Few can. If it had held on to Emma Swan much longer it would have consumed her too. Rumplestiltskin is one of the very few people I have ever found capable of containing it. Mainly.”

The awkward silence returned until eventually Killian stood up to leave. “So what do I do now?”

“I guess you carry out your promise to Miss Gale and Miss Lucas,” he chuckled. “Good luck, Mr. Jones…”

Downstairs in the bar of the Earl of Locksley, the numbers were starting to dwindle as many made their way back to Storybrooke after a pleasant, free evening of food and drinks, the forest dwellers to their newly built houses to settle.

Robin had stayed close to Caroline, not wanting to lose her again. His cousin held on to Victor Whale as Aurora regaled them all with a story about her brief time with Baelfire and Robin, sadly
concluding, “It’s odd. Neal was so brave, so humble. It’s such a terrible shame he never really got to
know Henry…”

“True,” Robin agreed, “though from what Merlin tells me, he’s even more of a hero in death. He’s
basically been doing what Jones and I were doing in our part of the Underworld, but on a much
bigger scale. I hope he’s at peace now.”

Prince Philip stood opposite, his arms around his wife and their fiancée, as he heard Mulan fail to
stifle a yawn. “It’s time we left, my love. You’re starting to nod off.”

“Not until we’ve asked Robin what we came to ask him.” The pregnant warrior stirred, trying to
shake off her drowsiness. She looked at her lovers, both nodding to her to go on. “Rob, you’re like a
brother to me. You once told me to go where my heart takes me and it finally led me back to these
two.” Philip kissed the top of her head. “We’ve talked about this and, well, the three of us would be
honoured if you’d agree to become our little one’s godfather?”

He broke into a broad grin, stepping forward to gently wrap Mulan in his arms. “Ping, I would be
the one honoured! I’d love to play a small part in your family.”

“Oh, and one more thing,” said Philip, “I also have another request. Rory and I are marrying this
wonderful woman next month. I need a Best Man. You up for it, my Lord?”

“Only if you promise never to use that title again!” he replied, pulling him into a man hug, slapping
his back.

Regina walked down the stairs back to the main bar area, now empty apart from a dozen or so,
including the little clutch surrounding Robin at the bar as embers died on the fire. A couple of the
men were clearing up whilst he appeared to be hugging and saying goodbye to Mulan and Philip.

“Robin! Could you come back up please?” she said, trying to prevent her voice betraying her nerves
and anyone else noticing. “Emma and I still need to talk to you.”

“Of course,” he said, before walking across to Rumple and Merlin to bid them goodnight. The
Sorcerer seemed to have an odd smirk on his face as he looked up at the brunette now standing on
the staircase. “Sleep well, Mrs. Swan-Mills.” She nodded back. I really hate that smug look, she
thought, turning as Robin joined her.

“I never got to finish my cognac.” He whispered with a grin, as he lifted her hand gently placing it
on his forearm to accompany her up the stairs. That’s when he noticed an odd look on her face. Eyes
avoiding his, reticent, slightly shy but above all, nervous. “Regina? You alright? What’s wrong?”

“It’s nothing, Robin, I’m fine. I’m just…well…” her voice stalling as she brushed a lock of hair back
off her face.

“Gina, you’re worrying me!” he said as they appeared on the landing, removing his arm and placing
his hands on her shoulders. As almost a reflex, her hands went to his waist. She slowly lifted her
eyes to his, looking into the piercing blue. She felt the pull almost instantly, the urge to wrap his body
around hers. The urge to kiss him. But she had to hold off. At least for now.

“Robin, Emma and I have been talking and…well…there’s something we’ve agreed on but, yes I’m
nervous. Just listen to us and please…please don’t judge me!”

Listening to her anxiety, it would have been so easy for Robin to use his new powers to read her
thoughts. But, after Emma, that would be a complete invasion of her privacy. Nonetheless, having
her almost in his arms now, he just wanted to wrap her up and bring his mouth down on those
beautiful lips. “You know I’d never do that,” he whispered, kissing her forehead, the light touch making her shiver.

She turned to their door, lightly knocking for entrance; something Robin thought odd, as it was her bedroom for the night. Hers and Emma’s. He heard a soft voice inside. “Come in.”

As they stepped in, the first thing he noticed were candles distributed on the dressing table and vanity. Without even thinking, Robin apologised. “Sorry for the lack of electric light! Merlin said he’s going to get us up and running with a generator tomorrow. He and Gold have it all planned out and he…” His voice stopped at the second, far more surprising thing in the room.

In the middle of the large bed, on her side, lay Emma Swan-Mills, wearing a sheer silk purple nightdress, and an odd smile. Her hair was down and she looked so…enticing? In her hand, a large glass of the cognac he had brought up earlier. “Hi darling! Hi Robin!” He thought she’d clearly made herself look wonderful for her wife. The blonde looked into Robin’s eyes, trying to appear sultry, but her nerves obvious.

Regina recognised that look, but also the innate sexiness of Emma, especially when she tried to be alluring but failed. Emma had always been a little tomboyish in public, but in the years since the pirate’s death and their marriage, she’d made a conscious effort to be more feminine in her evening dress, foregoing the signature jeans and tops, to complement Regina rather than contrast with her. It was one of so many reasons why Regina loved her.

So, looking at her now, laying on their bed coquettishly, it was clear that in the few minutes she’d been gone to fetch Robin, Emma had used magic to poof one of the brunette’s gowns, scent and makeup from the mansion before making herself up. She looked ravishing and, if Robin hadn’t been beside her at that moment, Regina would have launched herself on to the younger woman and ravished her on the spot. However a small cough brought her back to her senses.

As Robin saw the blonde on the bed, it was obvious she’d prepared herself to seduce Regina. He’d never seen Emma look like this before. My goodness, she’s absolutely stunning! he thought to himself, and for a moment, felt envious. Envious of Emma, but also envious of Regina. Then, looking at Regina’s face, her eyes darkening as she stood beside him, he felt out of place. Seeing them gaze longingly at each other, the former outlaw felt like a gooseberry, unwanted and clearly interrupting what was going to be a passionate evening.

“I’ll be going…” He coughed, feeling embarrassed, turning to see himself out. “See you in the morning…”

At that, the women woke from their mutual admiration, turning to him. “No! Don’t go, Robin…I…”

“You clearly need to be alone. It’s fine.” He was interrupted again, this time by Emma.

“Robin, I don’t want you to go either…”

Robin looked at her, confused, as he moved to the door. Suddenly, Emma was up and in front of him. “I said…I don’t you to go, either!”

Regina, alarmed they might have offended him, stepped closer. “Robin, listen to me! Listen to what Emma and I have to say. Then make your own mind up…”

Emma, no longer appearing quite so confident, nervous of the rejection she had felt in the past. “Robin, we all know that what you and Regina have is true love, or soulmate magic or whatever. She needs to be with you and I think you’re probably suffering some sort of withdrawal from her
too. Well, Gina and I got talking…”

Her wife took over. “Robin, you promised Emma and I that you wouldn’t do anything to harm our marriage. I believe you. Emma said she would be willing to share me, under the circumstances, though I also promised her I would never be unfaithful. However, if Emma…” she started to flounder. “If we’re, sort of, all in it together, at the same time, then it’s not like I’m being unfaithful, is it?”

Robin at last grasped what they were getting at. “You’re suggesting Emma being with us when we…”

“Well I have to admit, it sounds a little kinky when you put it like that…” Emma replied embarrassed.

“Not quite what she meant,” Regina breathed, smiling at the pair. “But I do…want us all…together.”

“Whaat!?” Emma breathed. They were rapidly going to a place of no return.

“I want the three of us.” She breathed. “Emma, I love you. Ever since that day in Archie’s after Robin’s death, I just knew. I always will love you. And you Robin, it’s taken me some time to assimilate this, but I know my love for you is so very strong and everything Emma has said is true. My time away from you is hurting me. But I can’t bear the thought of hurting her. Either of you. So I want to take Emma’s idea to a new level…”

“Regina, maybe it’s because I’m a mere man, but I need you to be specific here! Tell me what you want?”

The brunette’s eyes darkened as she moved to Robin, taking Emma’s hand as she looked up to him.

“I would have thought that’s obvious! Emma tried to pretend, but she’s been eyeing you up all day, especially by the lake! I also saw the way you looked at her just now. So, to answer you Robin, I want you to hold me. I want you to kiss me. I want you to make love to me. But I also want you to do the same with Emma!”

Robin understood what Regina had been implying but, just hearing her lay it out like that, was more than a surprise. Though looking at an equally stunned blonde, he was definitely excited. Turning to face her, “Emma, how do you feel about this? Please be honest!”

Seeing his concern, Emma felt touched that he actually cared. “Honestly? Nervous, quite excited and…” she said, glancing down at a definite bulge in his chinos that definitely wasn’t there before, “a little horny!”

Regina, seeing where Emma’s eyes drifted, was somewhat impressed, herself. Her breathing grew heavier as Robin grew bigger. Realising that the two of them were still too nervous to make the first move, the former queen decided to act. As her left hand released Emma, travelling around her back and pulling her closer, her right went around Robin. Former, but not for much longer, I hope! “Kiss me, Robin.”

He didn’t need to be told twice. He leaned down, gently dropping his lips on to hers, for the first time in five years. She welcomed it instantly, opening her mouth expectantly, awaiting his tongue. Sensing his hesitation, she instead drove her tongue forward, to be greeted by his own, sliding together in a wet embrace. She moaned. This is heavenly, she thought to herself, feeling the years slip away. What felt like seconds, was in fact almost a minute before they both felt the rising wave, a
pulse blowing out from between their joined lips.

Oh god, I’ve forgotten what a great kisser you are! Robin thought before the wave hit him, momentarily making his mouth pull away in shock. Instead of seeing his queen in a similar state, she was instead giving him one of the most lust-filled gazes he had ever seen. Fuck!

Pulling her head back but never letting go of the wife at her side. “Lovely. Now, would you please kiss Emma for me?” Seeing a wide-eyed look from both. “I’ve imagined you two together since this morning. Robin, would you please kiss my wife?” His head slowly turned to face Emma, who was as nervous as him.

Emma had just watched her wife have a full-on French kiss with her old boyfriend, within inches of her. She wasn’t sure how she felt. Not jealous, just insecure? Now she’s asking him to snog me! He’s not going to do that! He’s far too stiff! Mind you… she thought, looking down below his waist, you could say that about something else, right now!

“Emma, you sure you’re ok with this?” he whispered. She couldn’t quite get the words out, so just nodded. He brought his face closer to the blonde’s, before gently pressing his lips onto hers. Not as confidently as with Regina, moments ago, but tentatively, waiting to see whether she would respond in any way.

Regina watched them with bated breath, her face mere inches from theirs and unable to quite believe they were doing this. As she watched the kiss slowly intensify between her current and former lovers, she couldn’t help but feel the heat build between her thighs. This was seriously turning her on!

Stepping back to look at them properly, Robin’s right and Emma’s left arms coiled around each other’s back and shoulder as he brought their bodies slowly closer. Seeing the impressive, straining bulge in the front of his trousers press into Emma’s nightdress covered stomach, she heard the blonde, now fully immersed in an open-mouthed kiss with Robin, moan at the sensation. As her cheeks flushed at the sight of the pair now really getting to enjoy themselves, she felt Robin’s left arm touch her lower back, pulling her in closer.

Regina now missed being a part of the action. Bringing her left fingers up into her wife’s long tresses, her right hand cupped the back of Robin’s head as she held the two while their continued. Moments later, as Robin & Emma’s lips finally broke apart to catch their breath, Regina seized her moment, turning the younger woman’s head softly to seize her now swollen lips with her own. Emma had hardly caught her breath after the oral assault by Robin, and now Regina’s tongue had urgently taken his place. Robin gasped at the vision of these two beautiful women clutching and kissing, no, mauling each other, in frenzied passion. Moments later, Emma broke her mouth away, turned her head and pulled him back on to her, their mouths interlocking once again.

Regina was now hot, aroused and ready for more. So much more! Watching the now fully committed blondes engaged in a clear display of heated French kissing, she couldn’t resist any longer. Bringing her mouth closer to theirs whilst still holding the backs of their heads, she giggled, forcing her tongue between their joined lips in the limited space available in Robin’s mouth alongside Emma’s. For the briefest of moments, less than a second, the three wet tongues collided, clumsily, in a squashed, messy, sloppy kiss. That’s when the next, stronger, electrical pulse shot through them.

They all felt it. The short burst of energy, the fizzing jolt to the temples, making all three heads pull back. Not in shock, but in surprise. “Was that me again?” he asked though still reluctant to let them go. “I’m sorry if…”

“It wasn’t you, Robin, it was all of us…” she was about to explain what she thought the pulse was,
when she saw Emma’s hungry eyes. So, desperate now to prevent them stopping, she waffled and lied. “It’s just our combined magic. It won’t harm us in any way.”

The next part went by in a blur to them all. More heated kisses were exchanged, more hugs and the slow divesting of clothes into two little piles at the side of the large bed. Nobody would remember who pulled or pushed who onto the soft sheets, but within minutes the three lay clustered together in the centre of the bed, Regina in the centre with Robin on her left and Emma on her right, snuggled tightly in. Robin had been more self-conscious than the women, still leaving his boxers on, although they were clearly straining at the sight of the two now entirely naked women before him. “Well, how should we…” Robin began but Regina already knew what she wanted.

The brunette rolled over on to Emma, pushing her thighs gently apart with her own before mounting her fully. She seized the blonde’s mouth with her own before pulling back to gaze lustfully in to her eyes. “I want you to make love to Emma, Robin! I said I want her to have everything I have! To feel everything I feel. Everything,” she breathed, never taking her eyes off Emma’s. “Make love to my wife, Robin!”

Emma had been in a daze the last few minutes, overcome with so many weird feelings. Now, glancing across Regina to the man’s broad chest and the now very prominent bulge in his shorts, her queen pulled her head around to face him, as she mounted her. The she heard the order. “Make love to my wife, Robin.” She now caught Robin’s eyes, now in a very different light, his pupils blown, his gaze over her almost predatory as he rose, moving across Regina towards her. But there was still compassion as he caught her stare.

“You ok Emma? We don’t have to, if you’re not sure about this. We can stop now, if you wish?”

She looked deep into those eyes. *Those piercing blue eyes. He’s beautiful! No wonder she’s obsessed with him.*

“I’m good” she said, seeing the lusting gaze in Regina that just seemed to build more fire inside her. “Don’t worry, I’ll say if I’m not…” she whispered.

At that, Regina pulled to her left side, turning to face him. “I think someone’s holding back!” she said, looking down at his boxers, removing with a deft flick of her fingers. At that, Robin’s penis sprang dramatically from its prison. Regina gulped, and Emma’s breath hitched. *He’s big! Not as long as some I’ve known but god, it’s so, so much thicker!*

*Sensing her nerves as he turned towards her, he whispered. “May I?”* And with that, he kissed the former sheriff gently on her lips, before slowly working his own lips down her body. He stopped to kiss just below her ear, making her shiver. Moving across her shoulder, peppering kisses all the away, he reached her right breast, anointing her nipple with the flat of his tongue before grazing his teeth over the turgid bud.

Emma hissed loudly at the sensation, making Regina grin slyly. As Robin’s head descended lower, Regina took the left breast in her own mouth, to suck hard. “Oh god!” groaned Emma.

He continued a slow tortuous path, working gradually towards his target. Emma’s breathing stopped as his lips and tongue slid gently across her hip, coiling over her stomach before heading into her navel, lightly licking and kissing as she shivered. Pressing his nose gently in, he again slid further down towards her core, lips brushing lightly around, but avoiding her clitoris, before kissing the sides of the moist opening. Emma shivered, as she felt his hot breath over the centre of her vagina. Ever so slowly, he flattened his tongue against the opening, pressing harder and scraping the wet surface.

Regina had ever taken her eyes off him as he worked Emma, watching her wife start panting loudly.
as he seemed to almost devour her. It had been over five years since she had been on the receiving end of that talented tongue and even after such a long time, she could still appreciate what Emma was going through. *Hell I think I could come just watching them!*

Gradually, Robin tilted his mouth upward, before moving his lips over the clit, sucking the bud gently into his mouth. “Aaah! My god…” she moaned at the pressure, a mixture of soft pain and ecstasy. Robin continued, now slowly introducing his forefinger into her, then gently accompanied by his index finger as he lathered her clit with his tongue. Emma pulled Regina up to her mouth, pulling her soft full lips down onto her own to help silence the scream.

*Emma had never* experienced a man properly go down on her before. Several had asked, but she had always declined, assuming like many women, that most men probably regarded cunnilingus as fairly revolting and only willing to do it if it led to a reciprocal blow job. Killian Jones had offered many times but again, even with him, she’d declined, instead distracting him with many other delights. It had taken a fumbled evening with Regina to even open her up to the idea, as they experimented and learned how to satisfy each other. Together.

However, Robin hadn’t asked, but seemed to really know what he was doing down there! She didn’t care whether he’d learned with Regina, Marion or the entire Boston Cheerleaders. This was bloody ecstasy and she was too close to coming to care! Holding Regina’s body against her own, she screamed into her mouth as the intense waves flew right through her. “Mmmmnngghhh” she groaned as the older woman’s tongue danced around her own.

Regina felt bewitched by her response. She’d just witnessed her former lover drive her wife into an orgasmic frenzy. Feeling incredibly wet herself, horny and in need of relief, she lowered herself against Emma’s upper body, seizing and squeezing before bringing her mouth over her yet again, sealing them together and driving her tongue into her welcoming mouth as deep as she could. As Emma’s orgasm washed through her, Regina felt the blast of energy through her mouth, causing her to break away momentarily.

“Fuck! That was, that was…” Emma breathed, lost for words. Robin withdrew his fingers slowly, lightly kissing the opening before rising up on his knees to face the pair with a smugness he found impossible to hide. Before he even had a chance to speak, Regina rose to face him. “Here, I want to taste her on you!” she purred, now latching her mouth to his and tasting Emma on his lips and tongue before pulling back.

It was over five years since she last had Robin in her bed, and Regina was now desperate to savour every moment. *But not until her Saviour was fully sated!* Leaning back, Regina lightly wrapped her right hand around his uncomfortably swollen member, pulling gently before lowering her mouth over him. “Mmm,” she moaned as she rolled her lips around the shaft. *God, I’ve missed this!*

Robin closed his eyes, tilting his head back in bliss as he felt her teeth graze down him, then opening them again to see Emma watching them intensely, the breath slowly coming back. She assumed Regina would now want to take him for herself and was more surprised to find the woman pull her lips off him before lowering them to the opening Robin’s tongue had just vacated, kissing her clit loudly, *hell, that tickles*, before rising again, still gripping Robin’s penis and gently pulling him, shuffling, towards Emma’s still parted thighs.

“Robin,” she giggled, “Emma’s had the starter, I think she needs the main course now?” Robin smirked at her. *What on earth’s she playing at?* he thought, but said nothing. For him, the last half an hour had been too wonderful, too blissful, and he wasn’t going to risk ruining it by making some stupid remark. After what he’s just experienced with Emma, he should have exploded! But instead he seemed to have more energy than ever and didn’t find it too hard to contain himself, anxiously
holding out until they were both fully satisfied.

Dropping on to all fours, Regina guided him ever closer towards Emma’s centre, stroking the bulbous head across Emma’s swollen lips. Again, Robin stopped, silently mouthing to Emma whether she was willing for him to enter. Emma was too far gone to refuse, looking at the broad purple head in Regina’s hand which she lightly brushed through her labia. “Yes…yes, I’m good!”

And with that, Robin, still being guided by Regina, slowly eased himself inside her. Emma gasped as she felt her body slowly receive him, adapting to his girth. It had been a long time since any man had been inside her and the fullness she now felt was considerable, but nothing compared to the exquisite sensations running through her as he started to move gently in and out, sinking deeper each time. Robin also groaned in ecstasy as he felt her squeeze down on him.

Regina recognised the look on Emma’s face and knew her second orgasm was close. Her right hand, having left holding Robin’s manhood, was now busy working herself into a frenzy as she watched the scene in front of her. Robin was now aggressively ploughing in to Emma, her long legs now wrapped around the back of him and her arms around his lower back, fingers digging in, almost drawing blood. Regina was unbelievably turned on by the display. Her own climax surely close, she whispered in her ear. “It’s ok Emma, let go. Come for him Emma, come for him, my darling. Come for me!” With gritted teeth, eyes now closed, and look of pain, or bliss, or painful bliss, etched on her face, Emma now screamed loudly into his face. “YES! OH GOD!! YES!!” she bucked hard against him as the climax overtook her. “YEEEEESSSS!!

Robin, although overwhelmed by the feelings from within this beautiful, writhing goddess under him, surprised himself by somehow managing to hold himself back from the edge, instead enjoying watching her ride out her orgasm. By now he would normally be well over the edge himself!

As she calmed, Regina moved across to envelop her wife in a deep kiss, wrapping her face in her hands. Robin smiled down at the pair, now completely engrossed in each other. Not wanting to interrupt them, he gently eased himself out of Emma, kneeling back to go and tidy himself. As he did so, a voice from below breathed.

“Robin. Stay. I need you now!” Regina, still with an arm around Emma, lay beside her in a similar pose. Robin smiled down at them before moving lower down the bed to prepare her. However, his former queen had other ideas. “No, Robin, after that, I’m too close - I need you inside me, now!”

Robin looked down on the pair, knowing that no matter how long he lived he would never experience a sight as blissful. However, he looked down at his still very swollen organ, now covered in Emma’s fluids. “Certainly milady. I just need to clean myself up. Give me a moment…"

“No. That’s just my Emma on you! I’m more than happy to have her in me. Always!”

Just hearing that made him stiffen even more, his cock twitching. “As you wish…” He then slowly positioned between her thighs, before lowering himself to easing the slick member between equally slick folds. “Oooooooohhh!” she groaned, as Robin slowly entered. Oh god, it’s good to be back! he thought, savouring the feeling of finally being sheathed in his love once again.

The next hour went by in a haze of writhing passion and numerous orgasms, as they all forgot themselves. The lust-filled trio becoming more emboldened, trying every position they could. Robin had lost count the number of times these astonishingly powerful yet beautiful women had come before him. However, it finally occurred to him that it was odd that he hadn’t finally achieved his own climax!
Downstairs, the last two visitors left the pub, leaving John and several of the men to clear up. Outside the entrance to the Earl of Locksley, Rumplestiltskin and Merlin bid farewell to each other for the night, having discussed a multitude of issues needing their own unique attention. As Rumple shook the man’s hand, “Sorcerer, a small question, if you will indulge me. That small charm you put on the Swan-Mills women. I detected something else. A fertility charm? I saw you use it on Locksley earlier…”

Merlin smiled at the Dark One. “I forget how perceptive you truly are, Rumplestiltskin! Though it wasn’t for fertility, it was for potency. I would never interfere with destiny. Just make it a little more…enjoyable. You know, sometimes fate needs a little…shove.”

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Back in the Master Bedroom, Regina was close to a fourth ripping orgasm as Robin ploughed into her once again. He seemed insatiable, though Regina was starting to tire. Nevertheless, the feeling of him once again buried deep within, was just too good. Emma was now on all fours over her, lowering herself gently on top of her wife as Robin, now standing at the edge of the bed and holding Regina’s legs, continued to drive harder and harder into the brunette.

Emma, now squashed between them, forced her crotch down onto Regina’s stomach, in a desperate attempt to get more friction as she saw her come apart. From behind her, she heard Robin’s low growl into her back as he too seemed to be nearing the end. Finally!

Robin, after two hours of relentless driving passion and with a stamina he’s never had before, finally felt his groin tighten spontaneously, his lower body spasming as it started to override the self-control he’d kept, determined to fully satisfy both of them before allowing his own release. So now, with a loud groan, he felt the hard pull from within as he finally came deep inside Regina.

“AAHH! Gina…Emma…I’m…aarrgghh!!” Emma stopped for breath, stilling to look in to the eyes of her beloved lying under her, breast to breast as Robin came, deep inside her. After the first burst of energy from his climax, he felt his balls relax momentarily as they prepared for that brief yet equally wonderful second spasm. In that moment, for reasons unknown, he felt an uncontrollable need to share this. Withdrawing himself from Regina, he tilted his still hard organ a few inches higher, rising to now push fully home into Emma, almost immediately releasing his final part of the climax, yelling “aarrgghh” once again.

Regina sensed the moment. After two hours of lovemaking, her wife now directly above her and pressing down, the two women looked silently at each other, their faces close, hot and sticky. After her final orgasm, Regina felt Robin remove himself from within her, momentarily feeling the loss before suddenly feeling Emma push forward slightly, down onto her stomach, a pleasant gasp and a look of surprise on her face as Robin had clearly just entered her. Listening to his groan, Regina pulled her head down to kiss her once again, as Robin now came inside the Saviour.

Robin stilled, gently pulling out of Emma and lying on his back. Emma then rolled off Regina to lie on her other side, slowly gaining her breath. The three of them lay quite still, recovering for a few minut

As they lay silently, realising what they had just done, Emma started to feel guilt kick in.

*What the hell was I thinking! What the fuck was I thinking!* She inwardly repeated to herself. She’d just experienced the most wonderful sex ever, with her wife and her wife’s former lover. All together. Now she started to feel dirty and …ashamed. *She wondered whether this would be the final nail in her marriage. It was bad enough that he was gentle, kind, generous and Regina was in love with him. Now she discovered he was a wizard between the sheets too! How can she compete with*
She slowly rolled her head to see him lying the opposite side of Regina, eyes closed, with an odd satisfied smile on his face. *It was too much.* “Robin…you need to go!” She heard herself say, more harshly than intended. “You best not be seen if Honour comes in!”

Robin, a little surprised by the sudden change in the blonde, looking across and before he could say anything. “Now, please!” She demanded, feeling ashamed of herself for the last few hours.

Regina, lying in the middle, felt the tension. The sudden change. Not sure how to respond, she rested her hand on her wife’s stomach, leaned up and before she could say anything, a voice on the other side spoke up.

“I understand,” he sighed loudly, rising from the bed without argument. Sensing magic, Regina turned to see he had instantly clothed himself. Looking over the two still naked, exhausted women. “Goodnight ladies,” he whispered, “Sleep well.” And with that he silently stepped out of the room, leaving Regina suddenly feeling downcast, an about turn from the wonderful hours of erotic bliss they all just experienced.

“Was that really necessary?” she harrumphed, irritated by Emma’s tone. “We invited him in here, not the other way around!”

“Honour could come in! She’s only next door…” Emma whispered.

“Bullshit! I put a spell on the door when I soundproofed us; there’s no way Honour or anyone else would have walked in!” Regina realised Emma was clearly ignoring her question. So, huffing loudly, she flicked her fingers to magically cover herself in a set of warm cotton pyjamas, her romantic mood now gone. She rolled to face away from the blonde, who was now clearly pretending to fall asleep. As her mind drifted to the wonderful feelings and sensations she had experienced this evening, a tear rolled down her cheek.

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Emma woke the next morning, the sun beaming through the oak windows. After a fitful night’s sleep, she turned over to find no sign of Regina. Groaning, she slowly rose to reach her phone. *Five thirty? Got to be kidding me? She’s an early riser, but this is ridiculous!* Slowly lifting her feet over the side of the bed, she started feeling the aches and soreness from the previous night’s activities. Yawning loudly, she looked to see whether Regina had left her one of her little notes. Probably ‘*with Honour*’, she guessed. Too tired to focus her magic, she dressed herself, stumbling over to the connecting door with the adjoining room, to see whether they were still there. Opening it as quietly as she could, she glanced in to see the two little blonde heads of Honour & Alexandra snuggled under the covers of the main bed, and Ashley’s long torso in the bed next to it.

Stepping back and into her own bathroom, she showered, before using her magic to change and make up before stepping out of the bedroom to find Regina.

Walking down the staircase into the main bar area, Emma saw a large breakfast bar laden with food, the smell of cooked bacon making her stomach growl with hunger. Six-thirty in the morning and people are eating! Looking for anyone she recognised, she was surprised to find Robin’s cousin, ‘*What was her name, Caroline?*’, piling up her plate with sausage, bacon and eggs. Although she looked rather slim and elegant, Emma was pleased she wasn’t the only one with a big appetite. Caroline glanced over at the other blonde. “Oh, good morning! Emma, isn’t it?” to which she
nodded. “Best dig in quickly, before the horde wake up!” As their eyes met, Emma could see the strong resemblance between Caroline and Robin. The blue eyes, the dimples. She couldn’t help but smile back. “It smells delicious. Who did the cooking so early?”

“Well, the two ladies from the café in Storybrooke, I think. And your lovely wife, of course…”

“Regina, she’s cooking?” that’s when she noticed Dorothy appear with another tray of bacon and hash browns.

“Yes, I think so. She and that other tall, pretty brunette. This lady’s fiancée, I understand?” Carrie said, smiling at Dorothy as she was in earshot. The former warrior, lying the tray down, smiled back at her, before wiping a hand on a towel before offering it to her. “Yes, that’s right. I’m Dorothy and my fiancée is Ruby. I gather you already met her. You’re Robin’s cousin aren’t you? Caroline?”

The tall blonde shook her hand warmly. “Call me Carrie; lovely to meet you at last, Dorothy. The way Ruby spoke about you, I had a feeling wedding bells would be in the air before long! She said you were beautiful, and she was absolutely right.”

Dorothy giggled. “Stop, you’re making me blush! Clearly you’ve the Locksley charm genes too!”

Ruby arrived at her side. “Carrie, stop flirting with my girl!” she said, with a big grin. “You and Robin are just the same. She’s only known him two days, yet he comes over, flashes his dimples at her and she melts like a big jelly!” At that, all three chuckled as Dorothy gave Ruby a light slap on the arm.

“What can I say? We clearly both recognise beauty when we see it!”

Emma listened to their conversation as an outsider but couldn’t help herself. “You…um…you’re gay too?”

Carrie laughed out loud at that, “No, actually, I…” before Ruby interrupted her.

“I hope not! A certain doctor I know would be very disappointed! He’s taking you out, I hear?”

“Oh, news travels fast around here! Yes, he’s taking me to Franco’s.”

“Ooh, that’s a bit romantic, and expensive, for a first date!” Ruby teased. “Victor must be keen!”

“Whale?” Emma blurted. “You’re going out with Whale?” she pronounced the name like a disease, realising her mistake the moment the other three women’s smiles dropped to almost scowl at her.

“Doctor Victor Whale, yes!” Caroline’s face held a hint of annoyance. “Any problem?”

“Um…no, but…” she spoke before she thought. “You’re a beautiful woman. But him, he’s…”

“Not another word, Emma!” warned Ruby, unable to hide her own anger, “You know nothing about Victor, only what Regina and your dad told you! You have no idea what he’s faced…”

Emma had never faced Red’s wrath before and though it wasn’t in her nature to back down, seeing the three women united in their annoyance: “I’m…I’m sorry, Carrie, I didn’t mean to give offence.” Embarrassed, she turned away with her plate of food, adding some bread and a coffee before trying to find a small table away from them. As she settled nearby, she looked across at the three women, now ensconced in a conversation with a young man she recognised from somewhere. Storybrooke hospital, possibly. Way to go Swan, you managed to piss off two of your friends before breakfast! Nice one! She grumbled, quickly piling the bacon and some egg into her bread, folding it into a
messy sandwich before forcing a good chunk of it into her mouth.

*Hmm, so good,* she thought, savouring the taste, as a familiar face came out from the kitchen door carrying another steaming tray of food to the table. Regina! Clearly, she hadn’t spotted her in the corner as she shifted the food trays to fit in with the rest, assisted by Robin’s cousin, before both stood upright facing each other.

Emma couldn’t hear what Caroline was saying to her but there was clearly a warm conversation being struck, Regina paying close attention.

“Regina, Roland has told me so much about you. And Henry and his sister; he’s such a delightful young man. You must be very proud!”

“Thank you, although you know I’m not Roland’s birth mother? That was Marian. She passed on before Robin and I met. Little John tells me Roland’s eyes and nature are definitely Marian’s, though I think those dimples and grin are Robin’s,” she smiled, thinking about the archer and his likeness to the boy. Caroline chuckled. “He clearly loves you very much. I gather you took him in after Robin was killed?”

“Yes. Roland helped me get through some very bad times, and Henry of course, when Robin...” She gulped, remembering the day her thief was struck down by Hades, a tear forming. “I’m sorry...” Caroline sensed the moment, moving in front of her and bringing her hands to quickly grab Regina’s, in an attempt to comfort her.

“I’m so sorry, I didn’t mean to makes you upset! You don’t need to explain. I just wanted to say thank you for looking after my...our...family. Robin told me about the Underworld and how you saved his children when he couldn’t. You’re clearly a very lovely woman and I can see why he fell for you…”

The former mayor blushed at the compliment, still holding her hands and looking into Caroline’s blue eyes, seeing her genuine compassion...and those dimples. Her brief moment of sadness was replaced by a soft smile. “You know, Caroline, you look like him. Robin, I mean. When you smile! Seems the charm genes are very strong throughout the Locksley family.”

Caroline giggled. “Flattery will get you everywhere!”

Emma watched the women from her table, unsure whether to go and rejoin Regina. However, seeing the tall blonde lift her hands in her own and step closer, it made her all the more insecure. So, getting up from the table and under the pretext of getting more coffee, she rose and walked over to Regina’s side.

“Morning, wife of mine!” she said, trying to be upbeat. Regina carried on holding Carrie’s hands regardless, looking down to her side but not at her. “Good morning, Emma.” Her voice slightly cold, betraying no emotion, good or bad. Emma recognised that tone. It was the brunette’s pissed off voice.

Sensing an undercurrent between the couple, Caroline gently released Regina’s hands before looking to see who else was around. “I’d better get going. The Professor wants to get started on the clinic early. Lots to do, patients to see. Regina, it’s been a pleasure.” She stooped, placing a kiss on the brunette’s cheek, which she reciprocated without hesitation. “See you around.” Then looking to the Saviour without moving forward. “Emma,” she said with a curt nod to the blonde before turning to walk out, with a small wave to Dorothy. Regina noticed Caroline’s glare towards her wife.

“So, what did you do to piss her off?” She asked with a raised brow.
Before Emma even had a chance to answer, Ruby reappeared, arms folded. “She was being snide about Victor, even after she discovered he asked Carrie out on a date. Something I should add she was hoping would happen for a little while now.”

“Victor Whale? Carrie’s going out with Whale?” Regina could now see how easy it would have been for Emma to be cynical. “Well, I can see how…” before being interrupted by Dorothy.

“No Regina, don’t you go there too! You think you know Victor, but you don’t! Over the last few years he has been spending a lot of his spare time helping everyone around here in the forest, completely unpaid, while also trying to keep everything together in Storybrooke. He and Archie have been holding free surgeries and clinic days out here in the tents. It’s here he met Caroline as she was a nurse in the Enchanted Forest. Yet whenever he goes back to Storybrooke, he receives shit from everyone, including you two, David and Snow, when you expect him to just drop everything for the latest crisis to engulf everyone. You may be reformed now, but so is Victor. He’s been a bloody marvel and a good friend to Ruby and me, so please, if you have something unpleasant to say, keep it to yourself!” she ranted to the astonished couple.

Regina stayed silent for a moment, glaring at the woman. “Well, perhaps you’re right, Miss Gale. Perhaps it is time to let bygones be bygones…”

“I’m sorry too, Dorothy,” added Emma. “Seems I’m pissing off everyone at the moment! Henry two days ago, Regina today. Caroline. Robin…” before a glare from her wife shut her up.

“Gina, can we talk? Over there?” she said, indicating her table in the corner.

The brunette nodded, smiling to the newly engaged couple before walking away with her partner.

“Look, about last night…” Emma whispered. “I’m… I’m sorry, ok?”

“Regina remained impassive. “Tell me. What are you actually sorry for, Emma?”

“Well… for pissing you off last night. For not letting him stay over…”

“Anything else?” Regina deadpanned. Seeing the wife’s confused expression, she carried on. “I don’t think it’s me you should be apologising to, Emma! You treated Robin like dirt! He was reluctant to join us last night, but we persuaded him. We asked him. We all had a wonderful time together, and please don’t insult me by pretending you didn’t enjoy it! I saw you. Then within minutes you treated him like a damn hooker! That was nasty, and it spoiled everything!” With that, she turned from Emma and headed back to join the others.

“Guess I’d better apologise to old ‘Golden Bollocks’ then!” she murmured to herself, sitting back down to finish her breakfast. But I’m not facing him on an empty stomach!
Another Visitor to Storybrooke

Chapter Summary

Killian Jones provides a hand, and a little bit more. A little bit of building in the forest is followed by magic. Another magical visitor comes to help...

The New Village

A short walk from the entrance to the Earl of Locksley, stood two large oak-beamed buildings, one-day-old like everything else in the brand new village. A small group stood watching, as Robin Hood, Rumplestiltskin, Tinker Bell & Merlin stood at each of the corners of the largest building, Robin & Rumple within sight of Merlin, arms raised as he shouted instructions to all three.

“Ok! As per the spell and on my mark! Three, two, one, proceed!” he yelled.

Within moments, a wide golden glow appeared to emanate from all eight hands, creeping together in a mass and meeting above the roof, before gradually spreading over the two rooftops and sliding to the ground, surrounding the buildings on all sides to produce a see-through dome encompassing the structures, a few sparks flying off until it settled. After surveying their work, Merlin shouted “Jefferson - all OK in there?”

A voice from within shouted back. “Yup, all done! Any second now!” Moments later, an octarine light flew out of all the building’s windows and doors, rising up to form a second seal within the round dome, its light mixing with earlier magic. “That should do it! Who’s going to be the guinea pig?” he yelled, a little less loud as he appeared at a front door.

Hearing all the shouting, Emma and the others walked from the pub, wondering what happening, to see her wife standing close to Robin’s side, when she saw an old friend. “Jefferson? What are you doing here?”

The Hatter smiled, surprised to see her. “Oh, hi Emma!” he said, walking to join her and giving her a brief hug. “What do you think?”

“Well, what is it? What’s with the magic? What did you do in there?”

The Sorcerer appeared at their side. “It’s a sanctuary. A place safe from magic. These two buildings are going to be a hospital and a safe meeting place for all.”

“Safe from magic? How is that even possible?” asked Regina, joining her wife.

“By using old magic,” said Merlin, “Rumple assisted me on the dark magic side and Mr. Locksley and Tink provided additional light. Mr. Hatter here provided the rather clever means of collecting magic in one of his devices. I merely brought everything together. Rather than explaining, why don’t you come inside? Jeff, I will be your ‘guinea pig’ as you so delicately put it.” He raised his arm, indicating his wish for the former mayor to join him. As Regina stepped forward, she felt a hand close around hers. “If you’re going in, so am I.” whispered Emma.

“Everyone is perfectly safe, I assure you,” said the Sorcerer, leading the gathering group.
As they entered, most gasped when they saw the wide dome, huge vaulted ceilings and staircase inside, completely out of proportion with the large, but not enormous, building outside. “How the hell is this possible?” said Emma, looking up, astonished, at the sheer scale. *If this is the reception, how big is the rest of this place?*

Merlin laughed. “I learned a few things from a fellow time traveller, as it happens. Very interesting chap from another realm. Had an odd device he used to travel in. An old British police box on the outside but quite a large flying craft on the inside.”

“The TARDIS? Doctor Who! You know Doctor Who?” shouted Roland, appearing from nowhere. “He’s real? What’s his name?”

“Real enough.” said Merlin, resting a hand on the boy’s shoulder. “Though he was just known as The Doctor when I met him. He never actually told me his name.”

As the boy gazed at Merlin in awe, Rumplestiltskin stepped to Regina’s side. “Now then, dearie, try performing a simple spell. A fireball, perhaps? Perhaps your irritating wife wants to try?”

Regina bristled, trying to ignore his barb, stretching out her hand to create a fireball. Nothing. Not a flicker. Not a hint of magic. Emma focused too, trying to lift a vase of flowers on the reception desk. Nothing. “Ok, very impressive, she said, “Now give me back my magic!”

“It hasn’t been taken away,” said Jefferson. “It’s been neutralised. Magic in here has been completely cancelled, the same as outside the town line. When you leave here, everything will be back to normal.”

“It’s brilliant,” said Roland. “Everyone becomes equal. People with magic can’t control people without it in here.” He tried to avoid Emma and Regina’s questioning gaze as another large hand rested on his other shoulder. “You’re right, my boy. And as well as being a hospital and clinic, it’s where everyone can head to in times of emergency,” said Robin, pulling the boys head to his chest. “Merlin tells me that if anyone were to enter here with a cloaking spell,” he looked at Regina who knew he was referring to her sister, “it would show up immediately and they wouldn’t detect anything as they entered.”

Emma looked wistful. “It’s brilliant. If we had this a few years ago, we could have stopped Zelena before…” she stopped, looking at Rumple, who answered for her. “Before she went on to murder my son?”

Robin saw where the conversation was leading so decided to cut things short. “Well then, ladies and gentlemen, we’ve built the building and the means to protect it. Now I have no idea how we equip and stock, let alone run a hospital, so we need help.” He looked at Merlin’s daughter as she sported a smug grin.

“Already ahead of you, Robin. Dad and I have a lorry load of gear and reinforcements coming later today!” she smirked at her father. Merlin smiled back. “Oh, she’s coming herself then?” To which Anna just nodded.

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Half an hour later, Robin stood next to Regina as they surveyed the new hospital, others milling around them busy with one thing or another, seemingly happy to be part of something new. Regina, still annoyed at Emma, had sent her off to wake Honour and Alexandra and give them breakfast. Roland was a short distance away, organising a small group of forest children in some sort of game involving hoops and a football. Regina couldn’t contain a smile as she saw how easily he led them,
with no effort, just natural charm. Several younger girls, none older than eight, stayed close, looking at him with wonder, as though he hung the moon.

“So like his father.” The words came out accidentally and she blushed, realising she’d said it out loud. This was the first time the two had been alone since they were in her living room. They hadn’t spoken alone since she brought him back from the brink of death with a kiss. Since they had enjoyed the most amazing sex, with Emma, only hours earlier.

Robin forced a smile. “Thanks, though I think he’s more like Marian. She always had such a wonderful way with everyone. She had fire, but rarely used it unless she really needed to. I don’t remember her having an enemy anywhere. I see so much of her in him now.” He looked wistfully at the curly haired young man. “I’ve missed so much, Gina. Five years! My boy, my girls…” he gulped.

Now Regina realised why he looked so glum, seeing his reddening eyes. The loss of what might have been; missing his children’s early years.

“That’s my fault. Mine…and Zelena’s. I’m so sorry, Robin…”

He turned slowly to stare into those expressive brown eyes. The eyes that had so captivated him. The eyes. His hands rose to lay on her shoulders. “Don’t compare yourself to that…woman. I pushed myself in front of you to protect you, and I’d have no hesitation in doing it again. I did it because I loved you. I still do…” the last three words barely a whisper.

Regina could no longer look him in the face, staring at the floor, feeling shame. “I love you too, Robin. I won’t deny it. Emma’s right. You sacrificed too much for me. I never deserved that…”

“Hush, that’s nonsense! You’ve always deserved more, and now you have Emma. She’s a good person and you deserve each other; even though it’s hard for me to see you together, I just want you to be happy…”

She buried her head into his chest, not caring who saw. “I’m not sure I can ever be truly happy again, without you in my life.” She whispered, pulling herself even tighter against him. “I love Emma. I really do; and I so don’t want to hurt her. But this…” she said, snuggling in. “I’ve missed you so very much.”

“As have I, my love. Last night was just a reminder of what we had. Though it was somewhat different!”

“It was wonderful, but I’m so sorry Emma ruined it…after. I’m sorry for how she treated you. I should have said something.”

“Water under the bridge, my love! Don’t blame her, she’s just feeling defensive, and who can blame her? Last night was wonderful, but I’m sure she doesn’t want it leading to something more permanent. She’s your wife, Gina; Henry’s mother, and a very good one at that. She’s feeling insecure and even though she has sort of allowed me back in to your life this must be incredibly hard for her. She’s also had to face Killian as well, so it’s not been easy.”

“True. Her seeing me with you these last few days has only made it worse.”

“It’s odd. She talked about ‘sharing’ you with me. I hear the words but I sense the pain she’s going through. Using these odd ‘gifts’ Zeus gave me, I accidently read her thoughts. Merlin showed me how to block them and I’ve apologised but I hate the thought that she feels violated. I need to talk to her again, perhaps alone. Leaving aside what’s happened, I would like to get to know her properly. I
know David fairly well, and Henry I regard as one of my own. But Emma…”

She looked up at him with a quirky smile. “I agree. I think you should ask her out.”

Robin smirked. “Are you saying I should ask your wife out on a date!”

“Why not? Robin, the three of us slept together last night. We shared each other, intimately. I could hardly object to my two loves wanting to get to know each other a little better now, could I?”

“I’m not sure Emma sees it that way, or if she is willing to even see me…”

“She will. I love Emma with my whole heart. But she knows I also love you. It hurts me that I’m the cause of the friction. I would love nothing more than you to become friends. To see you both get along.”

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Emma had made her way back into the pub, climbing the staircase towards Honour’s room. As she reached the landing and turned a corner, she spotted a tall, dark, leather clad figure stepping out from one of the bedrooms, talking to someone, a woman, laughing. Killian! What the hell’s he still doing here? She stepped quickly back around the corner, so not to be seen. And what the hell am I hiding from? We’re not together!

Hearing him laugh too, Emma couldn’t help herself as she peeked around the corner to see just who he was talking to. A tall brunette stepped into his arms and they embraced briefly. She saw his head turn towards the woman’s as from behind it looked like he gave her a quick kiss on the lips. As they parted, she finally saw the woman’s face. Dorothy!

What the hell? She’s just got engaged! What about Ruby? How could she do this to her? How could he? After all he said about them last night. What a fucking hypocrite!

She was just about to walk over and give them a piece of her mind, when a third figure came out of the room. Ruby! The statuesque woman seemed oblivious to their hug. Instead, the wolf brought her hands up either side of the pirate’s cheek, placing a chaste kiss on his lips, just as her fiancée had done moments earlier, whispering something only heard by the three of them and all chuckling.

Curiosity getting the better of her, Emma stepped out in full view, walking across to the trio. “Hi,” she muttered self-consciously, knowing she had stumbled in to a private conversation. “I thought you’d left?”

“You thought wrong,” Killian replied, stepping back from Dorothy & Ruby.

“What are you even doing here?” The question came out harsher than intended, which she instantly regretted.

“What business is it of yours, Swan?” he challenged, his voice noticeably cooler.

“Er…none, I guess. Sorry. I just…”

“Killian came up to give us some help with something.” Dorothy intoned breezily.

“Aye, well it was…a pleasure. Ladies, if you’ll excuse me,” he said, winking at Ruby as he raised their hands. “I will make the necessary preparations.” And with that he kissed each of the engaged couple’s left hands, both now adorning his mother’s gifted rings. “Friday morning it is. See you on the Jolly at ten…” He turned, brushing past Emma, turning his head with a cursory “Good day,
Dorothy and Ruby both heard it and saw Emma’s crestfallen face as the man walked away without turning back. Dorothy tried to distract her from the snub. “Killian’s arranging the wedding for us, on the Jolly on Friday morning. As a former Royal Naval Captain he’s allowed to officiate. So, we’re going to do it before he leaves on Saturday. Emma…would you be my Matron of Honour?”

“Your what? Um…yes, of course,” The blonde responded, honoured but still reeling from his snub. “Rubes, look, I’m sorry I upset you earlier…about Whale and Robin’s cousin. I don’t know why I said it? My mouth just seems to run away from me these days. I don’t know why…”

“It’s ok, Emma, you’re forgiven! Just know that Victor is very different to how you think. He’s been a good friend to Dottie and me. He’s helped a lot of people here. Just cut him some slack, cause you won’t make any friends out here by slagging him off.”

“And Carrie’s been keen on him for a little while now,” added Dorothy, “He’s smitten too, but around her he’s too damned shy to do something about it.”

Emma listened with a half-hearted smile, her mind still on Killian’s coldness towards her. She couldn’t blame him. To Killian, only three weeks ago they were in the Underworld declaring their eternal love. She’d gone there, blackmailing Gold and putting her entire family at risk, to rescue him. Three weeks ago, he had to say goodbye to her forever.

Except it wasn’t three weeks to her, it was five years. Five years in which she’d battled depression, lost her mind, her self-respect as a saviour, her job and the respect of all those around her. Five years in which she was no longer the saviour but needed to be saved. By Henry, by her mother and father, by Archie and finally by the last person she imagined. Regina. Henry’s other mother. Who had gone through even more pain than herself. The woman with whom she had gradually come to depend on as they shared their grief until their feelings slowly grew into something more. She’d never forgotten Killian but she had never imagined his return. She had moved on. Definitely. Positively. Moved on. Sure of it.

Until she realised he had also now moved on. That hurt, even though it shouldn’t.

Seeing the look on Emma’s face, Dorothy couldn’t help herself. Thinking of what had happened this morning in her bedroom with the former pirate, she had to know the answer. “Emma, I’m sorry to ask but, do you still have feelings for Killian?”

Emma stiffened. “What? Why? Do you…? No, of course not! It’s just a little difficult, seeing him back again…”

“Okay,” said Ruby, not altogether convinced. “Anyway…about the wedding. I’m asking Snow to be my Matron of Honour. You think Regina will mind if I asked Roland and Honour to be our page and bridesmaid?”

“No, I’m sure Gina’ll be delighted! Honnie loves dressing up.”

“Well that’s sorted,” said Dorothy, cheeks a little flushed. “Thanks. We had better be off too.”

Emma’s super sense could tell she was definitely covering up something. The way the two of them had been fawning over Killian moments earlier had been odd. Oh well, she wasn’t going to bring it up now. “Well I’ll see you later. I need to get Honnie up…” she said, walking away, anxious not to talk further.

Emma knocked softly on the bedroom door. Within seconds, Ashley opened it. “Morning, Emma!
Honnie’s up already and Alex is with her in the bathroom,” she said before turning to the inner door. “Girls, are you nearly finished in there? Emma’s here for you, Honnie. Finish off and come outside.”

A minute later, Honour appeared, scrubbed and ready for the day. “Hi Emmie! Can we go see papa now?”

Emma hid her frustration. She had been living with Regina for over two years, married for one, yet Honour and Roland continued to call her by her first name, even though Regina kept referring to her as Mummy in front of them. Yet within a day of Robin returning, she called him papa or daddy and clearly adored him. She understood why. He was the father she never knew until now. The hero she had heard Henry tell stories about and, yes, even though Emma found it hard to admit, Robin was basically a very nice, decent guy. A nice guy who my wife is in love with and fucks like a racehorse!

She thought.

“Well, we’ll see. Let’s take you down to see mummy first. I don’t know what we have plann…” she was interrupted by the apparent low rumbling sound of a large engine outside. Going to the window to look out, she was astonished to see an enormous military-looking articulated truck pull up outside the pub forecourt, its loud air brakes hissing as it stopped. “What the fu…” she stopped herself cursing as the two girls joined her at the window to see the commotion. “How the hell did something that big get into the forest?” gasped Ella.

“I have absolutely no idea,” muttered Emma. She also spotted Regina, her arm linked in Robin Hood’s, making her way to the front of the truck. “Though I’m going down to find out.” She said as her old police instincts kicked in. “Come on, Honnie, let’s see what’s going on!”

Minutes later, as people started to gather around the truck, the passenger door opened and a recognisable figure stepped down from the cab, her face a beaming smile. “Blue? What on earth do you think you’re doing?” called Regina, glaring at the fairy. Robin merely smiled up at her, happy to see the arrival.

The head of the fairies ignored her strident tone. She had never been a fan of the former Evil Queen. “Helping Rosalind get here, of course. Someone had to get her over the border and show her the way!” she bit back.

“Rosalind? Rosalind who?” the brunette growled back. “Don’t you know how dangerous it is to let just anybody into Storybrooke? You could put people in danger…” she stopped as the driver door opened and another figure stepped down from the cab.

Looking up, Regina first saw the long bare legs and dark brown hair of a tall figure stepping down. As her feet touched the ground, the figure turned to face them, turning to offer a hand to Robin. “Hello handsome! I’m Rosalind Sage, but you can call me Rosie. I’ve brought you a hospital!” the woman said, the crisp English accent instantly noticeable. Robin stepped forward, taking her hand and, instead of shaking it, turned it to place a small kiss, a peck, on the back of it in a show of respect. “Hello Rosie, I’m delighted to meet you. Robin Hood, at your service!”


It was Blue’s turn to giggle. “Yes, Rosie, this is the real Robin Hood. Robin of Locksley to be precise.”

“Well, I’ll be buggered!” she said, still in mild shock.
“I hope not, milady, it would rather ruin your visit!” he countered, with a chuckle. “Merlin’s family will always be welcome here.” Feeling a tighter grip on his arm, he turned to see Regina looking oddly at the young woman.

Regina looked intensely at Rosie. She was truly stunning, with a face and figure Hollywood casting agents would die for, and she could now see the resemblance to her sister Anna. It was in the eyes and the smile. Regina herself was widely regarded by all as beautiful, but this young woman seemed, to Regina, to be in a different league entirely. She could see the resemblance to her father, but her mother must have been breath-taking to sire such beautiful daughters.

Robin sensed her sudden nerves, so sought to distract. “Rosie, may I introduce my…erm…my very close friend Regina Swan-Mills, the former Mayor, and creator of Storybrooke.”

Just as Rosie had so easily flirted with Robin, now she turned her attention to the brunette woman on his arm. “Hello Miss Swan-Mills! It’s lovely to meet you too.” She said, shaking the offered hand. “Sorry, I’ve been driving in the cab for the last five hours, so I’m a bit hot and smelly. Frankly, I feel a little intimidated standing near someone as beautiful as you!”

Regina blushed slightly at the compliment. ‘Nonsense. I was thinking the same thing about you!” she admitted, her mouth slightly running away with her as she reached to shake hands with the woman. “I can see the family resemblance. Your father’s very handsome, but your mother must be something else.” As she did, she saw to her side, Emma joining the little group, Honour to her left and clearly having heard them. Robin intervened. “And this lady here,” he said, pointing to the blonde, “Is Mrs. Emma Swan-Mills, Regina’s wife.”

“Oh…OH!” said Rosie, clearly having assumed Regina was with Robin. “I just thought…”

“Hi daddy!” yelled Honour. “Who’s the lady?” the little girl interrupted.

“This, my darling,” Robin said, picking up his daughter, “is Rosie, Anna’s sister. Rosie, this is Honour, our little girl.” He said, looking at Regina with a smile. That brought a confused look from Rosie, which he tried to ignore. She had already noticed Emma’s defensive posture, moving close to Regina.

“Anna’s sissie?” Honour said excitedly. Merlin’s daughter had been playing with her yesterday.

“Oh, you’re gorgeous! Yes, my lovely. Anna’s my baby sister. Is she here by any chance?” Rosie said, tickling her under the chin.

The little blonde nodded, smiling broadly. “She’s inna pub!” she shouted, pointed at the inn.

“Hmm – no change there then!” Rosie replied, to which everyone laughed. Emma had arrived just in time to see the flirtatious look the stunningly beautiful brunette had given her wife and she didn’t like it. “So, what’s in the truck, to bring you all the way from New York, then?” she asked, a little more forcefully then intended.

“Medical supplies for our new clinic, Emma,” said Robin, answering for her. “Beds, furniture, machines, lots of medicines and all sorts of medical equipment I know nothing about. Merlin organised it, Rosie drove it here and her family are going to help us install it.” He sounded delighted.

“Rosie, how can I thank you?”

Looking up at the sign in front of the building. “Well, Mister ‘Prince of Thieves’, you could buy me a drink for a start! It’s a bit early for booze so perhaps a decent coffee? Nice looking pub, by the way. In the middle of a forest too! A walker’s paradise! Let me go in first, to give my sister a little
wake-up call! You’re going to lead the way, Honour?” And with that, she lifted the girl from her father, took her hand in her own and strode to the door, marching inside.

Robin watched them, chuckling to himself. “I think I’m going to like her,” he said, earning a glare from Regina, which surprised Robin. *Was that a hint of jealousy?* He thought. Emma stepped close, threading her arm with her wife’s to follow them. As they walked in, they saw Rosie, at the bar already, talking to Will Scarlet.

“So, who do I have to sleep with, to get a drink around here?” she yelled, grinning, to no-one in particular.

“Well, I’d love to answer that question in a way it deserves lass!” said Will, tidying up, “though I think my girl here,” he said looking over at Alice, “would not appreciate it. However, lucky for you, our newly magical Lord Locksley is picking up the tab until he discovers how much we’ve spent. What can I get ya?”

Before she could answer, she heard a yell from the other side of the room.

“BITCH COW! You didn’t break the truck then?” came a familiar voice from the kitchen door.

“Big tits! You doing the cooking? No wonder they need a hospital!”

The two girls ran to each other, falling into a sisterly hug before separating. “Pooh, you stink! You need a bath, girl!” said Anna, looking at her tired older sister.

“That’s what real manual work does, Anna! You should try it sometime!” The friendly banter continued, each sibling gently insulting the other as though it was a daily occurrence, completely ignorant of their audience who were all chuckling at their sparring and jibes.

“You’ve put on weight Anna! Look at those hips! A few less pies for you, my girl!” she said to the slim blonde who definitely didn’t need to lose weight.

Anna wasn’t insulted, though women gathered nearby were shocked by the barbs, before Anna countered.

“Rosie, you know why I’m so fat? Cos every time I fuck your boyfriend, he gives me a biscuit!”

The audience, Robin included, fell about laughing, realising this was clearly a game the sisters played. So did Rosie, who continued the friendly barrage.

“Ex-boyfriend actually! And I don’t think he’d go near you, sis. He hates bouncy castles!”

“Ooh, bitch! Your arse could do with a…” to continued laughter, she was interrupted by a deep, male voice.

“GIRLS, BEHAVE!” yelled Merlin, standing in the doorway, rolling his eyes at the publicly traded insults.

Rosie turned. “DADDY!” she yelled, running across to him, and jumping in to his arms. The cocky, self-assured woman had turned into a needy young girl at the site of her father. “I’ve missed you!”

Merlin laughed, taking his daughter into his arms in a warm hug. “And I you, my darling! Thanks for coming. I haven’t seen you in months. How was England? And your brother and sister?”

“Charlie’s flying in tomorrow and Celia said she’ll join him. It’s been a while since she’s been
anywhere with magic, so it’ll do her good!"

“They’re coming here too? How wonderful! We haven’t all been together for ages. It’ll be just like old times…” said Merlin, seeming genuinely delighted.


“Well my wife’s favourite play was As You Like It! Though we named our youngest after her grandmother. One of the bravest and fairest women I ever knew. Just like my Anna”

Annabelle blushed, turning back to her sister. “Ok, fish face, let’s get you hosed down! The guy’s will unload the truck, so I’ll show you the delights of the village before we head to Storybrooke. I’ve discovered a nightclub there and some smoking hot single guys…”

“Good. You know what they say? The best way to get over someone is to get under someone else!”

At that, Regina, Emma and everyone within earshot roared with laughter. Except Merlin. “Aargh! La la la la! Dad present! Not listening! Don’t want to hear this!” said Merlin, theatrically sticking his fingers in his ears. He hated hearing about his daughters’ love lives. They may be adults now, but he was still their father and thought of them as his little girls. Robin placed a sympathetic hand on his shoulder.

“I guess I have all this to come, my friend?”

“Sooner than you can imagine, my boy! Over the centuries I’ve had close to a hundred daughters, yet it doesn’t get any easier! So now, let’s leave these…ladies…and help your men with the truck…”
The Mayor has to Go!

Chapter Summary

Changes in the forest are causing attitudes to change in Storybrooke. The mayor decides to take action. So do his long suffering citizens...

Chapter Notes

Thank you again for all the constructive feedback!

There's been some complications and hurt feelings on the way, but slowly our illustrious trio will will find their way through. However, this chapter is a bit of a segue, focusing on changes in Storybrooke, which will have a dramatic affect on the nascent village in the forest. I hope you like the relationship between David and Regina...

Enjoy. Fi.

Chapter 15

Sunday afternoon had passed peacefully enough. Robin, Merlin and the Merry Men had continued through the day building and adding to their new small hamlet in the forest. Someone had nicknamed it Sherwood; the name stuck and now everyone in Storybrooke was talking about the new village and especially the pub in the middle of the forest, its homes, clinic and hospital.

Roland had returned to the mansion late, having spent as much time with his father as he could, though he did have school the next morning, so reluctantly came back. Honour never stopped talking about her new forest friends. About Anna, Rosie and most importantly, her daddy. While Regina had been pleased to see her little girl so happy, she couldn’t help feel that, even with her wife and smaller children now all together, without Henry, it still felt like something was missing, as her eldest continued to spend his college break living with his paternal grandfather.

The following morning, Regina drove Roland to school, Emma having dropped Honour at her playgroup a little earlier. He was nearly eleven now, so didn’t tend to cuddle her quite as much. Nonetheless, she smiled as he placed his usual kiss on her cheek before darting inside the main entrance, a figure walking out to greet her.

“Good morning, Regina!” The annoyingly happy and bright Snow White shouted as Roland raced past her. “How’s Emma? I haven’t heard from her for a few days. I left her a message, but she hasn’t called me.”
“She’s fine. Was there anything you specifically wanted to talk to her about?”

“Not particularly, I just miss her. She’s still my little girl, and David told me she’s been a bit stressed over the last few days, what with Killian and Robin returning and, well, it’s bound to have been a bit of a shock for you both. I can’t imagine it’s been easy…”

Regina bristled at the mention of the pirate, though realised she was being petty. She had focused so much on Robin’s return that she hadn’t really taken into consideration Emma’s own feelings for Hookr. She would remedy that, she told herself, by letting Emma get things off her chest later.

“Are you coming to the EGM at the town hall tonight?” Snow asked.

“An extraordinary general meeting? Tonight? No, I didn’t even know there was one!”

“The Mayor called it. Monday nights he’s usually out training his little army, but he insisted. All the committee members are required to attend. I spoke to Gold, and he suggested as many of us as possible should come.”

“I don’t see why I should. Neither Emma nor I have a vote anymore and would just have to watch from the gallery. Not my idea of fun. I’ll probably have my feet up with a book and a glass of wine instead…”

“Well Gold didn’t give me any details, but he thinks it’s about the new village and Robin Hood. He’s forcing a vote on something tonight and needs us all there.”

“A meeting about Robin? What’s that got to do with them?”

“Well, I did hear he threatened him and Sheriff Nottingham yesterday! I gather it turned nasty.”

“Well I was there,” Regina growled. “Nottingham grabbed Roland and threatened to hit him. Under the circumstances Robin was quite restrained. He shook him up, but he didn’t actually harm him.”

“Mmm. That’s the problem with magic; it lets you dominate and control everyone around you. Perhaps Robin needs restraining? That could be what the meeting is about.”
The older woman seethed. Granted, magic had previously turned her to the darkness. And Rumplestiltskin. But Robin! “He does not need restraining! He’s being coached by the greatest sorcerer that ever lived. Robin’s magic is white, like your own daughter’s. And your own son’s, for that matter. Careful what you say Snow!”

The younger woman’s expression didn’t change, despite Regina’s irritated response. “You see, Regina, that’s the problem, right there! When anyone with magic ever gets challenged or refused, instead of discussing it like a rational human being, they threaten!”

“I did NOT threaten you!”

“Not yet but you were getting close! Can you even hear yourself? That’s the problem, Regina, it’s too easy to choke someone, throw a fireball or make them disappear. Most of us have to just seethe, or get angry but after that just grow up and get on with it! But magic makes you all do really stupid things. And now Blue tells me Robin has even greater powers than any of you, even Gold. What happens if Robin changes? When Merlin leaves, what happens if he wants this new ‘Sherwood’ village to grow bigger? What does it mean to Storybrooke and how could anyone stop him?”

“You know NOTHING about Robin! He isn’t like that! He doesn’t crave power like Spencer or Richard. Or me in my own past for that matter. He’s good. He’s…”

“The man you’re still in love with…”

She said it as a matter of fact, not a question. The topic change threw her completely, not sure how to answer.

“I know you think David and I are idiots, but we’re really not. We notice, and we’re worried. Worried for Emma, worried for Henry and worried for you, too! You’re still so completely blindsided by Robin’s return that you can’t see the bigger picture. I’m not going to discuss this with you now outside the school gates, but we need to talk soon. In the meantime, come to the town hall tonight. Goodbye, Regina…”

And with that, the short schoolteacher abruptly turned, heading back into the entrance, leaving Regina mystified as to what she’d just heard. She was definitely going to the Town Hall tonight!
Monday Evening – Storybrooke Town Hall

The Public Gallery started to fill a good half hour before the 7.30 scheduled start to the Extraordinary General Meeting of the City Council, requested by Mayor Spencer, the former King George.

On most occasions, the main table of eight voting councillors would be overlooked by perhaps two or three of the elder population at best, as most citizens didn’t care much for the arcane processes and procedures of running a modern town like Storybrooke. However, today was to be different. Close to one hundred and fifty members of the public showed up, squeezing into a large gallery overlooking the main chamber and additional seating at the side, provided at very short notice, to cope with the unforeseen audience.

Regina had turned up a good hour before, having been tipped off by David that there was likely to be a crowd, so she needed to get a seat early. He’d held one free chair next to him, for which she was grateful. As she sat next to him, David gave his daughter-in-law a light peck on the cheek, whispered “Evening!” and sat back to watch, winking at his wife sitting down at the main table. Since she married Emma, Regina had become much closer to David and he had proved himself to be a loyal and supportive friend, despite her strained relationship with his wife. The former mayor was no stranger to public events, but rarely attended since she had lost the mayorship. She hated being a bystander and unable to control things herself.

At the main table sat six of Storybrooke’s elected councillors. Snow, as the local headmistress, represented the education services. To her right sat Dr. Archibald Hopper, the town’s chief psychiatrist and conscience of all. To Archie’s right sat Dr. Victor Whale, the Chief Physician. Moments before the meeting was due to start, a door silently opened, and a familiar clacking noise was heard as Mr. Gold, the primary landowner and landlord within Storybrooke, walked stiffly across to his own marked seat.

Mayor Spencer appeared from a side entrance, flanked by the Sheriff and the Town Clerk, acting as the meeting Chairman, moments before the formal meeting was due to start. Looking irritable, Spencer was clearly annoyed that his impromptu meeting with the town’s councillors now had a much bigger audience than anticipated. Oh well, he was a leader and used to commanding crowds, by force if necessary! He strode towards the table, half expecting the audience to stand for him. Nobody did, which irritated him even more.

“Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for attending this evening at such short notice! I have asked you here today to deal with a problem which requires our urgent attention. Namely, the unlicensed and illegal building of a small settlement within our borders. A settlement built by a bunch of outlaws and thieves which we currently estimate houses around two hundred forest dwellers and vagrants!”
The throwaway insult made Victor’s blood boil as he heard grumbles around him. How dare he? Vagrants? The poor people in that little settlement were worth so much more than the puffed up, self-righteous and contemptable little shit! But he stayed silent. He had his own news to deliver and he would do so in due course. However, before Spencer could continue, Rumplestiltskin intervened.

“Point of Order, Mr. Chairman!”

That woke old Colin, the Town Clerk. “Erm…yes, Mr.Gold?”

“To which ‘border’ is the Mayor referring?”

“What?” cut in Spencer, “The border separating us from Westbrooke, the lake edge on the plan!” he said, nudging Nottingham to distribute hastily printed copies of a map. “Robin Hood has built on a patch of our forest, at the edge of the lake!”

“Mr. Chairman,” Rumple spoke calmly, “as I have tried to explain to the Mayor yesterday, in slow careful sentences that even he would understand…” the audience started laughing, “…that the area of land shown here is not and never has been a part of Storybrooke! It fell outside the boundary completely. It was I fact owned by myself until yesterday, and I have sold some two hundred acres of land to the Earl of Locksley. Or as you know him, Robin Hood.” A few gasps were heard among the audience, some of whom knew nothing of Robin’s lineage.

“He’s no Earl! His family was stripped of its title!” growled Nottingham.

“Only in the eyes of the then King John, who himself acquired his royal title temporarily, until his brother Richard returned from his campaigns. Not only does the Locksley title remain in force, but so do our borders. This land here…” he stabbed at the photocopy, “…is no concern of yours! As most of you are aware, I am a lawyer and contracts are my ‘speciality’. Not only that, this committee should know that Lord Locksley’s counsel in this matter is Professor Sir Merlin Sage. Better known to most of you as The Sorcerer. His daughter, Celia Sage, is acting as Locksley’s lawyer in this matter and is currently in the settlement should you wish to challenge the sale.”

With that, Rumple sat back, watching light slowly dawn on Spencer’s face. The man’s fucked and he knows it!

“Well what about the crime issues, then? We can’t have a bunch of thieves living on our doorstep. There’ll be anarchy,” yelled Keith Nottingham. “There’s crime and basic sanitation. They live in the
Regina had heard enough. “Watch your tongue, Nottingham! I know these people and there’s nothing ‘filthy’ about them. They’re as clean as any of you - they’re just poor and have to survive! A lot of them are there because of the things your idiot boss, my mother and myself have done to them in the past!” she roared.

“Point of order, Mr. Chairman!” shouted Spencer at the Clerk next to him, trying to be heard above the noise from the public gallery. “Only committee members are allowed to speak at this session! We’ll have no barracking from members of the public!”

“I must agree,” said the Clerk. “Mrs. Swan-Mills, members of the public, I must insist you remain silent during this session, otherwise it will closed, and continued in camera. Please be silent!”

Philip Briar, the former Prince Philip and last member of the committe, spoke for the first time. “May I speak, Mr. Chairman?”

The clerk nodded. “You have the floor, Mr. Briar. We’re listening.”

“Thank you. As some of you are aware, I have been in command of our military forces for the last five years and I am delighted to report that, apart from occasional skirmishes, we have yet to require their use, relying instead on the sheriff’s department for internal matters. Nonetheless, our militia is on permanent standby, trained and ready for deployment if required.”

“Yes, yes!” Interrupted Spencer, wanting to wind thing up as he was getting nowhere with his plans for the eviction of the forest dwellers. He wanted to make his second point, but this man was slowing things up. “What’s that got to do with anything!”

“Mr. Chairman!” roared the young man, furious at the interruption. “I have waited silently and patiently, listening to this man’s nonsense!. Now would you kindly invite him to shut his ignorant fucking mouth and listen for a change, without interrupting me while I make my statement?”

The audience hushed. Nobody had ever heard the former prince, one of the calmest people in the town, shout before, and they could all see a man about to lose his shit altogether! Regina loved it. Loved the tension and saw Aurora’s husband, and soon Mulan’s, in a new light. “He’s got balls. I’m glad I came!” she whispered to David, who whispered back. “He’s been using them too, judging my Mulan’s condition.”
Regina cracked up, lightly slapping his arm as she fell about laughing, with David cackling beside her. He looked up to see his wife glaring silently at the pair of them. Now is not the time David!

“Mr. Mayor,” the Chairman intervened. “You cannot ask for silence from members of the public, and not show the same courtesy to Mr. Briar! Now please be silent until he has finished speaking. Now then, Mr. Briar, please continue.” The mayor’s face was purple with rage, furious at being spoken down to not just by this young whippersnapper but by the Chairman too. I'll get you back in time, you better believe it! He brooded to himself, silently.

“Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The point I was getting to, is that close to a half of all our young men and women volunteers have come from among the forest dwellers. Even several of the Merry Men regularly assist with their combat, survival and medical training. Even my wonderful fiancée, Fa Mulan, is actively engaged in their fighting skills.” He glanced over to the warrior, blushing slightly as she sat beside her other fiancée. “I never cease to be amazed by her techniques.”

“Mmm, I bet. Phil must be exhausted!” breathed David into Regina’s ear, the latter burying her head into his shoulder to hide her giggles, earning another furious look from Snow.

“My point being,” continued Philip, “that we have come to rely heavily on the people of the forest and the Merry Men for our added security. They’re volunteers, not paid for, like the Sheriff and his men. I have gotten to know them these last few years and I have found them to be sincere, honest and good people. The very same people our current Mayor decided to deny a vote to these last few years! Far from trying to deny them their homes, we should be encouraging them to join in activities with us, share our facilities as they share theirs.”

“I will not share my town with those bastards! Robin Hood remains a thief and a scoundrel!” Interrupted Spencer, earning an angry glare from the Chairman. “I will not tell you again, Mr. Mayor!”

“I’m glad you mentioned Robin Hood, Mr. Mayor.” Philip continued, “I have seen and worked with Robin of Locksley and his men up close. May I remind you that their thieving days were caused by the ridiculous taxes imposed on the poor by those who should have known better, stripping them of their homes and dignity. They stole not for their own benefit, but in an attempt to buy food for the poorest of the Enchanted Forest. Those who had nothing…” He paused for breath as Mayor Spencer jumped up.

“I’m not listening to any more of this rubbish! Meeting adjourned!” As he turned to walk away, Spencer felt his entire body freeze. An invisible force turned him around, lifting him forcibly back into the chair he had just vacated. Several members of the audience gasped at the display.
Rumplestiltskin smiled, standing to address the room. “Sorry about that, ladies and gentlemen! I assure you the mayor will not be harmed, though I believe he needs to sit and listen. Mr Briar has not finished yet, and I believe there are several other councillors wishing to speak. As the Mayor insisted on dragging us to this meeting, he WILL show us all the courtesy of listening to other councillors’ comments. So, Mr. Briar, please continue…”

“This is great, Regina! I wish the council meetings were this good when you were Mayor!” whispered David to his daughter-in-law, “We’ve got to come again. You bring the wine and I’ll bring the popcorn!”

Regina was starting to giggle again, keeping the face down to hide tears of laughter. “Charming, you may be my father-in-law, but I swear to god…”

“Thank you, Mr. Gold!” Philip continued. “Now, where was I? Oh yes. After the imposition of ridiculous taxes by him and his ludicrous gopher,” he said pointing dismissively at Spencer and Keith “…most of the poor fled their homes after his soldiers ransacked the villages. The only place they could go was the forest. The Merry Men fed and sheltered them. A number of years later, the Red Queen…” Regina bristled at the mention of her mother, “…sought to destroy many who defied her. She attacked the community of Phalia, slaughtering most of the men and women who stood in her path. Well over a hundred were brutally murdered. So, what about the children who were left wandering in a village of dead corpses? Who helped them? Certainly no fucking Royal, that’s for sure!”

Philip was fired up now, no holding back. Regina’s tears of laughter had been replaced with shock at the vivid reminder of the horrible act perpetrated by her mother. Philip carried on, now addressing the villagers, his back to the table of councillors. “You know who helped them? Again, the people of the forest, this time led by Friar Tuck. They scouted for and took in all the children they could find. Many died. Though a good fifty or so live close the Merry Men’s encampment even today. So after that vile, filthy, psychotic woman destroyed so many families, at least a few were saved.”

David, now chastened at their impromptu history lesson, looked at the public gallery, seeing faces in shock, many nodding, some showing signs of anger at the injustice. He saw one young man, his head in his hands. David assumed that particular lesson must have been one he had personal experience of.

“Some years later, the Red Queen’s daughter, the Evil Queen, carried out her own barbaric act of butchery on the village of Swaledale. Their crime? The had sheltered Snow White, protecting her from being murdered. The villagers tried to fight back but again the Black Knights showed no mercy, hanging their leaders and raping their womenfolk where they stood. The Evil Queen crowed over her triumph and even removed the heart of the village seer, a man of eighty. Older than her own
father, crushing it in front of his family!”

Regina felt sick. Reminded so brutally of her past was overwhelming and she became dizzy. David brought an arm around her in an attempt at comfort. Then he heard a recognizable voice come to her defence.

“She’s no longer that woman, Philip! She’s a hero now! We cannot keep bringing this up! We all know about her past. She has saved so many lives since, and we have to move on. I have forgiven her!”

“Well that’s nice to know! YOU may have forgiven her, Snow White, but I’m telling you most of your former ‘subjects’ have not! You make the mistake of thinking everything you say is taken as true by adoring subjects, but you are so wrong! She sits in a warm mansion today, and you a comfortable home, yet there are hundreds in the forest still suffering from King George, her mother and yes, even your own family’s past crimes! Your own fights among your families have caused more harm than you can ever imagine. These are the people the Merry Men deal with every single day! Snow White, you may be a symbol of goodness and light, but you truly have no comprehension of the pain and suffering your families have all caused.” He paused for breath.

“I mentioned Swaledale. Well, one brave young woman smuggled two young children from under the guards’ noses after their mother had been murdered in the massacre. That remarkable young woman protected them through the mountains for two whole weeks, leading them to safety. She even fought off three of the queen’s knights single handed, when they tried to capture them. She eventually got them to the Merry Men for protection and though older, the young boy and girl now live there today. That woman was captured shortly afterwards. Would you like to know her name? Marion Locksley! A true hero to the poor, just like her husband…”

The gallery was silent. A few quiet sobs were heard amongst them as memories were rekindled.

“Now I say all this, because I want you all to realise that we need the forest people a lot more than they need us! After getting to properly know them, as Doctor Whale has, I can testify that they, Robin Hood and his men are the most noble, brave and honourable people I have ever had the good fortune to know. And if this committee intends to take ANY form of action against them, I will cease my duties in this town forthwith and stand with the people of the new Sherwood. I will not allow any action to be taken against them, and will fight alongside them, if necessary!”

“As will I!” said Mulan, standing up and looking at her fiancée with love in her eyes.

“As will I!” said Aurora, standing and beaming with pride at her husband.
“As will I!” said David, standing and ignoring the annoyed glare given by his wife.

“As will I!” said Regina, earning a gasp from some in the gallery.

A rumble was heard from the floor and gallery as numerous men and women stood and pledged their allegiance to the forest dwellers. Rumple watched the wave increase with a smirk as the noise changed to a thunderous round of applause for Philip’s speech. After a while it subsided, Rumple slowly standing to address the committee.

“AS WILL I!” Said the Dark One, earning the loudest gasp from the room. Everyone knowing what that meant! Any action now taken against the forest dwellers would be dealt with in a very different matter! So, it was decided.

The Chairman quietly gulped, looking down at his papers. “Well then, ladies and gentlemen, as that matter seems to be closed, I believe Doctor Whale wishes to make a statement?” he said looking at Victor.

“Indeed, Mister Chairman. I need to inform the committee that I will be resigning my office as Chief Surgeon at the end of the month.”

“What?” someone yelled from the gallery. “He’s the only doctor we’ve got!”

“That is indeed unfortunate, Doctor Whale. May I ask where you will be going?”

“I intend to take charge of the new hospital and clinic in Sherwood.” Nottingham’s breath hitched at the memory of his arch enemy’s old home town. “However, I will be joining Professor Sage’s faculty in New York to undergo further specialist training. I will return in six months, though will be based in the forest thereafter...”

“Is there anyone you could recommend as your replacement?” asked Colin.

“Well yes. Doctor Annabelle Sage has offered to provide her services for the next six months. Her father, a renowned surgeon, will also be available to assist for at least three of those while on his ‘sabbatical’. During that time we can also look for additional resources.”
“Then I wish you the very best, Victor! I’m genuinely sorry to see you go. Now does anyone have any other statements before we bring this, frankly unwarranted, meeting to a close?”

Rumple called. “Actually yes, Mr. Chairman. I wish to make a formal statement and request.”

“Very well, Mr. Gold. You have the floor.”

“Thank you, Mr. Chairman” said Rumple, rising in his old theatrical manner, with a rather devilish look in his eye. *He was enjoying this - Just like old times!*

“Ladies and gentlemen. We have been brought her today for some rather curious reasons. It seems the Mayor here, has asked us to agree to actions against a settlement of the poor and the worthy, close to the town border. They have been soundly rejected. The Mayor, the former King George, has over the last two years acquainted himself with the trappings of office unworthy of a small city such as Storybrooke. Following his election, he appointed his own sheriff, Keith Nottingham, to his current post and has gone on to appoint a further six deputy sheriffs, all at the expense of the taxpayer. Now, as we all know, before David Nolan’s long deserved retirement three years ago, we had two deputies on the payroll plus himself. That was sufficient and had been since the time of Sheriff Swan and Sheriff Humbert. Sheriff Nottingham has instead increased his staff threefold, to no noticeable benefit. They have provided themselves with additional vehicles and even horses, again all at our expense.”

Mayor Spencer was now purple with rage. If he could, he would have climbed out of the chair in which he was being held and wring the bloody imp’s neck! He couldn’t even shout back, his voice being withheld. Rumple saw his discomfort. “Don’t worry Mr. Mayor, you will be released shortly. I’m almost finished.”

Then he turned to address the gallery. “It is my belief that the last election held was under very dubious circumstances, Mayor Mills and Sheriff Swan at that time being, temporarily, mentally unfit for their offices at that time for personal reasons. The former King George took advantage, called an election under which the normal vote counting methods were not secured. Citing that and recent events, it is my belief that the current mayor is wholly unfit for office. It is within my rights as a Storybrooke Councillor to request a vote by the Council for the current mayor to be suspended, pending investigations and an interim one appointed while an investigation and new election is called. If at least seventy percent are in favour, suspension is immediate.”

Spencer’s eyes bulged. *So that’s what the old bastard is up to!*
“So, ladies and gentlemen, all those in favour of immediate suspension, raise your hand and say ‘Aye!’”

Gold, Whale, Philip and, more slowly, Snow White, all raised their hands. “Aye!” they declared. So far it was a draw. However, after a short delay, Archibald Hopper also raised his own hand. “Aye!”

Five in favour, three against. No surprise when it came to the Mayor and Keith Nottingham. But Colin?

“Mr. Chairman? Colin? You haven’t cast your vote yet. Are you in favour of Mr. Spencer remaining in office?” said Snow, sympathetic to his predicament.

The Chairman looked at Spencer. His son actually worked for the Mayor’s estate and he knew the man would take his betrayal personally, no doubt sacking his son the same day. Nonetheless, he knew where his conscience lay. Raising his hand, he looked across at the incandescent man. “No, actually. I vote in favour of the motion. Aye.”

“Three quarters of the vote in favour. Seventy five percent carried. Mr. Mayor, you are suspended pending investigations!” declared Rumple, releasing the man, and Nottingham, from their magical binds.

“You bastard! You will pay for this! I’ll…”

“You will do nothing! Do you understand? You attempt any form of illegal action or intimidation against anyone in this room and you will be swiftly reminded why I am also known as the Dark One!” As he said it, Gold instantly morphed into the scaly gold, black eyed figure Spencer recognised. “Are we clear?”

Spencer stood silently, turning away to leave the room without comment, followed by Nottingham. The audience in the gallery whooped and cheered, glad to see the back of two of the most hated men ever to hold office.

Snow White silently stood. “Well, I guess we need to arrange an election. I’ll step in again as interim Mayor and start making the arrangements. If you’ll excuse me…”

The Chairman raised his hand. “Snow, stop! We have not decided who should be interim Mayor yet,
or indeed if we even need one before an election.”

Snow sat back down, chastened. “I’m sorry, I just assumed…”

“Assumed yet another member of the Mills-White-Charming clans should fill the void?” snarked Rumple. “Perhaps it would make a change if the same three families didn’t control Storybook’s key offices for a little while? Perhaps somebody the people could turn to for more independent rule?”

“You mean you? How on earth could you imagine that anyone would…” snarked Snow.

“Not me, you fool! I wouldn’t want the job anyway. I think the choice would be obvious.” he said, looking across the table to the youngest man to his left. “After what we heard today, I think Mr. Briar would be obvious for the temporary position. Perhaps he could even be persuaded to stand for office himself?”

Philip heard cheers and applause rain from the gallery as he looked up. He certainly hadn’t anticipated that! “Eh? Well I’m flattered…but I hardly think I’m worthy! I’m not sure where I would even start!”

The calm voice of Archie Hopper interrupted. “You’re worthy, because you didn’t ask for the role! You’re worthy because you have ideals, young man, rather than just opinions. You’re worthy because, without magic, you have led people in the past, people who have been prepared to risk their lives for you. You’re worthy because people trust you. You’re worthy because you have given to the town. I think Mr. Gold may be right. You would be an excellent candidate!” Victor, sitting next to him, nodded in agreement.

Before Philip had a chance to respond, looking up into the glistening eyes of his wife and their fiancée, Colin brought the meeting to order. “Councillors, let’s make a decision! All those in favour of Mr. Briar being installed as Interim Mayor while elections are arranged, raise your hands and say ‘Aye!’”

“Aye!” the five remaining councillors called, unanimous. This was swiftly followed by a loud ‘Aye’ from the public gallery and those seated below. Cheers erupted.

“Well then, Mr. Briar, you are duly elected!”
Tears ran down Aurora’s face, hands cupped over her nose and mouth as she watched her man, their man, stand and receive congratulations from the council as other milled around him. Mulan’s arms wrapped around her in a celebratory hug, neither believing what had just taken place. The room slowly started to settle as the new Mayor Philip was invited to address the room. Raising and lowering his arms slowly to call for silence.

“Well! Ladies and Gentlemen…I’m not sure where to start…you have completely overwhelmed me!” He was genuinely choked, his eyes reddening. “This is only a temporary role, and I’m not entirely sure I’m worthy of this honour on a more permanent basis!” There were further cheers and shouts of “Course, you are” and “We love you Phil!” amid the laughter.

“But perhaps I could start by making my first mayoral decisions. Firstly, I request this council formally terminate the current Sheriff Nottingham’s employment contract with immediate effect, pending investigations!” That brought a loud cheer.

“Secondly, I would like to ask the Council to declare land currently occupied by the Merry Men and their associates, as being outside Storybrooke’s borders and beyond legal challenge. I ask that the Merry Men and Women be given the freedom to travel and work in Storybrooke should they wish. Something that they were denied under the previous Mayor. That they may be allowed to make use of our facilities freely, as we have used theirs. That they be recognised for the heroes they truly are!”

Loud cheers rang out as he closed. “And finally, I ask this Council to award their leader, Robin of Locksley, the Freedom of the City for his great and dedicated service to the poor over many years and invite him to become an honorary councillor of Storybrooke Council. Do I have your agreement?”

The remaining five all raised their hands. “Aye!” they declared, Rumple smiling at the young man’s cheek.

Regina sat quietly, still chastened by the reminders of her terrible past. However, listening to the young mayor’s speech and his open admiration for her lover, a small tear slid down her face, quickly batted away before anyone noticed. David did, but smiled and said nothing.

“Councilor Hood! They’ll be making him Sheriff next!” Charming whispered, nudging her shoulder.
Chapter Summary

Robin asks Emma on a date, Rosie's looking for someone to date, Killian has his best night for a long time and Emma just wants a lie-in!

Chapter Notes

Sorry the pace of new chapters being released had to slow, due to Uni course work!

As I said last chapter, there'll be a couple of segues to line up characters for what's to come, but I hope to get to surprise you all. Thanks once again for all the constructive PMs and comments you've been making! You're wonderful...

Monday Evening – Mifflin Street

As the small revolution was taking place at the Town Hall, Emma sat quietly in the living room at Mifflin Street. She wasn’t in the mood for a film or tv, so she just sat, watching flames lick the fake coals in the fireplace. Honour was safe and sound, tucked up in bed. Roland was with his dad and god alone knows where Henry was. Gold’s probably. Regina had decided to attend some boring council meeting. Why, she’s not even the mayor anymore? Only mum’s going to be there! And who the hell calls an extraordinary general meeting at this time of night?

As she sat morosely watching the flames, her thoughts went back Killian, their past together and what he meant to her now. The dismissive way he reacted to her earlier was still bothering her, and she didn’t understand why. Nor why she cared! She started imagining what it must have been like to be brought back to life, to greet your lost love and discover she’s not only moved on, but she moved on got married. How she would have been under the circumstances.

But it had been five years! Three years of bereavement, aching loss, depression, counselling and everyone else trying to pick you up. One year of slowly falling in love with a woman who had been going through a similar heartache, before finally marrying and moving on with your life. Moving on. As if!

She was pulled out of her maudlin thoughts by a loud knock, making her flinch. Who the hell? Standing up, she moved to the front door, opening it to find a curly haired whirlwind race past her with a cursory “Hi Em,” as Roland headed up to the staircase, clumping up them two at a time.

“And good evening to you too, Roland!” said Emma to his back, before whispering as loudly as she could without waking Honour. “Not too loud – don’t wake your sister!” A pointless exercise as the inexhaustible ten-year-old had already disappeared into his room.

“Hi Emma,” said a deeper voice from behind her. “Sorry we’re back a little late. Henry was teaching us card tricks and I didn’t realise the time…” said Robin, as he put a hand to her arm and kissed her cheek. Without thinking, she reciprocated before stepping back. “Hi…erm, did you say Henry? He’s
still at the camp? I mean, the new ‘village’?”

“Was,” said Henry, walking in behind them. “I’ve come back…to stay the night…if that’s ok?”

Robin saw the slightly embarrassed, awkward expression on Emma. “I’ll head up and make sure he’s getting ready for bed and not messing around; and look in on Honnie.” With that, he hurtled silently up the stairs taking three at a time. Like father, like son, she thought, before addressing her own boy.

“You don’t need to ask, Hen. This is your home! You know there’s nothing we want more!”

“I know. It’s just, these last few days…”

“You’re my son, Henry. I love you, even though I’ve gone a funny way of showing it! I’m sorry…”

“Hey, don’t go there again,” said the young man, pulling his mother into a broad hug. Henry was a good seven inches taller than his blonde mother now and, even though she didn’t like the role reversal, she absolutely loved his hugs and rested the side of her head on his broad chest. “I’ve been a complete arse too.”

“What made you change your mind and stay over? I thought you decided stay at your grandfather’s place?”

“I did. There was nothing specifically or, well, perhaps something Robin said, made me think…”

“Okaaaaay. Now you know I’ll keep pestering till you tell me, so…”

Henry looked past her, making sure Robin wasn’t within earshot. “He said I should look at it from your point of view! That you’ve been put in a really awkward spot. That Killian and him coming back was bound to cause you a lot of pain after everything you’ve been through. I kinda told him about…about the jail cell. Mulan was there, and she saw it. A couple of people laughed. Robin didn’t. He kinda gave me a bit of a roasting. Said I was being cruel to you, and should apologise. He said you were only trying to protect me after all, and knowing I don’t need that sort of protection anymore must have hurt. He sort of gave me a bollocking!” he grinned.

“A ‘bollocking’?” Emma chuckled, “I know what it means, but haven’t heard that old Brit term for a while. Not since Killian…”

“I know, right? I heard a whole bunch of them tonight! Knob. Dickhead. Pillock! Killian even called me a ‘spoilt git’! It’s hilarious!”

“So, Robin tells you off and it’s ok, but I do it and I’m bad? Doesn’t seem fair, Hen!”

“I know. Perhaps it’s a guy thing. All I know is that Robin made some good points. He was a good guy before Zeus sent him back, and I like him. Magic doesn’t seem to have messed him up. I like being with him. When it was just us and Rollie and Hon, it felt like for the first time in a very long time I had a…sort of had a…” he hesitated to say it, concerned how she would react.

“A father, Hen? A dad? I do understand…”

“Yeah, well. Things are tough for him too. It can’t have been easy coming back to this. But we like having him around, though I know you don’t. I get it…”

Emma’s eyes flared. “No Henry, no. It’s not like that! Things are obviously different now, and your mum’s relationship with Robin was always very different to mine. He’s Honnie and Rollie’s dad, not
to mention little Robyn’s. Although mine and Killian’s…friendship…is probably over, his and your mum’s can never be over. I don’t hate Robin, not at all! I mean, how can anybody hate Robin Hood? After all, he’s kind, generous, takes care of people, he’s a leader. And the rest of my family seem to adore him! It’s just…just…I have never really had a chance to get to know him…”

She looked up again, now seeing Henry’s eyes fixed on something over her shoulder. Or someone.

“Then perhaps I can remedy that?” said the deeper voice behind her.

She froze, turning her head to see his eyes staring straight in to hers. “Robin! Erm…what did you hear?”

“Only a few seconds.” His gaze never left hers. “And I would like the chance to properly get to know you too, Emma!”

Henry smiled at his mum’s rabbit-in-the-headlights expression. “I’m heading up - g’night Robin, thanks for a really good day. I like Sherwood, though I agree with the lads, you should’ve called it Locksley! And I particularly like your pub!”

Robin chuckled. “You’ll always be welcome there. Though watch out for those drinks! I know you’re borderline drinking age, but both your mums will have my guts for garters if they know you’ve been imbibing - well, publicly, anyway,” he winked conspiratorially. “And once you’ve turned twenty-one, you should know that Friar Tuck is more than capable of handling a bunch of young inebriates. I’ve seen him in action and he’s scary!”

“I thought he’d have Little John do that…”

“No, John just grabs ‘em and sits on ‘em! Believe me, after an experience like that, they’re more than happy to be thrown out by Tuck or Mulan!” Robin scoffed.

Henry bid goodnight again, turning for the stairs, before glancing back. “Guts for garters? Is that a real phrase?” he chuckled, heading up.

Once Henry left the room, Robin stepped in front of her. “I meant what I said. I would like to get to know you. Perhaps we could go for a meal somewhere? Not Granny’s or the pub. Perhaps over the border? What do you think?”

“You’re inviting me out on a date? ” she smiled at him. ”Cos if you are, I think my wife might have something to say about that!”

“She does. In fact, it was your wife’s suggestion.”

“Regina asked you to take me out on a date? ”

“She didn’t use those exact words! Though she did suggest we get to know each other. That I ask you out. She still believes she’s the root cause of our difficulties. We both know that’s not true, that its more complicated than that; but I happen to think she’s right. We should try to get to know each other.”

Emma smiled, feeling more relaxed than she had of late. “Ok, you’re on. And definitely another town. Tongues wag around here, and anyone seeing you and me together may get the impression…well, it may get construed as something…something else. Then, as soon as my mother gets to hear of it! Well, you can imagine…”

He smiled back, already warming to the idea. “I can indeed. So how about tomorrow night? I’ll find
a restaurant. I could come and pick you up around six? We’ll drive out for an hour or so. What do you prefer, French or Italian?”

“Well I haven’t had French in ages! Are we talking something fancy or something basic?”

“Oh, fancy, definitely. Why?”

“How could you ask me that? I’m a woman, Robin! I may spend most of my life in jeans, tees and jackets, but I’m still capable of smartening myself up on occasion!”

“Then you must dress in whatever you feel comfortable. You always look beautiful, anyway…”

That threw her. She’s had compliments on her appearance most of her adult life, but not from her wife’s former lover! Her superpower told her he was being sincere. As her eyes glazed for a moment, a small voice inside told her, *get a grip Swan, it’s only a bloody compliment! Stop acting like a simpering teenager!* “Thanks. So, six o’clock then?”

“Six it is. I’ll see you tomorrow. Good night Emma, sleep well.” And with that he stepped forward, again resting his hand on her upper arm, before placing a gentle kiss on her right cheek. She mirrored his actions, then gently pulled her head back, as did he. For one brief second, she looked down at his lips, feeling an urge to kiss them. Lifting her gaze, she saw him looking at her own mouth. *Was he thinking the same thing?*

“Well, I’d better be off.” he said, stepping back and heading out the door with a short smile.

“What the hell just happened?” she muttered to herself.

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*The Rabbit Hole*

“I can’t believe this place!” said Rosie, nursing her fourth large chardonnay of the night, having worked through two of Malcolm, the nightclub owner’s, home-brewed cocktails. “Everything’s a bloody fairy tale! You’ve got fairies, dwarves, kings and queens and princes. Hell, you’ve even got Frankenstein!”

“Hey, Victor’s a good bloke, don’t knock him!” said Anna. “He’s the only bloody proper surgeon in the area!”

“Someone sounds keen! Fancy him?” teased her older sister.

“No, nice guy but a bit old for me. Anyway, I think he’s just found a love of his own. He was keen on Ruby, the leggy redhead you met at the diner this morning?”

“The one you said was Red Riding Hood? But I suspect she bats for the other team! She kept eyeing up that other brunette serving us.”

Annabelle chuckled. “Yes, Dorothy Gale! They got engaged yesterday, and they’re getting married on Friday. I think I’m invited. You should come too!”

“Dorothy Gale out of the Wizard of Oz is marrying Not-So-Little Red Riding Hood? This is bizarre! I saw the Evil Queen and that blonde girl, the Saviour? They’re already hitched? Does every girl eventually go lezze in this town?”

“Don’t be daft! As for Regina and Emma, that’s a very different story. They’re happy, but there’s a
lot of tragedy. And for those two, there’s a lot more story to come. I saw their future, and…”

Rosalind stopped her with a hand up. “Anna, stop! Dad told you to be careful using your seer magic! It can screw up history and possibly get us all in trouble. If you’ve learned something, keep it to yourself, you know that!”

“Stop fretting. I am ‘keeping it to myself’! I’m just saying, that there’s lots of stuff to come for them. Good stuff, as it happens…”

“Alright, just, be careful, ok! Anyway, on to more important stuff.” She said looking at as a small excited group of men and women who had walked in and now stood clustered around Philip at the bar. “Those good lucking guys at the bar, cheering that hottie in the centre with the pint. Tell me about them? Especially him!”

Her sister giggled. “You never change, sis!” though stopped when she heard another small laugh from someone close by; looking up to find Ashley bending over. “Perhaps I’ll tell her, Anna! That ‘hottie’, is Philip Briar. He’s just been elected Mayor of Storybrooke, after they kicked out the old one a few hours ago…”

“Ooh, looks and power! And is he single?” Rosie enquired, glad for the info.

“Definitely not!” He’s married to that tall auburn-haired one on the left. Princess Aurora. Or Sleeping Beauty to you. And the pair of them have just become engaged to that small brunette in front of them…”

“BOTH of them?” He’s with both of them?” They nodded back “Lucky little bugger. Looks, power and two hot women on the go? No wonder he looks a bit tired!” They all laughed before she urged their new confidante. “And what about the other guy, just to the right of the ‘lucky guy’?”

“That’s Jeff, or Jeffersen,” before Anna interrupts. “That’s the Mad Hatter, Rosie!”

“Really? Bloody hell, everyone’s famous around here!”

“I should’ve properly introduced you. Rosie, this is Ashley Herman, or in the books, Cinderella!” The tall blonde smirked at the seated brunette, before faking a small curtsy.

“Shouldn’t I be curtsying to you? Didn’t you marry your prince?”

“I did. And I’m now a mother to two. You met my little Alex yesterday…”

“Aah, the gorgeous little blonde poppet. She’s a darling! Ok, last chance then. Ashley, who is that tall dark blonde next to Mulan? The one with the shoulders and the dimples? God, I love dimples! No…wait…don’t tell me! He’s not gay, is he? Or living with a posse of cheerleaders? He’s got lovely arms. Wouldn’t mind them around me of a night…”

Ashley chuckled with laughter at that, attracting the attention of, and gorgeous smile from, the man they were discussing. Ashley gave him a small wink back. “Hmm. Definitely not gay, and I’d be bloody annoyed about the cheerleaders! But he is out of bounds, I’m afraid. That’s Alex’s dad, my prince, Sean!”

Rosalind cringed in embarrassment, putting her face in her hands. “Oh Gawwd! I’m so sorry Ashley!” she squeaked red faced. Ashley merely laughed again, placing a comforting hand on her shoulder. “No problem. I’m flattered that’s what you think of my man, though I best not tell him. He’ll get awfully big-headed!”
Anna, having enjoyed her sister’s cringing, leaned it. “Don’t you worry, there’s plenty of single guys around. I’m sure Ashley and I can…” she stopped when she saw Rosie’s eyes widen and jaw drop as someone came through the front door.

“Well, stone me!” Rosie breathed as a tall brooding figure walked towards the group. “Look at that! He is abso-fucking-lutely drop dead gorgeous! Ash…please tell me he’s not married, gay or one of your toy boys?”

Ashley saw where the brunette’s wide eyes had focused. “Ah, Killian Jones! Yes, I agree he is quite a dish. Most of the women around here fancy him, and he is definitely single…for now!”

“Oh Ash, here’s the deal” she said, her eyes never leaving the former pirate who had now gone to Philip to congratulate him. “You introduce me to Mr. Jones and I babysit your little lady one evening this week. Give you a night out with your own gorgeous Mister Muscles!”

Ashley lifted the brunette’s arm into the hook of her own. “You, young lady, have got yourself a deal! Come on…” she said, leading her towards the group. Anna sighed as she followed them. “Here we go again…”

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An hour earlier - The Docks

News travels fast in Storybrooke. “So, Philip’s now the mayor?” said Killian, surprised at Tinker Bell’s news from the Town Hall as they stood by the Jolly. “No Snow White or the Queen taking over? I know they both hate King George…”

“That’s the strange thing,” Said the fairy. “Snow assumed that too, but the Council said they wanted someone new. Phil gave a great speech, Rumplestiltskin proposed him and everyone else seconded it.”

“The Dark One proposed him? He must be up to something.”

“Possibly, but Merlin’s close to him right now. He’ll keep an eye on him, I’m sure. Anyway, there’s drinks at the Rabbit Hole from eight. You’re invited!”

“Then it would be impolite to refuse.” Killian liked Prince Philip, a decent straightforward man. A little stuffy sometimes on account of his royal and military background, but a reliable ally in a storm. “So, have they also kicked that arse Nottingham out of the sheriff’s office?”

“Phil’s first decision!” grinned the fairy, “that and confirming the Merry Men could settle where they were and be welcomed in Storybrooke at last. Not treated as outlaws.”

“That’s long overdue. After all, Robin’s boys have been mopping up all the shit the royals have caused over the years.”

Tink nodded in agreement but looked a little hesitant about something. He picked up on it. “Something else you want to ask me, love?” She still seemed a little unsure, but decided to ask anyway.

“Well…I was wondering. Frankly, there’s not really much here for me these days and I’m starting to get a bit…bored. Where will you be heading when you sail?”

Killian smiled at one of the few fairies he actually liked. “I’ve got a couple to tasks from Zeus to take care of. I’ll be heading to the Maritime Castle. Eric and Ariel have a few issues with a certain squid.
You remember Ursula? Then on to Agrabah as Aladdin’s gone missing. Then Arendelle to pick up supplies and sort out a little issue with the neighbours apparently. After that, who knows?"

“You’re going to be seeing Ariel…and Elsa?” Tink had desperately missed her old friends.

“Aye, lass. Do I interpret from your sudden interest, that you would like to join me? You’d be most welcome, though the living quarters are a little cramped.”

It didn’t take more than a moment to consider. “Killian, I would love to. Thank you!” she blurted, wrapping her arms around him, giving him a kiss on the cheek.

“You’re welcome, love. Just be ready for Saturday morning’s tide. Meanwhile, I think it’s time for that drink with the mayor…”

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An hour later, Killian Jones arrived at The Rabbit Hole with Tinker Bell, seeing a small cluster around the new Mayor, toasting his health. Striding through the middle of them, he shook the other man’s hand. “So, Mr. Mayor! You now have the beautiful wife, the equally beautiful fiancée, the second baby on the way and now the town! Where did it all go wrong?”

Phil scoffed at the friendly dig. “I don’t honestly know, mate.” He looked across to his two loves. “Undeserving though I am, I guess I’m just a lucky, lucky bastard!” They clinked glasses to the happy laughter around them. “Captain, I don’t suppose I could persuade you to stick around a week or two?” Philip pondered. “We just got rid of Keith Nottingham, we need to organise an election for Sheriff, and I don’t yet trust the deputies apart from our beloved Mulan here. She could do the job blindfold with one arm behind her back, but I’m worried this isn’t the time to…”

The warrior rolled her eyes. “I’m pregnant Philip, not injured! I can handle it. Stop fretting!”

Philip groaned as Aurora wrapped an arm around their fiancée. “We know you can my love! You’re as strong and capable as you’ve ever been. But you’re carrying our little one inside you right now. I’m just a little worried you’ll overstretch yourself!”

Aurora stepped in. “He’s right, Ping. You remember when I was carrying little Philip? I nearly miscarried just from being on horseback. We’d never forgive ourselves if…”

“Ok, ok, I get it! But once I have this baby, I’m applying for the sheriff’s badge!”

“You’re better suited to it than almost anyone else in this town,” said Killian, “But your future husband and wife do make a good point, love. What you’re carrying right now is a wonderful new life, and surely that’s more important than any job? You know, if I…” he stopped, completely distracted as Ashley Herman walked towards him with a young woman on her arm. A young woman with a devastating, disarming smile, looking straight at him.

Bloody hell, she’s a goddess! He thought as the young brunette raised her hand to him. Instead of shaking it, he merely held it in his own as Cinderella introduced them. “Killian, I’d like you to meet Rosalind Sage. Or Rosie. Rosie, this here’s our very own former pirate, Captain Killian Jones. Or Captain Hook, as was!”

“It’s a pleasure meeting you, Rosie.” He said, turning her hand gently to kiss the back of it, his eyes staring into her own. Rosie’s breath hitched at the simple act. Come on, get a grip girl! It’s just a bloke, she told herself.

“Likewise, Captain!” she murmured coquettishly, eyes blatantly flirting with the pirate’s.
“So what brings you to Storybrooke, Rosie Sage?” Then seeing Annabelle walking up behind them. The resemblance was clear. “Oh, Sage! As in Merlin’s girls? Anna’s sister?”

“Rosie’s MUCH older than me, you understand! I’m just showing the old girl around,” Annabelle sarked.

“Oi, none of that, blondie! There’s only three years between us,” the brunette retorted to her sister, her eyes never leaving Killian’s. “You see Captain, I got the brains and she got the boobs, basically!”

What followed next was a series of quick sarcastic comments and retorts between the two sisters, both smiling happily as they traded insults. It was clear that the sisters were actually close, and had missed each other, their comments never more than light fun. Anna continued as she wrapped an arm around the older girl. “Anyway, my aged sibling here, was asking about the local guys and, you know, she needs all the help she can get with dating advice and so on…”

Killian smirked at the pair. “I’m sure that’s completely untrue! You are the most stunningly beautiful pair of sisters I’ve ever met; no doubt you have boys falling all over you!”

“Hmm. Thanks for the compliment, Captain, flattery will get you everywhere, but I’m more interested in men than boys!” She winked at Ashley. “So far, all the guys in this town like Sean heree, seem to be tied up with very beautiful wives like Ash. Or…” she smiled over at Philip, “your handsome mayor here, with more than one gorgeous lass, you greedy boy!” At that Philip laughed and nodded in agreement. “An undeserving boy, certainly!”

“Well before you set about your task of searching out all the single men in Storybrooke,” said Killian, “perhaps you’ll allow this single man to buy you and your sister a drink? You too, Ashley?”

“Why thank you, kind sir!” said Rosie, deliberately avoiding her sister’s gaze.

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Emma Swan-Mills lay in bed, book in hand, propped up on the pillows. Since moving in with Regina two years ago, the former sheriff had gone out of her way to educate herself in a wider variety of literature. Although she’d never been much of a reader herself, her parents, wife and son were avid. Her mum, unsurprisingly, loved the romantic novelists such as Austen and Bronte. Roland took after Henry in his love of adventure stories and Regina loved the classics. The biggest shock had been her father. Since the curse broke, David had become hooked on Shakespeare. So Emma, feeling like an illiterate dullard compared to the rest of her family, decided it was time to further her own education.

It was while re-reading a chapter, that she heard the gentle thud of the front door downstairs and after a couple of minutes, her wife appearing in the bedroom.

“Hello, my love,” whispered Regina to avoid waking Honour, stepping towards Emma and placing a chaste peck on her lips. “Couldn’t sleep?”

“Not really. I tried to, but, you know me, if you’re not here…” She fluttered her eyes flirtatiously.

“Hmm. Well, I’ll try to fix that very soon. After the meeting, I stopped off with Kathryn and Frederick for a couple of drinks. So, just let me pee…” she rose to head to the bathroom.

“Way to kill the moment there, Gina!” Emma replied, a chuckle being heard from the bathroom. “Don’t forget to use the bidet!”

“How dare you! I do every night - as you well know!” Regina called back, in mock outrage. “Now
Leaping out from between the sheets, Emma’s cheeks flushed at the thought. She loved the naughty side of Regina, the side hidden from everyone but herself. The side that always came out after a couple of drinks. Tapping on the bathroom door to check she was ready, after all there were some things Emma really didn’t want to see! “Coming in, ready or not!” she breezed in to see her wife standing in front of one of the mirrors at the double sink, in bra and panties, removing her make-up and cleansing.

Emma moved to her side to join her at the next sink, realising she hadn’t brushed her teeth before bed and tonight might be worth it! Emma loved times like these. She and her wife, side by side in front of their mirrors, preparing for bed. The simple domesticity of married life was something she had long craved. And now she had it.

“So. The meeting at the town hall? What’s Spencer bitching about this time? More unnecessary deputies? Bigger office? Leroy taking up the cells?”

Regina smiled at her, as she brushed her teeth, also craving these little moments. “Actually, Spencer is no longer the mayor! They suspended him, sacked Nottingham and Prince Philip is now the Interim mayor!”

“Sacked him? Phil? How the hell! What did I miss?”

“Well...Spencer wanted to take some sort of action against the Merry Men. Philip wasn’t having any of it and made a speech. A very good speech actually, apart from a few home truths I didn’t like. The imp alleged fraud by Spencer. There was a vote. Your mother, Philip, Hopper and Whale voted against and now he’s gone. The voted in Philip and he’s made some…changes…and there we are. So, anything happen here?”

“Well, TV was crap tonight, I hate James Joyce, Henry’s home and Robin asked me out on a date.”

“Henry’s home?” Regina was desperate to spend some quality time with her adult son. Then the gears in her mind started comprehending what Emma just said. “Wait...Robin? What did you say?”

“Your true love asked me out on a date. Or more specifically ‘a chance to get to know me’. He said it was also your suggestion. So what are you up to, O darling wife of mine?”

Regina mind whirled. He asked her. He did it. “Um...oh, well...it’s sort of...true. I did suggest something. But I didn’t think he’d go for it.” She looked innocently at Emma, seeing the suspicious glance back.

“Aaaaand!” Emma asked, “What were you thinking? The truth please...” Regina stiffened, turning to look at her wife.

“Emma, I would never lie to you! I just thought that...as we have an ‘unusual’ situation with Robin, it would help if the two of you properly got to know each other.”

Emma raised a brow, bewildered. “How do you mean, Gina? Two nights ago, the three of us were having the best sex of my life! Now you want me to get to know him? Cart before the horse, don’t you think?”

“Emma, I don’t have an ulterior motive! I just felt that, well, after what you said yesterday about you two somehow ‘sharing’ me, I felt guilty. Like I’m the one stopping you and Robin from having normal partners of your own. You both deserve better and after hearing what Philip said about my past this evening, I was reminded about you and Hook and Marian...”
“Marian? What the hell has she got to do with anything?”

“Nothing,” Regina sighed. “Just yet another life I monumentally screwed up. I just…well…never mind. I thought you and Robin becoming friends was a good idea. I’m sorry. I hope you let him down gently…”

“Who said I let him down?”

“What? You said yes? You’re going out with him?”

Emma smirked. “Well, what’s to lose? He’s good-looking, he’s taking me out for a decent meal and it was my wife’s idea in the first place! If I wind up not liking him or I get bored, I’ll just say thanks for the food and come home…”

Regina’s look of shock turned into a broad smile. “Emma, thank you for trying! I know it’s difficult, though I certainly don’t think you’ll be bored…” She stepped forward to wrap her arms around the blonde, shivering for a moment as the exposed skin of their stomachs touched. Without hesitation, Emma moved in and latched her lips on to Regina’s in an open mouthed, urgent kiss, enjoying the fresh hint of toothpaste as her tongue slid easily into the older woman’s mouth, to massage her own. Regina merely groaned, “mmnnnnnn.” As breathing became difficult, the women pulled back their heads, arms still entwined. Emma saw the look of sheer lust.

“Well Mrs. Swan-Mills, you said something about a bidet?” She asked, curious and so goddam horny.

“I did. I’ve just had an idea how we could both use it…at the same time! Up for trying something?”

Emma’s breath quickened. Kinky woman? This is going to be another very long night!

“With you? Always!

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Tuesday Morning – The Jolly Roger

A soft beam of sunlight shone through the stained glass of the ship’s portal, waking Killian Jones. He quietly groaned, too drained and exhausted to move. For once his malaise was not the result of vast amounts of rum. Instead it was caused by endless hours of frenetic lovemaking with a certain brunette. A certain brunette seemingly more than experienced in the sexual arts than he expected, and ever experimental. A certain brunette who had made it very clear she was attracted to him. A certain brunette who had played his body like a Stradivarius. A certain brunette whose own sublime body lay naked next to him, snoring gently.

A smug grin broke on his face as he skipped through last night’s events.

After meeting Anna’s sister, Killian had taken it on himself to introduce Rosie and the team to all the drinking holes in Storybrooke. Five bars later, he bid farewell to Tink, Anna and the rest of the pub crawl team. “Well then, guess that leaves just us.” He told Merlin’s daughter. “I guess we better get you back. You’re staying with your father at the convent?”

“Nope. My bags are with the truck. I’m staying at the Locksley Arms tonight, though Dad told me never to poof anywhere using magic if I’ve been drinking. So, I guess I have to walk. Where are you staying?”

“On the Jolly Roger of course. I sail on Saturday.”
“You what? The real ‘Jolly Roger’? So, you really are Captain Hook?”

“Very perceptive,” Killian replied, sarcastically and lifting his left arm. “You see? Zeus fixed the limb when he sent me back, so the moniker is a little out of date.”

“Sorry. No insult intended. Still, I would love to see the famous Jolly Roger! I’ve only seen the Disney version!”

“I can show you the real thing. Perhaps tomorrow?”

“How about tonight?” urged Rosie, determined to keep the evening going. “I’d love to see the stars from the ocean.”

“Won’t your father be worried about you? It’s getting late.”

“I’m a big girl, Captain. I’ve magic of my own and can look after myself!”

“I have no doubt, love. You and your sister seem more than capable. I’m more than willing to show you the stars on board, though I have no wish to piss off your father unnecessarily…”

“That’s sweet of you, but don’t worry. Dad may be the Eternal Sorcerer, but he knows what we’re like. Don’t forget he’s had hundreds of children…”

“Very well then. The Jolly it is…”

Half an hour later, Captain Jones had led her on to his ship. He cast off in the moonlight, anchoring just offshore, so they could take advantage of less background light from the town to see the stars. They had lain together just looking at the heavens, and talking about recent history for a good hour, before Rosie took both hands on his cheeks, turned his face gently, before looking up at him lustily.

“Well Captain. I’ve been dropping hints all night. When are you going to kiss me?”

Killian didn’t seem flustered. On the contrary, he seemed to be in his element. “I always thought it bad form to kiss a lady without invitation!”

“Well then. Consider yourself invited.” With that she pulled him down to her mouth. He needed no further encouragement, latching his lips to hers as his arms wrapped around her smaller figure. Initial hesitation quickly turned to heated kissing, which led them into the Captain’s Quarters, and eventually to the most frenetic, urgent, exhausting and, frankly, wonderful sex the two-hundred-year old former pirate had ever experienced.

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So, as dawn broke, Killian Jones lay happily exhausted. On the bed beside him, an equally naked and shattered Rosalind Sage, both glistening with sweat, eyes closed and in a state of sated bliss.

“Well, it’s been an odd sort of day,” she breathed. “Dear Diary, two days ago my dad asked me to bring a truck to a funny little place called Storybrooke. I met lots of fairy tale character,s in an English pub in the middle of a forest, then went out to sea for a romantic night under the stars on the actual Jolly Roger, before having the best shag of my life with the actual two-hundred-year old Captain Hook. Who I thought was supposed to be a baddie, but turns out to be a sweetie! Apart from in the sack, when he’s a hottie! Not bad for day one!”

Killian’s face broke in to a happy grin, reaching across to hold her hand. “Well lass, I thank you for the compliments! For the record, I may have two centuries of experience behind me, but I truly think
that was also one of the greatest…nights for me, too!”

“Really?” Rosie gasped, surprised. “But you must have had countless women between the sheets over the years? Or are you just a good flatterer?”

“I meant every word. You Miss Sage, are something else! Something rather wonderful…”

“And you, Captain,” she said, rolling back on to his chest, “are good for at least another round…”

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As Killian and Rosie enjoyed their energetic morning, Regina woke with the sun on her face as she lay naked, happily entwined in the arms of her wife. This was her favourite time of the day, their moments cuddled together before they had to get up. Emma now lay sleeping with her head resting on her chest, enjoying the warmth of their bodies. For Regina, it was the first time they had made love together, since Robin had returned, without the need to fake an orgasm or give up from frustration. Even after last night, she still felt slightly guilty that part of it had to do with her fantasies throughout their lovemaking. However, this time, instead of imagining herself with Robin, thoughts of Emma and Robin together had swum through her mind! Remembering the look of ecstasy on Emma’s face, as Robin brought her to her peak several times, Regina now imagined what else they could do together, just Emma and Robin. Or all three of us. Together.

Regina remembered how Fa Mulan, that severe, dour woman, now seemed to have undergone a transformation, beaming with happiness after publicly announcing her engagement to not one, but two people! How Princess Aurora and Prince Philip never left her side, and the obviously love and devotion between the three of them. Could I ever have something like that? She imagined herself waking up with Emma and Robin at her sides. Not just the sex, though that was wonderful last time, but the love, the cuddles, the warmth.

“Hmm…but who am I kidding?” she grumbled, before realising she’d said it out loud.

“Ugh? Wassat?” moaned the warm blonde beside her, groaning and pulling herself closer. “Too early…sleeping!”

Regina smiled down at her, before glancing at the bedside clock. Eight - Shit! An hour late! We slept in!

Jumping out of the bed, she waved a hand, clothing herself instantly before racing onto the landing to get Honour and Roland up for school and playgroup.

Stepping into the girl’s bedroom. “Honour, time to get…” before noticing the bed was empty.
Panicking for a moment, she walked across to Roland’s room, opening the door to find he too was already up. She quickly trotted down the staircase, relieved to hear noises from the kitchen.

“So Henny – you takin’ me an’ Rolly?”

“Yup, that’s right, Hon. We’ll let your mums have more sleep!” Said Henry, doling out fresh pancakes.

Regina looked at the scene from the doorway with mixed emotions. Henry was adorable with his younger siblings, a wonderful big brother and fiercely protective. Yet now he was a young man, who didn’t need his mothers so much. A young man who now had another life outside of Storybrooke, who would one day leave, probably to travel and begin his own family. She hated that thought, and just wanted him close forever. The last few days, after he’d fallen out with Emma, they’d seen so little of him since coming back from university. It had been much too painful.
“Hi mum, didn’t see you there! You want pancakes?” he asked, seeing his mother staring.

“Oh, no…that’s fine, Henry. I didn’t realise you were all up! I thought they’d be late for school…”

“No worries, I’ve got them sorted. I figured after last night, *you’d both need a late start*…” he looked at her with a knowing expression. Regina realised then, with embarrassment she desperately tried not to show, that her eldest son had heard them last night! *Shit, we forgot the silencing spell - yet again!*

Henry saw her anguished look, so he jumped right back in before she could say anything, calling to Roland and Honour, “Ok guys. We’ll be leaving in ten! Have your things ready to go…” With that, he turned to head up the stairs, “See you later, mum,” pecking her cheek on the way up.

Regina was relieved. Henry was her rock, and she hated making him feel awkward. Over the last five years, as she and Emma clumsily lurched from being awkward allies, to confidantes, to best friends and eventually lovers and finally, wives, Henry had been quietly supportive throughout. When Robin was murdered, he had been astonishing. He’d grieved himself, missing the nearest thing he had to a father figure, terribly. But he still manage to care for his mothers, offering endless comfort, hugs and advice, when only a teenager himself.

It had been Henry who, on discovering his older mother was pregnant by Robin, insisted on getting his two grandfathers to track down Roland and bring the little boy back to her. To unite his little ‘brother’ with his half-sister and imminent new sibling. Henry, who had persuaded Little John and the men to bring Roland back to Storybrooke permanently. Henry, who had forcefully encouraged her, and Emma, to seek help for their depression through Archie. Henry, who had brought Robyn into the family (even though he hated her mother). Henry, who had persuaded the town to erect a statue to honour Robin and Killian, held the family together during an impossible time. And was now grown up and regarded as a hero in his own right. A hero sadly missed when he went to university. The same young man who was now crashing down the stairs, car keys in hand, to take his brother and sister to school.

Henry lifted a giggling Honour up to Regina’s face for a goodbye kiss. “Bye, mummy. See ya’ later!” Regina giggled back, placing a kiss on her cheek. Moments later, she looked to the girl’s right to see Roland, magically suspended in mid-air next to her, also laughing.

“Roland! What on earth!” she cried, before realising it was Henry’s magic supporting him! She quickly pecked Roland’s cheek too, before admonishing Henry with a glare. “Henry, stop that! No magic in the home, thank you very much! That spell might not have worked, and he could have fallen…”

“Bit like your silencing spell then?” he cheekily rebuffed, leaving her dumbstruck, before he magically lowered Roland to the floor, heading to the door, “…You probably need a new one. Honnie woke up last night, too!”
Chapter Summary

There's going to be a wedding on the Jolly in three days. Robin takes Emma on their...date?

Chapter 17 - Storybrooke Hospital

“Ladies, Professor Sage will see you now!” barked the ever-stern Nurse Ratched.

Ruby & Dorothy both flinched at the harsh tone of the former asylum nurse. They’d popped in Killian’s sperm sample the day before, and were hoping to be met by Victor Whale, rather than the hospital ice maiden. However, Ruby’s anxiety eased when she heard the rich baritone voice of another as he came out to greet them.

“Miss Lucas, Miss Gale! Lovely to see you again! Bridget, would you kindly show them into my office please? I’ll be with you in a moment.” With that, Merlin moved across to a side sink to wash his hands.

“Certainly, Professor. Ladies, this way please? Would you like some tea?” Dorothy noticed the instant change in Ratched at the presence of the man, clearly in awe of him. They had never seen her smile before and it was a bit alarming. Though Ruby winked at her fiancée as they were led into Victor’s consultation room.

“Ok, sorry about that. Hope we didn’t keep you waiting? I didn’t realise Victor had such a busy case load. He needs more help here. The poor man has been rushed off his feet.”

“Is he ok?” asked Ruby. “He’s usually here on a Wednesday. I often have a quick lunch with him…”

“He’s fine. He’s busy working in the new Sherwood clinic for a month. Then he’s going to New York to retrain in his first love. Neurology.”

Ruby couldn’t hide her disappointment. ‘He’s leaving? What, for good?’

Merlin gave her a sympathetic smile. “I don’t think so. I’m sure he’ll be back. Victor has been acting as an all-round practitioner here, often running this place single handed. He’s been denied many of the new tools and skills of the modern world. So, I’m going to help him get up to speed, introduce him to some key specialists, that sort of thing.”

“Carrie’s going to be upset,” added Dorothy. She was also going to miss their friend.

“She already knows,” he said, “Miss Locksley is going to go with him to New York, to look for temporary accommodation. I’ve a good feeling about those two.” The women looked glum. Another friend moving on.

“Anyway, you two. Let’s not be too sad. I know they’ll both be back in due course. Onto other news. I’m told you left the donor sperm in the container here yesterday? It’s been prepared, so shall we get started?”
Dorothy exchanges a guilty look with Ruby. “What, already?”

“Well, no time like the present. I checked your charts from your samples and you both should be ovulating around now. Though I can’t remember which one of you was going to get pregnant. You’ve both got your combined DNA in your eggs, so it’ll only take a few minutes to…”

“Um…fine. Although before we start, we do have a question.” Merlin smiles and nods for her to continue. Dorothy gulped, gripping her fiancee’s hand, as she struggled to hide her, their, embarrassment.

“Ladies, I sense there’s some hesitation here? I’m a doctor. I need you to be open with me if you want me to help. There’s no need to feel embarrassed.”

“Well…what if one of us…both of us…were kind of, already inseminated? How long before we found out if one of us took it and successfully fell pregnant? What kind of gap would there need to be, if we weren’t, before we tried again with the samples?” Ruby kept looking down, feeling she was wasting the Sorcerer’s time.

Merlin looked at them, quizzically. “‘Already inseminated?’ Ruby, you didn’t try to inject some of the sperm yourselves using some sort of turkey baster, did you? I can tell you, that doesn’t usually work too well.”

“No! God no! We wouldn’t try to do anything like that. Only with you people helping us. Experts. Or the…” her cheeks blushed deep red as her eyes connected with his, seeing him connect the dots.

“Or the natural way? Intercourse? Is that what you’re saying, Ruby?” He gave her an odd look, not judgmental just curious. Dorothy’s short nod confirmed his thoughts. “So are you saying that one, or both of you, had sexual intercourse with a man, without a condom?”

Ruby’s eyes confirmed everything. It was Dorothy’s turn to blush.

“Well, it’s not what I was expecting, but there’s no need to feel embarrassed. You’re not the first and you certainly won’t be the last to jump the gun before starting treatment. Ladies, I’m not here to judge you, just to help you. As I mentioned on Sunday, the potential donor, or father, needs to have some form of magical abilities if there is to be any chance of success. So therefore, I have to ask, was Captain Jones involved?”

“Um…yeah.” Dorothy confirmed in a whisper, still feeling guilty. “Does that change anything for us?”

“I don’t see why not. Probably best to see if you miss your period in a couple of weeks. If so, we’ll get a urine sample to check, followed by a bloods. If no change, I recommend we start with the donor samples in about a month or so. You never know, you may get lucky and fall pregnant first time around. Which one of you had intercourse?”

The two women looked at each other, bashfully, playful smirks showing on the pair of them. It was also picked up by Merlin, who gave a surprised grin back.

“Both of you? Well, well. That may double the chance of success, so I’ll keep my fingers crossed for you both! However, for the moment I’m just going to prescribe you some multivitamins and a few things to help in the meantime. I’ll see you both back here in a few weeks…”

“Thanks Professor. I do have another thing to ask,” said Dorothy, relieved the embarrassment was over. “We’d like to invite you to our wedding on the Jolly Roger on Friday morning. Short notice, I know, but I hope you’ll come? Anna and Rosie are going to be there…”
“Oh dear,” said Merlin with a deep chuckle. “If my girls are going, I’d best attend, just to keep them in line and stop them tripling your drinks bill! Thank you, I would love to come to your wedding! The Jolly Roger you say? Isn’t that Captain Jones’s vessel?”

“Yes, Killian’s also performing the ceremony. Seems fitting somehow. He’s the one that gave me the nudge I needed to ask her to marry me, after all!” said Ruby, latching onto Dorothy’s arm.

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Tuesday Afternoon – Mifflin Street

As Regina let herself in through the front door, having collected the children from school, Honour and Roland charged around her towards the stairs, stopping briefly to kick off shoes and coats. “Hang them up, Roland!” she yelled to the ten-year-old’s back. I don’t want to see a pile on the floor again!” She ignored the pronounced moans of the boy as he turned back to retrieve the discarded coat and hang it up. “Don’t forget you’re helping me cook tonight, young man! Emma’s going out and you said you wanted spaghetti Bolognese? So, if you don’t help, you don’t eat!” She knew it was an idle threat. Roland loved cooking.

Two minutes later, she walked up the stairs, entering her bedroom to find wardrobe doors open and most of the floor and bed draped with clothes. Emma’s clothes to be precise. Before she could complain about the mess, she heard a loud groan. “AArrggghhh - too bloody tight! They fit three months ago; I can’t have put on that much?” wailed Emma, as Regina stepped into the bathroom to see her wife lying on the floor, red faced and straining as she tried to pull on her usual skinny jeans.

“Emma! What the hell are you doing?”

“What does it look like? I’m trying to put something on to go out for the evening with your…boyfriend. And nothing fits! I’m running nearly every day, and down to three bear claws a week now, so I shouldn’t have put any weight on! My ass is the size of a barge these days. Ooohh…” she groaned.

“Emma, I can assure you your ‘ass’ is perfectly lovely. I should know! However, ‘lovely’ is not the word I would use to describe the state of our bedroom right now! What’s wrong?”

“What’s wrong is that I can’t find anything to wear! Nothing looks right, and I just…I don’t know…”

“Emma, you’re acting like a child,” she scolded. “And you’re looking in wardrobes owned by two women of fairly similar size. There’s bound to be something…” Regina looked at everything that had been flung on the floors. “If I didn’t know better I would have said you were definitely Roland’s mother! It can’t be that hard. Where’s Robin taking you anyway?”

“He texted me. Something about a French place called ‘L’Auberge Cachée’ something or other. It’s some fancy restaurant…”

“You’re going to ‘L’Auberge Cachée’? Emma, that’s a five-star Michelin restaurant! I want to go there! It’s only been open a year or so.” Regina remembered recently reading about it, and had intended taking Emma for an anniversary. “I’m jealous, the food’s supposed to be wonderful! Very creative.” Then she looked at the clothes scattered across the floor. Mostly jeans, pants and tops. “But you can’t possibly go somewhere like that in jeans! It’s fancy - you need to dress up.”

“Gina, you know I don’t do swanky! I’m a burger and fries girl. I’m not sure it’s a good idea, after all. Perhaps I should just tell him I can’t make…”
“Don’t you dare! Despite your best efforts, you’re still a princess - and food obsessed, so you’ll love it! So, no buts, madam - I’ll help find you something and we’ll damn well fix your hair and make-up while we’re at it!”

Emma looked curiously at her wife. “Why?”

“Why what?”

“Why go to all the trouble? It’s only Robin and…hey, what’s wrong with my hair?”

“It looks greasy. Needs a wash. And you go to the trouble, because he’s going to the trouble to take you somewhere special. He’s trying to get to know you, and you should damn well try to get to know him too…”

“I think I got to know him fairly well Saturday night, don’t you think?” Emma smirked, “Anyway, what’s going on? It feels like you’re trying to turn this into some sort of…date?”

Regina huffed and sighed loudly, sitting on the bed beside her wife. “Emma…we’ve talked about this. Robin is Honour and Roland’s father. And little Robyn’s. He’s going to be part of their…our, lives now. After what you said about him being part of my life I…kind of…want you and he to become…friends.”

“Oh, I see. So you want me to become friends with him?” Emma asked.

“Only friends? Gina, he’s my wife’s true love and taking me out to a posh restaurant. That sounds suspiciously…romantic. You don’t think he has ideas of something with me too, do you? You don’t think he’s looked at Philip and thought about something like that for himself? A few more threesome evenings? It’s every guy’s dream, after all…”

“Please don’t talk about Robin like that, Emma! He’s honourable and you know it. He would never treat you or any woman like that. Just because you’ve had bad experiences in the past…”

“True. But I guess you wouldn’t mind another little romp with me and Wonder Boy?” teased Emma, trying to get a rise out of her.

“I will admit to enjoying Saturday night - till somebody put her foot in it, that is…” she glared at the blonde. “And I know you enjoyed it too!”

“Hmm. I don’t deny it, but do you really think it’s a good idea setting me up with him? I am a married woman after all…”

“I’m doing no such thing. He asked you out and I’m encouraging it.”

“Okay, what do you suggest I wear then? Clearly, according to you, my clothes aren’t nearly good enough for him!”

Regina ignored the sarcasm. “Something of mine. The purple cocktail dress would work - with your
hair down.”

“You wore that at the Spring Ball! You looked drop-dead gorgeous. Most of the guys couldn’t take
their eyes off you. Nor could Mal or Ruby. I think Dorothy was a bit pissed off at her for staring! Bit
sheer and shows a lot of boob and leg though, don’t you think?”

“No, I do not! It shows sufficient décolletage to be interesting but not provocative. It will fit perfectly
for where you’re going. Now, you’ll need matching strapless bra and panties. I think I have them.
Now let’s tidy up this mess and get you in the bath…”

Emma gave a saucy leer. “Hmm, I like the sound of that. You gonna join me?”

“I’d love a hot bath right now; however, it’s early and we have very wide-awake children in the
house!”

“Nothing a locked door and a silencing spell can’t fix.”

Regina groaned, remembering what Henry said earlier. “Yes, about that. Our son heard us again last
night and I gather we woke Honour!”

“That’s impossible! I threw that spell - twice. I’m sure I did!” Emma cringed. “Fuck, that’s so
embarrassing. There’s no way he should have heard us!”

“I know. I was there, remember? I don’t know what’s happened, but I guess we’d better keep the
noise down in future.” She looked at her wife, resigned. Though Emma had a sly grin.

“Perhaps I should get your boyfriend to step up his babysitting responsibilities now he’s back and in
his little kingdom? They can all spend the night with him in the forest, and we stay here! You can
scream all you want!”

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Earlier the same day – aboard the Jolly Roger

Aboard the former pirate ship as it lay moored in the harbour, Captain Killian Jones was going
through the arrangements for Friday’s wedding with Ruby Lucas and Dorothy Gale. Tinker Bell and
Rosie Sage stood to one side, offering suggestions.

“So, ladies. After you’ve made your vows to one another, you’ll exchange the rings, I’ll declare you
duly married, or wife and wife or some such. You’ll kiss your bride, and you’ll go into the Captain’s
Quarters for the cricket, who’ll sort out the legals, registering the marriage, that sort of thing. All
understood?”

“Aye, aye Cap’n!” said Dorothy, with the worst pirate accent imaginable, making the others groan
and Killian raise an eyebrow, making her feel a little guilty. “Erm…sorry. Not my best impression!”

Her expression made him smirk. “Forgiven. Now then, where are you having the banquet?”

Before the imminent newlyweds could respond, Rosie spoke up. “You need to sort this place out!
It’s looking at bit…ship-py!”

“A bit ‘Ship-py’! Is that even a word, love? It’s a ship! A beautiful brigantine. My beautiful
brigantine to be precise. What were you expecting?” he scoffed light heartedly.
“You know what I mean! It’s a beautiful ship, but it still needs some sort of extra decoration for this wedding! Some bunting, lights and stuff! Some pizzazz! It’s their special day, Killian,” said Merlin’s daughter, looking at the two women. “We need to brighten it up!”

Jones looked up and down the vessel, his pride and joy. *She has a point*, he thought. “OK, young lady. What do you suggest?”

“Well, I’ve never actually decorated a ship before, but how about something like this?” With that, the young brunette waved her hands. As the mist cleared, the rigging, ropes and edges of the sails became festooned with multi-coloured flags. White lilies draped across the floor and multi coloured flowers decked the sides.

“Oh, wow! That’s so clever, I love it! Did your dad teach you that, Rosie?” gasped Ruby, looking at the sudden massive floral display.

“Well, kind of. Mum was always the one for the style stuff.” She said, a tinge of sorrow in her voice. “Dad was more into the big performance.”

Tinker Bell picked up on the change, moving across to place an arm on the young woman’s shoulder. “I’m sorry, Rosie. When did she pass over?”

“Three years ago; car accident. Knocked everyone for six, especially Anna. Dad took it pretty bad too.”

Ruby said nothing, silently stepping in front of the young woman, wrapping her long arms around to take her in a hug. Dorothy stepped to their side, wrapping her arm around Rosie’s shoulder, the three women now surrounding her in a comforting embrace. “Rosie, we know. Ruby and I both lost our parents; but the pain does lessen though it’ll never go completely. But you have friends here; don’t be afraid to use us. Rubes is a particularly good shoulder to cry on. So’s Killian, actually!” said Dorothy, looking up at the former pirate.

“Aye, love. Most of us have experienced pain of loss. Death is a part of life. You’ve already made friends here. I’m here too, or at least I will be till Saturday.”

Rosie looked up at the man she had spent all night and all day with, her eyes reddened. “Actually Killian, I’ve been meaning to ask you all day. Take me with you?” she said, her face pleading. “Please?”

Killian was more than surprised. The last twenty-four hours with this astonishing, beautiful, energetic young woman had been wonderful and he was secretly hoping for more time with her. “Erm, Rosie…you know I’m going to be away for at least a year, possibly longer? This is all a bit sudden. I would love to have you on board, but you need to talk this through with your father. And your sister. Think it through and if you still want to join us,” he said, glancing at the green fairy, “then you’ll be most welcome.” With that, he stepped away to walk down the steps to his quarters, leaving the four women still huddled.

“Rosie,” said Tinker Bell, lowering her voice. “I’m sailing with Killian too, but it’s a long time to be away from your family. Are you sure it’s a good idea?”

“Tink - you’re going too! Why?” interrupted Dorothy.

“Well, apart from my friends here there isn’t really any reason for me to stay. Kill’s going to be meeting Ariel and Eric in Atlantica. They have a little girl now, Melody; then he’s going on to Arendelle. I’ve really missed Anna and Elsa, so it seems the right time to go. Besides, I can keep him
company. I’ve been worried about him since he came back and found out about Emma and Regina. He hides it well, but he’s hurting…”

Rosie gave a little chuckle. “Yeah, right!” making Tink frown at her. “Rosie, something you want to say?”

“Well…erm…begging your pardon and all that. I may not have known him as long as you all but he’s definitely more over Emma than you might think.” Tink never spotted the smirk on Ruby & Dorothy’s faces as they nodded in agreement; but she definitely picked up on the blush on Rosie’s cheeks.

“Oh. Oh! Rosie, are you and Killian…together?” It wasn’t the first time she’d seen someone smitten.

“Well…not exactly…it’s just…well, it’s early days yet. We’re both getting over someone but…who knows?”

Tinker Bell smiled back at Merlin’s daughter. “Well if you do decide to come it’ll be nice having another woman along. I was beginning to think I’d be a bit outnumbered.”

As the two discussed the voyage ahead, Ruby looked with concern at Dorothy, who guessed where her thoughts were going. If Rosie and Killian were starting a relationship, should they be continuing their IVF with Killian’s sample? Would he expect them not to go ahead?

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Knowing Robin would be collecting Emma at seven, Regina finished cooking the children’s supper a little early so she could change out of her jeans and T shirt and into something more suitable before he arrived. She knew he wasn’t actually taking her out this evening but, what the hell! Stepping into their bedroom, she heard Emma in the adjoining bathroom. Trying the handle, which was locked, she called out. “Em! You ok in there?”

“Yup. Just finishing off - perfection takes time these days!” That earned a snigger from the brunette, who was just about to change out of her jeans and top when she heard the door knocker. “Dammit, he’s early!” So instead, she zipped herself back up and stepped back out and down the stairs.

She opened the front door. “You should know better, arriving before a lady’s fully prepared…” she stopped, as instead of seeing her familiar outlaw, she was instead confronted by a tall brunette teenager.

Hi Mrs. Swan-Mills! How are you?” blurted Violet, as heavy footsteps were heard thumping down the stairs behind her. Henry suddenly appeared behind his mother, gently grasping her shoulders from behind, embracing her while gently but forcefully moving her to one side to get to his girlfriend.

“Hi, Vi!” he said, wrapping an arm around the girl’s side and placing a just-about chaste kiss on her lips.

Regina smiled at her, welcoming the increasingly elegant young woman into her house, whilst feeling a little saddened. She liked Violet, but hated how Henry was no longer reliant on his mothers. He was a young man now, no longer a boy; taller and broader than either of his mothers and growing in confidence. He had his grandfather David’s natural charm, and like Charming, effortlessly flirted with the opposite sex without even being aware of doing it.

“Come up, I’m nearly ready.” He said, taking Violet by the hand and leading her in.
Nearly ready? Henry, you’re going out? I thought you were staying for dinner? We’ve hardly seen anything on you.” The words left her mouth before she could stop them. She knew it sounded pathetic and needy, but she had so missed him, even before his recent falling out with Emma.

Henry stopped and turned to face her. “Mum, Vi and I are just heading into Sherwood for a few hours. There’s a party going on for Grace’s 21st birthday at the Locksley. I won’t need dinner…”

“But…you’re still coming home tonight, right?”

“Well…I was planning on staying over at Violet’s tonight. Sir Morgan doesn’t mind…”

Regina sighed. She got on well with Sir Morgan, one of King Arthur’s former knights, and knew he was a good man, a little formal, but he liked Henry and approved of Violet’s choice in boyfriend. Both parents realized that Violet and Henry were probably sleeping together but pretended their ignorance and trusted their children were careful and sensible. Sir Morgan had grown to trust Regina, but was still reticent when it came to Emma. The mere fact that, whilst cursed as the Dark One, Emma had once removed his daughter’s heart from her body to coerce Henry to tears had not been forgotten by the knight. Forgiven, after Emma’s apology. But not forgotten. “Violet,” she smiled at her half-heartedly, “You know, you’re always welcome to stay with us!”

Violet blushed, knowing this was an awkward subject, but still not feeling altogether confident around Henry’s blonde mother. “Thank you, Mrs. Swan-Mills. Perhaps another time?”

“Please call me Regina? It’s been five years and we’re almost family.”

“Ok, thank you Regina…I appreciate it!”

Before she could reply, a larger figure appeared behind the girl. “Hope I’m not interrupting?”

“Hi Robin!” said Henry.

“Lord Locksley!” said Violet. Regina couldn’t help but notice the gentle blush on the young woman’s face as she addressed him. “Thank you for yesterday! The paddock is wonderful. Dad’s over the moon!”

“You’re more than welcome Violet. And it’s just ‘Robin’ to you. None of that ‘Lord’ nonsense!”

“Paddock?” interrupted Regina, wondering what he had been up to now, to bring a smile to the girl’s face.

“Robin and the men levelled part of Sherwood to build some new stables, foaling barns and a riding area. You can fit about fifty horses in there now! Dad’s thrilled as he doesn’t need to traipse around several places for Thunderbolt!” Violet trilled.

“I’m glad he likes it. Now if we can just persuade David Nolan and a certain rather brilliant horsewoman I know to give lessons, we can create a half-decent riding school!” he said, winking at Regina.

“Me?” she mused, “and what makes you think I have either the time, or the inclination to teach? Have you even spoken to Charming about this?”

“First, I know you’re a lady of leisure at the moment. Possibly bored and needing a little change? You used to love nothing more than riding your stallion through the forest. You’ve probably forgotten more about everything equestrian than most people around here will ever know, and once again, you love it! Certainly beats all that boring local politics too!”
She laughed at the last bit. “You know me too well! Let me think about it? May I remind you that I am hardly a ‘lady of leisure’, seeing as I have to take care of two of your children! Much as I love them…”

Henry and Violet watched the conversation from the stairs, seeing how easily his brunette mother softened in front of Robin and how their eyes never left each other, flirting openly, as though the last five years never happened. Looking at them, Henry had no doubt his mother still had strong feelings for the man who died to save her. However, his thoughts were interrupted by the figure of his blonde mother walking down the stairs.

“Hi Violet! Hen, whatcha up to? Going out?” said Emma as she brushed past them.

“Wow, you look great Emma!” said Violet, stunned to see Emma in such a feminine, sexy dress. The former sheriff always had a great figure, but rarely wore anything that truly showed it off, leaving that to her wife. However, this time Emma sported a purple silk off the shoulder knee length cocktail dress which showed her long athletic legs to perfection and just the right amount of cleavage to be tantalizing but not indiscrete. Her long blonde hair, usually bunched, cascaded over her shoulders.

Robin brought his eyes up to her as she descended the staircase. “Oh my, Emma, you are a vision! Simply stunning,” he said, careful to look her in the eyes and not allow his own to roam her body. His eyes then moved across to Regina’s, seeing her equally impressed by the result. “My girl scrubs up well, don’t you think?”

“To perfection, Gina. Emma, I’ve never seen you look so beautiful! Oh! I nearly forgot - a little something for each of you…” he said, producing two single long-stemmed roses, one pale yellow and one lavender but both perfect in their detail. He gave the yellow rose to Emma and the lavender rose to Regina, who smiled up at him, knowing their meaning. Emma looked across at her wife, realizing that as the colours were unusual, they must signify something.

“Emma, the yellow rose symbolizes unconscious beauty, friendship and the promise of a new beginning…”

“And the lavender one?”

“Love at first sight,” breathed Robin, scanning the two ladies as they stood together. He silently chuckled to himself. Regina, normally immaculately attired, now felt self-conscious next to her stunning spouse.

“What? Something wrong with what I’m wearing? Badly dressed next to Emma?”

“Gina, you wouldn’t know how to be badly dressed if you tried! You’re always turned out immaculately. I chuckled because, looking at the pair of you together, both intelligent, powerful and yes, stunningly beautiful women; I just noticed how the two of you have grown in to each other. You’re wearing each other’s clothes, and you still look lovely!

Emma looked her wife over and saw it was true. She was wearing her own jeans and a white sweater. Apart from the Timberlands, as Emma’s feet were a bit bigger. Regina smiled back at her, leaning in to Robin to whisper, just within earshot of her wife, “She’s wearing my purple panties, too!” which earned a light tap from Emma, whose cheeks flushed. “Hey, don’t tell him that!”

Quickly trying to change the subject, Emma studied him. “Robin, you’re looking pretty dapper yourself!” And she meant it. He looked extremely handsome in a well fitted, single breasted dark charcoal grey suit with what looked like a black silk roll neck underneath, showing off his broad chest to perfection. His hair also seemed to be recently clipped and his beard trimmed. “Hmm,
doesn’t he just!” Regina agreed, with a slightly lustful gaze. *He looks even better underneath it!* She thought, glancing to see Emma had caught the look in her eye.

Henry, seemingly invisible to the trio as they talked, picked up on what was odd about this. “Hey, ma! YOU’RE going out with Robin tonight? Not mum?”

Emma’s breath hitched as she realized how it must have looked to her son. “Well…um…yeah. We just kinda…”

“I need to talk to Emma about a few things regarding Roland and Honour, Henry!” Robin interrupted to save her blushes. “Your other mother didn’t want to come out with us this time, so she’s staying here…” *At least it was believable.*

“Well, with Ma dressed like that, it must be somewhere special!” said Henry, who by now had noticed the odd-coloured roses both his mothers’ held. Seeing their awkward looks, he decided to leave it at that. “Well, have a nice time. Oh, and Robin? Nice suit!”

Robin grinned. “Thanks Henry. You have a nice evening too. Emma, are you ready to go?”

“Ready as I’ll ever be. I guess I’m driving?” The blonde looked to the side table for her keys.

“No. Nor am I. We have a car and chauffeur outside.”

Emma’s eyes widened. “A chauffeur? We’re heading over the town line! Who have you got too…” Until now she hadn’t thought about this bit. What if they were seen? Her and Robin on a…date? What if word got back to her parents? Tongues wag in Storybrooke and before she knew it, everybody would want to know why she and Robin were dressed up and going over the town line *without Regina!* “Robin, I don’t know…”

The archer had guessed her concerns. He’d closed off his mind-reading, but could tell where she was going with this. “Emma, don’t worry. I have an impeccable, discrete man who will take us over the town line and bring us back later, allowing us to have a few drinks and relax. He has magic too, so he’ll be fine.”

“He? Magic? Well I’m sure you wouldn’t ask Gold! That leaves Henry or…or…Merlin?”

“None of those, I’m afraid!” he almost giggled. “It’s someone I trust completely!”

“Not Killian? Please Robin, not him!”

“Then who else has magic here?” asked Regina, now just as intrigued.

“Well come see…” he said, gesturing them to join him, walking to the back of the large grey-black limousine. As they walked across to the car, a tallish man in a peaked cap and grey uniform stepped out, walking towards the back door and opening it in readiness for Emma to join them. “Your car, madame!” said a Robin Hood looking figure; an exact replica of the man now walking beside her!

“Hmm. Been practicing that ‘cloning’ magic, I see?” grinned Regina.

“Something like that! It’s a bit tricky, but I’ve been assured by Merlin that if I have too much alcohol tonight, it won’t affect him!” to which his chauffeur twin replied. “Absolutely not! I would never drink and drive!”

Regina stepped closer to Chauffeur Robin. “Hmm. Like the peaked cap! Very military!” To which the man replied with a wink “And I come with or without, madam!” Earning a guffaw from the
“Robin, your ‘chauffeur’ is flirting with my wife - rein him in!” Emma yelled, albeit with a grin.

“Bad chauffeur! Naughty, bad chauffeur! Don’t flirt with the customers! Know your place!” Proper Robin said to the doppelganger, trying hard to stifle his laugh.

“Oo arrr! Zorry, young zur!” Chauffeur Robin replied, feigning humility, a weird accent and a doff of his cap. “Oi know moi place, zur! Jus’ don’t go beatin’ me again zur!” To which all three laughed out loud.

“Perhaps you should just leave your…chauffeur…with me while you go off? I’ll take good care of him…” Regina offered, still grinning.

“Absolutely no chance!” said Emma, “Robin and I are definitely drinking. We need the ride home!”

“Very well. Have a wonderful time, both of you. Emma,” she said, placing a soft kiss on her wife’s lips. “you behave yourself! And Robin,” she turned to her former true love, placing a slightly more chaste kiss on his cheek, “please look after my girl!”

“Emma’s more than capable of taking care of herself, Gina. Perhaps she can take care of me? But I’ll still protect her with my life if need be…”

“Don’t say things like that, Robin! Brings back too many bad memories…”

Regina stepped back, as the pair climbed into the limousine, unaware they were being watched from an upstairs window by Henry and Violet.

“How come Robin’s taking Emma out to dinner, to a restaurant outside town, without Regina? That dress she’s wearing is so sexy - and the shoes! She looked wonderful, almost like she was on a date!”

_Henry was thinking the same thing. But if it was some sort of date, why was his other mother smiling and flirting with Robin when they left?_
Chapter Summary

Tinker Bell is given a special gift. Killian is given advice and Emma and Robin attack the drinks cabinet.

Chapter Notes

Hi all! Still with me? Thank goodness. I hope I haven’t made things too complicated with various plots going on but there is reason! Merlin’s family are relevant as you’ll see in due course. Now Emma and Robin get to know each other, Killian prepares to leave and Tink gets a very special surprise...

Thank you for all your constructive comments and criticism. I do take it on board!

Chapter 18

Back in the limousine, Emma was kneeling in the back, rifling through the car’s drinks cabinet. “This is great! Merlin doesn’t exactly struggle in New York, does he?” she said, pulling out two bottles of chilled beer, and contemplating opening up the champagne sitting in a little chilled bucket. “We’ve got whisky too! What’re you having.”

Robin smirked at her enthusiasm. “I’ll just take a beer for now, thanks. Merlin said the car’s owned by one of his friends. He owns a micro-brewery too, so I’m going to pace myself.”

Emma prised the tops off the bottles, handing one to Robin before sitting back next to him. “Ok outlaw, what’s the deal here?”

“The deal?”

“Yeah. Why are we really doing this? Gina said you wanted to get to know me, and I’ve got to admit I’m a little freaked that the guy my wife is still in love with is now taking me out for some sort of romantic dinner – with said wife’s blessing! So what’s going on? You two conspiring to get some sort of threesome going on again? Perhaps you’re looking at Philip and want what he’s got?”

Robin chuckled. “Hardly! Anyway, I know Mulan’s story. She was very much in love with Phil, before she even met Rory. Phil was killed, or so they thought, then she got to know Aurora and they fell in love. Very romantic, but hardly compares to us...”

“So, what’s with the romantic dinner? Granny’s or Aesop’s not good enough?”

“Well, the restaurant was Merlin’s idea! He knows the owner, and I wanted somewhere we could talk openly without being overheard. Getting to know you properly was Regina’s idea, but I agreed
with her. There’s no cunning plan, Emma. As we’re going to be in each other’s lives, whether we like it or not, I would like to get to know the woman Regina fell in love with and married. More importantly, the woman who’s been bringing up my children for the last five years!”

Emma looked at him intently, following every word. Her powers told her he wasn’t lying, or hiding anything. “Yeah, about that. Regina and me. Um…I spoke with Killian on Saturday…”

Robin was surprised to hear her bring up the name of her own former lover.

“It wasn’t about him,” she hesitated, feeling awkward. “It was about something he said. Apparently, when you were both in the Underworld, you told him you thought Regina and I would probably get together?” Robin noticed an odd look on her face. “What made you think that? I never even thought of Regina that way when you were with her! I was with Killian. I didn’t…well, you know…”

Robin saw where she was going with this, gently resting a hand on her knee to calm her. “I’m sure you never would make a move on someone, if you or they were attached to someone else. I’ve always known you were honourable, Emma.”

“So, what made you think… about Gina and me? It’s not like I was gay…heck, I’d never even been with a woman before her! Nor had she. How did you know?”

“Simple observation, I guess. There was always a lot of…tension…between you two; some might even call it sexual tension. The looks. I knew Regina cared for you deeply, even if she did hide it behind the usual layers of sarcasm. The way you used to stare at each other; it was almost…flirtatious. A bit like how she used to look at Maleficient. In some ways, I thought it looked like you were about to kill, and in other ways, like you were going to ravish each other!”

Now her cheeks really did blush. “You never said anything…to her?”

“No need. It didn’t bother me. Actually, I thought it nice for her to have someone, apart from Henry, that truly cared for her. You and your family were, are, very special to her. And when I was in the Underworld? Hopeful for you both, I guess. Henry is a son to both of you. He unites you. I just wanted her to be happy, even if it couldn’t be with me. Having you beside her was the next best option. She had such a horrible upbringing and suffered so much. She needs you more than you can imagine! You’re a very special person, Emma. It’s obvious you’ve also had a difficult past and felt abandoned, just like her. You deserve each other.”

Emma gulped, slightly embarrassed by his genuine admiration. “I don’t know what to say.”

“Nothing to say, really. I guess if I had come back, and Gina had another man, or Mal, on her arm, I might feel more hurt. But with you? It’s odd but I don’t. Seeing my own powerful, intelligent, kind and beautiful lady on the arm of another powerful, intelligent, kind and beautiful lady, somehow seemed…fitting.”

“Er…thanks. I guess.” Though she thought he was laying on the flattery a bit thick, it was still nice to hear. She thought of the two men she had loved. Neal, her cocky charmer. She’d always loved Henry’s father despite everything and always regretted not telling him until it was too late. He sacrificed his time with her, so she could break the curse and be with her family, and later sacrificed himself to save them all from Zelena. Then there was Killian. Another man who saved the whole town and stole her heart. She loved that gorgeous pirate with a passion and his death broke her. It took three years to recover, for her to able to receive love again; with Regina. And now, seeing Killian Jones again, five years after his death brought so many feelings. She had hurt him, not intentionally, but seeing the pain in his eyes at Granny’s made her feel quite sick. Then his coldness towards her at the weekend, when she knew he was finally over her. That really hurt.
Emma looked curiously at Robin, now sitting back drinking his beer, looking out the window. Emma had never paid much attention to him when he was with Regina. It seemed her wife had once almost worshipped this man and his death nearly destroyed her. *Damn, she even tried to commit suicide!*

She could understand the attraction. Robin was different. Much more serious than Neal or Killian. Secure in himself, with a quiet certainty that seemed to calm those around him, especially Regina. A father with responsibilities, he was a natural leader, who just seemed to inspire confidence. Emma thought about how he had been received by everyone in the town just days ago. The Merry Men obviously welcomed their lost figurehead, but what really surprised her was Mulan’s reaction. The normally sullen fighter beaming when she saw him in the park. Philip and Rory even asked him to be their new child’s godfather! And Ruby seemed to adore him. Blue, Tink, damnit everyone seemed to love him, and the Saviour began to understand why. He was just lovely. Kind, considerate, gentle and sincere.

As he watched the passing fields fly by, her mind went back to Saturday and their night together. The toned muscles, not overdeveloped like some narcissistic baboon who spends too long in the gym. But nicely defined, with broad shoulders, a gently sculpted jaw. A broad chest, which she now knew was covered with a light down of hair leading down towards a slim waist.

God, she remembered his waist! And those tight little buttocks in her hands as he ploughed into her mercilessly, came into her mind. He wasn’t mild or docile then! Then the foreplay, when he spent ages going down on her. Until Regina, she had never let anyone do that! He’d worked his tongue over, around and inside her like a maestro and she remembered that first powerful orgasm with a smirk. Later, she’d watched him do the same to Regina and remembered the glorious look of utter bliss on her face, teeth clenched, as her wife came apart; and the same look as Robin had driven hard into her. Damn that had been such a turn on! And then - when she lay on Regina, face to face, lips locked as behind them, Robin had pushed them into each other, taking each of them in turn. *That had been odd.* She remembered a fierce pulse of energy race through her body as he came inside her. It had been bloody magnificent!

“Something wrong?” he said, now looking at her and waking her from her reverie, seeing the flushed look on her face.

“What? No! No…it’s just…wait, what was that you said about Maleficent?”

Robin smiled. “Well, only that Regina used to look at her in *that way*; they clearly had some sort of past. Not sure if it was romantic, but I thought it likely. I guess if she told you she’s never been with any other woman, I’d believe her; clearly, I was wrong. Don’t worry about it – she’s traded up!”

“You throw in the possibility my wife had a previous female lover who still lives in Storeybrooke, and then you tell me not to worry? You clearly don’t know women as well as you think?”

“Emma, I didn’t say that. You did! I just said there may have been *feelings*. Nothing more. Regina’s a very beautiful, sexual woman. She’s bound to have attracted admirers over the years.”

“Yes, but another woman? That’s different.”

“Emma, stop. She loves you. You won! We both know she would never cheat on you, and has even married you. I’d say you never have to worry about anyone else ever again.”

“Yeah, right!” Emma sarked, “I’d like to see your face, if you found out Marian had had another woman ‘admirer’. Don’t think you would be quite so smug…”
“Actually, Marian did once have a woman ‘admirer’, as you put it. A bit more than an admirer, to be frank - her cousin, Lady Antonia. Marian told me they had been together, secretly, for a while before I met her. I knew Antonia, and it didn’t bother me.”

“Wow! I have to keep remembering that I only knew her briefly before she…well, before, you know, Zelena. I would never have guessed she was interested in girls…”

“A girl, Emma. A girl! Love is love, in all forms, and I’ve found it’s all about the person, not the sex. We never judged each other.” He smiled sadly, remembering his first true love.

She looked at him now in a different light. “Though I see why she kept it secret. People are very judgmental.”

“True. How did everyone react when you and Regina came out as a couple?”

The blonde gave a loud sigh. “Well…my family were fine. Don’t forget, we had both been through a lot of depression and therapy with Archie. Henry and Hopper kind of brought us together. Mum was a bit funny about it. Not about the girl-girl thing, but the fact it was Regina, her own stepmother. They’ve had an odd past and it must have been weird, her daughter and her step-mother being together! We had a bit of a falling out, but we made up again after a while. I think Archie had a word with her and mum always trusted his judgement; but it was difficult for a while…”

“And David - how did he take it?”

“Dad was brilliant.” Her head tilted as she broke out into a warm smile. “I’ve always been a bit of a daddy’s girl. He knew what was happening quite early, and just sat me down one day and said something sugary like he fully accepted it. He said something like ‘follow your heart’ and gave me a cuddle. He persuaded mum to stop being silly…”

“David’s a good man, but you’ll always be his little princess – he just wants you to be happy.”

“Yeah, he said something soppy like that! He’s been good with Regina too. Almost treats her like his second daughter now, even if technically she’s about the same age. He’s forever pulling her in and hugging her, usually with her yelling in protest and threatening him. She says she hates it, but I know as a fact she loves it really.”

“And the rest of the town?”

“Mixed, I guess. About three years after you…you died, I moved in with her. When news got out, some called us deviants and worse. Once in Granny’s, one old woman even publicly called us a couple of ‘man-hating dykes’! ‘Man-hating’! Can you imagine that? We just fought serious depression over the loss of our men! Gina even having almost…” she stopped as her eyes filled with tears. Robin, seeing her distress, moved closer, wrapping an arm around her shoulder, his other hand resting on her knee.

“Emma, stop. I didn’t mean to upset you! If you don’t want to talk about it…”

She instinctively leaned her head down onto his shoulder, welcoming his attempt to comfort.

“It’s ok. You didn’t know. After all you’re bound to hear about it sometime, so best it’s from me. Straight after yours and Killian’s deaths, Gina and I fell into depression. She stopped eating and I started drinking. She didn’t know she was expecting Honour at the time. She took sleeping tablets…”

Robin winced, imagining the emotional turmoil he had put her through. He leaned his head on hers.
“I’m sorry I caused so much suffering…” But Emma wasn’t listening, just playing back the time in her mind.

“Henry found her. He called an ambulance, and they rushed her in. They couldn’t find me - I was down in the cellar, wasted. It was touch and go whether she’d survive. I may give Whale a hard time, but he really came through for us that night. They pumped stuff out of her and it was only after they ran tests they found out she was pregnant. So knowing that, she felt even worse. That she almost killed her baby!

Robin wanted to interrupt, seeing she needed to get this out. And he wanted to know.

“Dad found me, unconscious, a day later and got me to the hospital too. Some bloody Saviour! Whale gave me something to make me throw up and they kept me in. I panicked. I tried to use magic to get out of there, so Henry somehow persuaded Gold to get magical cuffs on me and Regina so neither of us could escape. I gave him so much shit for that! So did Regina, when she woke up. Can you imagine it? Both his mothers giving him hell for saving their lives? What a pair!

“Henry is a remarkably perceptive young man. It’s a trait he gets from you both!”

Was he flirting with her, she wondered. “Anyway, Dad told me if I didn’t accept help from Archie, he’d lock me up with the bracelet still on. Regina wasn’t so lucky. She was in there four weeks while they did a psychiatric assessment. That’s when they discovered she was pregnant.” She continued. “That really shook her up! Robin, that pregnancy was the last piece of you she had left! It’s one of the main things that saved her. We kinda bonded in the hospital as we tried to shake ourselves out of what we’d both become. It got a little fuzzy at that point, but Archie sort of took control. He set us both on detox regimes and therapy sessions together, figuring we were both going through so much trauma we could help each other. A few weeks later, we both got out of the hospital, but Archie still wouldn’t let them take off the cuffs.

“He was just thinking of your welfare Emma. Those cuffs may have saved your lives…”

“You know what saved Gina’s life? Honour. Being pregnant gave her something to live for. She maxed out on the guilt of course. The number of times we both spent the evening crying at the farm…”

“The farm? Snow and David’s? She moved in with them?”

“We both did. Mum and dad needed to keep an eye on me. I think Mum was terrified I might start drinking again, or overdose like Regina. They spoke to Archie and he suggested we both move in until after the birth. She was still in a bad way and too weak and stressed out to argue. So, we both moved in until Honnie was born. Did you know my dad delivered your daughter?”

“David? Why didn’t they…” he blurted, shocked at the news.

It was sudden. The snow cut us off from the town, and there was no chance of getting to the hospital when her waters broke in the night. Dad was a shepherd. He’d delivered lambs and foals in his time, but never a human being. It was panicky at first, but he’s amazing in a real crisis! Mum is too. I left to get Doc shortly after, trudging through the snow, but we managed to get everything taken care of.”

“Thank you, Emma.” Said Robin, his voice almost a whisper.

“For what? Dad did most of the work…” she looked up from his shoulder to see his teary eyes.

“For looking after the woman we both love! For being there for her, when you had enough problems
of your own to deal with. For helping her through her pregnancy…”

She looked up at him, her head still resting against his shoulder. “She helped me too, you know? She and that pregnancy gave me a reason to pull my head out of my own ass…”

“Don’t dismiss what you did, Emma! You loved and took care of Regina, and you also helped raise Honour and Roland when I couldn’t. You’re a remarkable woman Emma, and not because you’re the Saviour or the daughter of Snow and David, but just because you’re you! I can see why Regina fell in love with you!”

Emma swallowed, knowing he was being completely sincere and seeing the warm smile as he turned to face her. “Well if we’re throwing out compliments, thank you for saving her from Hades! I see why she fell in love with you too.” The words were out before she could stop herself.

For a moment the pair studied each other, faces close and looking briefly at each other’s mouths, before Robin slowly leaned in and pressed his slightly parted lips gently but firmly against her own. The kiss was short but warm and they both felt that charge, that pulse, that they and Regina had felt that night in the Earl of Locksley.

They separated slowly, Robin anxious he’d overstepped the mark. “Sorry Emma, I shouldn’t have…”

“Yes? No problem with me. After all, Gina wanted us to get on. She even hinted she wants us to be ‘closer’.”

“She did?”

“Yup. I think she feels guilty she’s causing problems by loving us both. I think she’s secretly hoping for something to happen between the two of us,” she breathed, with a slight embarrassed giggle, which Robin found very attractive, resulting in another entirely different feeling in his trousers.

“Well I would hate to disappoint her! Perhaps this is turning into a date after all…”

Emma chuckled. “Yeah, though I think we did things the wrong way around, don’t you? We’ve already been to bed and we had fairly phenomenal sex, and you’ve yet to even buy me dinner!”

“Fairly phenomenal? Emma, you wound me! And I intend to fix the dinner issue this evening,” he said, leaning in to give her another more-chaste peck on the lips, with this time Emma responding in kind.

“Hmm. Did I see a bottle of champagne in there, Mr. Locksley?” she said, eyeing the secured ice bucket.

“You did, Mrs. Swan-Mills, you did.” He breathed, before moving over to the small cabinet to lift the chilled bottle, pop the cork with a steady hand and gently pour two glasses, already waiting on top. Lifting them across, he passed one to Emma before lifting the other to clink against her own.

“To your marriage and the woman we love,” he toasted as they clinked and sipped.

“To family and friendship!” Emma countered before taking a large slug of champagne.

“To the future!” he clinked again, refilling their glasses.

“To our first date!” she giggled, “and some decent food!”
While Emma and Robin were being driven to their restaurant, Killian Jones had been busy on board the Jolly Roger, preparing for the Friday wedding and his Saturday departure. Supplies were being ferried aboard, as they prepared for the Saturday early tide. Only about a third of Killian’s old crew were prepared to join him for this voyage, though it didn’t matter so much this time, as his new magical abilities now allowed him to command sails to rise, decks to be swabbed and provisions to arrive without delay. The lack of crew allowed him to create more space and, with Tinker Bell and Rosalind by his side, he set about creating, with magic, not just better living quarters for the smaller crew, but two additional cramped berths next to the Captain’s Quarters, the green fairy helping guide his magic through trial and error.

“Sorry ladies,” he said, “both these berths are a bit cramped, though at least you’ll both have your privacy. Alternatively, you could both take over the Captain’s quarters and share; at least then you’ll have bathroom facilities. I can berth in one of these…”

Rosie smiled at the pirate for the kind offer, knowing full well she was more likely to spend most nights in his bed anyway. “No, that’s fine, Killian. There’s a loo, and basin close by. I’ll be fine.”

“I agree with Rosie. A Captain needs his quarters!” said Tink. “We’ll be just fine. Mind you, I wish I still had all my powers at times like this; I could’ve just shrunk to fairy-size and slept anywhere…”

For the next half hour, Killian and Rosalind continued to produce small bursts of magic to add furniture, tidy and paint the two berths, changing the beds and colours to suit the three of them. It was then they heard a shout from above.

“Permission to board, Captain Jones?” Yelled the Sorcerer, her daughter’s head lifting in recognition.

“Daddy?” the brunette yelled back, followed by Killian’s own yell, “Permission granted, Professor!” He then whispered to Rosie, “Your father - you have told him, right? The fact that you’re coming with me? I don’t fancy getting incinerated by an angry sorcerer!”

“Of course!” she whispered back. “I wouldn’t keep something like that from him!”

The three climbed the steps up and on to the deck, seeing Merlin stepping up the gangplank, followed by Blue and Annabelle. He smiled as he saw his daughter. “Hello, my darling! I haven’t seen much of you since you arrived. No time for your old papa anymore?”

With a huge grin, Rosie stepped into his loving arms in a warm embrace. “Don’t be silly daddy - always time for you! I’ve just been a bit…erm…busy. We’re getting Killian’s ship ready for sailing on Saturday and we’ve a Friday wedding to prepare for. Sorry I haven’t been around much.” She looked across at her younger sister, who sported a sly grin on her face. That’s when she realised, Anna knew exactly what her older sister had been up to - with Killian!

She gave her sister a warning glare, while still enjoying the hug and the familiar smell of her father.

“I’m sure you have, my dear. Though I’m hoping you’ll spend the evening with Anna and I. Charlie & Celia will be arriving tonight and I haven’t had you all together for so long…”

“Of course, daddy! I’ve already texted Cee but haven’t heard back from Charlie.”

“Cee said he’d gone off for the day with some girl he met on the flight over, complaining of ‘jetlag’!” said Anna, earning a roll of the eyes from all three of the Sage family and a chuckle from Blue, who had remained silent till now. “I take it this isn’t an unusual event?”
“Definitely not!” groaned Rosie, “anything in a skirt…”

“Now don’t speak ill of your brother,” chastised Merlin, “not when he isn’t here to defend himself! He texted me actually, so he will be here tonight, with or without Celia.”

Captain Jones stepped forward to shake the Sorcerer’s hand. “Welcome on board, Professor. Although you’ll be heading off to be with your family tonight, can I at least offer you a drink, and show you around my ship? As your daughter will be joining us on the first sailing, I’m sure you would like to look around?”

“Indeed, Captain. I did want to have a word with you.” The Sorcerer said, betraying no hint or emotion. Killian knew the word was likely to be about his daughter and their current ‘relationship’. “Though first, let’s have a quick look at Rosalind’s accommodation for the next few weeks, shall we?”

Killian nodded before leading the group down the steps toward the Captain’s Quarters and adjoining bedrooms. Opening the door to the room set aside for Rosie, it appeared even more cramped than before as six adults stepped into it. Really cramped.


Not quite knowing what the Sorcerer intended, Killian stepped back. “Well…be my guest.”

As the remaining five stepped back, Merlin tilted his head down, muttering silently to himself with his hands moving together, almost in prayer. He slowly separated them, a pale-yellow light emanating from within. As the rest of the group watched open-mouthed, the oak beam walls began to move further apart, seemingly stretching beyond belief, with no sound of cracking or splitting. Ten seconds later, the previously small room now appeared to be at least five times larger!

“Fucking Hell!” said Killian in astonishment, before he could stop himself. “I’ve never seen that before! What the hell has it done to the rest of my ship?” before adding. “Sorry for my cursing… but…but…”

Merlin laughed at the look on the faces of his audience. “You like that? It’s a little piece of rather special magic, taught to me by a most unusual fellow I once met. A traveller through time. This room will appear no different on the outside, I assure you Captain, but on the inside…well, as you can see…”

“It’s brilliant, Merlin! Could you do it for my berth, as well?” shrieked Tinker Bell, earning a glare from Blue.

“Of course, my dear. I’ll also put in a couple of bathroom facilities and leave you to decorate them. Don’t worry Captain, as you’ll see, no damage has befallen your ship!”

“I’m truly amazed! Now, you said you would like a word?” he said leading the small group back into his own quarters.

“Yes, please. Although Reul, I believe there’s something you wish to say before the Captain and I leave?”

The Blue Fairy stepped forward, looking a little nervous. Very unusual for her. “Well, yes. I wanted to speak to Tinker Bell actually.”

The Green Fairy stepped forward silently, looking at her former leader. The relationship with Blue had been strained for a long time. All the way back to the day she’d tried to help Regina find her true
love. The day Blue chastised her, removing her wings. She didn’t hate the woman, but she didn’t exactly like her either.

“Yes? What do you want, Reul? If it’s about me joining Captain Jones and Rosie on this voyage, I’m afraid I won’t change my mind! There’s really nothing for me here. I’m no longer a proper fairy, as you well know, and I can see no reason to stay…”

Anna could swear she saw a small tear in the eye of the normally formidable fairy. “No Tinker Bell, it isn’t that. It’s difficult for me to explain. I’ve had long conversations with Merlin over the last few days, and it’s clear I’ve made some serious mistakes which I now need to correct. Mistakes particularly concerning yourself and Nova.” Her nervousness was apparent as, trembling, she kept her eyes fixed to the floor.

“I refused Nova’s wish to seek love in the arms of a human being, breaking her heart in the process. I now realise that was wrong of me, and I have asked her forgiveness. She may now do as she wishes, and I hope she can recover her happiness. However, with you I did something far worse. You sought to save the life of a tortured soul, and help her find her own happiness. Your motives were honourable, yet I still punished you and removed your wings.” Blue lifted her head to look at the younger woman, a tear now drifting down her cheek.

“I wish to correct that. Tinker Bell, sister, I wish to restore your powers. If you will allow me?”

Tinker Bell stepped slowly forward, overcome with her own emotions. “You mean…I’m forgiven?”

“I was at fault. There was nothing to forgive. Sister, will you allow me?”

Green stepped silently in front of her, pulling herself forward until the two fairies stood close, face to face, almost touching. Blue placed her hands on the green fairy’s arms, embracing her elbows. The older fairy tilted her head slightly to the right as Tinker Bell mirrored her action. It looked to the others as though the fairies were about to engage in a full kiss, as both opened their mouths wider, moving even closer.

However, an inch before their lips touched, a pale-silver mist appeared from Blue’s mouth, heading directly into the mouth of Tinker Bell. Their audience watched spellbound as the magical mist continued to flow from one fairy into the other. As it continued, Tinker Bell’s body seemed to inflate slightly, glowing, her cheeks glistening as a pair of wings slowly sprouted from her back.

“Astonishing,” said Killian.

“Beautiful,” said Annabelle.

“Hot!” said Rosie, earning a glare from her father.

“The ‘Fairy’s Kiss’ isn’t sexual or romantic, Rosie! It is a transfer of power, love and trust. It’s magical and sacred, and we are honoured to witness it!” breathed Merlin, to his suitably chastened daughter.

As the light passing between the two fairies ceased, Tink pulled her head back and looked into Reul’s eyes, now glistening with tears. Shivering her newly reformed wings in excitement, she now pulled Blue into a more traditional hug, kissing her cheek. “Thank you…Mother Superior!” she whispered to the older fairy.

“You’re more than welcome - and please call me ‘sister’,” she whispered back.

As Rosie and Anna stepped forward to talk to them. Merlin leaned across. “Captain, let’s talk up on
deck!” Killian nodded, leaving the others to discuss what had just occurred.

The Captain led him up to the fo’c’s’le at the front of the ship, twisting his palm as two chairs and a small table appeared.

“Captain, are you sleeping with my daughter?” Merlin asked before they even sat down, showing no trace of emotion. That threw Killian completely. Certain that the Sorcerer could spot a lie instantly, he responded.

“Well…yes.”

“And what are your intentions toward her? You have just come out of a relationship, I believe. Rosie has also recently ended something similar.”

“If I may be frank, I have no intentions yet, sir. It’s all very new for us both. I like Rosie very much, and I believe she likes me. We’re taking things cautiously, but I’ve no intention of coercing her or harming her.”

“I believe you, Jones. However, I am her father and while trying not to be too over-protective, I do worry for my girls. Rosie’s last ‘partner’ turned out to be an utter swine, and I’m concerned she doesn’t get hurt again!”

“You’re right to be. I was a pirate, as well you know. But I like to think I have changed. Despite my age, I have only had two ‘real’ relationships in the past and during them I was never unfaithful. One ended when she was killed by the Dark One and the other when I was also killed. Your daughter is a wonderful woman, and I have already told her much about my past, although two centuries is a lot of ground to cover. I have told her I am a damaged soul, and to take her time getting to know me.”

“You intend to tell her ALL of your past? About your first love, Milah? Your connection with Rumpelstiltskin, and your previous obsession with revenge?”

“Aye, although we only met two days ago, I have already told her about Milah. And Emma.”

“Good. Honesty and openness is the only way. But have you told her about Miss Gale and Miss Lucas?”

“Dorothy and Ruby? What about them…they…oh…oh!” Killian shuddered, remembering their evening together just three days ago. And the sperm sample. “I haven’t yet. But I will. Tonight.”

“Very well. Please do so. I understand that you gave your sample to the couple to help them have a child, which was noble of you. And it was before you met my daughter. I know a little of your future, which I cannot disclose, and it is clear that you will remain linked to the couple for a very long time to come. But a seer cannot see his own bloodline in his visions, so I do not know what part Rosie will play in your life. She’s a strong woman, Mr. Jones. So, provided you are absolutely honest with her, I will not try to persuade her either way.”

“Then I give you my vow that I will tell her before we sail! She can then judge me accordingly and, if she decides not to come, I’ll respect it and not try persuade her otherwise.”

Merlin nodded in agreement. “You also need to speak with Ruby and Dorothy. They can decide whether they wish to continue with using your sample, knowing you may be starting a relationship with my daughter.”
An hour after leaving Storybrooke, the limousine pulled up at the front of the most beautiful restaurant Emma had ever seen. The half-timbered mansion lay on the edge of a beautiful lake, with perfectly manicured gardens at the front. As the car stopped, a large uniformed figure appeared, opening the door.

“Bonjour madame, welcome to L’Auberge Cachée. We are honoured to have you with us tonight,” he said, offering a hand to assist her step out. Normally Emma would be affronted at the idea of someone thinking she needed any help getting out of a car. However, here it somehow seemed fitting. Emma had seen enough old movies and she rather liked this excessive formality. She was elegantly dressed in one of Regina’s best outfits, her hair looked good, and she felt like Hollywood royalty. Looking back, she saw Robin.

As he stepped out, adjusting his jacket, she had to admit that he did look good. His suit fitted him perfectly, and certainly looked expensive; just right for this place. She turned to see the imposing entrance, candlelit within. Everything reeked of luxury. Since marrying Regina just over a year ago, she’d got to experience some pretty fine dining and hotels on their rare outings outside of Storybrooke, but this was in a very different league! Hearing steps on the gravel, she felt a warm hand gently take hers, linking their arms. “Shall we?” he muttered, with a grin, which she countered with her own. They followed one of the doormen into the entrance, where a short, balding man stepped up to them, sporting a huge smile.

“Bonjour madame, monsieur! It is Lord Locksley, no?” he said with a strong French accent, his head bowing in deference. “I am ‘onoured to ‘ave the famous Robin of Locksley dine with us tonight! Professor Sage said you were indeed a special friend of ‘is, and to take good care of you! So we ‘ave something rather special planned. A gourmet meal fit for ‘eroes!”

He walked over to Emma. “Oh! And you ‘ave brought your beautiful lady to dine with you this evening?” The little man stepped forward, lifting Emma’s free hand with his own, before planting a tiny kiss on the back. “Enchantée Madame! I am Pierre Roch, the owner of L’Auberge Cachée.” He rambled happily. “Lady Locksley, Sir Merlin is a very good friend of mine. You know, ‘a once saved the life of my darling daughter Mia and my granddaughter Estelle? I owe ‘im so much! So tonight, you will be seated on the lake front!”

“Well actually, we’re not…” Robin was about to correct Pierre, who clearly thought Emma his wife. However, before he could, he felt a tight squeeze on his arm. Looking into Emma’s eyes, clearly, she was trying to tell him something urgently. So, without hesitation, he released his third eye sense, taught to him by Merlin only days ago, to find out what she was trying to say, reading her thoughts, which immediately came through, loud and clear. “Shut up!” She said “‘Something special’! He’s talking food for god’s sake! I’ve just had two beers and most of the champagne. I need food! Just go with it! I’m too hungry to argue! Her eyes pleaded, not expecting to see a grinning outlaw smirking at her and nodding with a wink.

“That sounds lovely, Pierre! After you…my lady!” he said, as Pierre led them to their table. The pair were escorted through the restaurant, before being directed toward the lake. Emma’s breath hitched at the sight, as they walked eventually across a short pier to their table, sitting away from the remaining diners, under a small glass canopy. It was utterly enchanting, sitting at least a hundred feet offshore, with lights from the lake gently twinkling in the distance. “Oh, my!” said Emma, “this is wonderful!”

“I’m pleased you think so,” said Pierre, pulling a chair back for Emma to sit. “This is known as the Margaretta table, named after the Professor’s wife! I met ’er once, before ’er sad demise. She was also a doctor, you know? A truly enchanting and beautiful woman. Much like yourself, Lady Locksley. You are a lucky man monsieur!”
Emma blushed furiously at the comment. Before she even had a chance to reply, a warm hand rested on top of her own. “I agree Pierre, I am!” said Robin, a mischievous look in his eye.
Chapter Summary

Robin and Emma have their first date. And Killian tells Rosie about his recent 'service' for a young couple.

Chapter 19

The Mansion

As she sat down to read, Emma having only been gone half an hour, Regina heard a knock on the door, sighing loudly as she stood. “No peace for the wicked, as Zelena continually reminds me...” she mumbled to herself, walking over to answer it. She opened it, to the smiling faces of Ruby and her fiancée.

“Regina! Sorry to bother you. We were hoping to speak to Emma about the wedding? Is she here?”

“No, she’s out tonight with…er…anyway, she’s out!”

Oh, ok, no problem. We said we’d pop in and drop off the wedding outfits for your two. Emma said she’d check them and see they fit, and Carrie said she’d do the adjustments if they don’t…”

“Carrie? You mean Robin’s cousin, Caroline?”

“Yes. Oh Regina, she’s a darling! She offered to help with our wedding dresses too, and she’s pretty good with a sewing machine. It’s such short notice, so Carrie said all we needed to do was check the measurements and she’ll do the alterations…”

Regina was taken by her earlier conversation with the only adult relative of Robin’s she’d ever met. “I’ll help too, if you’ll allow me? I’ll have Honour and Roland try them first thing, and drop them over to her in the morning? I wanted to talk to her again, anyway…”

Dorothy smiled. “Funny enough, Carrie said something similar about meeting you again! If that wouldn’t be too much trouble, we’d really appreciate it. Probably a silly idea, us trying to arrange a wedding in just a few days!”

“I was going to ask you about that. Why the rush? A wedding in under a week?”

Ruby and her fiancée gave each other a look, neither wanting to reveal the real reason. “Well... Killian sails Saturday morning, and he offered us the use of the Jolly before then. As a Captain he can marry us too. Plus, Tinker Bell’s going with him. So’s Rosie, Merlin’s daughter, and a few of the villagers, and they may be gone some time,” she explained, only to be interrupted by Regina.

“Tink’s leaving with Guyliner? Why wasn’t I aware of this?” she blurted out in astonishment. “She can’t just leave!” The former mayor knew there was nothing to stop her, but was aghast at the thought of losing one of her closest confidants after Emma. She and the green fairy, her former fairy godmother, had shared so much and she was saddened at the thought of losing her.

“Well she is,” said Dorothy. “We saw her earlier. Blue gave her back her wings and powers. She’s a
full-blown fairy again! She’s sailing with Killian and Rosie. I think they’re heading for Ariel & Eric first then on to Arendelle…”

“Blue gave her powers back? She’s my fairy godmother, so I definitely need to talk to her! It’s madness. She needs to be here, not gallivanting across realms with that diseased pirate!”

“That’s our friend you’re talking about, Regina!” said Ruby, defensively. “Just like other people I could mention, Killian’s done some dubious things in the past, but that’s all behind him. He’s reformed, just like you! And he’s been more than helpful to us these last few days…”

“Zeus wouldn’t send just anyone back.” Added Dorothy.

Regina saw the irritated looks on the faces of the brides-to-be. “Sorry. You’re right. If Zeus himself saw fit to send him back with Robin, who am I to judge…”

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The last two hours had gone far too quickly for Emma. The food, and the company, had been magnificent. Nine courses in all, ranging from small lobster entrees to a mammoth Beef en Croute for the main course, various small plates of things she’s never experienced, before finally finishing with the lightest chocolate pudding imaginable. Now they were on the cheese and biscuits, accompanied by the smoothest port ever. All beautifully presented and the tastes sublime. Half the time she wasn’t sure what she was eating, but she didn’t care. It was wonderful. Wines had been meticulously selected in advance to match each course and she had welcomed each refill. Now here she was, completely stuffed and pleasantly inebriated. Not drunk, not quite, just very, very comfortable.

She’d been surprised at just how much she’d enjoyed Robin’s company too. Five years ago, she’d always remembered him as being a bit of a stuffed shirt, too earnest and too serious by half. But now, getting to know him, she saw a very different side to the man. To Regina’s true love.

After they’d spent the first few courses talking about their pasts, Robin and Emma had moved on to poking fun at their current arrangement, friends and finally, each other. Robin told her stories about the mischief the Merry Men got up to, the self-important royals they stole from. The people they met. She was surprised when he showed his talent for mimicry, impersonating people in Storybrooke. Perhaps it was his British accent as he did extraordinary impressions of both Rumpelstiltskin and Killian. He even took the piss out of Belle’s antipodean accent, exaggerating it with rude remarks the woman would never say, which made Emma howl with laughter, tears flowing. As they settled, she looked wistfully across the water.

“This was a great idea! I’ve loved it, though I have to admit I’m feeling just a little bit…”

“Pissed?” he interrupted with a grin, earning a glare which instantly turned into a smile.

“Tiddly! Not pissed, tiddly,” she said, slurring her words slightly. “And you should know by now, over here ‘pissed’ means angry, not drunk!”

“Well I’ll let you into a secret,” he said, leaning closer to whisper, his breath being felt on her cheek. “I’m a bit pissed, using the proper English meaning, too! But I’m not ashamed to admit it, like some people!”

Emma was about to counter with a suitably barbed reply, when close to the lake they heard gentle singing and a guitar playing nearby. She looked down to where it came from, as a small gondola came into view, a small man singing while playing a little mandolin. That’s when she realized what he was playing.
She rolled her eyes in disbelief. “I don’t believe it! You’ve got to be kidding me! Disney, here?” then turning to Robin. “Did you have a hand in this?”

“Um? A hand in what?” he replied, “sorry, I don’t understand…” It was then he heard the song properly.

“Here you see her,
sitting there across the way.
She don’t got a lot to say,
But there’s something about her.
And you don’t know why,
But you’re dying to try,
You wanna kiss the girl.”

Emma snorted with laughter. The Little Mermaid, for god’s sake! This was the most romantic place she had ever visited and now she was being serenaded, by, by someone who had no idea who she was.

“Yes, you want her,
Look at her, you know you do.
It's possible she wants you too,
There's one way to ask her
It don't take a word, not a single word
Go on and kiss the girl!”

Looking back at Robin, she saw he had already started laughing too, desperately trying to control himself. It was obvious he hadn’t set this up; he was as surprised as she was. She studied him more closely. He is a seriously good-looking guy, she thought, her eyes taking him in. And he does look fucking hot in that suit!

As her eyes moved appreciatively over the rest of his body, Emma looked up to find him now staring straight into her own eyes, a changed, darker expression on his face.

“Now’s your moment,
Floating in a blue lagoon.
Boy, you better do it soon,
No time will be better.
She don't say a word,
And she won’t say a word
Until you kiss the girl…”

Emma felt a small shiver as Robin’s own gaze moved from her eyes down to her mouth. She noticed him bite his bottom lip as they both slowly gravitated closer to each other, heads tilting. Then, without hesitation or awkwardness, two sets of lips gently came together in a soft, warm kiss. A tender kiss, so completely different to what she had experienced on Saturday night! Warm. Loving.

Emma automatically widened her lips, Robin following with a slight groan. Neither pulling back. He was More than happy for her to take the lead, to feel in control of the situation, and she did so with gusto. As she felt Robin’s left hand slide gently to the back of her head, holding her in position, she did the same to him, cupping his cheek with her own left hand as she slowly introduced her tongue into his mouth, to be welcomed and softly massaged by his own.

The kiss was so very different to the first time. That was passionate and urgent, motivated by a dare. This was…was…well, tender and so damn…intimate!
After what felt like minutes but was probably only seconds, Robin gently unsealed his lips from hers, pulling his face away. For a moment he looked at her, her eyes still closed and mouth open, as though waiting for him to reattach them. As she opened her eyes, she saw the reason he’d stopped. There, to her right, a young blonde waitress now stood beside their table, having silently walked along the small jetty, holding a small tray in her hand, silver tongs in the other.

“Cognac & coffee, madame, monsieur? Petit fours?” she asked, her tray holding cups, glasses and a large tantalus. Her face failing to hide a little smirk.

Emma blushed, knowing the girl had seen them kiss. “Er, yes, sure. Thanks.”

“You’re welcome, madame.” She said softly, smiling more broadly now and leaving the small decanter, glasses and a bowl containing small blocks of chocolate and sweets on the table before giving her a wink, unnoted by Robin. “Bon appetite.”

“I wouldn’t be concerned,” whispered Robin as the girl departed back up the jetty. “After all, they do seem to think we’re married! And besides, Regina sort of gave me carte blanche to woo you. So, I have the queen’s permission…”

“Woo? Who uses words like ‘woo’?” she giggled at him, which he found more than endearing.

“People like me!” he breathed, leaning and pressing his lips to hers again, to continue where they left off.

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It was late when Rosalind Sage and Captain Jones returned to the Jolly Roger. After a long day preparing for the arduous journey ahead, Killian had organized a meeting at the Earl of Locksley for all those wishing to join the voyage. A lot more people had joined the party than expected. After making selections and finally bidding farewell until the day prior to sailing, the pair of them slumped onto his bed in the Captain’s quarters.

Rosie noticed a serious look on his face. “Something wrong?”

He hesitated. “No, love. It’s just something your father said. We need to talk…”

Rosie gulped in alarm. What’s he said? Has dad threatened him if I go with him? Has he threatened to slice you limb from limb if you soil his precious daughter? Because if he has, I will seriously bollock him! It’s not as though I’m some naïve little virgin he has to protect! He knows I…

“Calm yourself, lass! He’s said nothing of the sort. Well, not directly, anyway. He’s fully aware of our situation.”

“Our ‘situation’? That’s a funny word for it!” Where was he going with this?

“Our relationship, lass! He knows we’re together and he’s right to be concerned. He hasn’t warned me off. He just wants you to know fully what you’re getting into, and he is right. I am a damaged soul after all…”

“Kill, we are both damaged souls! We’ve spent the last two days talking about this. I know you were a pirate, a villain, a thief, murdering, pillaging and raping as you go…”

“Maybe a bit of pillaging lass, but never raping! I could never hurt a lady, nor a child, though my actions may have caused hurt regardless.”
She smirked at that. “Nonetheless, Zeus would never send back anyone who hasn’t reformed. Dad knows that, which is why he probably trusts you.”

“All the more reason why I need to tell you some more recent history. It’s important, love. I have strong and growing feelings for you, but as you are aware, I am still raw from a recent relationship. I need to be completely honest, so you can make a judgment whether to come with me on this voyage, or not. I do not wish to mislead you…”

She sat on the edge of the bed next to him, taking his hand. Was there some horrible recent history? A murder? Other women on the go - did he long for another?

“Ok, Killian. I’m listening. I’m fully aware about Emma and your recent history. But first let me ask you two questions. One, is there any other woman now in your life I should be aware of? Any other relationship?”

He sighed. “No Rosie, only you. I swear. I am over Emma, though it still hurts.”

“Yes, I know. Two, do you have any children I should be aware of? You’re over two hundred tears old so I understand. You’re bound to have left a few wenches up the duff in your time…”

Killian chuckled but his face remained serious. “You’re right, love, there may well be a few but I’m not aware of any. Though the topic is relevant. It concerns Ruby & Dorothy.” He grimaced.

“Dorothy and Ruby? What, they’re gay aren’t they? At least I think Dorothy is! Not sure about Ruby though. From what I’ve seen, she flirts with everybody. Even me last night! Wait - what? You’ve slept with one of them, is that it? They’re getting married on Friday. You didn’t?” Her mind was rambling with her words.

“Again, calm yourself. I need to tell you this because, well it’s important. While I want you with me, you may change your mind after I tell you this. But it needs to be in confidence. Can I trust your silence?”

She nodded slightly, urging him to continue. “Go on.”

Two days before you arrived, I encouraged them to marry. For Ruby to do what she was avoiding for so long, and propose. They wanted a child, you see. They went to your father, asking about magical babies or some such. Something about creating a child that was truly a part of each of them. Merlin told them that there was a way, but to do so required seed from a man with magical ability. They asked me.”

Rosie’s mind whirled. “You donated sperm. Is that it?”

“Aye, lass, I did. I gave them several donations one evening. Your father sought to store it for them, to use over the next few months if first attempts fail. I agreed to help them get pregnant. Furthermore, I said that if it was successful I would like to be in the child’s life if he or she wished it. I wouldn’t want to be a dirty secret.”

Rosie looked down, quietly trying to process the information. Killian grew concerned at the silence but held her hand as she contemplated the news. Finally she broke the silence.

“Actually Killian, I think it’s rather lovely. You did the right thing…”

“I did?”

“Yeah, you did. You had two people who desperately wanted a child of their own and you’ve made
it possible. I hope they succeed. Any child wants to know where they’ve come from and not telling them about their biological mother or father seems cruel. I understand.”

They sat together quietly before another thought popped in Rosie’s head. “I should tell them I know.”

“Wait, what? Why would you…”

“I saw the look on Dorothy’s face when I kissed you, Killian! She’s a woman, and she knows we’re getting closer. They may hesitate in using your sperm if they think we’re going to be in a relationship. They may think I would be annoyed if there was a little Killian wandering around Storybrooke wanting to spend more time with his father! I would in their position. I need to tell them I know and that I’m ok with it, and just go ahead.”

“You’re a remarkable woman, Rosalind Sage.”

“And you’re a remarkable man, Killian Jones. As I said, Zeus doesn’t save just anybody! He gave you powers and a fresh start too. He knows about this sort of stuff.”

“Hmm, I guess. However, there is a small addition to the story I also need to add. I’m afraid this is the awkward bit…” He continued after she again nodded for him to continue. “Well, the night Ruby proposed, your father performed some sort of magic to combine their eggs, ready for the seed, as it were. After which, I went up to their room to make my own contribution…”

Rosie giggled at his embarrassment, “You were a wanker! It’s ok, Killian, it’s a necessary part of the process…”

“Indeed. However, the situation was a little unique. We talked for some time before. Just the three of us. Ruby told me that she never even knew she was bisexual, till she fell in love with Dorothy, her true love. Dorothy admitted that she had never been with anyone, man or woman, till Ruby arrived. We had shared a few drinks and well, things developed…”

Rosie’s eyes widened as she realized where the conversation was heading. “Oh my god! You’re saying you bonked Dorothy Gale! In front of Ruby? Is that what you’re saying? Dorothy wanted to try it with a man, so you just obliged?”

“Well, as we’re being honest, I actually ‘bonked’, as you put it, both of them. As I said, we had all had a good few drinks, Dorothy was curious, and Ruby encouraged it. I was now single, so I felt there was no harm in it as we were all willing and a little bit enebriated. Early the next morning, I also left a sample. Sorry, I’m feeling a little ashamed now…”

She looked him in the eye, her own face betraying no hint of emotion or reaction to what she heard. Killian stiffened, hoping she would at least say something. He couldn’t bear the silence anymore.

“I’m sorry, love. I quite understand if this changes things between us; I just needed you to know the truth.” He looked totally ashamed, feeling he had let her down.

“I don’t believe it!” she said as he stood to leave the room.

“Any other guy I know, who had a threesome with two hot women, would be shouting it across the rooftops by now! “Look at me, I banged two girls at the same time!” But not you? You seem almost embarrassed by it!”

“Well love, it was only a day or so before we met. I don’t normally go in for that sort of thing…”
The brunette slowly stood up from the bed, stepping in front of him and taking his hand in hers. “Killian, I understand. You’re still, technically, a single man. And a bloody good looking one, at that. You were already on the rebound and, hell, if that opportunity was offered to me, I’m not sure I would have refused! I understand, it’s a surprise but I have no issue with it. Though I will talk to Ruby and Dorothy as it would be stupid for them to stop the chance of a happy life with a baby because of me. I think you would make a great daddy!” With that she kissed him hungrily and sighed as his arms enfolded her.

“I thought you were tired, Miss Sage?”

“Hmm. I will be. Soon. And I’m sure you’ll see to that, Mr. Jones!”

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It was just after two in the morning when Regina heard the car pull up outside. Or to be more accurate, sensed it. Sensed them. Them. Emma and Robin. Earlier, the former queen had tried to settle in bed with a book but sleep just refused to come. She’d had a hot chocolate and even two whiskies, but it wasn’t working. And she knew why. She was desperately waiting to see how they had gotten on. Without her. On their own. It was the fear of losing one of them, which led her to this, to her suggesting Robin took her wife out on a date. You’re playing with fire, Mills! She told herself as she realized the risks from her foolhardiness. What had they had talked about? What if she hated him? Had they fought? Had they got on? And if they had, then what?

Slipping a silk dressing gown over her nightdress, she looked out the window to see her wife slowly and inelegantly clamber out the back of the large car, aided by another figure who had opened the door. Presumably the chauffeur, Robin’s doppelgänger. Emma appeared to be leaning in, whispering something, laughing before being joined by Robin, from the other side of the car. My Robin. She smirked as she saw the blonde, clearly the worse for wear, continue to stumble, latching onto Robin’s arm. “Oh Emma, how many drinks have you two had?” she whispered to herself as the pair headed up the drive to the front door. Regina decided to tiptoe downstairs to meet them, before hovering behind the door, trying to eavesdrop on their conversation from the other side.

“Sssshhhhh!” her wife hissed noisily outside. “It’s…it’s late!” she slurred.

“You don’ say?” came the deeper voice, sounding only a little less drunk. “I thought it was early!”

“Early…late…whatever. They’re shleeeping, so you need to keep it down!” she over-pronounced every word while attempting to whisper, unsuccessfully.

“I never thought I had it up!” he chuckled, prompting an even louder laugh from her.

“Well you did Saturday!” she cackled, rapidly turning into a giggling fit. Behind the door, Regina also silenced a laugh. Jeez, they’re both completely plastered! Nonetheless she carried on listening.

“Thang…thank you for a little evening, Rob…Dobbin’.”

“Dobbin? Dobbin! I’m not a bloody donkey, Emma!” he started giggling too.

“Well it seems you’re hung like one!” she said, before she could stop herself, setting them both off, tears of laughter in their eyes.

“Shush, shush, bad girl!” Robin admonished. “Whatever would your lovely wife think of such smut?”

“She ruder then me! Last week she said…” she stopped as the door she was leaning against opened
rapidly to reveal her wife sporting a very pointed glare at her spouse, clearly intended to stop the revelation in its tracks. Emma initially looked shocked although collapsed back into her giggles again as she enjoyed the look on the brunette’s face.

“Gina! My lovely, lovely, wifey!” she blurted out, followed by a loud hiccup, the volume of which caused Robin to also giggle like a schoolboy. Regina tried to look annoyed but seeing the silly state of the pair couldn’t help but smile, turning to face her wife while addressing the former outlaw.

“Robin, I thought you were going to take care of my wife? Yet here she is, completely hammered. What do you have to say for yourself, hmm?”

“I have to say…do you have any decent scotch in the place?”

Regina fought hard not to giggle. “I think you’ve both had more than enough alcohol for one evening! Are you coming in for coffee?”

He shook his head before turning to his date. “Thanks, but best not; I need my beauty sleep. Emma, it’s been a lovely evening, I really enjoyed getting to know you…at last! We should do it again soon – perhaps next time Gina could join us?” Stepping in front of the former sheriff, he rested his hands on her upper arms, placing a small chaste kiss on her cheek. Emma was slow to respond due to the booze swimming around in her head.

“Umm…yeah…it was…wonderful. Robin, thanks,” she slurred. From the corner of her eye she saw Regina smirking at the interaction. A little look of devilment came over here as she remembered what the brunette had said earlier about her date. “Wait…Robin, umm, the food was fab, but I mostly enjoyed the company. You’re different to how I imagined you. Nothing like as stiff as I thought!”

“So, nothing like last Saturday, then?” he smirked, with an evil grin. “I don’t know whether to be flattered or insulted!”

At that all three burst out laughing, including Regina. “Well when you two have quite finished flirting, I also need my beauty sleep, so Robin, I’ll bid you goodnight…” she said, stepping in front of him. He immediately released his right hand from Emma’s shoulder to place it on Regina’s, drawing her closer to them.

“You’ve never needed anything to enhance your beauty, sleep or otherwise! Goodnight, Regina.”

With that, he tilted his head to place a parting peck on her cheek, though instead she mirrored him, tilting her face to capture his lips with her own in a warm, not-too-heated kiss.

“Emma watched intently as their mouths parted. “Hey! I get a tiny peck on the cheeks and she gets a proper one? Hardly fair!” she slurred.

Robin smirked back at Regina, silently asking permission. “Be my guest…” she breathed. At that, he turned his head to capture Emma’s own lips in an equally enthusiastic kiss, which the blonde responded to with vigour, before stepping back to breathe. “Better now?” said her wife.

“Better now,” said the younger woman. “Goodnight Robin. Sleep well…”

“You too ladies, pleasant dreams.” At that, he withdrew and walked back to the car, his doppelgänger giving him a wry smile. Regina took Emma straight to their room, before stripping the pleasantly drunk woman of her now slightly ruffled dress and shoes, then rolling her gently into the sheets where the blonde fell into an immediate sleep. “Hmm. Goodnight to you too Emma.” She smirked before preparing herself for bed.
Wednesday morning – Granny’s Diner

It had been a busy morning at the café. Expecting the usual early morning dribble of diners, Ruby had instead been astonished to see six of the dwarves waiting patiently outside for her to open. On seeing Sneezy, she broke into a smile before shaking his hand. “Mr. Clark, it’s lovely to see you back with us!”

The dwarf grinned back. “Good to see you too, Rubes. Though it’s only thanks to Merlin that I got out of that tree! I thought Emma or Regina could’ve helped.”

“Emma tried, she really did!” the wolf groaned, defending her friend, “so did Regina and Rumple. But you were just outside the town line. They said something about magic being weaker there. I’m sorry…”

“Only took Merlin a couple of minutes,” Sneezy harrumphed. “Five bloody years I’ve been a sodding tree! Merlin comes along, gets me out and fixes my ruddy sinuses too. No more sneezing! Seems like the ‘heroes’ only fix things when it affects them…”

Ruby sighed. She knew there was no point in trying to persuade him otherwise. “I’m sorry Mr. Clarke, it’s been a tricky few years, what with King George taking over and everything. Still, that’s in the past, yeah? Your friends have come to celebrate your safe return?”

Sneezy’s eyes twinkled. “I guess. Well that, and partly because of Nova n’ Grumpy. You know about that?”

Seeing the blank, surprised look on her face, the former nasally-challenged dwarf continued. “Blue’s let Nova leave the convent and be with him. So, they’re properly together now and he’s now got that daft look about him, like he used to. Guess we’ll be changing his nickname back to Dreamy…”

“Blue just ’let’ her be with him? How come? I always thought she was dead against fairies mingling with us?”

“Not sure, but I think Merlin had something to do with it. He seems to have straightened her out on a few things. Anyway, never mind that. I haven’t had a decent breakfast in five years and I’m starving! You still do a Granny special?”

Ruby smirked. “We do. In her memory. A full heart-busting fry-up with a gallon of tea?”

“Bring it on, sister!”

As Ruby gave him her usual flirty wink (as she did with everyone), she turned back to shout the order back to Franco in the kitchen. Just as she did, she saw Merlin’s daughter come through the front door, accompanied by a flushed-looking pirate.

The tall brunette walked across to the counter, not taking her eyes off Ruby. Killian chose to hang back, excusing himself to speak to the small gathering of dwarves and fairies assembled in the corner.

“Hi Ruby, can I have a minute?” said Rosie, deliberately keeping her voice down, while only then noticing Killian had not joined her.

Ruby saw a look of concern on the other woman’s face. “Something wrong, Miss Sage?”
“Could we go somewhere a little more private?” She had an odd look on her face. “Perhaps Dorothy could join us?”

It dawned on Ruby what this could be about. Killian’s sample! Or more importantly, whether she and her fiancée could use it. She deflated from her usual happy grin, realizing that Killian had probably changed his mind, especially now he had a new girlfriend! No man would want to run the risk of being a father when he was involved with someone else. “Er. Give me a moment, I’ll ask her. She’s in the kitchen and I have to go there anyway. Why don’t you wait in the lounge at the back. Just through there and first on the right…” she pointed, leaving Rosie to find her own way through to the private room.

“Rosie, you ok?” said Killian, appearing on her right. “I’ll come in with you…”

“No, it’s fine. Let me do this on my own…please?” she asked. The former pirate nodded silently. “As you wish.” He stepped away to join the group.

She stepped into the little lounge. It was nicely furnished, and she couldn’t help but notice one wall covered with lots of recent pictures of the two women with various people she recognised. On one shelf, she saw a picture with them standing either side of a female couple she recognized. Killian’s former girlfriend, and the woman she was told was the former mayor. Looking at their elegant dresses, although they weren’t white, as they held small bouquets it looked like it had been taken on their wedding day. They stood outside a city registry office which was probably not Storybrooke. Ruby had a young girl in her arms, who she recognised from the children playing outside the Locksley pub. A small informal wedding. Rosie thought it odd there were no other guests in the picture and no other pictures of the day. No parents, no children, no more friends. Perhaps it was just a photo for them, the rest of the wedding guests outside of the shot?

Her gaze fell on several other pictures taken with various families, particularly the children and babies. She picked up one framed photo of Dorothy holding one blonde baby close, with a look of adoration. Ruby was leaning over her side, planting a kiss on the little one’s cheek. That one picture told Rosie she was making the right decision, embarrassing though it may be. As she smiled at the picture, she heard a small cough as someone came in the room.

“That’s Alex. Ashley’s little girl,” said Dorothy, seeing the photo frame in Rosie’s hand. “You remember Ashley?”

“From the pub? Yes, of course. Beautiful little girl - just like her mother.”

“She is. She’s a gorgeous little thing,” Dorothy said, looking at the young woman whose cheeks were now reddening, not sure where the conversation was going. “You said you wanted a word? Please, take a seat…”

“Thanks. Well, this is a little more awkward than I thought it would be! Dad always told me if I had something to say, just come straight out with it, so here goes…” She paused for breath. “I understand you asked Killian to help you with getting pregnant?”

The two women stared, open-mouthed. Part of Ruby wanted to say it was none of her business, though seeing the kindly look on her face, she hesitated. Rosie saw the discomfort so jumped back in. “Please, I’m not judging! I’m sure I would have done the same! You want to have a baby of your own, after all…”

Dorothy stepped forward. “Yes, well, it’s true. It was originally kinda your dad’s suggestion. He said we could use a sperm donor, provided they had magic and, well, they’re in short supply! Killian was single a few days ago, so we asked him…”
Ruby saw her fiancée’s discomfort and stepped in. “Killian offered to help, so we have his sample at the hospital, ready for us to use. But as Dottie said, he was single then, but clearly isn’t now! I understand if you two are together the last thing you want is him becoming a dad by someone else, even if he’s not involved in their life. It’ll come between you, so I’ll speak to Victor and get them to destroy the sample,” the wolf said, more in resignation than sorrow. “I guess we’ll find another way. Somehow…”

“No! Wait…no…that’s not why I came! I don’t want you to destroy it!”

“You don’t?” gasped an astonished Dorothy.

“No. Look, Killian was, technically is, still single. Yes, it’s true we’re together, sort of, but it’s early days! We’re both on the rebound from failed relationships, so we’re taking it slowly. However, I’m leaving with him on Saturday, so last night we decided to tell each other everything, warts and all, about our pasts. Bloody hell, he’s got a history! However he also told me about helping you both get pregnant. It’s his business, and I had a long think and I decided that I’m ok with it. He said he knew you two would be brilliant mothers and deserved this. Seeing these photos, I can see he’s probably right. I asked him about how he would feel knowing there was a little pirate-girl or boy running. He told me he wouldn’t want to interfere with your family, but if the little one, or you two, wanted him to be in his or her life, he would…”

“And how do you feel about that?” said Dorothy. “What happens if you decide to marry and have a kid of your own? Knowing there’s another little Killian running around?”

Rosie smiled. “Then it means my baby will have a little brother or sister to play with! Can’t be bad, can it?”

Ruby visibly relaxed, the tension dropping. She stepped forward, taking Rosie’s hand. “So you’re sure you’re OK, with us using his sperm to get pregnant? You’re absolutely sure?”

“Yes, I’m sure. Who knows, in a few years’ time, we could be babysitting for each other…”

Without another word, Dorothy stepped forward and wrapped her arms around the younger woman, pulling her into a tight embrace. “Thank you! You have no idea what that means to me. To Ruby…”

“You’re very welcome. I hope it’s successful. Though one thing I don’t understand. Why do you need sperm from a man with magic? Limits your choice a bit, doesn’t it?”

Ruby smiled at her fiancée. “That was your father’s doing! He performed some sort of fertility magic on us. Basically, he’s somehow combined mine and Dottie’s eggs. So we’ll both be actual biological mothers to any baby. Just add sperm and voilà!”

“I had a feeling Dad would be involved somehow - two millennia old, and still an incurable romantic! Oops, that reminds me, I have dinner with all the family tonight. My brother and our older sister get into town soon, so I better get off and meet them. So, you’re OK now? You’re not going to do anything daft like destroy the sample?” Rosie stood to leave them.

Ruby chuckled. “Not now. Now we now you’re both OK with it. Thanks again, Rosie.”

“No problem. Though I do have a small favour to ask…” she said, a mischievous smirk playing on her lips. Ruby nodded for her to continue.

“I’d rather you two didn’t have any more sex directly with my man…”

The couple both swallowed with embarrassment, as she followed up with, “At least, not unless I’m
there too! Hmm - never had a foursome before. It’s a thought! Bye…” With that, she winked at them both and quickly turned to leave the room, leaving a stunned couple looking at each other, open mouthed.

“Did she just suggest…” Dorothy croaked as per fiancée pulled her into her arms, smiling.

“Yeah. Yeah, I think she did!” The warrior looked at the wolf’s grin before they both exploded into laughter.

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Chapter Summary

Emma gets an interrogation on her date after a very revealing dream. Albert Spencer's plan for revenge is slowly revealed...

Chapter 20 – The Mansion

Emma woke, gasping from her very vivid dream, slowly regaining consciousness, and feeling a thin layer of perspiration across her entire body. Slowly breathing out, she turned heavily to her left side, slowly opening her eyes. Expecting to see either a half-empty bed, or a sleeping wife beside her, she was instead confronted by the vision of her wife, her head on the pillow, wide awake, looking straight at her from close range.

“Good morning. Sleep well?” Asked the brunette beauty, sporting an odd look Emma didn’t recognize.

“Yeah, I s’pose,” She grunted bleary-eyed. “What time is it?”

“Just after eight thirty. Pleasant dream?” she asked, a knowing look on her face which the younger found disconcerting.

She tried avoiding the question. “I guess. Where’s Rollie?”

However, her wife was not to be so easily distracted. “Tell me about it? Your dream?” before finally adding, “Emma Locksley?”

Emma’s eyes widened and she tried desperately not to panic, cheeks reddening. Shit, how did she hear that?

“No. You…you must have misheard. Why on earth would I say that?”

“Your dream, dear. You said, “Emma Locksley, I like the sound of that!”” Regina noticed the look of panic on her wife’s face.

“No. You…you must have misheard. Why on earth would I say that?”

“Why indeed?” said the brunette cryptically, before rising, nodding to the other woman’s side. “Coffee’s on the side table…” before walking silently out of the room. Emma cringed internally. Oh fuck! What did she hear?

*Emma felt herself running up a long staircase, holding onto someone, giggling and dragging them behind her. “Shush, quiet! We don’t have long!” before pushing open a door to reveal an ornate bedroom with a large four-poster bed at its centre. Giggling, she felt herself being turned around by strong arms, gently enfolding her in a hug, and lifting her off the floor, her legs wrapping around him as his lips came down to press on her own. She broke the kiss with a chuckle as he walked her across the room to lay her on the bed.*
Seeing the look of sheer lust in his hooded eyes, he parted her thighs gently to lay between them. “My lady…” he breathed as she felt the bulge press between her legs, sending a pulse through her. “May I?” he continued as he rose again, kneeling back and sliding his warm hands down her thighs and up her skirt. Slowly, he eased his fingers into her panties, gently pulling them down, where they snagged on her shoes. “At least take my heels off first, Mr. Impatient!” she panted, as keen as he was. His soft hands caressed her legs and down to each foot, relieving her of her Jimmy Choos in a matter of moments, kissing the top of each foot, before finishing the removal of her panties in a flourish, leaving her spread before him. “Emma, you are a vision!” before moving back on top of her and kissing her passionately, her mouth opening wider to greet him and forcing her tongue out to perform a dance with his own. “Mmmmm…” they groaned simultaneously.

As their lips parted to draw breath, he peppered the small amount of cleavage exposed with light kisses, before working his way south rapidly to where, he thought, she needed him most. Placing more kisses and gentle bites on the inside of her thighs, he rapidly moved to her centre, sliding a broad flat tongue across her entrance and taking the little pink bud between his lips to squeeze gently. She hissed loudly. “Ooh, god! That’s just… no…no…no time! I need you up here with me! I need to see you. I need you inside me. Now!” she ordered.

“As you wish, my lady!” he purred, his voice low as he tried to contain himself. “You’re sure you’re ready?”

“Definitely. Get-inside-me-now! No time to waste!” she panted, rising up from the sheets to grab his belt, yanking his pants down and thrusting a hand into his boxers, relieving his raging hard-on from its confines. Almost angrily, she lowered her mouth onto the purple head, sucking hard whilst pumping the shaft hurriedly, ignoring the loud hiss. “Ooh, easy Emma!”

She pulled away in a matter of moments, to lay back down. He swiftly rose, pulling the shoes, trousers and boxers off completely before turning back to her, lifting her flowing white wedding dress and silk underskirt to expose her once again. Without further delay, he slowly lay over her, taking his weight on his forearm, as he guided himself into her. She wrapped her long legs around and behind his calves. His brim lightly skirted her folds, before gently easing inside, carrying on slowly but firmly, until his entire length was fully consumed within. “Aaaahhh!” she breathed, “you’re larger today. Feels bloody enormous!”

“Can you blame me? You’ve never looked more gorgeous - I’ve never wanted you so much! Gina’s going to fuck your brains out! But I’m first…” he grunted, his pace increasing rapidly, as he pulled his entire length almost out of her before slamming back in harder and faster. This was truly heaven for both of them and Emma grunted her approval, gritting her teeth as she felt her peak approaching. “Harder! Oh god, yes! I’m close, so close! Just keep going – just like that – just like that… just… ooh shit… aah…..yes…yesss!” She felt the full force of the orgasm hit her hard, her body going into spasm as the wave, emanating from deep within, shook her as she screamed.

As she sought to catch her breath, she felt him holding back until she had fully settled. “Don’t stop, don’t you dare stop! Come for me Robin! Come for me! I want to feel you explode inside me!” She pulled her legs tighter back around his muscular thighs, gripping his arse to pull him in even tighter, as she felt him draw close. Eventually his
whole body tensed as he finally slammed into her for the last time, his seed flying into
her, deep inside. She was sure she felt it. The raw heat as he finally came.

As his breath finally calmed, Robin looked deep into those beautiful hazel-green eyes as
Emma looked back up at him in wonder. “That, that was just incredible!”

“Definitely more of that tonight!” She murmured, now enjoying the cuddle and feel of
his long naked body on top, his member slowly beginning to soften inside her. “Best get
up, though. We can’t leave Gina holding the fort. The guests’ll be getting suspicious
why we’ve been gone so long!”

“I think they’ll have an idea…” he smirked, an annoyingly smug expression on his
chiselled features. “I don’t think anyone will begrudge me a few minutes with my wife
now, would they, Emma Locksley?”

“I guess not. Emma Locksley, I like the sound of that!” she breathed, pulling her new
husband into a soft, deep kiss...

As details of her dream slowly came into focus, she realized what Regina must have heard. But how
much of it had she heard? And where the hell was she in the dream? What the hell did it even mean?
She’s never had a dream like that before and definitely didn’t think of Robin that way! Did she?
Groaning inwardly, she slowly got up from her now sweat-soaked side of the bed, looking at the
clock.

After a longer shower than usual to help recover, she dressed, slipping into a single white T and
jeans. She slightly dreaded going downstairs where she just knew Regina would want to continue
their last conversation. Or at least the previous night, about her ‘date’. She tiptoed downstairs silently,
heading into the kitchen with her now-cold coffee. She stopped as she caught the sight of Regina
sitting on a stool at the worktop, coffee in hand and immaculately dressed as usual. She wore a silky
knee length blue A line dress which poured over her legs, sporting a small silver necklace, a birthday
present from Henry, and a very suspicious look.

“Good morning, my darling! Feel better now? There’s fresh coffee in the percolator…”

“Yes, better thanks.” She replied, not sure where this was going. Was she annoyed? Suspicious?
What?

“I thought you might need some extra sleep after last night’s activities, so I asked Zelena to collect
Honour and Roland an hour ago, when she took Robyn to school. Henry didn’t come back last
night. He decided to stay at Hank’s with Violet. I think they’re probably in some sort of relationship
now, so perhaps time to meet up with Sir Morgan, or invite the pair of them round for dinner?”

Emma sighed with relief at the change of subject. “Uh, yeah sure. Though I’m not sure he’ll come if
I’m there! It may be five years ago, but I think he’s still sore at me taking Vi’s heart like that… He’s
tended to avoid me unless strictly necessary.” Sir Hank Morgan had always been suspicious of
Emma, despite her reputation and despite Violet’s own forgiveness of the dark deed.

“You were a Dark One then Emma, as everyone knows! And it’s even more reason for us to let him
get to know you properly. Hank’s very fond of Henry, and he trusts him with Violet. Henry said he’s
nothing like as stiff as he used to be and apparently, he’s now dating some woman from Sherwood. I
want to do this, Emma. Who knows, Violet might be part of our family one day!”

“OK, then let me ask him. Perhaps if I go in with the full, grovelling apology?”
“Well it wouldn’t hurt, would it? I understand Philip has offered him the sheriff position temporarily, or at least encouraged him to stand for election.”

“I thought Mulan wanted to run for sheriff? At least after she’s had the baby. Don’t say Phil’s trying to be all sexist and putting his foot down now he’s marrying her? I heard he doesn’t want her to stand…” **Emma had always found Philip a bit too righteous for her.**

“On the contrary. It seems he told Mulan he’d happily back her if she wanted to stand, but he would resign as Mayor if she won. He thinks it’s wrong for a current Mayor to be related to a current Sheriff. ‘A conflict of interest’, as he put it. So, he’s asked Sir Morgan to stand in temporarily while they disband and investigate Keith Nottingham’s goings-on. They’re setting up a new team. Your father has been invited to join temporarily as a deputy. He declined a full-time post.”

“Hank for Sheriff? That’s a surprise. I’m also surprised dad turned down a full-time role. I thought he was getting bored on the farm.”

“Seems not. I also heard that Phil had earlier offered the sheriff position to somebody else. Apparently, the council’s first choice was unanimous, but he declined…”

“Who? Who declined?”

“Robin.”

Emma burst out laughing. “They asked Robin to be Mayor? That’s hilarious! The Outlaw, the scourge of Nottingham? The Prince of Thieves! He’s spent most of his life fighting sheriffs and now they want him to become one?”

“Why not? He’s ideal. He’s noble, honest, protective of others and a natural leader. And now he has powerful magic too! Seems perfect for the role to me. However, I gather he felt he had too much to do building up Sherwood.”

Emma stepped across to the percolator to refill her coffee. However, the brunette wasn’t finished yet.

“So, my darling, tell me all about your ‘date’! I want to know *everything*!” she said, patting the stool next to her, brooking no argument. “I want to know about the food, who was there, what you talked about, everything! Then yes, my dear, I want you to tell me about the mysterious ‘Emma Locksley’!”

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“So, this is it?” said the former Mayor Spencer (and previously King George), sneering as the motley collection of former deputy sheriffs, guards, servants and travellers squeezed into the reception room of his comfortable but shabby, run-down mansion on the edge of Storybrooke. “This is all we could muster, Nottingham?”

“It is my lord! We haven’t spoken with the standing army yet, as we’re unsure how many of them are now loyal to Prince Philip…”

“HE’S NOT A FUCKING PRINCE!” he roared. ‘He’s a two-bit soldier pretending to rule!”

Keith Nottingham waited until the puce-faced man calmed. “Maybe so, my lord, but he has loyal followers. Bearing in mind the secrecy required, I thought it best to be cautious and stay with people we know to be loyal to you. At least until we have more leverage.”

Spencer harrumphed, knowing the former sheriff was right. “Very well, very well. Gentlemen, gather round,” he said as the twenty or so men leaned closer as he sat at the head of his table. “As
Emma told her wife all about the fantastic restaurant she and Robin had wined and dined in the previous night. The perfect food, the wines, the pier setting on the lake, the service. “It sounds wonderful! We are so going there on our next anniversary! Was it very expensive?”

“Well I’m not sure. Pierre said he was picking up the bill. A favour to Merlin apparently. Something about saving his daughter’s life. But I sneaked a peek at someone else’s bill and that was just short of a grand…”

“You met Pierre Roch! You met one of the best chefs in the world?” Regina was truly impressed. “I didn’t think he still cooked. Emma, I’ve three of his books in the kitchen, the man’s a culinary god…”

Emma chuckled at the woman’s enthusiasm, seeming like a groupie at a rock concert. “Yeah well, our Pierre was all grovel to Hood, fawning all over him! He knew all about him apparently. Didn’t know me, though. Just assumed I was Robin’s wife!”

“Hmm. Hence the ‘Emma Locksley’ tag!” The brunette surmised. Emma picked up on it quickly, realizing it was a better excuse for what she had said from her dream.

“Yes, he already knew I was Emma, so he didn’t assume I was Marian. Called me ‘Lady Locksley’, actually!” she crowed.

“And you didn’t bother to correct him?” Regina raised her eyebrow. “You didn’t tell him you were already married?”

Emma now felt guilt rising at the slip. “Well, the food and service was unbelievable. I didn’t want to disappoint them.” She looked at the quizzical look in the older woman’s eyes. “You’re not…you’re not upset, are you? We didn’t actually say we were married. He just assumed…”

“Surprised yes. Upset, no. You were on a date, after all. Was there any romance?”

Emma blushed. “What do you mean?”

“I think it’s obvious what I mean. Did Robin kiss you? Hug you? Make out with you? It’s a simple question…”

The now beetroot-coloured blonde decided attack was the best form of defence. “Regina, where are you going with this? You asked me to go on a date with your true love! You said you wanted us to
get together, for goodness sake! I even remember you saying you would be ok if we made out! What’s going on Regina? I’m confused.”

The older woman looked silently at her partner before smiling warmly, placing a hand on the blonde’s knee. “I did, and I’m not upset or annoyed. I did say that. As I said yesterday, I actually hope you two become close. You’ve allowed me to share myself with him, so if it means we can all grow together…well…that’s even better.”

“So, you’re ok if I told you we had a rather hot make-out session in the back of the limo on the way home? You’d seriously be ok with that?”

“Yes Emma, I would. Did you? Tell me truthfully now. I promise you I will not be upset.”

Emma looked deeply into her wife’s eyes for any sign of insincerity. Seeing none, she relaxed slightly. “Yeah actually, we did…”

Regina’s smile grew wider. “Thank you for being honest. Did you enjoy it?”

“Gina, I’m not in love with Robin! I’m perfectly happy with you, my wife, thank you very much!”

“I know, but you’re definitely attracted to him, aren’t you?”

“I can’t believe you’re asking me all this! Yes, he’s a lovely guy. He’s kind, gentle, surprisingly intelligent and actually listens to a woman when she’s talking! And he’s a pretty good kisser.” The last comment made Regina roar with laughter, making the blonde ask, “What?”

“Nothing, it’s just exactly the same thing a certain thief said to me, five years ago! I’m pleased you had a lovely time, Emma.” She stood up to walk away, before stopping at the door, her back to the other woman as she left with a final “Though if you think I believe that ‘Emma Locksley’ comment you made before you woke up, you must think I was born yesterday…”

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Wednesday afternoon – Sherwood Clinic

Early in the morning, before her wife woke, Regina told Roland and Honour about Ruby and Dorothy’s request for them to be official pageboy and bridesmaid for their wedding. As expected, they were thrilled, especially Honour, who definitely wanted to wear a bridal dress. “So, Mummy, I get a big white dress?” she asked.

Regina chuckled. “Sorry my love, white dresses are only worn by the bride, or brides, who are getting married! However, you get to wear a beautiful dress anyway. It’s a soft lemony colour. You’ll love it, I promise! And you, Roland, you’ll be wearing a very handsome suit of your own, matching the Best Man, if there is one. I think.” The wild-haired ten-year-old just nodded in agreement. He had important things on his mind. “Will there be chocolate cake, mamma? And sausages? I like those ones on sticks…”

Regina smiled, enveloping him in a hug. “I’m sure there’ll be plenty of nice food there. Now, I’ve left your clothes for the wedding on your beds. Let’s go up and measure them, shall we?” The pair ran upstairs without further ado. Honour, because she loved dressing up and Roland, because he just wanted to get it over with before he left for school.

Now, after using magic to make final adjustments to the clothes, Regina apparated just outside the new Sherwood village, remembering that Merlin and Gold had specifically prevented magic being used within, an invisible force blocking it.
As she stepped into the small clinic at the front, she was once again amazed at the sheer scale of the building within. Since her last visit, she was surprised to see the reception had been kitted out with furniture, desks and a large seating area. Merlin had used the word ‘Tardis’ to describe the magic that allowed so much space inside, completely at odds with the small building outside. She looked up to a large glazed canopy above, which allowed a well-lit ambience. The glass was stained in a very light shade of green, reflecting the forest beyond. She drew breath in admiration as a soft voice was heard at her shoulder.

“Beautiful, isn’t it?” said Caroline softly, so not to make the woman jump.

“It is! I’m just amazed at the size of this place. Hello, Caroline!” she said, pleased to see Robin’s cousin. She bore a striking resemblance to him. Dark blonde, with those amazing blue eyes, a little lighter, but quite similar to his. “It’s lovely to see you again.”

The other woman didn’t hesitate, stepping forward and placing her hands gently in Regina’s and placing a small, soft kiss on her cheek, instantly replicated by the other woman. “Hello, Regina, it’s lovely to see you too! I feel we have so much to talk about, don’t you?”

“Definitely. I know so little about your family, apart from what Robin’s told me, of course. I gather you know we were together before…well before…”

“Before he was murdered? Yes, I’m aware. Some of the fairies, John and Tuck have filled me in on some of the details. I’m glad you found love again.”

She could tell the sincerity in the blonde’s eyes. “Yes, well, Robin will always be a major part of my life. I was pregnant when it happened. Without Rollie and Honour, I don’t know how I would have survived.” He voice had reduced to almost a whisper.

“And Emma, of course! I can see how much you love each other. Come, let’s find a table in that café, get some tea and have a bit of a gossip…”

Regina grinned, “Tea. I hated it before Robin; I’m kind of hooked on it now…” She laced her arm within the other woman’s, letting her lead on.

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Robin spent the morning organizing the new water supply and drainage system for Sherwood, involving using magic to connect Merlin’s newly installed plumbing system. The dwarves had supplied the underground tunnels, and several skilled craftsmen had supplied plans and checked the overall quality of work. As the pumping system was turned on, the crowds stood in awe as they now had the unimagined luxury of fresh water delivered to their homes, indoor plumbing and lavatories, plus a heating system in the hospital and clinic.

“This is a bloody marvel, Rob!” said Little John as walked towards the outdoor swimming pool. “I’m not sure I’ll get used to it anytime soon.”

“It’s what everyone should have had long ago, John. Tents should be reserved for camping trips, not for children to sleep under.”

As they stood admiring the results of a hard day’s work, Robin noticed David Nolan and Mayor Philip appear, a worried look on both their faces.

“David, Phil? Something wrong?”

“Could be. We went in to take over the station this morning. Nottingham’s team had left but we
“Go on,” encouraged Merlin.

“It’s what we didn’t find that bothers me,” said Philip. “The town armoury was in cellars under the station. We just came back from there, Everything’s been stripped out! Hand guns, rifles, swords, everything.”

“You think Spencer and Nottingham are behind this?” said Robin.

“Probably. Hank Morgan and I tried to arrest Nottingham this morning, but he’s disappeared along with several of his old deputies. We’re wondering if you could help us track them down? As they’re heavily armed, we thought…”

“You thought right, Mr. Mayor. Of course we’ll help,” insisted Merlin. “Robin, as we may have armed men on the loose, I suggest you get your men to corral all the people we can find into the safety of the clinic and hospital. They should be safe there for the moment if John and the men keep guard. There should be plenty of space. Mr. Mayor, I suggest you two come with me to the station. David, I don’t really know my way around Storybrooke yet. Could you both hold on to me and imagine the front door of the station? There’s just a chance they’ve left some magical trace or clues. Gentlemen, shall we?” With that, the sorcerer blinked, engulfing the trio into his familiar smoke trail and whisking them outside Storybrooke Police Department.

As the Mayor and Sheriff re-orientated themselves, Merlin pulled a small translucent shield over the top of his companions. “Just in case someone’s waiting for us!” He explained. Merlin led the way, breaking into the station with ease and using magic to blast the armoury door from its hinges. They walked in to the stripped rooms, no weapons in sight. “David, why on earth does a little town like Storybrooke need so many guns?”

“A lot of them are confiscated. When people have attempted to invade. There was some seriously nasty stuff down here. Pump action machine guns, sabres, small grenades.” David explained, Robin looked aghast at the potential threat that now could put the town at war by the storage of so many senseless killing machines.

“There’s nothing obvious here. No magical traces. We need to cover the rest of the town. David, do you have anything that could have been used with the weapons? Cloths, holdalls, that kind of thing? I may be able to put a tracking spell on something to at least figure out where everything went…”

The three emerged from the front door of the station. Merlin immediately twitched, sensing danger. “Gentlemen, keep your eyes open! I don’t think we’re alone…”

He had hardly spoken when a small swooshing sound came from the car park. David’s senses went into overload as he saw a steel tipped arrow bounce of the magical shield Merlin has created for him. Before he could even comment, he then felt repeating loud metal noises bouncing off the same shield, immediately followed by the deafening roar of a machine gun. “Some fucker just tried to kill us?” he breathed, shocked at the potentially deadly experience.

“It would seem so,” said Merlin before he calmly reached a hand out, lifting the two unsuccessful assassins from behind a car to face him, his angry breath only inches away. “Gentlemen, it would appear you tried to kill us! Who ordered you to do this?”

“We ain’t sayin’ nothin’ croaked one of the men. “Do what you will! You can’t kill me, you’re the Sorcerer!”
Merlin smiled. “Indeed. I am supposed to be the good one! However, when people attempt to kill me, all bets are off.” And with that, Merlin looked down toward the man’s crotch, squeezing the air hard as the effect was replicated on the man’s testicles. He squealed in agony, his breath escaping him. The other captured assassin stood looking at his comrade in horror as Merlin then released the grip, a lit blowtorch now appearing in his hand. “Now then, it would be easier if you just told me everything, as it’s quite hard to return your balls to their original state once I’ve started.”

Despite his initial cockiness, the first man now looked absolutely terrified, while Merlin was worryingly calm. “So, three, two, one. No? Ok, here goes...” and with that, Merlin lightly brushed the white-hot blame over the top of the man’s crotch, causing instant pain. Even Philip and Robin flinched at the site. “Now sir, you tried to kill us, so I have NO hesitation in killing you. Very painfully!”

“All right, all right! It was Nottingham!” the man screamed. "He made us steal all the guns. Everything. He’s going to attack you!’ screamed the now hysterical man, trying to avoid the look from his comrade. “That’s better!” Now gentlemen, when and how?” With that, the other silent man was pulled effortlessly upside down to hang in the air, blood rushing to his head. “Ok, let’s not waste any more time! Gentlemen, excuse me a moment…”

Merlin attached his fingers to the man’s head, deliberately filtering and seeing everything the man had experienced over the last week. David and Philip stood motionless, unable to help.

After less than a minute, Merlin dropped the man with a satisfying thud as his shoulder hit the ground. With a flick of his wrist, the two would be assassins were transported away. David raised an eyebrow at the Sorcerer’s action. “Don’t worry David, they’re still alive, merely transported out of the realm for the moment. Now gentlemen, you’re correct in assuming it’s Spencer and Nottingham. The weapons from your armoury were carried down to Spencer’s cellars at his home, though it appears they plan to attack Sherwood today as magic cannot be used there.”

“That doesn’t make sense,” Philip frowned, “we have enough people in Storybrooke to fight them. We have the reservist soldiers plus magic. You, Emma, Regina and Robin can defeat them easily without force the moment they step outside Sherwood.”

“Perhaps they want to take hostages and bargain with us?” Suggested David.

Merlin looked grim. “Unlikely. Spencer isn’t stupid; he’ll always face the threat from us. My guess is he’ll want to do something more permanent to eliminate it.”

“Then we’d better warn the others!” groaned David as Merlin again transported the three of them back to the camp.

Regina had been enjoying ‘High Tea’ with her new friend when it started. Caroline Locksley was warmth and kindness personified and she couldn’t help noticing the similarities between her and Robin. “You have similar eyes,” she said. “You mentioned Maria, his sister? What’s she like?”

Before Caroline could answer, a loud burst of noise could be heard from the reception area, followed by several screams and someone shouting loudly “EVERYONE – DOWN ON THE FLOOR! NOW!”

The diners all stood, anxious to figure out what was happening, when a moment later, three armed men burst through the door, followed by another five or so. The men, all burly with assault rifles hanging over their shoulders, spread themselves around the room. “You heard! Down on the floor, now!” He followed the order with a rapid burst of gunfire into the ceiling, causing panicked screams
from several diners.

Although initially paralyzed in surprise, Regina stood, ramrod straight and composing herself. She’d dealt with aggressive soldiers before. In fact, she’d even burned quite a few of them that dared cross her. Walking up to stand directly in front of the leading man, she barked, “How dare you!” Without further ado, she tried to summon a choking spell to lift the intruders by the throat. But nothing. No magic! She’d forgotten where they were! Now her voice carried a slight trepidation as she continued. “How dare you interrupt us! Get out before I fireball the lot of you!”

Unusually for Regina, the man she addressed didn’t step back and showed no fear. That worried her. “Magic not working, your Majesty? We’re all on a level playing field. Which is just as well as I’ve been wanting to do this for so long…” With that, the former royal guard, at six-foot-five towering well above her, drew his fist back and punched her hard in the side of her face, just missing her nose. Regina, never having needed to physically defend herself without magic before, now felt her whole body fly back into a table before collapsing onto the floor. The pain was unbelievable, and she knew her face was going to swell badly from the blow.

As she stayed down, dazed and trying to compose herself, she heard Caroline race in front of the assailant. “Bastard!” before slamming her own fist into his nose. She followed this with a swift knee up between his legs, making him howl in pain. Unfortunately, as she looked with satisfaction at her handiwork, another man grabbed her forcefully by the hair, spinning her around to face him. She froze as a heavy, cold piece of metal was pushed under her chin. “Any more of that my dear, and I’ll fire! Your brains will be splattered all over this pretty room!”

The first man, who had been nursing his battered testicles, now stood. “After all the shit you’ve put us through over the years, you should be the first…” With that, he pulled a handgun from its holster, pointing it directly at Regina. “Goodbye…Evil Queen!”

Regina braced for the worst, with no magic, she was both human and powerless. She was about to die. Hearing the click of the gun’s safety catch, she closed her eyes slowly, expecting never to open them again. However, fate had something else in store! Unbeknown to her, Carrie knew what to do in these situations. The blonde relaxed her shoulders, feigning surrender. This caused the soldier holding the gun under her chin to relax, giving her a small chance. Seizing its barrel, she slid it to one side before slamming her forehead into the soldier’s nose! He stepped back in pain, allowing Carrie to seize the gun, turning it and slamming the handle hard into his head. The soldier about to execute Regina, temporarily distracted, felt the force of Carrie’s body now over the top of him, trying to seize his own gun and shielding Regina. However, the soldiers were highly trained, so the brief scuffle was rectified by a rifle butt being slammed into the back of Caroline’s head, rendering her unconscious.

The first soldier, Malcolm, one of Spencer’s most loyal republican guards, now stood, rechecking his weapon before once again pointing it at the former Evil Queen.

Before he had the chance to fire, Albert Spencer burst into the room, accompanied by even more armed men. “What the bloody hell are you doing man! We need her phone, dammit! Get the fucking phone! And follow your orders!”

Malcolm seethed. It was obvious to Regina that whatever she had done to him in the past, he wanted her dead. “Sorry sir!” he bleated, before grabbing her and lifting her to the table. “Your phone? Now!”

Regina, seeing the now prostrate Locksley who’d tried to save her, didn’t argue. She pointed to her bag, whereupon he turned it over with one hand, its contents spilling as her smartphone bounced out. Spencer walked across to pick it up. “Now, it’s very simple, Regina. I’m going to send a message to
all the Heroes, telling them you’re being held hostage. So, I need your passcode, now. And before you waste my time, I’m going to count to three, after which young Bernard here will execute that woman. After that, we’ll go around everyone in the room and do the same before we finally get to you! You’ve killed hundreds in your time, so I’m sure causing more suffering won’t bother you too much. So, the number if you please…”

The code was given and another of Spencer’s former deputies, more versed in technology, set about launching a pre-agreed text to everyone in her contacts list:-

Regina Swan-Mills:   Spencer has taken hostages. We need to meet, IMMEDIATELY. Everyone with magic, come to Sherwood Clinic...

Emma & Robin, like many others, received the message simultaneously. Robin had just apparated outside the village with Philip and Merlin, anxious not to draw attention. Showing the text to the others, Robin fumed. “Seems things have already started! What do you think?”

David studied the text. “It’s unusual for Regina to request help! She normally wants to handle things herself.”

Looking more closely, Robin agreed. “Also, I don’t think this is from her! Someone’s got her phone.”

“How do you know that?”

Robin half-smiled “Punctuation. Gina’s a stickler for good grammar, written or otherwise. She doesn’t do upper case words and she once said that ellipses were a sign of lazy writing.”

“So, your conclusion?” Merlin prompted.

“Someone other than Regina wants us in there!” concluded David. “We need a plan before we go in. It sounds like they have Regina, but Emma and Gold may not have replied just yet. I’d best call them!”

As he picked up the phone to dial his daughter, Robin brought his hand over David’s wrist. “Wait! We can’t be sure they haven’t been captured themselves! In which case, Spencer could be reading their phones. No magic, remember?”

David nodded, realizing there was a small chance he was putting his daughter, possibly her wife, in danger too. “Ok, fair enough. So, what do we do? We can’t just wait until everyone with magic arrives! It may be too late for Regina and whoever else is in there!”

Robin thought Merlin looked far calmer than he should. Though considering he was almost two millennia old and immortal, he shouldn’t have been too surprised. “Ok Merlin, you’ve probably faced worse situations than this, it’s your turn to offer suggestions!”

“Well now, as I see it, you have a potential threat in a place where magic is cancelled; with who knows how many armed people defending it, with who knows how many people trapped inside and with others walking into a trap, I suggest we look more closely at the situation. David, I suggest I immediately send you back to your wife and son. You, Snow and any others put the word out to stay away from Sherwood and ignore the texts. Make sure your grandson stays away too. Henry has magic, but it’s new, so he may do something rash.”

The Sorcerer than opened his own phone and shared his contact details. “Text me within 30 minutes
with the code ‘Charming’, then we’ll know you’re safe. If not, I’ll assume you’ve been compromised and act accordingly.” With a small click Charming was gone in a spiral of smoke.

“I’ve a plan,” said Robin. “Though first, can you apparate us just in front of the Sherwood magic boundary while also keeping us invisible? I need to see what’s going on first.”

“Of course,” said the Sorcerer, as though the magical act was simplicity itself. “And I can keep a sound barrier around us too. Robin, our mind meld should have taught you all this?” he teased, “weren’t you paying attention.”

“My apologies o’ Great Sorcerer - there was an awful lot to take in!” he said in mock apology as the familiar mist swirled around them once again, depositing them amongst trees, yards from the front of Sherwood Clinic.
Chapter Summary

All hell breaks loose in Sherwood...

Chapter Notes

The next two chapters are quite a departure from those that preceded it, but I think it's necessary for the eventual outcome. I hope you like it!

Again, thanks for the messages and VMs I've received. Mostly positive and constructive. I'm trying to keep the chapters a little shorter, but this one has a lot to get through...

I particularly like Regina's opinion on sloppy ellipsis. Something I'm guilty of...

Chapter 21

Emma had been in Granny’s Diner when she received Regina’s text, still slowly recovering from the late night out with Robin. She sipped her second black coffee, having just ordered bacon, pancakes and syrup from Kathleen, one of the young girls Ruby had recently hired.

She looked up at the departing waitress’s back. I’m sure Henry dated her for a couple of weeks. She thought, before looking at the other waitress on duty. Grace, Jefferson’s daughter, was now serving an elderly couple she didn’t recognize. She remembered Henry having his first crush on Grace, and over the years the girl had truly blossomed. Emma felt a tinge of quiet jealousy looking at her. God, she’s got tits like rocks, that face and hair and a figure to die for! Although having just turned forty, all the stresses of her home life made her feel her age. Where the hell did that go?

She was brought out of her melancholy by the text:

Gina: Spencer has taken hostages. We need to meet, IMMEDIATELY. Everyone with magic, come to Sherwood Clinic...

Emma nearly choked on her coffee. “What the fuck!” she breathed, in shock as several other diners’ phones went off simultaneously. Ruby, standing at the counter looking down at her own phone in surprise, lifted her head to see Emma stand, throwing a bill down to cover the drinks. “Em, wait! I don’t think…” The wolf shouted, but it was too late as the blonde looked up, magical mist now enfolding her to transport her away “…it’s Regina!” she finished. The text definitely looked suspicious, but it seemed Emma wasn’t going to waste time asking questions.

Moments later, Emma apparated to the green lawn outside the front of the Earl of Locksley, as she gathered her thoughts, taking in her surroundings. The first thing she noticed was the silence, nobody
present, apart from a couple of guys hanging around the front entrance to the new clinic. Seeing the former sheriff appear, one of the men, Derek? Dave? - she’d seen his face before, but it didn’t matter now, appeared to stiffen. “She’s gone inside!” he croaked, waving his thumb behind him. Without hesitating, she followed his direction, walking across and into the building.

Like everyone before her, she was flabbergasted as the small entrance opened up to a vast reception area completely out of proportion with the view outside. Before she could even take in her surroundings, she felt a hard jab of metal to her side. “Hello, Saviour! We’ve been expecting you!’

She slowly turned to see Clive Thomas, one of Keith Nottingham’s former deputies, sporting a smirk as he held a pistol against her side. Forgetting where she was and with her anger rising, she attempted raising a simple spell to incapacitate the man. Nothing. No reaction! She groaned, remembering all magic had been neutralized in this place. That’s a fucking smart idea! she sarked internally. “Thomas – what the hell are you doing?”

“As I’ve been asked, Saviour, as I’ve been asked! And as you can see, we’re all equal now! No magic…”

“So someone asked you to stick a gun in my ribs? Where the fuck is Regina?” she growled. As she looked around, she saw about six other armed men in the reception area, covering various unfortunate members of the public as they knelt or lay down. Another man darted in from a side door with a sly expression on his face, whispering to a colleague.

“All in good time! First, I’ve been told to tie you up, then take you in to see Nottingham,” he nodded towards a room the other man had left. “Your missus is in there with him.”

She now realised the danger they were in. Without magic, if I let this arsehole tie me up, I’m fucked! Better do it the old-fashioned way then… So, without any further warning, the blonde span aside, pushing the gun from her rib, while swinging her right fist up to connect with his jaw. The satisfying thump was immediately followed by the fierce pain in her knuckles as she was reminded how magic was always so much easier.

“Aargh!” yelled Thomas as he reacted to the blow, temporarily disorientated. He felt the woman grab his wrist to wrest the gun from his hand. No sooner had Emma picked up the weapon, then she felt a heavy blow to the side of her head as another of the armed men slammed the end of his rifle butt into her. “Fuuuck!” As she spun in pain, the blow was immediately followed by a massive punch from Thomas, delivered directly onto her nose, most certainly breaking it as she went down, unconscious within seconds. “See how you like it, you cunt!” he snarled.

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In the adjoining auditorium, Regina, now knelt on the floor, hands bound behind her back, facing the lectern. She could feel the left side of her face now swelling from the blow as the ache came in. Beside her, Caroline Locksley, now barely conscious, also knelt, her head bowed as blood started to pour from her nose.

“You bastard - you know you can’t possibly get away with this!” Regina screeched, scowling at the former Mayor.

“Oh, do shut up you stupid woman! We’ve all heard quite enough from you. You really think any of us care what you think! We’ve put up with so much shit from you and your bloody family over the years. You, Snow White and that insufferable arse I treated like a son! You have controlled everything, and everyone, for so long only because you had magic. But we’re fixing that today!”
If looks could kill, Spencer would be ashes by now. Despite increasing pain now throbbing across her face, Regina snarled, ready to unleash yet another barb, when the main door from the reception area burst open. Two armed men dragged a lifeless body, by the arms, through and into the large auditorium. Regina’s face turned from red with anger, to white with sheer horror when she saw who the body belonged to.

“EMMA!” she screamed, struggling against her ropes that held her, desperate to comfort her fallen wife. “WHAT THE HELL HAVE YOU DONE TO HER?”

Clive Thomas, face bruised but no longer afraid of the bloodied woman before him, just cackled. “No more than she deserves! That bitch punched me in the face a couple of years back, and just now, so as she hasn’t any magic to help her out this time, I guess I’ve just given her a taste of her own medicine, your most gracious majesty!” he sneered as he pulled the body to the foot of the auditorium stage. Regina was massively relieved to hear a loud groan from her wife. She’s alive! “Emma, my love, I’m here!” she cried, desperate to comfort her.

The two soldiers roughly bound the Saviour’s hands behind her back, leaving her lying prone. As they stood back, the door again opened to another armed man, a smaller, squat figure who headed straight to Spencer. “You have news, Colonel Smith?”

“Aye, sir! several fairies arrived here and all have been held in one of the wards, though we’ve seen no sign of the Dark One, the Sorcerer, the Blue Fairy or Hood yet! It appears Hook is still on board his ship. Either he has no phone, or is out of range to read the queen’s message yet…” Smith reported, looking down at Regina.

“Ha!” smiled Spencer, mirthlessly, “I hardly think Captain Hook is going to waste his time with her anymore!” He sneered, nodding towards Emma, now moving up onto her knees with difficulty. “Discovering his former girlfriend’s now a dyke, shacked up with one of the most evil bitches around, would put most men off…”

Regina was too busy trying to shuffle across to Emma when her ears pricked up. My Message? That’s why he took my phone!

Spencer saw her trying to put two and two together. “Yes, Regina, you heard right! Your message sent from your phone! You’ve told everyone you need help and get here immediately! I’m sure your cavalry is on its way! Let’s just say I’ve a small reception planned for them, just like your bitch wife.”

“You’re a fucking idiot, Spencer!” groaned a voice from the floor, Emma, now awake and presumably having heard the conversation. Regina’s breath hitched when she saw the clearly broken nose and purple bruising now coming out over her eyes. “Can you imagine what we’re going to do to you when we get out of here? Once we’re out…” she stopped seeing him smirk, completely unconcerned. Regina knew that look.

“That’s it, isn’t it? That’s the plan? You’re not intending for us to leave, are you?” she snarled.

Spencer smiled nastily. “Got it in one! I just need everyone who has magic, in here, a place where you cannot use it to control us. It’s perfect. A real level playing field!”

“Then what? You kill us? Then take control? Use physical force instead of magic?” growled Regina. “It’ll never work! It only takes one of us…” she yelled as Spencer leant forward, slapping the non-injured side of her face.

“Enough! Any more and we’ll gag you. Kneel quietly now with your…girlfriend.”
"I’m her WIFE, you gormless shit!" yelled Emma, before being delivered a swift punch on the jaw from Smith, knocking her onto her back, her hands still tied behind her. “Nobody cares anyway, you old dyke! You'll be dead soon…”

Albert Spencer looked down at the pitiful pair, now both battered and bruised. Emma’s right eye had now puffed up painfully, already turning black as the blood across her nose and face congealed. Regina’s left cheek had similarly swelling now, distorting one eye socket. The pair gazed at each other, both silently crying out to offer some sort of silent comfort to each other before Spencer against shouted at his minions.

“Mason, check the latest arrivals! Phone around! We need the Dark One, Merlin and Locksley in here as soon as they arrive! Say anything. Just get them into Reception somehow and put those magic cuffs on them from the station just to be sure. Then you can shoot ‘em, beat ‘em, even kill ‘em as far as I’m concerned, just get them in here! Anyone else just bind and gag them. Don’t bother about the sprogs yet. We’ll deal with the two Mills kids later, before school ends. Who else has magic out there?”

“Well Sir, the Wicked Witch ain’t got magic no more, so I don’t think she’ll be over anytime soon. The Blue Fairy has it but hasn’t arrived yet. The Hatter hasn’t been seen for ages, so I think he’s gone…”

Emma looked at her wife hesitantly. *He hadn’t mentioned Henry! So, there was a chance he would be overlooked! Just hope to god he speaks to Gold before he does something stupid like trying to mount a one-man rescue mission!*

Regina looked at Mason, whose face she vaguely remembered from long ago. “How could you do this? What have we ever done to harm you? You have no idea what this man is capable of…”

“How could I? You have no idea who I am, do you?” He roared at her, his voice low and angry and his face now inches from her. “My name’s Jeffrey Mason…Your Majesty!” He almost spat the title out. “You murdered my father on his wedding day! For the terrible crime of trying to get married to my mother on the edge of your land without your permission! You drew up in that ridiculous carriage with that pathetic father of yours in tow, just as we were getting started. You told us we were trespassing and murdered him in front of us! Murdered him! My mother was expecting at the time and miscarried because of what you did! She was so broken she killed herself later! So, don’t you DARE ask me why, you vile, obnoxious, self-important piece of filth! Oh, what the hell…” and with that diatribe, the man raised his foot to slam Regina hard under the chin, causing a loud crack in her jaw as she fell back, completely unconscious.

‘Gina!’ cried Emma, distraught at the brutal attack on her wife, too devastated to respond and knowing if she did the situation could get even worse. Mason looked down at her, no longer with fear, but contempt.

“And you! Call yourself a fucking Saviour? When did you save someone who wasn’t in your family? The rest of us could go hang, provided your own little family was taken care of! Never mind the rest of us poor bastards! You’re a fucking disgrace. No wonder Hook gave up on you!”

Emma looked at his wild, angry eyes. There was no point in trying to calm him or make him see reason. *Best to stay silent and hope, no, pray, for the best.* Her mind went to how on earth they were going to get out of this. They were tied up in a room with armed men ready to kill them and no magic. For the first time in a very long time, she felt hopeless and very, very, scared.

She thought of Killian, the man who had saved her life in the past. The past. He wouldn’t care now. The moment he realized she had moved on, so did he. She thought of Gold. If Belle had been in the
room with her, he would have found a way in, a loophole, to get past the magic barrier and slaughter every one of Spencer’s men. **Neil would have approved of that!** She thought. Then she thought of Robin, the man who had built the place. With his new power, perhaps he could do something? Anything?

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Robin and Merlin apparated into a small copse, a few hundred yards from the front of the clinic, “Still got to get used to that!” whispered Robin, orientating himself.

“No need to whisper, Robin, we’re in a magical cage - they can’t see or hear us,” assured Merlin. “Now, let’s not waste time. People without magic are going to start coming here soon, now they’ve gotten Regina’s message. We need to stop them before…” as he spoke, a nearby magical swirl heralded two new arrivals. Henry and Gold. Anxious for them not to be seen by anyone, Merlin twirled his fingers to collect the pair into his cage, before the mist had even cleared. “Whooaah!” yelled Henry. “What just happened?”

“Sorry gentlemen - I was trying to stop you being seen! Here, you’re now invisible to others,” explained Merlin. Gold merely nodded, as though this was all something normal for him. “Good day Professor. Mr. Locksley.”

“Hello Mr. Gold, I’m assuming you also saw the text message purporting to come from Mrs. Swan-Mills?”

“Indeed. My grandson was with me when it arrived. We both realized it was a rather crude hoax.”

“Well, we believe Regina may be being held in there, along with my daughter and who knows how many. It’s a perfect place to capture anyone with magic. My Anna was also working there this morning and isn’t responding to my calls. Until we get in there, we have no way of knowing what’s going on.”

“I think my other mum may be in there too - she poofed out of Granny’s almost as soon as she got the message!” Said Henry, looking seriously worried. “I tried calling her, them, but nothing. Grandpa, I’ve an idea. If you go in there you lose your magic advantage, right? But can’t you control anyone before they go in there then get them to do what you want?”

Gold smiled down on his grandson, mischievously. “Indeed, we can my boy. You sound more like your father every day!” His admiration was interrupted by two guards leaving the building opposite, clearly on an errand. Rumple recognized the smaller, squat man.

“I believe that’s Captain Clive Thomas, previously one of King George’s most loyal soldiers. I guess he’s as good a source as any…” Then, with a small twirl of his fingers, the man apparated from beside his colleague, in a short mist, from the front of the clinic to be unceremoniously dumped in front of Rumple, within Merlin’s sound cage.

“What the fuck!” he yelled from the ground, as he saw The Dark One looking down on him. Now, seeing the angry faces of Gold and Robin Locksley, Thomas started to panic, realizing he was in serious trouble.

“Right. You!” said Robin, now grabbing the man by his shirt and hoisting him onto his legs. “What’s going on in there? Speak now! Speak clearly!” he threatened.

Thomas was a tough old bird. “I’m sayin’ nothing, thief! You wanna know? Go find out for yourself!”
Gold didn’t waste any more time. “Wrong answer!” he growled, forcing his fist into the man’s chest. He swiftly pulled out the heart in a smooth, brutal movement, Thomas screaming in pain at the contact as Gold instantly transformed himself into the scaly, gold features of the Dark One.

“No, dearie, you know how this works, don’t you? Answer the question Mr. Locksley has asked, or I crush this little organ of yours and you’re history. Decide now!” Rumple gave the beating organ a little squeeze, earning a painful groan from the former guard, who slumped to his knees, knowing the game was up. “George…he’s got the Queen, the Saviour and a bunch of others at gunpoint in one room and others elsewhere.”

Robin’s fears were confirmed. “Are they ok? How are they holding them? Is anyone hurt?” He demanded. Thomas refused to look anywhere but down on the ground, clearly trying to avoid the question. Robin grabbed his hair brutally, forcing his head back to meet his eyes. “ANSWER ME! Or on my son’s life I will take your heart from the Dark One and crush it myself! ARE.THEY.HURT?” Rumple gave the heart an extra squeeze for good measure.

“Aargh, yes!” he flinched, “They’re hurt. The Saviour took a beating. She’s tied up…”

Robin winced. “And Regina? Tell me!” he roared.

“She’s…unconscious, and…tied up.” At that, Robin’s hand went to the man’s throat, squeezing tightly as he lifted him back to his feet. With his other hand he lifted the beating heart from Rumple’s palm, squeezing it firmly and bringing a scream of pain from their captive. “Why-is-she-unconscious? Who did it?”

Merlin, having been silent till now, calmly stepped forward, placing a gentle hand on the archer’s shoulder to stop him going any further. “Robin, I understand your anger, but we’ll gain nothing if this man also becomes unconscious! Here, let me…” With a flick of his fingers, a large dream catcher appeared in front of them. A light blue wave of light emanated from it towards Thomas’s head, directed by Merlin, which within seconds started to fill the screen with images from the man’s very recent memory.

Robin, Rumple and Henry looked on aghast as they saw, from the man’s view, the commotion that had just taken place inside the building. Robin’s anger grew as he saw Emma receive a rifle butt to the head, followed by Clive Thomas himself punching her in the face. As his rage increased, so did his grip on the heart and Thomas slipped into unconsciousness. Fortunately, the dream catcher continued to play out recent events as Merlin eased the heart out of Robin’s hands, fearful the Outlaw might turn it to dust in his tightening fist.

Seeing Geoffrey Mason kick Regina in the head was the last straw. Robin almost wept with barely controlled fury as he saw her slump to the ground. “I’ll fucking kill him! I’ll rip his lungs out, the bastard!” Seeing him like this, Merlin was glad he’s had the foresight to remove the heart from his hand.

“Robin, you MUST calm yourself! We need to plan our next steps carefully…”

“CALM? After what that swine did?” he raged.

“Yes, even after what he did,” he responded. “You forget, Robin, that man in the dream catcher said it himself. The Evil Queen murdered his father, caused his mother to miscarry and she went on to commit suicide. That’s three members of one family dead due to her actions.”

“She’S NOT THAT WOMAN ANY MORE!!” he yelled.
“No, but the effect of her actions live on! While she is now Regina, a loving mother to your children, people like that man have their whole lives ruined by what she was. For them there is no respite, no recovery. Their families are gone. Forever. Robin, I’m not justifying what he did, but you can understand the hatred he feels. So he deserves to be punished for harming her, but he doesn’t deserve to die!”

Robin sighed angrily, knowing the man was right. He continued to watch silently as the scene played out. Seeing his cousin Carrie, her face covered in heavy bruises made him want to vomit. She and Emma were now kneeling either side of Regina’s body, all with hands bound behind their backs as the former King George strutted around the room, firing orders at all staff as other innocent bystanders knelt or lay nearby.

Merlin turned to Henry, who was now shaking in silent rage, teary-eyed as he saw his mothers’ battered faces and suffering. He held him by the shoulders. “Henry, I know this is hard for you, but we need your help. You probably still have many Storybrooke contacts on your phone?”

“Of course. Why?”

“I need you to send everyone a message, telling them to ignore your mother’s earlier message. Tell them that people are being held hostage in the clinic and to avoid the area completely. Tell them Albert Spencer has illegally armed men on site and it’s too dangerous. Tell them to keep away until further notice…”

“But won’t Spencer see it? He has mum’s phone!”

“Yes. He’ll then know that we know; but it will keep them contained inside. Nobody else will step outside while we figure out what to do!” As he spoke, both Merlin and Robin’s new phones buzzed as a new text arrived.

David Nolan: CHARMING

Recognising the ‘safe’ word agreed with Emma’s father, Robin immediately started calling the former sheriff.

”David, is everyone safe there?”

“Hi Robin. Yes, kind of. Philip has called out the militia and some of them are guarding the school as we speak. So the kids are safe. Mulan and Aurora have secured the town hall and the police station and they’re letting everyone know what’s going on. Dorothy said Ruby went straight into the forest once she got the message. So she may already be in there. What’s going on over there?”

Robin didn’t want to tell David about his daughter but knew he had to. “Well, George is holding hostages. Emma and Regina are two of them.” He could hear the anxious gasp at the other end. Typical father.

“I’m coming over. Robin, poof me over! Now please!”

“I will do, David, but give us a chance to plan this. They’re being held under heavy armed guard, so we need to be careful. There’s no magic in there, remember? First, we need to keep everyone else away, and make sure that bastard doesn’t have anybody else causing problems elsewhere. Can you help with that?”

“Of course. Philip is already on to it. Robin, if Emma is in danger, I need to be there! Have you
heard anything? How are they?”

How do you tell a father his little girl has been beaten up? “David, I’ll let you know as soon as I have any more news. I need to go. Someone’s coming!” With that, he ended the call, so Emma’s father didn’t keep insisting on coming over. The less people here the better.

As Merlin knelt down to place the unconscious man’s heart back in his body, Rumple, seeing his shaking grandson, stepped forward. “Henry, my boy, it’s time for us to do something useful. We need to assess the situation out there; how many people Spencer has. How about I show you how to do our very own aerial survey under the cloak of invisibility?”

“Aerial? You mean we can fly?” Henry gasped, earning a short giggle from his magical tutor.

“In a matter of speaking. You’ll be under an invisibility cloak but, yes, in a way you will float above. Here, let me show you…” He held the boys shoulder and in a matter of moments, the familiar mist engulfed them, leaving a smiling Merlin and Robin behind. “Impressive young man, that!” said Robin.

“Indeed. Impressive and with a quite astonishing future to come, I can assure you…”

Inside the auditorium, Regina continued to lie unconscious, the swelling to the side of her face now joined by bruising from her chin. The result of Mason’s kick. Emma leaned over to get closer, her hands still contrained behind her back. “Come on Gina! Wake up! Please!” she pleaded.

The adjoining door to the reception swung open once again as two of Spencer’s men dragged another struggling victim into the room. Emma’s breath hitched as she realized who it was. “Ruby?”

The café owner looked up, revealing a large blackened right eye, swollen to a mere slit. “Em..Emma? What the hell did they do to you?” she yelled, earning a cuff around the side of her head from one of her captors. She growled loudly. If I could just change, that fucker would pay! she thought. Though on seeing the blood-spattered face of Emma lying next to a still Regina made her realise their situation was serious. “Put Lucas over there,” Spencer pointed to the opposite of the stage. “I don’t want them even talking to each other. Put a gag on her if need be!”

The two burly men lifted Ruby under her shoulders, dragging her across the floor before unceremoniously dumping her on her knees. “You heard the Mayor, now shut it if you know what’s good for you…”

Emma scanned the room, trying to think of any way to get out of this. This was bad. Really bad! From what she could see, there was no way Spencer and Nottingham were going to get away with this. If they threatened to kill everyone inside, everyone with magic outside would probably get them eventually. Rumplestiltskin would almost certainly kill them. And Henry? He’s just come into his magic. If he lost control at the thought of his mothers, he could go and do something stupid, even kill Spencer himself! So why are they doing this? They can’t possibly win…unless… That’s when she realised the plan!

Unless they have no intention of letting anyone leave here alive! That’s it! They just capture everyone with magic inside, kill them, then wait for more victims to come in and do the same again! Without any magicians, they can go back to controlling everyone with their thugs!

---

A good thirty minutes after leaving, Rumple and Henry apparated back behind Merlin’s invisible shield. “Grandpa, that was bloody awesome!” said the young man, still excited. “Robin, I was
slowly floating all over the top of this place! I could see everything!”

“That’s great Henry, but did you find out anything?”

Rumple stepped forward. “He did indeed. We counted around twenty five armed men in a small gulley about a quarter mile from here, mostly armed, plus a few on the perimeter a few hundred yards away. Several were wearing that ridiculous checkered uniform of George’s army.”

“Plus, a couple were on phones. They’re clearly coordinating with some of them inside.” Henry elaborated.

Merlin sighed. “Very well. Mr. Gold, would you kindly incapacitate them? I suggest a short sleeping spell for a day or so rather than actually killing them?”

“Spoilsport!” said Rumple, a mischievous smirk on his face.

“Thank you. Now then, while you were gone, Mr. Locksley also been busy with his Merry Men. Fortunately, most of them were further away from the clinic when Spencer struck. Robin, would you kindly explain your plan…”

---

Everything kicked off about fifteen minutes later. In the large reception area of the clinic, Keith Nottingham surveyed the captives. Lying or sitting on the carpet in front of the main desk, lay around thirty very frightened villagers, bundled together for comfort. Surrounding them with their backs to the wall stood six armed men, their rifles pointing threateningly at the group. Nottingham addressed them with a nasty grin.

“Ladies and gentlemen. My apologies for this interruption to your day but it has unfortunately been necessary for us to take this action, to arrest the ringleaders of the recent coup at the Mayor’s office! As you are aware, our Mr. Spencer was illegally thrown out of office days ago, and I myself was forcibly removed as sheriff. We are seeking to rectify this by arresting those responsible! Several of the collaborators have been taken into custody already. Anybody who does not possess magic has nothing to fear. So all we ask is that you sit quietly until we have finished. Now I have to warn you that anyone seeking to resist us will be dealt with harshly. So please, sit still, be quiet and things should hopefully soon be over…”

He then addressed his men. “Gentlemen, kill anyone who resists…”

As he turned to head back into the main auditorium, loud knocking was heard from the main doors, a sequence of three followed by two strikes, as agreed in advance. Two of Spencer’s men slowly opened the doors, yelling out, “Who goes there? Identify yourself!” Yelled Nottingham.

“It’s me, Captain Thomas! Reporting back, with additional prisoners, sir!” a voice yelled back.

“As he turned to head back into the main auditorium, loud knocking was heard from the main doors, a sequence of three followed by two strikes, as agreed in advance. Two of Spencer’s men slowly opened the doors, yelling out, “Who goes there? Identify yourself!” Yelled Nottingham.

“It’s me, Captain Thomas! Reporting back, with additional prisoners, sir!” a voice yelled back.

“Open the doors!” Nottingham ordered. As the doors opened, he was met with the sight of Thomas standing in front of three men, their hands tied in front of them, escorted by two of Spencer’s guards immediately behind. Nottingham recognized the men immediately. Will Scarlet, Little John in the middle, and Alan-A-Dale.

“Ha! Some of the so-called Merry Men! Well done, Captain. A fine prize indeed! I have a score or two to settle with these particular gentlemen. Perhaps Mr. Hood would like to try and rescue them?”

“Aye, Sir, a prize indeed,” said Thomas, trying not to wince in pain.
“Bring them in - I’ll take them straight in to see the Mayor.”

The doors opened wide, the prisoners and escorts stepping into the reception area. Nottingham turned towards the auditorium. “I’m sure he’ll be -” The enormous bang and piercing white flash took everyone by surprise, apart from the three captives. As all eyes had been on the largest man in the middle, Little John, the guards had missed Alan a Dale’s shrugging of the faked ties around his wrists to reach behind his head and into his hood, pulling out Rumplestiltskin’s primed thunderflash, slamming it into the floor.

Alan, Will & John closed their eyes as instructed, though the piercing white from the small grenade which temporarily blinded everyone else in the room was felt even under their closed eyelids. The enormous bang that followed shook the room, giving the three captives their chance.

Within seconds, Little John stepped across to two of the guards closest to the door, his enormous hands gripping the back of one man’s head pulling him sideways before slamming his skull into that of a second man, the two falling unconscious almost immediately. Swiping a rifle from one and a sword from the other’s scabbard, John turned to face a third guard, raising his rifle and pressing it into the man’s throat as he started to react to events by raising his weapon.

“I wouldn’t, pal! Drop it before I drop’s ye!”

The man, a young former officer in George’s guard, looked down the barrel pointing into his throat and surprisingly, smirked. The safety catch was on! “Not used to handling guns, are you?” he said. John responded to his arrogance by swiftly pulling the barrel point from his throat and swinging the butt into the man’s head, making him silently collapse to the floor.

“You’re right! Guns was never my thing…”

Having been the one to set off the flash, Alan was more prepared than any of them. He stepped swiftly towards one guard who, temporarily blinded, had nonetheless pulled a pistol from its holder in self-defence. Alan calmly pushed the gun down before slamming his head hard into the man’s face, hearing a satisfying crunch of bone. He went down to the floor almost instantly. Alan then stepped nimbly across to another dazed guard, raising his right leg, spinning his entire body backwards to deliver an almighty thump to the soldier, who collapsed but not before a follow up kick was delivered to the side of his head. Down he went, and Alan was silently grateful he remembered Mulan’s excellent fight training. She really is a genius, the thought.

Will’s task was to secure the doors and recover the reception area. He did so by charging towards the armed man standing next to the auditorium entrance, raising his entire body into the air to deliver a tremendously hard kick to his head. The man scrambled back, dazed but still able to fight. Without hesitating, Will punched him hard on the nose, splitting the cartilage. He went down. Now, the only one standing was Nottingham!

Nottingham couldn’t understand why Thomas and the men who brought them in were just standing there, not fighting! Then he realised. Someone got to them first! His anger instant at being fooled so easily, Nottingham pulled his short sword from its scabbard, racing back to the nearest outlaw to plunge it into his back.

At least that was the plan. However, as the tip of the blade was about to drive in between Will Scarlet’s shoulder blades, A small zipping noise was heard as something flew through the air. Nottingham felt his sword hand pushed backwards, glancing up to see that an arrow had pierced deep into his wrist. Moments later, he felt the pain, which was excruciating. Looking up to see where it had come from, he paled as he saw the leading outlaw himself, walking into the entrance, side-by-side with the Sorcerer, arrow cocked and ready to fire again.
Seeing his men had already secured the room, quicker than expected, Robin quickly walked over to Nottingham. The former sheriff had a gun at his side, cocked and ready to use, although the sheer agony coming from his right wrist took all his attention. Until Robin reached him.

Robin lowered his weapon, ignoring the arrow deeply imbedded in the man’s wrist as he grasped Nottingham by the throat, squeezing tightly.

“You had your chance. Now, you WILL pay!” Robin withdrew his grip before fisting the hand and slamming it hard into the former Sheriff of Nottingham’s throat, pushing the Adam’s Apple back. Nottingham collapsed to his knees instantly, his throat too constricted to even choke. He tried to draw breath, but it was painful. Very painful. A harsh right foot on the back of his head rendered him unconscious.

The Outlaw walked to the centre where the traumatized villagers lay or knelt, some clutching each other in shock following the enormous flash and noise. “Sorry everyone!” Robin called, “Now, I must ask you to leave very, very quietly! John, help them please?”

Little John nodded, lifting the traumatized villagers to leave the building while Will and Alan stripped the unconscious guards of their weapons. “Could some of you good folks help us tie up and drag these ‘ere villains outside? I’m sure the Dark One can take good care of ‘em from there…” said John. A small group instantly formed to help them.

“Now then,” said Merlin, walking around to the reception desk and pulling the small microphone to him. Pressing the little button at the base, everyone inside the building heard the distinctive clack of the loudspeaker system.

“Ladies and Gentlemen. This is Merlin!” he said in the most imperious voice he usually used for errant medical students. “This is a message for Albert Spencer and all those currently holding hostages or captives…”

Collective gasps were heard throughout the hospital. Perhaps this wasn’t going to end so badly, after all!

“All your armed colleagues outside the clinic have now been incapacitated. Furthermore, Nottingham and others are under arrest and will be tried in due course. I insist you lay down your weapons and walk slowly outside with your arms in the air! We are fully aware of Mr. Spencer’s murderous little plan, and I can assure you he will not be allowed to succeed. Now is the time to give yourself up. You will be dealt with fairly if you surrender quietly and calmly…”

By now, more of Robin’s men had entered the reception area. Noises were heard from the floor above as people started to walk down the stairs, some with their arms in the air as Merlin instructed. Some of the former hostages now surrounding them, using their former captors’ own weapons to contain them. Suddenly, Annabelle appeared on the landing, yelling down as soon as she saw her father in the foyer. “Dad! Dad! We need you up here! Quickly!”

Merlin, greatly relieved to see his daughter safe and sound, called up. “Anna? What is it? What’s wrong?”

“There’s been a few stabbings, and someone’s been shot! Victor’s doing all he can, but we’re short-
handed in theatre! Carrie Locksley’s in the building too but she’s not answering her phone…”

Robin froze. *Carrie! He only just got her back yesterday from her trip with Whale to New York!* “I’ll try and find her. Will, Alan, please go organize the men to clear the place, room by room. But stay away from that door - it goes to the auditorium and we think that’s where Regina and Emma are being held hostage! Spencer’s probably holed up in there too, so that’s where they’ll keep the best fighters and the most guns. So, go to it!”

“Got it, boss!” called Alan, really getting to enjoy this rescuing stuff after such a long time.

“John, could you go ask Gold for another of those thunder flash things?”

As the large man turned, the Dark One himself walked into the room, barely containing a most devious smile. “Ahead of you, as always, Dearie!” he cackled, before handing a device, larger than the previous thunderflash, to the outlaw. “Now, go steady with that, Locksley, and for heaven’s sake don’t drop it! It’s about five times louder and you’ll definitely need the earplugs again for this one. And when you slam it down, keep your eyes shut!”

Within a few minutes Alan and Will reported back. Most rooms had been cleared but a few pockets of resistance remained. However, Will had some disturbing news. ‘Rob, it seems young Henry’s been taken hostage down in the cellars! Seems he tried to get in through the back, thinking Spencer’s mob wouldn’t be covering it. He thought wrong. I think there’s a least two of them holding him. One of them says they won’t come out without some sort of guarantee, or Spencer telling them to let him go!”

“Dammit!” growled Robin. While the young man’s bravery impressed him, he knew not to go off plan. *Contain them, reduce the number, and only fight when you absolutely have to!* However, before he even formulated a plan, Rumpelstiltskin stepped forward to the desk, looking to the microphone. “May I?” he grinned.

In the auditorium, Emma looked through swollen eyes at Albert Spencer. The former king and mayor was pacing angrily, unsure of his next move. The six armed men in the room looked to each other, nervously. She smiled inwardly. *If Merlin’s here, there’s a fair chance we’ll get out of this alive!* she thought, though bile lodged in her throat as she looked at the state of her wife’s face, her beautiful features wholly distorted from the swelling. Regina was now awake and tried to smile at the younger woman, difficult with a broken jaw. Neither of them were ready for the next announcement over the tannoy system.

“Good afternoon to you all! This is Rumpelstiltskin. Though most of you may now me as the Dark One…”

Emma and Regina, though battered, shared a look. *Where was this going now HE was involved?*

“The Sorcerer has been most patient with those of you causing us problems today, and has asked you to surrender quietly. Now, most of you have given yourselves up and are now outside, safe and sound. Some of you will sleep safe in your beds tonight! However, there are a few of you who insist on keeping people hostage in this building. As you are aware, the Dark One always keeps his promises. I do not have the Merlin’s kind heart or Mr. Locksley’s sense of justice, but I do know how to keep a promise! So here is my promise. If you surrender yourselves immediately, leaving all weapons
behind, I promise not to execute you the moment you finally leave these premises!”

Emma tried to chuckle, but the pain made it difficult. However, the Dark One wasn’t finished.

“I also have a special message for the two armed gentlemen currently holding Mr. Henry Mills at gunpoint in the Annex of this building.”

Emma and Regina thought the same thing - Shit – they’ve got Henry!

“You will immediately hand over your weapons to Master Mills and allow him to escort you into the Reception area. If you fail to do so within the next five minutes, or ANY harm befalls my grandson, I swear here and now to skin you both alive, repair your flesh and skin you again and again until you beg me for death! That is all. Five minutes, gentlemen!”

Robin tried to stifle a laugh as Merlin merely smirked. “You think he’s bluffing?”

“Probably not,” said Robin. “I was half expecting him to finish with “Have a nice day!””

It took just over a minute before doors were heard opening and two very ashen-faced men, their hands held behind their heads in defeat, slowly walked from a side room and down the staircase, followed closely by Henry Mills, carefully carrying a selection of guns, rifles and a side sword. He seemed to be limping but smiled when he saw his paternal grandfather below, before shouting to the two in front. “Keep moving! These are starting to get heavy!”

Arriving at the Reception desk, Henry dropped the weapons and stepped up to Rumple, pulling him into a broad hug. “Thanks Gramps!” Rumple reciprocated, quietly relieved the young man was unharmed. Little John led the two silent captors away as Henry continued. “That was awesome! When you threatened them, they almost shit themselves! I’ve never seen anyone so scared.”

Rumple smiled, a devilish look on his face. “That was no threat Henry, that was a promise.” Which earned a quizzical look from his grandson. “You’d really do that, Gramps?”

“To anyone hurting my Bae’s boy? – in a heartbeat!”

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In the auditorium a few minutes later, Ruby Lucas, her right eye now completely closed with the bruising, was able to collect her thoughts. Seeing her two magical friends, battered and bruised, close by, made her heart sink. She had been in awkward situations before but had never seen the two most powerful women she had ever known in such a vulnerable state. A twitchy Albert Spencer had left the stage area and was now in close discussion with his remaining armed thugs. There was no doubt the Dark One’s threats had spooked them badly and they were frantically trying to develop a plan. For the first time since she’d been dragged into the room, she was in a position to whisper to the women, hopefully without getting caught and beaten again. She leaned across to Emma.

“Em.” She whispered, “you still have some magic, right? Some way of getting us out of here?”

Emma, whose own bloody face now resembled a car wreck, tried to whisper from the side of her mouth. “No. No magic in here. It’s useless. Just hope Merlin and Gold can do something…” she whispered back. “These guys are panicking and could do something stupid. Gina’s in a bad way too.
I’ll be honest Rubes…I’m…I’m scared!”

Ruby looked at the now hunched body of the former Evil Queen. The beautiful features were completely distorted, and it looked like she was barely conscious. Ruby knew they were in real shit but tried to comfort her friend. “Emma. Look at me! You’re strong, but right now you need to be like your mum. I know you think she’s a bit ditzy sometimes, but I’ll tell you, I’ve spent years on the run with Snow White and she’s the most awesome fucking woman I’ve ever known. You’re like her, my girl! Have her faith! We’ll get through this…”

Emma croaked. “I’ll try, alright? I’m just -” she stopped when the tannoy crackled to life again.

“This is Robin Locksley. I have a message for Albert Spencer. Albert…”

Spencer flinched. He hated people using his first name. I’m a former fucking king for god’s sake!

“…Albert, you’ll be delighted to know that Henry Mills is safe and sound, your men having very sensibly decided to surrender to him peacefully. So now everyone, apart from those good people you currently have held in the auditorium, has left the building and they are all safe and well, apart from some needing treatment…”

Regina and Emma both visibly heaved a sigh of relief. Henry’s safe! Plus, Robin’s calm, reassuring voice somehow seemed to just ease them a little, despite the dangerous situation they were still in.

“However, I know that you and the rest of your men are holed up in there. Mr. Gold and Professor Sage have offered you the chance to come out alive if you all surrender peacefully. Now, I’m a little more benevolent. Albert, I know how much you pride yourself on being a king, a true leader of men. And as you know, true leaders always lead from the front. So, my proposition is quite simple. I challenge you to a duel. Just you and me! There’s no magic in here, so we are equal. So, what do you say, Albert? Are you going to prove to your men that you are a true leader? By leading your men from the front? Or are you going to continue to be the snivelling coward I’ve always thought? The man who takes innocent women and children hostage, and hides behind braver men…”

Spencer was furious, his eyes bulging in anger, a vein throbbing in his temple. How dare he? How dare that bastard call me a coward! He walked across the room to face the now locked door which led to Reception, lifting a semi-automatic assault rifle to his shoulder, which he now pointed at the door, ready to instantly kill the first person to cross the doorway. “Locksley!” he roared, loud enough to be heard the other side. “Big words for a thief! Without your magic you’re nothing! I accept your offer but on my terms! The door will be unbolted shortly, then you may come inside. Only you!”

Emma crouched down closer to her wife, wondering why on earth Robin was antagonizing Spencer? Ruby, also with her hands tied, shuffled closer, trying not to draw attention away from the scene near the door.

“Em…Em!” she whispered, desperate not to be overheard, “I can hear Merlin! He’s talking to me. He knows how my hearing works! He’s telling me something’s about to happen - we need to keep
down, keep our heads down and for god’s sake keep our eyes shut when we hear the door go! You need to pass it on to Regina!” Emma nodded silently, turning and shuffling closer to her wife, now laying on her side closer to Carrie’s still unconscious body. “Gina!” she whispered as the wolf had done. “Help’s on its way. Something’s about to happen but you must keep your eyes shut!”

It was obvious the cowardly bastard had no intention of fighting Robin. He was just going to shoot him the moment he came through the door! She had to do something, but how? She was tied up by the legs and hands and he was on the other side of the room. As she thought what to do, the tannoy crackled again.

“Good, Albert, good! I’m pleased you’ll accept my challenge. Now, as a sign of good faith, how about you let a few of your hostages go? Perhaps the most injured ones? It’ll make no difference to you and show your troops what a marvellous, considerate leader you are!”
Death of a Tyrant

Chapter Summary

Emma responds to Regina’s request for help but soon has problems of her own. Unusually, the Saviour needs saving. Albert Spencer’s plan is revealed and other heroes are called on to save the day. Someone’s going to get hurt. Or worse...

Chapter Notes

Second part of the Battle of Sherwood Clinic. We’ll get back on track with our gorgeous trio soon, I promise.

“Good, Albert! I’m pleased you’ll accept my challenge. Now, as a sign of good faith, how about you let a few of your hostages go? Perhaps the most injured ones? It’ll make no difference to you, and show your troops what a marvellous, considerate leader you are!”

Spencer had had enough of his sarcasm. “No one’s leaving this room, Locksley, and no one is injured! Now get to it! Are you coming inside or not? Let’s see this ‘bravery’ we all heard so much about!”

On the other side of the door, Robin silently fumed, knowing Spencer had blatantley lied, now confirming he had no intention of letting anyone out alive. However, his plan with Merlin was agreed, so he had to maintain his calm and stick to the script. Wind up Spencer, keep him talking and hit him when he isn’t expecting it! He looked back to his attack squad. To Little John, who nodded, holding Rumple’s invention safely in his huge hands, ready to go. To David, who had now joined them (he didn’t let them refuse). The farmer prince stood braced, ready to charge with a sword in one hand and his old sheriff’s pistol in the other. To Alan and Will, his best knife throwers. And finally to Philip, the young mayor. All willing to fight, and die, if necessary. Robin prayed to god it wouldn’t come to that! The risks were high, and they all knew it. Ok, here goes!

Sighing loudly into the reception microphone, he said in an exasperated tone:-

“Very well Albert, have it your way! But a leader of men should always consider the safety and well being of those under his command first! You know, when I-”

At that moment, several things happened at once. Firstly, Emma saw Spencer shoulder his assault rifle, facing the door and aiming at its centre. She had to stop him!

So as loud as she could, she screamed,

“ROBIN, DON’T COME IN! HE’S GOING TO SHOOT!”

Robin heard her the moment their battering ram hit the door. Outside the clinic and using magic,
Merlin had earlier constructed a heavy gun carriage with wheels, a full-size Oak trunk cut and sharpened to a point, On either side a heavy wood and metal shield to block whatever came back at the six grown men it took to get it rolling. Philip’s guards had heaved it along the ramp, building up speed as it now hurtled into the building across the reception area and straight toward and into the auditorium doors.

A mere second before impact, Spencer turned back at the alert given by the blonde woman. Without hesitating, he swung the rifle in her direction, firing a single shot to silence her. “Aargh!” she screamed as the bullet ploughed through her shoulder, forcing her off her knees and spinning her. The pain was agonizing, and she felt the burn down her entire side as she coiled up, expecting another. As he loaded and prepared to fire another round, the door behind him shattered.

As the huge battering ram ploughed into the door, it’s hinges broke immediately as the heavy wood blew in. Spencer, having been focused on Emma, turned to see the large gaping hole, with a heavy wooden ram filling it. Ruby, now lying down, saw a huge man step onto the top of the ram, throwing something round onto the floor close to Albert Spencer. Remembering Merlin’s instructions, she whispered loudly at Regina and Emma “Eyes closed. Now!”

Even with her eyes tightly shut, Ruby couldn’t believe the sheer intensity of the white light. It was blinding, and her ultra-sensitive eyesight was overwhelmed. Now she understood Merlin’s instruction, knowing that if she had opened her eyes, she would likely be blind by now! However, that was as nothing compared to the enormous explosion of sound that immediately followed. Deafening wasn’t the word to describe it! The ear-splitting boom paralysed everyone in the room. Everyone except John and the invading men wearing Rumple’s carefully fashioned ear plugs.

Dazed and blinded, Spencer opened his eyes to see only a blur, but saw the outlines of several men who had entered the auditorium. To his left, Colonel Mason seemed to have been instantly flattened by the large man who had thrown something. Next to him, as his eyes cleared, he saw Corporal Johnson looking down at the knife now embedded in his shoulder, thrown by a young scruffy man. Probably one of Hood’s thieves, who was now wrestling his gun from him. Spencer saw Johnson scream but couldn’t hear it, deafened by whatever tortuous device had made that noise. As he scanned to his right, Smith and Pargitter had also been overwhelmed. Philip Briar now stood over a bloody faced Smith, while Pargitter seemed to be on his knees surrendering, his rifle on the floor in front of him. He still heard nothing, merely seeing the act play out.

His eyes flashed back up to a figure looming over the top of the battering ram. Within moments he saw the furious face of Charming coming straight over the top, heading straight at him. A second later, David had seized hold of his rifle with one hand, before delivering him a swift punch to the face with the other, then bringing his short sword to the man’s throat. “You’ll pay for this, you bastard!” David growled. But Spencer’s hearing was still impaired, so he only heard a low muffle. Spencer dropped the rifle in surrender. David was so close to plunging the knife into the man’s throat. Then out of the corner of his eye, he saw Emma. Emma! His girl, his beautiful daughter, was writhing on the floor in agony. Obviously also deaf from the thunderflash, she twisted around in pain, and that’s when David saw her face, almost beaten beyond recognition. The sheer shock at the state of her made him gasp, momentarily distracting him.

Spencer seized the opportunity. In a moment he picked up his rifle, slamming it hard into Charming’s head. The shock made him reel back in pain, allowing Spencer to deliver another blow. As he went down, Spencer didn’t waste the chance. Collecting his hidden dagger from the lining of his boot, he turned the blade, ready to stab Charming through the heart before he could recover.

However, before the knife rammed home, a swish passed his face as an arrow embedded itself deeply into the former king’s shoulder. He looked up in surprise to find its owner. Robin Hood!
outlaw moved quickly seizing the knife firmly before using his forehead to deliver a heavy blow to the former king’s nose. Robin wasn’t going to make the mistake of leaving this man to respond!

“Try to knife someone when they’re unconscious? Nice touch that! Everything I would expect from a vile little turd like you! Now, I challenge you! Pick up your fucking sword and fight me you weasel!” Robin Hood was no longer shouting, just growling, teeth bared, focused and waiting. No distractions.

Spencer, knowing there was no way out of this, recovered quickly. Seeing Robin only with a short knife in his hand, he pulled his sword from the scabbard, facing him, ready. *One full slice would do it!*

What he hadn’t anticipated was the sheer speed the outlaw moved. Spencer pulled his sword arm back ready to slash the man, Robin dashed within inches of him, wrapping his wrist around the sword hand to hold it back. With surgical precision, he drove his knife hard, not into the man’s chest but under his chin, piercing and forcing itself through the tissue, into the mouth and nasal cavity, behind the eyes and into the brain, instantly killing the former King George, tyrant and mayor! Spencer’s eyes briefly showed shock and surprise, before glazing over, the rest of his body buckling to the floor, cascades of blood now flowing from the open wound.

Everyone stood rigid, most having seen the brutal and swift dispatch; the end of the life of a cruel man. Robin exhaled. He’d always prided himself on his ability to talk his way around most adversaries, rather than having to kill them. Sadly, sometimes it was necessary. It wasn’t his first kill, but he hoped to god it would be his last!

The noise around him returned his mind to the present. He quickly surveyed the room. His men were dragging Spencer’s last troops from the room. Will had already jumped up onto the stage, to a bundle of clothes on the wood floor. No, not clothes. Bodies! His heart raced as he stepped up, realizing who the bodies belonged too!

“MY GOD! REGINA? EMMA?” he yelled, stepping first to the battered brunette, who lay on her side, crying loudly. She could hardly speak due to the disfiguration of her face. “RRRBBNN!” she muffled. Will was already slicing through the ropes tying her wrists behind her, followed by the ones on her ankles. Tears were pouring down her cheeks as she immediately launched herself beside the stilled body of her wife. “HLLPP HRR!” she screamed.

Robin so wanted to hold his former true love, seeing her so distraught. He looked down at Emma, seeing her lifeless body now slumped in a large pool of blood. His heart broke at the suffering this couple, this beautiful couple, had just endured. A large hand appeared on his shoulder. Tuck.

“Rob, get Emma outside, quick! She needs magic, not medicine, right now! You, Merlin, Gold. Anyone! Just get her out there quick, before we lose her! I’ll help Regina! She’s injured, but she isn’t dying! Go Robin, go!”

Robin didn’t answer, just bending down and gently scooping the Saviour into his arms. As he stepped towards the rubble of the former door, he noticed Little John had already picked up the larger, heavier Prince Charming, whose body lay unconscious. The pair raced through the reception, outside to the front of the building, where groups of people had gathered to tend to the various injured lying around. Knowing they were now back in the land of magic, Robin pulled his own magic to him, two large trestles now appearing in front of them. Without hesitation, he laid Emma’s lifeless body gently onto one, before leaning to whisper into her ear.

“Emma, you’re safe now! Gina’s safe! Stick with us now! Come on!” A nurse appeared at his side. “Robin, let me in! Please? I need to stop her bleeding!”
Back in the almost empty auditorium, Tuck was now lifting Regina. Seeing her broken features, he ignored her tired, unrecognizable protests, lifting her into his arms gently before running not outside but up the stairs to the operating theatres.

Will Scarlett had similarly collected Caroline Locksley, still unconscious, into his arms, following Tuck. Alan gently tended to Ruby, the only fully conscious one of the four women. “Blimey, Rubes, that’s quite a shiner you got there! You’ll need a bit of make up on that if you don’t want to ruin the wedding photos!”

As Tuck entered the emergency treatment area of the building, his eye was drawn to the corridor full of injured people, some with major and some minor injuries. Laying Regina gently onto a new hospital trolley, he called out, “Anyone! Help needed here please!” Two nurses appeared from a side door. ‘Where’s Whale?” he demanded.

‘In theatre, operating.” Said the elder. “What do you have?”

“A very poorly queen, badly beaten. Help us, please?” he pleaded.

The nurse ran some basic checks over Regina, who lay silently, no longer resisting and too injured to argue. “I’ll page a doctor.” Within moments, a young woman appeared at Regina’s elbow.

“Sorry you’ve been in the wars, Mrs. Swan-Mills!” said Dr. Annabelle Sage to the clearly agitated woman, trying to calm her. “Let’s take a look at you.” Merlin’s youngest daughter ran a gentle hand around the massively swollen jaw and face. “She will need her jaw reset first. Prep her for theatre please.”

“Can’t you use magic?” said Tuck, fearful for the woman he’d grown to regard as a little sister. “Please?”

“It doesn’t work like that. Magic can fix bruises and tissue damage, but the bones and everything underneath need to be reset first. We’ll X-ray and I’ll ask Victor to operate as soon as he comes out of theatre with dad. Then we can take her outside, and my dad or someone else can heal the superficial layers. What about Regina’s wife? Doesn’t she have white magic? Or Robin?”

John didn’t want to mention Emma’s condition in front of Regina. “Well, Emma’s been hurt too! Rob’s already taken her outside.”

Downstairs, even more urgent attention was being given to Emma. As Robin looked over her as she lay on the stretcher, Rumplestiltskin appeared to his left. “Ok, Mr. Locksley,” said the Dark One as he passed his hand across the blonde woman’s body, as though he were scanning her. “She has some sort of bullet lodged under her collarbone. She’s bleeding heavily, and doesn’t have much time. You need to first collect the bullet and stop the bleeding!”

“Me, how? I don’t know how! I can’t possibly! Why can’t you?”

“I have no medical knowledge, whereas you have! It’s all in the Sorcerer’s knowledge transfer. If I do it, I’m more likely to kill her. Try to remember Merlin’s lessons, it’s all in there!” He rasped, pointing to the man’s own head.

“Robin hesitated, drawing down the condensed memories of magical healing he had received from the Sorcerer. Pull out the foreign body by thought. Imagine the sides being sealed as it comes out. Draw slowly. Seal the wound with heat. He stood in silent concentration as the various instructions finally came.

Quickly ripping back the top of Emma’s blouse to reveal the gaping wound, Robin gently covered
his palm across the entry wound, summoning the bullet, calling on it, ordering it and any other invaders in her chest and shoulder to come forward. Moments later, he heard a loud groan as the Saviour winced and was astonished to feel the buckled bullet and smaller shards to now appear in his palm. Emma cried out, clearly in agony.

“She’s bleeding badly, Rob!” gasped Ruby, appearing at Emma’s other side. He flinched, knowing whatever he did now would determine whether Emma lived or died. He plunged his finger into the wound, imagining the sealing of the broken vessels. A pulse of light emanated from him into the almost unconscious woman. The bleeding appeared to have stopped, but she was weak. Too weak. Oblivious to those around him, Robin now begged. “Come on, Emma, wake up! Stay with us! Henry needs you. Gina needs you. So do our children; our children, Emma! Don’t do this to us!”

Placing his now bloody palm gently on her forehead, he pushed his magic into her as he had been taught.

Emma groaned again, her swollen eyes now opening. “What…Rob…Robin? Her voice was barely audible.

“Yes, Emma. It’s me. We’ll get you through this…I promise!”

“Never made that second date, did we?” she whispered, between groans.

“Plenty of time for that, old girl!” he replied, now desperate to keep her awake. “Where should we go next?”

Despite her obvious agony, he detected the faint hint of a smile on her badly bruised features. Robin hadn’t yet had the time to fix her beautiful face. “Bora Bora sounds good, but there’s no chance of that.” Her voice grew even more faint. “Robin?”

“Yes, love?”

“I’m sorry how…how I treated you. Sorry for being such a bitch. I’m sorry I…”

“Stop talking like that, Emma! Don’t apologise, and don’t talk like you’re leaving us! You’re not, just hang on!” He encouraged, now bending closer just to hear her. Her voice was so quiet.

“I would’ve liked another date, but just…just take care of her, ok? Gina. Take care of the woman we love. Don’t leave her again. She needs you…Henry too…just…” her stopped, her head slumping to one side.

“No, Emma! No! Stay with us! Stay!” A small tear fell down his cheek. This fantastic woman was about to die, and he couldn’t bear it. “Emma, don’t-you-dare!”

A final flicker from her eyes as she croaked. “Tell them I loved them…all of them. I love you too Robin…” and with those final words, Emma Swan-Mills, Saviour, slipped away from them, her mouth hanging open. Her eyes open and glazed.

“NO!!!” he yelled, tears and anger now flowing as he kept trying to force his magic into her.

“She lost too much blood. She’s gone, Robin!” bawled Ruby as her tears started to roll from blackened eyes.

Robin breathed heavily, realisation hitting him. Emma’s dead! How do I tell Regina, Henry, Honour! This’ll kill them!

His heart sank even further as he leaned over the now lifeless face, whispering inaudibly to everyone
but the wolf. “I love you too Emma, after finally getting to know you! I’m so, so sorry!” He pressed his lips gently to the Saviour’s bloody forehead. “Rest in peace, lovely.” He gulped, a tear falling on her face.

Moments later, it happened. Noticed by everyone surrounding them, a warm wave of octarine light pulsed from the Saviour’s head, fanning out all around and knocking people back. Magic! Strong magic!

Moments earlier, Henry Mills had just arrived from the far side of the building to see his blonde mother lying still on the trestle, Robin Hood leaning over her body. He only recognised her from the clothes she lay in and gasped in horror as he saw the large pool of blood on the table she was lying on. Her own blood! He was speechless as Robin leaned close, whispering something. As he ran forward, he saw her whisper back and was about to scream in alarm when her head slumped back. He froze in shock, sound refusing to come from him. Then he saw the kiss.

Robin looked up from the body, pain and distress etched into his face as the saw Henry. “H…Henry! I’m so sorry! We’re too late.” He breathed, his breath hitching with emotion. “We…me…I wasn’t quick enough! This is my fault! I…” Then they heard the loud inhale below, turning to see Emma’s eyes, now open, to collective gaps from all around.

“MUM!” Henry screamed, pushing through to her, taking her hand and kissing her head. That’s when he noticed the massive bruising and black eyes. Emma, still dazed, turned to his voice. “Hen? Hen! Are you ok? They got you! You shouldn’t have tried…” but she was too exhausted to continue. Henry, a slow smile returning to his face, “Hush ma, I’m fine! Grandpa saw to that!” he said, looking across at Gold who had moved closer as Robin stepped away, knowing Emma was now safe and surrounded by loved ones.

Emma looked at Henry’s paternal grandfather. “Um…thanks. I guess I owe you!”

“When it comes to my grandson’s life, you owe me nothing! Welcome back, Emma.” The Dark One had an odd look in his eye, as though he had just discovered something major. But she wasn’t going to ask. Not now.

“Welcome back? I don’t, don’t understand?” the Saviour croaked, still body still aching.

“You died, ma, you died!” said Henry, to which Ruby nodded in agreement.

Rumple moved closer, making Emma feel slightly uncomfortable. “Emma, the Outlaw carried out the important surgery. He removed the bullet and brought you back. Now, let me do the tidying up! Lie still now…” he instructed, opening his palms to float them over her face. Emma winced repeatedly as she felt the magic enter her, under her skin, and flinched as she felt the cartilage in her nose start to repair. “OW!” she yelled, but stayed still, as she realized her face was being repaired. With a little gentle flourish, even the dark dried blood seemed to disappear, leaving her face as though she had never been attacked.

Ruby smiled down at her, brushing a tear away. “As lovely as ever!” she cheered, albeit with her own black eye now being noticed. Rumple turned to face the wolf. “Miss Lucas, if you’ll allow me?” She hesitated, but seeing Henry look on encouragingly, she silently nodded. A moment later, Rumple raised his hand over her face, a small purple haze of magic pulling the bruising from her eyes and allowing her now to properly open them. “There. A better look for a blushing bride, don’t you think? Ladies,” he turned to face Emma, “as you will probably know, you may be healed but the aches and pains will continue for a while yet. I suggest a good night’s sleep is in order.”

“Um…thanks, Mr. Gold,” said Ruby, feeling her cheek bones and relieved at not having to face her
bride-to-be with a battered face.

“Looking good, Rubes!” said Emma, attempting to sit up and, feeling decidedly dizzy, lay back again. “Wait, what? Henry, what do you mean…died?”

“It’s true Emma,” said her friend, “you were shot in the clinic and you lost a lot of blood there, and here. Robin’s covered in it! He carried you out here. We lost you just now…”

The Saviour looked confused. “Then why am I here? Henry, did you do this?” She had felt the octarine wave herself, remembering that feeling from all those years ago, when a certain ten-year-old lay dead in the hospital. When she didn’t believe in magic.

Henry looked at his younger mother, unsure what to say. He needed to think of the consequences himself. “Er…not me this time, ma.” His mother looked at him, wide-eyed. Then who? How? Regina’s not here so…so…how? It was seeing the slightly wry look on Ruby’s face, she remembered who had been standing over her. Who she had been whispering to with her dying words, who…who she…oh. OH! Oh shit! She needed to talk to him. Now!

“Rubes, where’s Robin?” she asked, trying to sit up once again and groaning with pain.

“Stop ma!” said Henry. “Stay down, you’re not ready! Rest up a bit and I’ll get him. He went back in to see how mum’s doing in theatre.”

“The operating theatre? Hell, Henry, why didn’t you tell me?”

“Because you were busy dying, that’s why! Robin needed to get you outside quickly! I just came back from there. Tuck carried her in, and Merlin and his daughter are with her now. She’s in good hands, ma.”

“I need to see her. Now. Henry, please?”

“Look, don’t do anything stupid like trying to stand up, ok? You lost a lot of blood, and you’re still weak, so just lie still!” Henry closed his eyes, a picture forming in his mind. Within moments, a wheelchair he’d seen inside now appeared in front of them. “Ok ma, let’s take it slow and we’ll get you inside. Now let me lift you out…”

Inside the clinic, in the small post-operative room, Regina Swan-Mills slowly started to recover from the anaesthetic. “Uuuh,” she groaned, feeling intense pain in her jaw, still confused. She had bandages wrapped around her head, her arm was in a sling and her shoulders were killing her. “Emma! Is she safe?” she managed through the swelling.

“I’ll check. They took her straight outside, as she was critical, though I heard from someone that Robin saved her life. Apparently, it was a close thing! They brought her back in, as she needs blood. Your son is with her.”

Regina shoulders collapsed as feelings of relief flooded through her. She’s alive! Henry’s safe! “I want to be with them. Please?”
“Of course. I’ll get someone to take your gurney down. Now, again, until dad has patched you up, please try not to talk as it’ll only hurt more! I’ll get your pain relief.”

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Emma lay, eyes closed in sheer exhaustion, on a hospital gurney, with an IV in her arm. After Henry pushed her into the hospital in a wheelchair, one nurse had briefly examined her, before colleagues lifted her onto another gurney, before inserting an IV into her arm. Merlin had just appeared from a nearby operating theatre and walked across to her side. “Hello Emma. I gather you gave us quite a fright outside! I’m pleased to see you’re recovering. Mr. Locksley did quite a job, considering it was his first time using healing magic. A bullet and shrapnel? That’s not easy. Now, would you mind if I gave you a quick check over? Victor Whale’s still in theatre, but I can do it.”

She nodded to the Sorcerer, “Go ahead. I don’t want Whale anywhere near me.”

Merlin frowned down on her as he proceeded to check her pulse, under her eyelids and the now healed wound area. “I’m sorry you still feel that way about Doctor Whale, Emma! The short time I’ve got to know him I find him to be a fine surgeon. He’s thought of very highly here in the forest. It’s a shame he’s not regarded so well in Storybrooke, by the very people who have hurt him the most…”

Emma was surprised by that, having always thought little of the medic. She felt slightly guilty, knowing her opinion was probably the result of her wife’s general contempt for the man, and her father’s, which was probably the result of knowing Whale once had a one-night stand with her mother. Before she could respond, the door burst open, a trolley entering with a nurse on either end. “GINA!” yelled Emma, relieved to see her spouse. Emma moved to get up. “No, Emma, stay! You’re wired up to the IV and weak. We’ll bring Regina to you. Lie back now!” urged Merlin.

The blonde looked anxiously at her brunette wife. Bandages wrapped around her jaw and head but they still didn’t hide the severe swelling. “Oh Gina! My love! How are you feeling? Come here!” she waved.

Regina, in pain herself, was so relieved at seeing her wife. Her beautiful face seemed to be completely restored. “Em,” she murmured through the bandage. “He…he shot you! They broke your nose!”

Her wife could just about understand what she was saying and smiled back. “Yeah, about that. They took me outside and Robin and Gold sorted me. I’m good, Gina.”

“She is ‘good’, Regina, and a very lucky lady!” added Merlin. “She’s lost a lot of blood, so they had to use magic as there wasn’t enough time to get her in here. Robin removed the bullet, and Mr. Gold repaired the external tissue damage. Now she’s undergoing a blood transfusion.”

The brunette couldn’t believe her eyes. Emma had been close to death? But seeing her now restored made Regina weep, a large tear rolling down her cheek. As the nurses placed the two hospital gurneys side-by-side, Emma reached to hold her wife’s hand, smiling softly.

“I’ll leave you for a couple of minutes,” said Merlin as a nurse came to talk to him about another patient. “Victor has made an excellent job of restoring your TMJ, so…” as he tried to explain, he saw the confused look from the women. “Sorry, the TMJ is the temporomandibular joint, the joint connecting your jawbone to your skull. It’s been repaired and reset, so we can later use magic outside to deal with the bruising and any other tissue damage. One of us will take you outside shortly. After that, you’ll need to rest.”
As Emma couldn’t move for the IV in her arm, Regina clambered slowly from her own gurney to join her, lying side-by-side, Emma’s free arm curling to pull her in as they shared a pillow. “Don’t talk, it’ll hurt too much. Just lie with me till they take you outside.” The brunette nodded, closing her eyes and trying to rest her head on her shoulder, instantly recoiling when the sharp jolt of pain from her swollen jaw kicked in.

The door burst open again, this time their son coming in with a grin, when he saw his two mothers lying huddled together, sharing the same bed. “Mums, you’re both awake! Great. I heard you went into theatre? Ma, how’re you feeling now?”

Even after the last two years, there was a hint of embarrassment Emma still felt every time Henry saw her in bed with Regina. Illogical, but it was still there. So as usual, she changed the subject. “I’m fine, Hen,” she breathed, trying to keep her eyes open. “Just stupidly tired, like you said I would be. So, what’s going on out there? Who’s injured.”

“Well, Mayor Briar’s got Spencer’s thugs under arrest. What’s left of them, anyway. They’ve taken them back to Storybrooke. And the bodies…”


Henry was surprised they didn’t know. “About five people died I think, all Spencer’s thugs. And Spencer himself, of course.”


“Well, from what Will told me, Robin killed Spencer. It was quick but a bit grizzly, apparently. Then Alan-a-Dale slotted that weirdo Baker, though I’m not sure who the rest were.”

“Robin killed Albert Spencer?” Emma found it hard to believe the gentle archer could end another life. *Though seeing him change when Nottingham had threatened Roland, perhaps there was another side to him!*

“Yeah. I was surprised, but not as surprised as what Robin did to you earlier, ma! That was just awesome! Bringing her back to life like that. Merlin was right – his magic really is strong!”

Regina wanted to know what happened but seeing her wife looking, oddly embarrassed, plus the fact talking with her bound jaw was so painful, she decided to save it for later.

Fortunately for Emma, Merlin walked back into the room, followed by an exhausted Doctor Whale. The two men first went over to Regina’s side. “Ok Victor, what do you think? Is Mrs. Swan-Mills recovered enough from surgery for me to do my bit?”

The former mayor had always been blunt and sarcastic to Storybrooke’s only doctor, rarely giving him any respect or acknowledgement, which always resulted in Whale showing her equal contempt, so he was always happy to pass anything to do with her over to any nurse available, rather than put up with the petty vitriol.

“I think so. She seems more alert now, so the anaesthetic is wearing off. You can take her out. I hope you feel better after Regina, but remember to rest up for a day or two! Blows to the head, like you suffered, shouldn’t be taken lightly. Give your body time to recover and to help your jaw heal, stick to soft foods for the first few days. Chewing will be painful. Frankly, I’d rather you either come back here for a few hours so we can monitor you, or have somebody with you at home to keep an eye on you…”

Regina nodded, desperate to get out of the place. “What about Emma?” she mumbled with difficulty
and taking her wife’s hand, “can she leave?”

Whale hesitated before answering “Ah, well, that's different. Your wife lost an awful lot of blood from the bullet wound, and her pulse was dangerously weak! Emma, I’ll be honest, I’m not quite sure how you survived! Ruby told me your heart had stopped, and with all that blood loss it’s a miracle Robin brought you back!” Regina could have sworn she saw the man smirk. “If we can get the IV working through you for another five hours at least, then we’ll check your blood pressure. If all good, you’ll be free to go but if not, it’ll be too dangerous!”

“I have to agree with Doctor Whale,” Merlin reassured. “Rest up Emma, and we’ll get you out of here as soon as we can. Meanwhile, Regina, let’s get you outside so we can sort out those injuries…”

Outside the front of the clinic, the small crowd that had gathered was starting to diminish. The bodies of the dead had been transferred to the morgue by Gold, Philip Briar had disbanded the militia controlling the perimeter, the Merry Men were ferrying in the last of the wounded and things were starting to get back to normal. Regina had been transferred from her hospital bed to a wheelchair. As Emma was now soundly asleep, she was too tired to argue as Henry pushed his mother outside the building, Merlin walking beside her. The three of them felt the magical pulse hit them.

“Ok Henry, let's stop here,” Merlin instructed. “Your mother doesn’t need to lie down. Regina, just hold your head still; this shouldn’t take a minute.” Merlin brought both hands to her face. The familiar golden light emanated from his hands surrounded her entire face. She grimaced in pain as she felt the sutures melt away, the swollen flesh replaced with pink, fresh skin. Henry watched fascinated as his mother’s elegant features came back before his eyes. “Wow, you have so got to teach me how to do that!”

“All in good time, Henry!” chuckled the Sorcerer. “Let your family continue teaching you the basics.”

Touching her face, Regina summoned a mirror to her hand, taking a look at the newly restored flesh. “Thank you!” she sniffled, “I was beginning to think I’d be spending the rest of my life looking like the Elephant Man!”

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Storybrooke – an hour later

“How the hell could you just go over there without telling me!” screamed Dorothy at her bride-to-be. “You could have been killed! Did you even think to tell me? What on earth possessed you to do something so stupid without backup?”

Ruby have never seen her so angry. “I’m sorry, Dot! I got Regina’s text and thought they were in trouble!”

“They’re always in trouble in this damn town! David rang after you left and told me her email was a trap, and everybody should stay back! But not you! You had to be a fucking hero! I could have lost you, dammit! They had Gold. And Merlin. And even Robin to fix it! They’ve got magic - you haven’t!” she yelled, desperate to stop her anger from turning to tears. “Don’t…don’t you EVER do that to me again!”
There was no point in trying to defend herself. Dorothy was right; she had gone off without thinking. The wolf pulled her fiancée, struggling in annoyance, towards her and her hug tightened. Slowly, the warrior’s stiff body softened, and her rage turned into soft sobbing, tears falling on the other woman’s shoulders. "I could have lost you!" she finally whispered, choking on tears. That made Ruby feel truly awful.

“I’m so sorry Dot. You’re right, I shouldn’t have gone, and I won’t do that again without telling you. It was selfish and I’m sorry. Anyway, I only got a couple of black eyes and bruises and Gold repaired my face in the end…”

“Who else got hurt?” Dorothy continued, sobbing through her hug.

“Regina was beaten up quite badly. She was going in to theatre with a broken jaw when I left. David got knocked out. I’m not sure what happened to him. As for Emma, she got it worse than anyone on our side. Technically she died outside the clinic. Bled to death. Robin was there. He said goodbye, then he kissed her, and she suddenly came back to life. If I didn’t know better…”

“True love’s kiss? Like us?” Dorothy gasped. “But surely Robin and Emma aren’t…? Are they?”

“No idea. But I know what I saw. That funny warm wave and gold colour mist when I kissed you? Yeah, that was there. But I’d never imagined those two together! Emma and Regina, yes. And Regina and Robin definitely; but Robin and Emma? Well, who knows…”

“Well why not the three of them?” said Dorothy. “Robin, Emma and Regina? It happened to Mulan, so who’s to say?”

“Two polyamorous families in a little town like Storybrooke? That’d be something! Perhaps I should have a word with Tink. She knows all this true love stuff, after all…”

“Whatever happens, Rubes, don’t go talking to Snow about this! It’s only a theory. You think you saw true love magic. If you’re wrong, it could really cause a few problems…”

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After Merlin used his magic to remove her bruising, Regina, her stomach growling, decided to take her son into the adjacent pub, desperately hoping they were still doing food, before going back to check on Emma. She couldn’t remember when she’d last eaten. The pair were delighted to find that, despite all the commotion the little community had just witnessed, there were still people eating inside. Sitting at a table near the bar, Regina ordered herself a tomato soup (following Whale’s recommendation to help her jaw), frowning at her son when he ignored her repeated health advice by ordering a burger and fries.

“Now then, young man, tell me what happened when you ignored Robin’s specific instructions, and tried to take matters into your own hands?”

Henry swallowed, looking guilty. “Look, I know Robin and Merlin asked me to stay put, but I just couldn’t! Not when I knew you and ma were probably in there. I am not going to apologise for trying to save you both!”

Regina groaned. *He sounds so very much like David!* “I understand Henry, you’re clearly very brave, but you should have listened to them! You put yourself in great danger.”

“Like you and ma haven’t done regularly? How often did you both stop to think about what it’d mean to me, if something happened to you? Have you no idea how many evenings I had to spend at grandma and grandpa’s while you risked everything?”
She realised she was getting nowhere. *He always an answer for everything!* She decided to change tack. “Well, never mind. I want to know what happened to your mother? Two people have now told me she died! So tell me everything?”

“I never saw her till after Robin carried her outside. She was so weak mum, and everyone thought she was going to die! Then she slumped and stopped breathing. I heard Ruby say she’d gone. Grandpa Gold seemed to agree. Robin had been whispering something close to her before that; then he said something else I couldn’t hear, kissed the top of her head and after that we felt some sort of warm wave come out of her, with an odd colour, sort of golden. A second later ma just sort of burst back to life! That’s some powerful magic Robin’s got now! Bringing someone back to life - that’s just awesome!”

Regina listened intently. *Kissed the top of her head? Golden wave?*

“And you never heard what Robin whispered to your mother?”

“No. Ruby was closest to them, and she has wolf hearing after all, so she must have heard. Best ask Robin.”

“And where is he now?”

“He poofed over to the school. He wanted to make sure Spencer didn’t have any more of his thugs hiding there in wait. Mulan took out two of the guys nearby and was waiting there, just in case. And to check on Rollie & Honnie of course! He asked me to tell you. Sorry, I forgot. There’s been a few things going on…”

She smiled, quietly relieved everyone seemed to be ok, and the thought of Robin’s first concern for his, their children.

“He said he would text you once he got them. John bought him a phone at the weekend, and I loaded in all of our numbers. I’ll give you his.” Henry slid his phone from his back pocket.

Someone had already recovered Regina’s handbag and returned it to her bedside. As she delved in it, she remembered Albert Spencer had taken it from her in the auditorium. Presumably to send his message to everyone in the first place. “Henry, Spencer stole my phone, so send the text to your mother until I find it please?”

“No problem. I think Will and the guys were cleaning up after they took Spencer’s body out and took everything with them…”

The next hour flew by. After checking Emma was still asleep, they had lunch. The first hour she’s had alone with her elder son for months and, despite the slow, painful progress she made with her soup due to her still aching jaw, she’s enjoyed their time enormously. She’d so missed Henry when he left for university that, despite Emma’s best efforts, she would often find herself waking in the middle of the night, missing the young man who had turned her life around. And now, replete from a slow and enjoyable lunch together, Regina and Henry, leaving her wheelchair behind, walked slowly up to the bar, to find Will Scarlett, his back to them, with a small crowd of young adults and children, regaling them with the story of what had occurred that morning.

A young woman nursing a coffee nearby, waved to Henry, signalling him to join her. "S'cuse me mum, I'll just go talk to Bridget. Back soon..."  

Regina rolled her eyes at him as he trotted away. As a grown man, Henry did seem to be very popular with the ladies in Sherwood these days. As she stood, she listened to Will's tale:
“So there we was, face to face with the murderous former King George! He had a sword in one hand, gun in his left!” the Merry Man recounted theatrically, as the youngsters gasped, hanging on his words. “Prince Charming had slugged ‘im one in the face but, seeing his little girl, the Saviour, all curling up, writhing in pain from being shot and beaten, he got distracted, as any good dad would!”

The description of Emma writhing in pain on the floor, sent a chill through Regina. Nonetheless, she listened too:

"And that distraction gave Spencer just enough time, for the swine to crack him on the back of his head with his rifle! Charming went down…"

Regina winced at the memory. It was just like David to risk himself without thought. Like father, like daughter! But she found herself hooked:

“George pulled a hidden knife from the side of his boot; he was just about to stab Charming in the back when, whoosh! Robin fired an arrow straight into the bastard’s wrist!”

“Steady with your language there, Will! Children here, remember?” warned an elegant lady Regina hadn’t noticed till now. Caroline. Her face now restored and unblemished, just like her own. Regina smiled at her, a look immediately reciprocated. “Apologies, Miss Locksley! Heat of the moment and all that…” He looked at the children, all desperate for him to continue.

“Shush! I wanna hear the story! If you don’t like it, go away!” said one rather annoyed teenager. “Go on Will, carry on!”

“Robin was fuming! He had a go at George for trying to stab an unconscious man in the back. Then he said something like “I challenged you! Pick up your…flipping…sword and fight me, you...weasel!” Will looked up, winking at Carrie as he avoided the words Robin really used!

"Now I've seen Rob angry before, but it was nothin’ compared to this! So George raised his imperial sword and swung it! But Rob ducked as it flew over him, missing ‘im by an inch! Then Rob grabbed his arm, went in and drove his knife in! Not into his chest, but straight up through his chin, up through his throat, mouth and into his brain!”

Various sound of “Eurgh”, and “yuck!” were heard from the youths. ‘What did it sound like?” said one. “What did his eyes do?” said another, ”Did they come out?”. “Did he scream?” God, thought Regina, teenage boys can be so horrible sometimes!

“A bit ‘squelchy’ if I’m honest,” said Will, “and a look of surprise from the old git! Anyway, he died on the spot! It was quick. Better than he deserved!”

Regina knew that, despite the rather crude retelling, the basics were true. Robin had killed King George. Her former true love had ended the life of one of the most cruel tyrants, herself included. In her heart she knew he probably regretted it later. He was a kinder, more gentle soul, then her.

“After that, Rob picked up and carried the Saviour out, cos she was bleeding and really beaten up! I heard she died, and Rob used his new magic to bring her back to life!” Will exclaimed, to gasps from the younger children.

“How?” said the oldest lad in the group, disbelieving. “I heard you can’t bring anybody back from the dead! Well, no one who’s normal!”

“So how come Robin's back then, if not from the dead? Magic, lad, magic!” said Will.
Caroline, seeing a changed look on Regina’s face, decided it was best to bring the little gathering to a close. “Well, I’m sure we’ve all heard enough for today. Will and the men need to go now, as there are a few more tasks to perform. Isn’t that right Will?”

Will recognized the look, turning then to find Regina also perusing him with a curious gaze. “Erm, yeah, tasks! I best get off, I guess. Well anyway, I’ll see you all around…” and with that he stepped back, leaving a disappointed crowd.

Caroline stepped over as the children dispersed. “Regina, dear. You look so much better! How are you feeling?” Robin’s cousin collected her hands in her own. She didn’t know why but over the last week, she had connected, Regina feeling an instant warmth, a camaraderie, with this woman. Must be the Locksley factor.

“Better thank you, Carrie! Completely exhausted, but better. You look much better too. Quite a battering, wasn’t it?”

“Completely. Don’t want to ever experience that again! And Emma? I heard she took it the worst of all, and it was a close thing. How is she?”

“Asleep. She lost a lot of blood and I’m going back to her in a minute. I just came back to see if my phone was handed in.”

“Well, let’s see. John! John?” Carrie yelled across to the bar. “Any phones handed in?”

“Yup. There’s two here. Gina, how you doing?” yelled the bear of a man, putting a towel down and walking around to them.

“Lovely to see you up and about! Glad Merlin’s fixed yer. Now, give us a hug…” With that, he collected her in his arms. Regina loved Little John. After losing Robin he was one of the reasons she maintained her sanity. Just. Not just because he was her true love’s closest friend, but because he took care of her, along with Emma, in those long dark days, almost becoming a big brother to them both. She enjoyed the cuddle and his natural warmth.

“Better now we’re all out and alive. But wait - your arm? It’s injured! Why hasn’t anyone fixed it yet?”

“Oh, don’t go worrying yerself, it’s fine! There’s a few injured worse than me back there. They’ll get me sorted when they’re ready…”

Regina wasn’t having any of it. “Don’t be silly, you big lump! Here, let me…”

She stepped back to look at the bandaged arm. Taking his right arm in her hands, she magically removed the bandage to reveal a deep slice into the muscle of his forearm. Without asking, she floated her hand over the damaged tissue, a purple haze engulfing the wound, searing it shut and removing the bruising, leaving nothing but a small scar.

“Thanks, lovely. I must admit it was stinging a bit!” He pulled her back in and placed a small kiss on her forehead. She would never admit it but at times like this she really appreciated his protective way with her. As they pulled back from each other and he stepped away, she blushed slightly as Caroline wrapped an arm around her own.

“He’s so lovely, isn’t he? A gentle giant! I do so hope he can get back with Queen Elsa one day.”

“You don’t mean Queen Elsa of Arendelle, surely?”
“Yes, the very same. I gather she was as smitten with him, as he was with her, but John thought he wasn’t good enough. After all, imagine that, love between an outlaw and a queen?” she winked.

Regina couldn’t tell whether she was being teased or not. “Well, after all the love and support he’s given me these last few years, I for one would think any woman, queen or not, would consider herself blessed to have someone like John! He’s a very special human being…”

Caroline smiled. “You’re right, very special indeed. Now then, I best not distract you. I need to get back to the clinic. Victor’s been working solid in the operating theatre all day, so I need to drag him out of there somehow. You go take care of your lady, and I’ll perhaps see you a little later?”

“I’d like that. And Carrie?” The other woman responded with a nod. “Come over to lunch sometime? Have some proper time with your niece and nephew?”

“I’d like that. Look after yourself, Regina, and that lovely family of yours. I’ve already fallen in love with Roland and Honour, and your Henry over there is a fine, strapping young man. He does you proud.” She pulled her into a warm embrace, pressing a cheek to hers. "See you later."

As Caroline left, Regina looked to her son, still engaged in a conversation with the young woman from earlier. She sighed as she saw the woman pick something, perhaps a loose cotton, off Henry’s sweater and stroke his arm tenderly. She couldn’t help but feel a little envy for the attention he was now sharing with women of his own age, rather than his mothers. "Oh well. Best see how Emma’s getting on."
Please let me go Home?

Chapter Summary

Emma just wants to go home. Victor wants that too. Tinker Bell delivers an uncomfortable truth...

Chapter 23

As he chatted with Bridget, Henry received the text from Daisy, a nurse working in the new clinic, telling him that Emma was now awake. He went back into the post-op room, to find Regina had once again returned to his other mother, and they now lay side-by-side on the single gurney, Emma’s head resting on Regina’s shoulder. She looked slightly better, bored and very irritable.

“Oh, you’re back then? Had a nice lunch with your mum? I thought you’d wandered off and left me. I’ve been bored stiff here!”

He rolled his eyes. “Don’t be silly ma, you’ve been asleep an hour and a half! Daisy’s been texting me every twenty minutes. She told me you’ve just woken up. We’ve been close by the whole time.”

“Daisy?” both mothers replied simultaneously. “And who, pray, is Daisy?” said Regina.

“Another girl, Hen? Should we be worried?” said Emma. “What about Vi? I hope you’re being careful!”

Henry chuckled. “Mums, stop, both of you! Daisy’s a friend who happens to work here. She’s Vi’s friend, too.”

The mothers exchanged looks. They knew he was popular with the girls, since he’d returned from university, all broad chested and muscular, but they couldn’t help being protective. Moments later, doors from the surgery opened and Merlin’s daughter, Annabelle, appeared before them wearing surgical scrubs, scrub cap and a tired smile. It was obvious she had just come out of theatre.

“How’s it going in there?” asked Henry.

“Not too bad,” she sighed wearily. “Dad’s gone back in to relieve poor old Victor. He’s been operating for a good few hours now. Anyway, never mind us, how are you two feeling?”

“I’m fine and ready to leave!” griped Emma. “So, take this IV out, and sign me off or do something so I can get out of here? I’m sure you’ve got more important cases to tend to!”

“How’s it going in there?” asked Henry.

“Not too bad,” she sighed wearily. “Dad’s gone back in to relieve poor old Victor. He’s been operating for a good few hours now. Anyway, never mind us, how are you two feeling?”

“I’m fine and ready to leave!” griped Emma. “So, take this IV out, and sign me off or do something so I can get out of here? I’m sure you’ve got more important cases to tend to!”

“Not so fast, Mrs Swan-Mills! Only Doctor Whale can discharge you, as he has all your notes and can give you the once-over. You had a very serious injury, and lost a lot of blood. We’ve been giving you plasma, but we need to make sure your vitals are ok before we let you go. The consequences of not doing so are serious!”

Emma groaned as Regina moved to hold her hand. “Whale? Not him. Oh, for god’s sake…”

Anna’s happy demeanour changed in an instant at Emma’s behaviour. “Oh, and I suggest you to keep a civil tongue in your head when Doctor Whale sees you! If you’ll forgive my language, he’s
worked fucking hard this afternoon and saved several lives. He’s been through the wringer physically and mentally, and the last thing he needs is some bitchy, asinine comments!”

“I BEG YOUR PARDON!” growled Regina, furious at the woman. “How dare you!”

“Fair point, mums!” interrupted Henry to a look of astonishment from his mothers, “you’re both always horrible to Victor and it’s time you packed it in! As Ruby and Dorothy told you the other day, people in Sherwood think well of him, even if you don’t! He’s a local hero in the forest too. Mum, you damaged his life a lot more than he’s damaged yours. You may not like what Doctor Anna said, but it’s the truth. It’s time for you both to drop the sarcasm!”

Emma hated her son talking to them like that. Her immediate instinct was to get angry, but seeing the equally annoyed look on his own face, and remembering what happened between them just a few days before, she scowled and stayed silent. Anna knew her remark had made them angry but didn’t care. *These bitches need to realise the world doesn’t just revolve around them! Her parents had long ago told her how to handle bullies and angry people, and she knew she could take these two on, no problem!*

“Now then, I’m going to complete my checks on your blood pressure and heart. If everything’s ok, I will ask Doctor Whale for his opinion and whether to sign you out. We don’t detain you any more than necessary!”

“And if I just get up and leave anyway?” Emma continued. “What’ll you do about it?” she challenged.

“Nothing. Although it would be incredibly stupid of you! Don’t be surprised to find that after your trauma, it’s unlikely your magic will return immediately. I know as I also have magic too! If you have a relapse after leaving here, without proper attention it is quite possible that you could die! So, you can either act like a petulant child, or you can listen to medical advice from highly trained professionals, stop treating their care as a major inconvenience to you, and wait for a little while longer!”

Emma had never been challenged so aggressively since becoming the Saviour. She was genuinely shocked at how assertive the young woman was, but her instinct to come back at her was tempered by the irritated look from her son. She glanced at Regina, who was similarly stunned. Henry chuckled at the exchange, earning glares from both.

“Not nice, getting it back, is it mums?” he chuckled. “She’s right! Be patient and wait. Just like everyone else.”

At that moment the door burst open again as Merlin and Victor Whale entered. The Sorcerer immediately picked up on the tension between the women and his daughter. “Ah, Annabelle my dear. Would you kindly assist Nurse Evans in theatre? She’s having issues with suturing a patient, and a guiding hand would go amiss.”

Annabelle flashed a look at the wives. “Sure! I was just about to run blood tests here, so…”

“Not a problem, Anna” said a clearly exhausted Victor Whale, “I’ll finish off here. Thanks for your help.”

As Annabelle moved to leave the room, her father stepped up to her, lifting her hands in his. “Darling, a small favour? Celia’s arrived a short while ago! She texted me and apparently, she’s just checked into Granny’s Diner in Storybrooke and your brother is supposed to be arriving shortly. Would you be a darling and meet them? Help them get checked in, show them around, that sort of
thing? I’ll be working with Victor for a couple more hours, but I’ll definitely get to you by eight.”

Anna smiled at her father. She had to admit, she was pooped, so a little rest and time with her own family was more than welcome. “Sure, dad. But don’t do your usual trick and work late, all right?”

He pulled her into a gentle embrace. “I promise, my love. It’s the first time my babies have all been together for a while. You really think I’m going to miss that?” He smiled, giving her a peck on the top of her head before sending her on her way.

Victor smiled at the little exchange. “You have a lovely daughter there, Professor. She was a huge help earlier today with the first injuries that came in, and she’s streets ahead of me on modern technique. I’ve learnt a lot just from having her in theatre.”

“Thank you, Victor, I’ll tell her you said that. She’s my youngest girl, a little headstrong but very bright. Incredibly perceptive. She has her mother’s looks too. God, I miss her.”

Regina watched the exchange between the two doctors, feeling as though she and Emma were invisible. She always prided herself on being a centre of attention in any group but here were these damn men virtually ignoring them. The cheek of it! Like they were just two patients not the Saviour and the Queen!

“Ahem! Gentlemen, are you going to stand there talking all day, or see to my wife?”

She instantly regretted it, as Merlin turned to face her, going from smiling to giving her one of the most condescending looks she had ever received since her mother.

“My apologies, Mrs. Swan-Mills. You must forgive us, we’ve only been spending the last four hours in theatre saving lives. Including yours, I may add! Now, I suggest you change your attitude whilst here. I heard my daughter tearing a strip off you earlier on and I have to say I have some sympathy. Everyone is equal in this place and everyone deserves equal treatment!” he berated her like a child. “Now, I’m going to leave you in Victor’s capable hands and go back to clearing up some of the human mess another royal with an inflated sense of importance left behind. So, if you’ll excuse me!” he finished, turning away from them to leave.

“I beg your par-” she was interrupted by Emma’s hand gripping her own. “Not now, babe! Please?”

Victor looked at the pair of them. While he and Regina always held each other in equal contempt, it was the Saviour and her family that caused him the most pain over the last decade. Her father hated him for his brief fling with Snow White that one evening many years ago. Snow hated him for his curt manner with her husband. Then their daughter, who had magically thrown him against the wall for no fucking reason several times. They brought traumas and injuries, some life threatening, to him regularly and expected him to drop everything, every other patient, for them. They were self-important and a pain, and he just wanted shot of them. Nonetheless, he was a professional. At least he was going to New York soon!

“Now Emma, I know you want to get out of here as soon as possible. I want the same! So, to achieve that it’s very simple. I need to know that your blood pressure has stabilized, your wounds have healed internally, not just the external parts, your heart is regular and you are fit enough to walk, at least to a wheelchair. So, let me get on with it and let’s hope. Henry, as I need to examine her, could you kindly wait outside a moment?”

Henry smiled, nodded and turned to them. “Sure. Mums, remember now…patience!” His mothers glared back.
Ok, Emma, first let’s check your heart - loosen your top please?” He said, pulling up his stethoscope. Emma obliged without further comment. As he checked her heart rate, Emma saw his face close-up. *Shit, he looks exhausted!* “Er…Wha…Doctor Whale, how long have you been awake?”

“Too long, frankly! Merlin called me to come over just after I finished night shift at Storybrooke. But there’s no choice. There were over thirty-three seriously injured. Most of them from the battle outside the clinic. Stabbings and gunshot wounds mainly.”

“Thirty-three? Gasped Regina, “Our side or theirs?”

“Mostly theirs, though we had a few late arrivals. I think your father added to the total quite well. Surprising, as he’d already had a head wound of his own before he left here. The stabbings didn’t help.”

“DAD? He’s hurt? What’s wrong with him? Gina, I need to see my dad, now!” panicked Emma.

“Calm yourself, Emma,” said the medic. “I meant he increased the injured on their side. Forgive my language, but he beat seven bells of shit out of Colonel Smith when he found out he hurt you! He hospitalized two more villains near the town hall before Robin Locksley pulled him off and calmed him down. Quite an aggressive fighter, your father, judging by the injuries!”

Emma felt an odd mix of annoyance that her father had put himself at risk, losing his temper because of her, and pride that he recovered quickly enough to beat the bad guys. “Is he hurt?”

“Some cuts and a minor head wound from the battle. I gather Spencer slammed a rifle into his head. He refused treatment and Robin took him to the school when he regained consciousness.”

A silence passed as Whale wrapped the sphygmomanometer sleeve around her arm and inflated, watching the reading closely while measuring her pulse. “Hmm. A little lower than I would like, to be honest.”

Crestfallen, Emma looked to her wife, who squeezed her hand in reassurance. Having listened to her son and Merlin, she decided on a different tack from usual. “Doctor Whale? Please? I just want to go home…”

He looked at her closely. *There was a risk.* “Look… I want that too. I shouldn’t do this, as you’re still not ready; but…I will sign you out, but only on a couple of strict conditions.” He looked at her wife, who also seemed to be pleading with her eyes. “First, your wife takes you straight home, and you spend at least the next 48 hours resting. No jumping around, nothing! I mean bed rest, read a book, watch TV but nothing on your feet!” He aimed the next one at Regina. “Second, you call me or the hospital, the minute she becomes listless or in any way unresponsive! Then check her pupils regularly to see if there’s any change, particularly if they’re larger. I mean that one. It’s important! Then finally… No magic during your convalescence! It could exhaust you enough to make you lose consciousness. So, do I have your agreement?”

Emma silently nodded. “Good, otherwise I’ll have to send Doctor Sage over to give you another ‘pep talk’!” he chuckled to himself, ignoring the silent glares from both women. “Just before you leave, I’ll ask a nurse to disconnect your IV and give you some of our ‘industrial-strength’ pain killers for the aching shoulder. Well now, more patients to see…”

“Erm. Doctor Whale?” The older woman called before he left. “Yes Regina?”

“I… I want to apologise! Henry’s right. I have treated you rather…poorly, in the past and…well, some of it wasn’t deserved. I have many faults, and I’m trying to fix them. I find saying sorry very
difficult but, Doctor Sage was right. I have been a bitch to you in the past, but I’m…I’m sorry. I’ll try harder in future.”

Whale looked at her, seeing her obvious discomfort and smiled, before Emma added, “I’m sorry too, for being arrogant and bossy and rude. You didn’t deserve that.”

He looked at both women, who were clearly uncomfortable. “Well, I have to admit, I have always found you and your family some of my more…challenging…patients, but I accept your apologies. And I will also try to be less…well, less me!” all three quietly smirked at that.

“Caroline Locksley speaks very fondly of you…Victor,” said Regina. “Are you…together?”

“Early days yet, but yes, we are dating. She’ll be coming with me when I go back to New York to continue my training. She’s an intelligent, wonderful woman with a big heart. I don’t deserve her but, well, I hoping…”

Emma smiled, realising she’d been a fool for ever being jealous of Robin’s cousin, who just wanted to be a friend to her wife. She smiled back. “Well she’s also very beautiful, and quite a catch. Good luck!”

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Twenty minutes later, Emma and Regina shuffled slowly out of the forest clinic, Emma still exhausted. Henry was there, outside reception, to greet them. “Ok mums. Victor’s already had a word, let’s get you back home…”

“Where’s your car, Hen?” Emma asked.

“At home. I don’t need it. We’ll just poof there…”

“The correct word is ‘apparate’ Henry,” corrected Regina. “And we're not supposed to use magic. At least, not until your mother is properly rested.”

Henry just stepped in front, taking Emma’s right and Regina’s left hands in his own. “You won’t be. I will…”

Seconds later, a familiar swirl and the three were in the mansion’s living room. “HENRY! Tell us before you do something like that! Your mother’s fragile at the moment!”

“Sorry mums - just thought it would be quicker!” he grinned.

---

Same day – a little earlier.

After the clinic had been secured, Robin had earlier decided to help David Nolan. He apparated at the school gates, wary of any potential attack from any of Spencer’s remaining thugs. While desperate to see how Regina was recovering, knowing Emma would also be there, made him feel anxious and confused.

_I kissed her and woke her up. I kissed her! She said she loved me. I said I loved her. Magic. She woke up! It can’t be. I’m still in love with Regina. They’re married for god’s sake! I don’t have feelings for Emma, do I?_ His mind was an emotional whirlwind as he considered what happened.
What do I do? Get a grip Robin or you’re really going to screw up their marriage! How the hell do I explain how she came back? How do I…? He felt utterly confused, slowly becoming aware someone was talking to him. Charming.

“Robin? Robin! Where did you go?” David laughed, “I think we lost you there for a minute! You seem miles away!”

“Sorry, David, just a lot on my mind…”

“Is this about killing Spencer? Robin, you had no other choice. I’ve ended quite a few men’s lives in combat, and it doesn’t get any easier, does it?” David placed a reassuring hand on his shoulder.

“It’s not that. It’s just…”

“I need to thank you for what you did for Emma. I saw how badly beaten she was, and Ruby said my girl almost bled to death! She said you pulled her out and did some magic on her outside? Henry texted me. I’ll forever be in your debt, Robin. The thought of losing her…” David’s eyes teared up at the thought.

“All’s well that ends well, David. I’m sure Regina’s taking good care of her. I’m just pleased she…”

“DAVID!” screamed the petite brunette figure from the school entrance. The bell for end of the school day hadn’t sounded yet, but the Head Mistress was charging toward them. “David! I just spoke to Ruby. You were hurt too?” she looked anxiously at the bandage strapped around his forehead and within moments crashed into him with a tight embrace. “What happened? How’s Emma? Regina? I heard they’re home now. David?”

David just enjoyed the hug, holding his true love as her tears started to fall. “It’s ok now, Snow! I’ll tell you all about it later. Emma took a beating, and she was shot, but she’s fixed now, tired and resting. We can go see her later. However, she owes her life to this man…” he said, pointing to the outlaw.

It was only then she noticed Robin. Releasing her husband, she skipped across, grabbing him soundly in an equally tight bear hug.

“Robin, Ruby told me what you did! Thank you, thank you! I owe my baby’s life to you. You have no idea…” a tear lightly soaking his jacket as he continued holding her gently, looking across at a smiling David. “Snow, I was just pleased to help. I’m glad she’s on the mend.”

She stepped back, lifting his hands up with her own to kiss the back of them. “No, seriously, I’ll never forget this, Robin! Ruby told me you carried her out, and stopped her bleeding to death. She thought we’d lost her! To think I somehow thought you hated her, because of Regina…”

“No, no, stop! Snow, I have never hated Emma! I may have been upset Regina moved on, but it was only three weeks for me, and five years for her! I guess I now know what it must have been like for her when Marian came back. Or who I thought was Marian. Emma’s good for Regina, and they’re clearly in love, so though I’m sad she’s moved on, I’m happy for them. Plus, Emma’s helped look after Honour and Roland when I couldn’t. So, I’m trying to get to know her too…” he was careful how far to go with this.

“No, no! Snow, I have never hated Emma! I may have been upset Regina moved on, but it was only three weeks for me, and five years for her! I guess I now know what it must have been like for her when Marian came back. Or who I thought was Marian. Emma’s good for Regina, and they’re clearly in love, so though I’m sad she’s moved on, I’m happy for them. Plus, Emma’s helped look after Honour and Roland when I couldn’t. So, I’m trying to get to know her too…” he was careful how far to go with this.

“Is that why you and my daughter were spotted in the back of a limousine coming back into Storybrooke early this morning?” Snow smiled but the question was still there. God, the Charming’s had spies everywhere!

“Well, yes. We went out for a bite to eat. I borrowed Professor Sage’s friend’s car. Sort of a getting-
to-know-each-other meal. We didn’t want to be overheard. It was Regina’s idea.”

Snow looked up into the deep blue eyes. “You’re a good man, Robin of Locksley! I admit, I was worried when Zeus sent you back. I felt sure Regina would… I couldn’t bear Emma being left alone again. Not after…”

“Not going to happen, Snow! They have true love and they deserve each other.”

“They do. So, you’ve come to collect Honour and Roland and take them back?” Snow wiped a few loose tears from her cheeks.

“Yes, although with hindsight, I wonder if I could ask a small favour…”

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In Mifflin Street, Henry and his mothers’ sat at the dinner table, Emma having her first meal since the operation. Regina figured hot chicken soup and soft rolls were the most her jaw could manage and enough for Emma, before she sent her off to bed. As they finished the meal, Regina voiced something bothering her.

“I’m surprised nobody’s seen Guyliner anywhere? I’m sure he would have got word back from Robin about Spencer and the clinic? I always thought he liked a decent scrap?”

“He’s not on land, mum. I know Little John gave him a mobile phone like Robin’s, because I have the number, but Killian took the Jolly out on sea trials early this morning…” said Henry, “He wouldn’t know what’s been going on here as he wasn’t within range of a signal. He wouldn’t have got any messages. It’s his last chance tomorrow if the ship needs any repairs. He’s got the two weddings on Friday, then sails on the high tide early Saturday morning.”

“TWO weddings? I know about Ruby and Dorothy, but who else is getting married at such short notice?”

“Mulan, Philip and Aurora. They hadn’t fixed their date but apparently, Rory took one look at all the wedding bunting, flowers and stuff on the Jolly when they prepped it yesterday and decided to take advantage. Archie’s doing their service and Robin’s going to be Philip’s Best Man. Mulan’s pregnant, so they didn’t want to waste any time and didn’t want a fuss. I’m going to both! I’ve never seen a poly wedding before…”

“How come you know all this, Henry?” said Regina. “We certainly haven’t been invited.”

“I have an interest in other people, mum, not just family! As for invitations, there aren’t any. Philip wanted to keep this informal as, although he’s technically a prince, he and Aurora always hated all that formal royal stuff. He said we’re all invited, children too. It’s at midday, a couple hours after Ruby’s. You going to come?”

Regina frowned. “I’m not sure. Your mother’s still recovering, and I don’t want her being left alone too long. I’ll go to Ruby and Dorothy’s, as Honour’s a bridesmaid and Roland’s a pageboy, but after that…”

Emma interrupted. “Don’t be daft, Gina. You should go! I’ll be fine here. Anyway, you love all that stuff…”

“Hmm. We’ll decide in the morning. Anyway, Henry, would you help me clear up? I’m sending your mum to bed soon as she needs the rest. And no arguments from you, madam!” she said curtly to Emma, who promptly poked her tongue out at her.
About an hour later, with Emma, she thought, soundly asleep, Regina sat nursing a book in the living room when the door knocker slammed. She’d recognized the magic signal outside and stood to check the arrival, moving to open the front door.

“Hi Mum!” yelled Roland, racing forward and jumping up to place a wet, sticky kiss on her cheek before racing around her to his bedroom, not waiting for a response.

“And hello to you too Roland!” she yelled to his departing frame, albeit with a wide smile, realising that, though he was none the wiser, that was a greeting she almost lost forever earlier today. Honour strolled slowly inside, laden with a bag, a cut out cardboard figure from school and her lunch box. “Hi Mummy!”

“Hello, my love” her mother cooed, bending on her knee to cuddle the child she never thought capable of bearing. “Did you have a nice day?”

“Yes, Mummy. We had stories and later I saw grandpa and daddy. I wanted to play with daddy, but he had to go…” she frowned at the last words, looking sullen. Regina smiled. She’s fallen in love with him already.

“I’m sure you’ll see him very soon, my love. He’s been a little bit busy today. Your papa was very brave and helped a lot of people, so he’s probably a bit tired.” As she kissed the top of her head she saw who had brought them safely home. “Hello, Tink. Everything ok?”

“Hi. Yes, fine. Rob asked me to drop Honnie & Rollie off, as he had to get back to the forest. I heard about everything that happened at the clinic today. Is Emma ok? Are you?”

“We’re both ok now, but it was a little too close for comfort!”

“And the kiss?”

“Kiss? I’m sorry, what kiss? I don’t understand!”

The fairy realised she may have spoken too soon. “Oh…nothing…I needed to ask Emma about something. Is she around?’

“Tink, she had a massive blood transfusion earlier, so she’s resting up and probably asleep. I’d rather she wasn’t disturbed.”

Henry’s heavy steps bouncing down the stairs interrupted them. “No, she’s awake mum! She’s asking for some painkillers Victor gave you? Said she’s got a headache. Hi Tink!”

“Hello Henry! You’re looking well. You seem to grow by the day!”


Tinker Bell chuckled, blushing at the compliment. “New magic actually! And thank you, kind sir, for the compliment! My powers have been restored, not just the wings…” The news had surprised Regina earlier, as she knew about Blue’s previous refusal to give back magic to her most independent minded fairy.

“Blue gave you your magic back? How on earth did you persuade her?”

“I didn’t. Merlin did. I think he’s somehow got to her; she’s always had a ‘thing’ for him. So she’s now going around correcting a few ‘mistakes’. Nova’s allowed to be with Leroy, Silvermist can leave to find Will and me, well I’ve been given my powers back. Good timing, as I’m sailing with
“I’m going to miss you. Wait - Rosie Sage? Merlin’s daughter? Why on earth is she going off with Guyliner? I heard he was going away for months, possibly years?”

“She and Killian have been, well, seeing each other these last two days. It’s all very new but, well, who knows?”

“Does Merlin know about this? I can’t see him being delighted at her dating him of all people!”

“He knows. They talked. It’s early days yet and they’re both taking it very slow.”

“Wonders never cease! Oh well, I best take Emma her pills. Thank you for dropping the children off, but I’d best be going up there…”

“Ooh, that reminds me,” said the fairy, taking a package from a small carrier bag. “Victor asked me to drop these off for her. He said they’re from the hospital and stronger than the ones he prescribed at the clinic. He asked me to tell her how to use them although I think he also needs me to check on her, to make sure she’s not trying to work or do magic or anything…”

Regina scowled. “That man is getting too big for his boots! How dare he…”

“That man is also the man who rewired your jaw earlier! The man who has worked himself to death the last few days. So, go easy on him. He’s thinking of Emma’s health; don’t knock it.”

“Why does everyone keep lecturing me on Victor-bloody-Whale and treating him right?” Regina harrumphed, “Go on then. Take them up to her and see for yourself. You know the room…”

Emma lay in bed, grouchy. She’d been asleep since they arrived, and woke with her whole arm and chest throbbing. Hearing the door open, she growled, “Where the hell did you go, Hen? I only asked to get my pills, not make the bloody things! My shoulder’s killing me!” Then, seeing it wasn’t her son or wife, “I…oh! It’s you! Sorry Tink.”

The fairy, now moving to the bedside with a small package and a glass of water, gave her a sad smile. “Hello, Emma. I’m sorry you’re still feeling rough! Victor’s given me some hospital-strength tablets to help ease the pain. He said he didn’t have them to hand in the forest but got them from Storybrooke. Apparently, you’re to take two before bed, stay away from alcohol or work and don’t even think about driving anywhere.”

“No argument there,” she said, grabbing the box. “Doctor’s orders. No problem…” She burst two tablets from their foil and swallowed the water in a single gulp.

“Emma, you’ve probably got a few questions? About the kiss?”

“Eh, what kiss? What’re you talking…” she stopped, seeing Tink’s frown.

“You KNOW what I’m talking about Emma. THE kiss. The one that brought you back to life.”

Emma looked like a startled rabbit, unsure what to say next. But she had to say something, if only to stop where she knew the fairy was going with her question. However, Tinker Bell saved her the time.

“To answer the question you’re avoiding, yes, it was True Love’s Kiss! Robin brought you back to life with True Love’s Kiss! You’re feeling confused, in denial, and so is he…”
The best form of defence is either attack…or denial; Emma decided to use the latter approach. She guffawed.

Loudly. So loudly and so fake that even Honour would have seen through it. “You’re joking, right? Robin and Me? That’s the most ridiculous thing I ever heard! I am so not in love with Robin! How could you even think…”

“I have my powers back, Emma. I’m a fairy! I know the magic from True Love’s kiss, and I felt it when he kissed you! We all did. Blue, Merlin, Rumplestiltskin. Everyone with magic would have felt it and anyone with experience would know. Henry felt it, but his magic is new so he didn’t recognize it. I talked to the Dark One later and he confirmed it. I thought Regina must have too, but she was in the clinic, a place without magic, when it happened. But it did happen Emma. It did!”

Emma, the ache in her shoulder temporarily forgotten, started to panic. “That’s impossible! Robin doesn’t love me and I don’t love him! We’re friends. That’s it. What about Regina? I love her. I’m in love with her! I couldn’t…she…I…I…” she looked away, then “You haven’t told her, have you?”

Seeing the now hyperventilating Saviour, Tink placed a hand on her arm, trying to reassure her. “No, I haven’t. But someone is bound to, so you need to tell her, Emma!”

“I can’t! I just can’t! It would kill her. She’s lost so much.”

“Who says Regina’s losing anything? I’ve known her a long time, long enough to know she loves you and I believe you love her too. Love requires honesty. You need to tell her, Emma.”

Emma turned from her without another word, curling into a ball under the sheets and hoping to god the pain would go and leave her to think. Fortunately, Whale’s ‘industrial-strength’, as he referred to it, medication took effect and sleep overwhelmed her. Tink stood quietly by as the body calmed, pulling the blanket over her shoulders and leaving the room. ‘Goodnight, Emma.” She whispered, “pleasant dreams.”
What do you Want, Regina?

Chapter Summary

Regina goes to Merlin's family gathering. Robin's there...

Chapter 24

The Mansion

“You’re going out AGAIN? Henry, your mother and I have hardly seen anything of you since you got back from Harvard! What are you doing tonight that’s so important, you need to abandon your mothers yet again? Violet? Are we so old and boring that you can’t bear to stay in for one evening with us?”

“Mum, don’t be silly! I love you both, but I want to catch up with Robin and the guys. The rest of Merlin’s family are coming in tonight, and he’s hosting a barbeque for them at the pub. His son and oldest daughter have come from England, and Blue tells me it’s the first time they’ve all been together for quite some time. Apparently, all Merlin’s children have serious magical abilities. So, I thought I’d like to meet them. Grandpa David and Grandpa Gold are going to be there. Why don’t you come?”

Regina felt deflated. Nobody had bothered to tell her about the evening. Five years ago, she and Emma were the centre of the community, the most powerful magicians, if you forget Gold, and heroes in the town. Nothing seemed to happen without one of them knowing about it. Now it seemed they’d been overlooked. Robin and Hook’s return, plus Merlin and his family, had made news throughout and everybody wanted to see them or be with them. The former queen and the Saviour seemed to count for less these days. Regina felt like it was party night and she was the girl without a date. Well she did have one, but that date was asleep!

“Seriously, come with me mum! I’m sure ma wouldn’t mind. She can rest on the couch and take care of Honnie and Roland? They’ll be in bed soon anyway. Come on mum, come with me!”

She looked at him, now a good few inches taller than her, and smiled. It would be wonderful to have an evening out with him; and to see Robin again. Try as she might, her thief was never far from her thoughts and, although it had only been four nights since they’d lain together, she itched for him. Saturday night had been blissful. It wasn’t just the sex. It was him. Her former lover. Those few hours they had spent, her wife and her lover, had been the best night of her life. Fight it as much as she could, she ached for him.

“I would love to Henry, I really would. But your mother is in no fit state to be left.”

“I agree.” said a voice from the stairs as the green fairy joined them. “Regina, you should go. Spend some time with Henry and enjoy yourself. I’ll babysit Honour and Roland. After all, it’s the last chance I’ll get to spend some time with them for quite a while. And if she wakes, I’ll tell Emma what’s happening. I wasn’t planning on doing anything tonight anyway.”
“There you go, mum, problem solved!” said Henry. “Thanks Tink, I don’t get to spend much time with her these days. So, now mum, come with me?” He pouted, knowing she wouldn’t be able to resist.

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It was only seven thirty, yet The Earl of Locksley was busy. A small crowd had also gathered outside on the lawn, close to the large barbeque that had been set up in the forecourt. Close by, a pig roast was being held, both being presided over by Merry Men. Delicious smells of roasting meat filled the air. Inside the pub, a small group circled around two men standing at the bar front.

“Robin, you already now know Anna and Rosie. I’d like you to meet my other two children. This is Celia…” Merlin pointed to a tall, elegant blonde. A little slimmer and less voluptuous than her younger sisters, she stood a good two inches taller. “Celia’s my eldest girl and she lives in England, with her husband and my two strapping grandsons.” He said proudly. “Celia’s runs an IT company. I still don’t quite understand what she does but it seems to pay well!”

Robin stepped forward, taking her hand. “I’m delighted to meet you, Celia. Robin of Locksley, at your service.”


“My boys are never going to believe this! The real-life Robin Hood! I so have to get a selfie!” With that, she pulled out her phone, handing it to one of her sisters. “Anna – do the honours, would you?” The younger Sage rolled her eyes as her eldest sister turned to stand next to Robin, wrapping an arm around his back. Anna took several pictures of the pair of them before handing the phone back.

“Jack and Jacob are going to be seriously miffed they missed this!” said Celia, “You’re one of Jack’s all-time heroes! I still can’t believe I’m standing next to the Prince of Thieves!” she simpered. Robin looked a little embarrassed at all the attention. “Well I hope you’re not too disappointed. I think my fame may be exaggerated.”

“Nonsense,” said Merlin. “From your performance today, I would say it is altogether justified. Now, let me also introduce you to my son, Charles. Charlie, meet Robin Hood. Or I should say, Robin of Locksley.”

Robin looked up as a very tall, broad chested, dark haired and lightly bearded man stepped forward to shake his hand. Charlie looked to be in his mid-twenties and even Robin recognized he was seriously handsome. And judging from the admiring glances from a number of the women close by, including Ruby & Dorothy, it was clear they definitely thought so too. Ruby almost looked smitten.

“Like Cee said, awesome to meet you Robin! Definitely one for the album.” The large man had a firm grip and looked like he’d just met a pop idol.

About ten feet away from the men, Dorothy whispered to her fiancée, “Rubes, that guy is fucking gorgeous!”

The wolf tittered, “Too right! What you say we take him back Saturday for our wedding night treat?”

As the pair giggled into fits of laughter, trying to keep their voices down, Ruby was horrified to find Charlie turned his head to look straight at them. Judging by his raised brows, it was clear he had somehow heard everything! The young man smirked at them before nodding his head, to almost acknowledge it. “Yes, I did!”
They hadn’t spotted Regina and Harry. The pair had entered the room a few minutes earlier. The former mayor froze on seeing a tall, blonde woman wrapping her arm around the back of Robin. How dare she! Then, realizing Anna, Merlin’s daughter, was taking pictures she saw the likeness between the two young women. She was obviously Merlin’s older daughter.

“Ah, Regina!” Merlin called, when he saw her. “So pleased you were able to come! How’s Emma feeling?”

Regina suddenly felt awkward, now being the centre of attention around people she didn’t know. “She’s resting, thank you. Needs a lot more sleep…”

“Of course. The tablets Victor sent over with Tink would knock a rhino out! Now, let me introduce you…”

The next few minutes went by smoothly enough. Regina was introduced to all Merlin’s children. She’d never been in the presence of so many magical beings all together before, and she felt the sheer magical force emanating from the group to be quite intimidating. Merlin’s daughters clearly possessed high levels of light magic. However when she shook the hand of Charlie, his son, she recognized the heady mix of light and dark magic combined. She looked into his rich chocolate brown eyes and immediately picked up the look of interest coming from the young man.

“I’m delighted to meet you too…Regina.” The way he pronounced her name sent a thrill down her spine. He was flirting with her! With an intensity she hadn’t seen since…since…him!

He then spotted the wedding ring on her finger, so reigned in his ‘pursuit’. “I see you’re married? Your husband is a very lucky man indeed!”

Regina’s cheeks blushed. “My ‘wife’ actually! And yes, she is a lucky woman…as I keep reminding her,” she said with a smirk. Charlie, probably no more than five or six years older than Henry, was completely unabashed. Damn, she hoped she’d embarrassed him!

“Quite right too! A good wife is also hard to find! Now then dad, why are you hiding out here in Storybrooke?”

Regina watched the energy between Merlin and his four children. He was clearly thrilled to have them all together and it was obvious they were close. The friendly bitching and verbal jousting between them all continued as Regina noticed Robin was missing. It’s then she realized she hadn’t even spoken to him this evening. In years past, he would have been locked to her side. But now. It almost seemed like he was avoiding her. She made her excuses and left the group, walking to the bar to see Friar Tuck’s smiling features.

‘Hello, my dear. Looking for someone?’

“Have you seen Robin?”

“I saw him step out the back, towards the clinic, a couple of minutes after you came in.”

It took a while to find him, sitting on his own on a bench close to the lake, silently looking out over the water. As the sun set, she recognized the Jolly Roger’s sails a good mile or so in the distance, a dark outline against the low moon. She silently walked over to sit next to him.

“HE seems to have avoided most of today’s little ‘events’” she said, looking at the sailing ship in the distance.

He turned, startled out of his thoughts. “Regina! Oh…I’m…um…sorry? I was miles away. What did you say?”
“I was referring to Guyliner and his ship - are you avoiding me? Robin, you never came to check up on me! After, well, you and Spencer... You never came.”

“I’m sorry, Gina. I was somewhat occupied, and everything went so fast. By the time I…dealt with Spencer…they’d collected you. Emma was lying in a pool of blood and looked to be in the worst state of all. We needed to get out of there and get magic into her fast!” he said, defensively.

“I’m sorry, that sounded selfish of me. And thank you, Robin, thank you for saving her life! We’ll never be able to thank you enough. Though, you could have come to see me later?” she pouted with her head to one side, fully realizing she sounded like an ungrateful child. God, why am still like this around this man?

“David needed help. Magical help. For all we knew, Spencer could have had more guards circling the school. He did have two spies guarding the place and two more on the gates. I thought you were in good hands! Henry was texting me the whole time, so I knew Emma was with you after your surgery, so I just thought…” He drifted off.

“Tell me how you did it?” she asked, “Emma? They seem to think you brought her back from the dead! Several people have told me she died in front of the clinic. How, Robin?”

Robin flinched, trying to find a way to answer, without actually answering. “Well… ‘magic’, I guess?! I had Merlin’s knowledge in here,” he said, touching his head, “removing the bullet was straightforward enough. I sort of ‘wished’ it out of her. I’m not sure about the rest. There was a lot of blood and once I sealed the wound I kind of wished it to happen… Heck, you’re more familiar with this stuff than I am, Regina!”

“I may be experienced but Zeus sent you back with more powers than any of us! More powers than I’ve ever seen before. Mind reading, auto-suggestion, splitting yourself up like you did last night. You’re sort of up there with Merlin, even if you don’t know how to control all of it yet. Unless Zeus commands it, I’ve never heard of anyone being brought back from the dead with magic alone! The only way I know of is…is…” her breath hitched. No, that…that can’t be it!

They sat quietly, watching the former pirate ship, silhouetted against a low moon, tacking and jibing against and wind, then straightening itself, the captain clearly testing the vessel. Robin was the first to speak. “So how are you feeling now? By the way, you look terrific! That’s a beautiful blue dress.”

When anyone else complimented her appearance, Regina tended to ignore it, brushing it off, having spent a lifetime being ogled. But with Robin, and Emma, it was just…just…different. It meant something, which probably explained why she often blushed in front of them. As she was doing now.

“Thank you. It’s one of Emma’s, actually! She keeps buying dresses like this, then keeps telling herself it doesn’t quite fit. Or she’s put on weight. Or she looks ugly in it. It’s very frustrating.”

Robin guffawed. “Seriously? How could she ever look ugly? She’s stunning.”

She nodded in agreement. “I know. It’s ridiculous, but she keeps doing it. It took me ages to get her out of wearing those leather jackets and jeans every day. She’s got the most gorgeous body, yet she has so little confidence in herself…”

“That’s just daft! Last night, she looked like a goddess in that dress, and was wonderful company. Emma has brains, courage and beauty. Just like you. I could hardly…” Robin stopped, wondering whether he was being set up by his former true love to say something he might regret.
“I know. And that was my dress that time,” she smirked.

“I guess that’s one of the advantages of two women being together. Twice the wardrobe…” He said, clearly trying to change the subject and hoping humour might do it. “Plus, nobody leaving the seat up in the bathroom.”

Regina chuckled softly. “Your son lives at home, remember?”

He smiled softly at her. “Hmm. I never thanked you properly. For taking care of him. Of them. When I was unable to …”

“You mean when you sacrificed your life for me? Robin, we’ve talked about this already. Your children, our children, saved my life! They pulled me out of the darkest of days – anyway, stop trying to distract me! Tell me about your date with Emma. I want all the details. I want to know what the place was like, what you ate and when you’re going to take me? Emma is a culinary nightmare and she got to eat somewhere I’ve wanted to go for months! I’m the food snob in this family, so if you don’t take me, I’ll go myself!”

Robin laughed aloud. “Ah, so that’s it! And there’s me thinking you wanted me to tell you everything about what Emma and I talked about; on our ‘date’.”

“We’ll get to that, in time. But first, tell me how it went.”

He gathered her hands in his, pulling her ever closer to him on the bench. Even now, she still felt that odd buzz whenever he touched her. It was as strong as ever. “I’ll tell you most things, but you know me well enough to know I never disclose a lady’s confidences. You know I always keep a secret!”

He grinned, making Regina sigh when his dimples showed in all their glory. One of the many, many things she had loved about him was his smile, always so full and genuine. He smiled with his eyes, those piercing blues always having that effect on her. “Did Emma say she enjoyed our evening?”

“Well she was a bit hungover! Thank you for that, but yes, she did. She said she had a wonderful time and, yes, she told me all about the restaurant, meeting Pierre Roch, the food and the drive. She loved it!”

“So why do you want me to tell you all over again?” he eyed her suspiciously. But her face just beamed that radiant smile at him, as she giggled coquettishly, her eyes flirting with him. “Silly question. I’m a woman, Robin!”

Being this close to each other was magnetic. “I remember, oh too well!” he flirted back, before leaning across and capturing her lips with his own, sealing their mouths together. An instant heat grew between them as both deepened the kiss. Robin’s tongue slowly working its way past her teeth and inside her mouth to meet her own, both coiling around each other before she uttered a pained cry.

“Mmmfarrrgghh!” she squealed into his mouth as she recoiled back in pain. “What have I done?” he said, anxiously.

She raised a hand to her cheek. “It’s…it’s not you…reset jaw…remember?”

“Oh, love, I’m so sorry! I forgot!” he leaned in, turning her head to rest the opposite side gently against his chest. “What an idiot! Can I take the pain away?” He kissed her forehead, stroking the back of her head as he wrapped his other arm around her. She’d missed this and closed her eyes, almost purring.

“Mmm, just keep doing what you’re doing,” she whispered.
“Sorry I kissed you like that. I shouldn’t have, it’s not fair on Emma…”

"Robin, Emma is ok with this, remember? She gave me ‘permission’ to be with you. She understands. And last night, I sort of gave her permission to get closer to you too, if she wished. She told me you kissed and made out with her…” she smirked, “and said you were a ‘good kisser’! I’ve heard that phrase before somewhere!”

Robin nodded, “Emma’s an astonishing woman, Gina. I understand now how you came together. You deserve each other, but I was serious when I told you I wouldn’t get in the way of your marriage.”

“You said that several times already. We won’t let it. Robin, I love Emma, I really do, but…but I’m also in love with you! I have been for the past five years. You gave me your love. You gave me Honour, the greatest gift anyone has ever given me. So, I just thought maybe…” she drifted to a halt, not sure how to continue.

“Gina, I love you too and that’s why I want your happiness, even if it has to come without me. You know you can tell me anything? So, tell me now, what do you want? What would be the perfect solution for your happiness?”

She stayed silent for a long minute before inhaling and taking the risk she would offend him. “It’s a little embarrassing for me to say, but here goes. In my ‘perfect world’, I want you and Emma to grow closer, to love and care for each other as much as I love both of you! It’s stupid, I know. It’s not like I can make my two loves fall in love themselves…”

Robin studied her face as she stared out at the sailing ship as it sailed across the horizon. She was avoiding his eyes, fearing she’d said too much. However, the ongoing silence forced her to break it.

“Robin? Say something…”

“You want us to have what Phil, Rory and Mulan have?”

“I saw the three of them at the inn. They seemed so deliriously happy together. So much so, they’re even getting married, the three of them! I always thought Mulan was gay. I had no idea she had feelings for Philip but seeing the three of them together, they seemed so…so…content. Am I being stupid, Robin? Is that wrong of me to imagine something like that for us?”

He smiled benevolently at her. “I know about the wedding. They brought the date forward, because Killian’s set up the ship for Ruby and Dorothy and they thought they’d take advantage before he sails Saturday. Phil’s asked me to be his best man on Friday. But Gina – we may both love you, but Emma and I don’t love each other like that. We’re friends, yes; becoming closer, definitely; and…I can’t pretend I’m not attracted to her, but I’m not in love with her. She certainly doesn’t have any feelings for me!”

She smiled up at him and his breath hitched yet again. *God, she is so beautiful!* Looking into those brown eyes fluttering, he could feel himself starting to harden. *Oh no! Bad timing, old friend, please don’t?*

“You’d be surprised! I share a bed with her, remember? And I probably shouldn’t be telling you this, but you were definitely in her dreams last night! She talks in her sleep. Does the name ‘Emma Locksley’ mean anything to you?”

He sniggered. “She said that? It’s probably from last night’s meal. Pierre assumed we were married. Emma quite liked the grovel as well as the food, so we didn’t want to disappoint him. She liked the
‘Lady Locksley’ title too. Are you upset about it?”

“No, not at all. I found it quite hilarious when she said, “Emma Locksley, I like the sound of that!” in her sleep! I teased her about it when she woke and she went beetroot red. I didn’t tell her the rest though; I’m just enjoying the embarrassment!”

“Gina Swan-Mills, you are a bad girl!” he chided, albeit with a big smirk on his face. “you should be ashamed of yourself, teasing your lovely wife like that. What are we to do with you?”

The looks between them changed in an instant, Regina’s darkening with a different feeling altogether. Arousal. “Perhaps I should be punished?”

Robin picked up her lustful look. “Stop that! I refuse to go back in there trying to hide an erection!”

That made her crack up with laughter as she pulled herself in to his chest a little tighter. “I think you’re the one who needs punishing! You took my darling wife out to dinner, pretended she was yours, romanced each other and made out like horny teenagers on the ride home! I think it’s time I brought out my some of my old Evil Queen outfits and dealt with the pair of you!”

“Again, not doing much for my erection there, Gina!”

That was it. She collapsed into a giggling fit, clinging ever closer to him.

God, she’d missed this! His smell, his smile, his complete inability to be intimidated by her. Could Emma ever grow to love him?

“Robin, I know this is all a bit strange, for all of us, but...” she was rudely interrupted by new arrivals.

“Regina? Robin? what are you two doing out here?” Snow White’s voice broke their moment. The princess had clearly seen the pair of them sitting close, their arms draped around each other and holding hands. “Regina, how is Emma?” The way she said it was clear that she disapproved of her daughter-in-law and former love being so close. Seeing them holding hands was clearly alarming her even more. “Why are you out here and not at home with your wife?”

Robin and Regina had already jerked apart at her voice, and Regina was, unusually, lost for words. Robin stepped in to fill the silence. “Emma insisted she come. She has a few things she needs to ask Merlin, and Caroline’s been asking after her. We were also just discussing my dinner with Emma last night. Regina seems to think she missed out.” He said it as though it was the most obvious thing in the world.

“Why would you be taking Emma out to dinner,” asked Charming, an eyebrow raised in suspicion.

“People tend to be terrible gossips in this town, David!” He said, looking directly at Snow and not batting an eyelid. “Emma, Regina and I have a lot to talk about.”

“Such as?” said Snow, somewhat rudely in Regina’s opinion. Robin changed his tone in an instant.

“That is our business! Thank you for your concern, Snow, but you may remember Roland is my child and living with them? Honour is our child and living with them. The three of us have to find the right way to raise her, with everyone’s agreement.”

Charming stepped closer, his voice hardening. “They’ve done a pretty good job so far, Robin. They don’t need…”

“Indeed, they have David! Emma and Regina are excellent mothers and they have done remarkably, seeing all they have gone through. But I am still Roland and Honour’s father and I WILL have an
equal involvement in their lives. Emma and Regina are very willing, everything is amicable and with respect to you both, this has absolutely nothing to do with either of you!"

“Regina is married to my daughter, Robin!” squawked Snow, “I see you sitting cuddled up together, holding hands on a quiet bench. Emma’s at home in pain. You two have a past, Regina! What am I expected to think? He was your former lover! He-”

Regina was now ready to take her on. “Careful Snow! This is the man who saved Emma’s life only a few hours ago! This is the man who saved my life, five years ago! Who stopped George taking over! How dare you? How dare you imply that I would do anything to-” but Robin jumped in.

“We’ve talked about this already, Snow! Regina and Emma have a beautiful relationship and they always will. You have entirely the wrong end of the stick and I think it best if you leave! Talk to Emma if you wish but please leave!”

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Meanwhile, at the convent, Reul Ghorm had made extra special preparations for her guests. Merlin and Anna had been staying since Saturday, and the effect on them all had been astonishing. The greatest sorcerer of all time, the strongest purveyor of light magic, was amongst them and the place had been transformed from a puritan, soulless building into one transformed with energy and activity.

The Sorcerer had suggested courses for all the fairies, to learn about the world outside Storybrooke. His younger daughter had talked to them about the problems humans faced in the real world. Father and daughter had used their magic to download vast amounts of modern knowledge directly into each of their student’s minds, saving time. Medicine, history in the non-magical world, science and even some politics. With the effect that the fairies were transformed, wanting to realise their full potential in the world. And now, another pair of the Sorcerer’s children were about to stay.

Reul had already met Merlin’s eldest, Celia, some years previously. She was a bright, feisty, young thing. A natural teacher and leader who was forever asking questions. She had heard through the grapevine that Celia had taught at a university in the UK. Now in her early thirties, she had married and given birth to two boys all in the space of three years. It was unclear why she had left them behind to travel to the USA. A possible awkward subject she would avoid.

Then there was Charles Sage, or Charlie, Merlin’s only son in this realm (he had sired many sons over two millennia but he was the only living son – as far as she knew). She had heard of Charlie Sage through the fairy grapevine. He was a powerful magician, possessing light and dark in equal measure, though like his siblings, he eschewed using his powers, instead mainly living in the land without magic. Early in his career, Charlie had shunned the medical and educational routes of his father and sisters, choosing instead to graduate in music. A gifted violinist & pianist, he had set up a music school dedicated to severely handicapped and disabled children, particularly those suffering from delayed speech and speech impairment. He’d written two books and now, even only in his late twenties, had become an authority on the subject. Reul could learn so much from a young man who had learnt more about that world in three decades than she had done in two millennia.

“The rooms are all ready for them, Blue!” said Silvermist, disturbing her thoughts. “I still can’t believe we’re going to have the greatest sorcerer who ever lived and his whole family to stay? It’s going to be brilliant!”

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Angered by Snow and Charming’s treatment of herself and Robin, she’d marched back into the Earl of Locksley, ready to tell Henry she was heading home earlier and please, please try not to come
back too late. However, just as she reached the door, to her left and in a slightly concealed spot, she saw Henry with a young blonde girl she didn’t recognise. The young man’s arms were wrapped tightly around her back, his right knee clearly pressed between the girl’s thighs and his face turned into hers and they were clearly engaged in a very heated kiss.

*What about Violet!* She was about to yell at him to stop, when Robin stepped in front of her to gently place an index finger against her lips. As she looked up at his face, he whispered. “*Gina, don’t! You’ll embarrass him, and then he’ll be furious! You really want him to move in with Gold permanently?*”

He was probably right, but it still hurt! She hated the fact Henry was now a grown man. She nodded to Robin as he took her arm to gentle lead her in through the pub door. As they stopped in and beyond Henry’s sight, he smiled down at her. “Well done! I know it isn’t easy…”

“Don’t patronise me! He had her pinned to the wall and his tongue halfway down her throat!”

“And you and I have experienced young love ourselves, Regina! You know he wouldn’t thank you. He’d probably get angry and he’d leave again! He’s a man now and it must be hard for you and Emma but…well…he’s a man!”

“You’re repeating yourself!” she glared at him.

“For emphasis! Have I made my point? Or would you like it a third time?” he chuckled, his blue eyes twinkling.

“*Hmm,*” she growled, though still trying not to be overheard. “*You may be right but it’s still irritating seeing Henry like that. Dammit, my twenty-year-old son is getting more action than I am!*”

That made him snigger even more. He continued, still whispering.

“Well, Emma will be better soon. I know she’s more than capable of looking after you. And if the two of you ever want to repeat our…activities…anytime soon, you know where to find me!” he looked at her, lustfully.

She wanted to be sarcastic at his cockiness, but she recognised that look. The look that used to make her melt. The look that made her realise his feelings for her, were still as strong as hers were for him. So, she joined in. “I’ll bear that in mind. Enjoy yourself, did you?” she continued to whisper, her expression smug.

“Can you blame me? Gina, last Saturday night was quite simply the best night of my life! You may call it sex, but to me it was making love! With the most astonishing couple…”

Her cheeks flushed. “*Hmm. It was rather wonderful. Shame Emma fucked it up and spoiled the mood!*”

“Don’t, she just felt awkward after. I understand. It must have been very hard for her…”

She smirked, a devilish look on her face. “It was ‘very hard’ for both of us, as I recall!” She started to giggle, a noise which Robin found indescribably sexy.

“You’re such a bad girl!” he whispered back, “I should take you over my knee and spank you!”

Now different thoughts swam through her head. “*Hmm. I could be up for that!*”

He looked down, alarmed that a bulge had again started to appear in his pants. “Damn it, Regina! You’ve done it AGAIN! How can I walk in there with a raging stiffy?”
Desire overwhelmed her as she looked into his now lust-filled eyes. She wanted to get her hands on him. And quickly! “I can help with that! Robin, let’s get out of here. Now!”

However, just as she was about to apparate them to a suitable hidden cottage she knew, Regina heard a loud voice, calling from the other side of the bar area, addressing her. Most people turned to see the small cropped brunette, a phone in her hand, yelling to her. "Regina - It's Emma! She needs you home. Now!” yelled Snow, a scowl on her face.

If looks could kill, Snow would be ashes by now! *The woman had clearly seen enough to deliberately disrupt them*. Even Henry, outside the door, heard his grandmother's yell, before stepping back inside with the unnamed girl. Everyone was now looking at Regina and Robin.

The archer sighed loudly, resting his hand on her arm. *From the look on his face, he was clearly as frustrated and as horny as she was!*

"You best go to her Gina! We'll have our time soon enough..." he whispered.

Regina slowly nodded in frustration. "Ok, I'll see you later!" With that, he gave an evil glare to her mother-in-law, before apparating away.
Two Weddings and a Funeral

Chapter Summary

Here we go then! Four brides, one groom. Two weddings coming right up...

Friday morning – Two Weddings and a Funeral

Archie Hopper loved nothing more than the first hour of the day spent walking Pongo through the town, the forest or like now, down to the docks. The sun shone brightly in a cloudless sky and as usual, Archie found himself being stopped regularly by friends, patients and well-wishers alike. Pongo, resigned to this, now sat patiently at every interruption; his master was after all, one of the most popular and friendly faces in Storybrooke. In earlier years he would impatiently break away and have to be tracked down. Now, in his middle age, the large dalmatian sat contented, knowing they’d be on their way again in due course.

The town psychiatrist and conscience, Archie held more secrets, confidences and intimate knowledge of most of the residents than anyone. Even including the former Evil Queen and Dark One. Even those two, and Emma, came to him in times of crisis or worry, for counsel or unburdening. His absolute discretion was assured and his biggest joy was seeing his patients overcome their burdens to lead a happier life.

However, the man who now greeted him had never sought his counsel. Had always seemed, on the outside at least, a picture of calm, despite the traumatic experiences of his life. A man who had felt loss many times. A man who had truly lived, survived, died and apparently, lived again.

“Robin, good morning to you! Lovely day for a wedding or two, isn’t it?” he offered his hand to shake.

Robin took it, shaking warmly before dropping to his knee to offer Pongo a warm stroke. The dalmatian, recognising a friendly soul, instantly moved closer to be petted. “It is indeed. And you’re officiating both?”

“Not quite. Captain Jones will be wedding for Ruby Lucas to Miss Gale. I’m a guest for that one, though I’ve been asked to speak. I’ll be officiating for the Briars when they wed Miss Fa. I’m rather excited about that one. I’ve never performed a triad wedding before!”

“And I’ve never witnessed one. They’re certainly ideally suited; I’ve known Mulan for some time; she used to be one of my merry ‘men’. Is a ‘triad’ wedding actually a legal thing?”

“It is here and in the Enchanted Forest, though still not recognized in the world without magic. It’s rare but has been done before. Technically, you can marry as many people as you want, provided all are willing.”

“Well, I’ve never seen one, though Prince Philip has asked me to be his Best Man. So, I’d best prepare a speech, I guess. However, Doctor, I wanted to ask you something.”

“Of course. Please call me Archie, or I’ll have to start calling you ‘Lord Locksley!’”
Robin smiled, standing up. “Anything but that! Ok, Archie, I wonder if I could book a little time with you? I’ve something bothering me which I need your…advice…on. I know you’re close friends with Emma and Regina and…well, most of the town, but I was wondering…”

“Robin, of course I’ll see you. Whatever you say to me is ALWAYS in the strictest confidence! I would never survive in this town otherwise. Come see me, say Monday afternoon, around three?”

“Thank you. I truly appreciate it! Well I best get off to Phil’s. Something about a morning suit. Are you heading there now? Seems a bit early…”

“It is, but first I have a more sombre task I need to perform this morning. The funerals of those killed a few days ago at Sherwood Clinic. The former King George and his fallen. Will you be attending?”

Hardly bloody likely – I killed him! He thought silently. “Probably best not, given the circumstances.”

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A small group stood around the grave as Albert Spencer’s coffin was lowered into the ground. The parson had said a few words but, with no family present, he couldn’t resist adding his own little flourish. “Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, if god doesn’t take us, the devil must…”

Although he’d been universally loathed, the man was a former King. As such, the other former monarchs and senior royals felt obliged and honour-bound to attend a royal funeral. Regina and Snow stood together to one side, Regina flanked by Will Scarlett and Friar Tuck. The four were just out of earshot as the ceremony closed. Charming stood by the graveside, to assist in the final act.

“Personally, I’d like to see a gravestone over ‘im that says, ‘Under this sod, lies another!’ or how about ‘Albert Spencer - Arsehole!’” said Will, causing Regina to look down so as not to be seen chuckling. “Or ‘ow about…”

“Enough, Will!” whispered Tuck. “Show some respect for the dead…even if he was an arsehole!”

That set Regina off even more, as she desperately tried to stifle giggles by cupping a hand over her face and looking down to avoid being seen. Seeing her shoulders shaking, Tuck couldn’t resist going further, adding, in a loud whisper, “Now look what you’ve done, Scarlet? You’ve got Gina crying now, she’s so upset!”

She knew she couldn’t lift her head up, as a laughter tear ran down her cheek. “You bastards! I’ll get you for this!” she whispered back, between giggles, causing the men to smile.

Regina loved Robin’s friends. Since they brought Roland back to Storybrooke after his death, Little John, Will and Tuck had gone out of their way to welcome her into their little community. She’d shed many tears with John and Will over their leader’s passing and slowly they had grown to become the younger and older brothers she never had. Henry had spent many weekends at the camp and even Emma, long suspicious of the former thieves, had grown to like and trust them.

“Will you two shut up!” snapped Snow, angrily. “Know your place! They’re burying a former king, for god’s sake!”

“They’re burying a wanker!” replied Will, still whispering, “And ‘know my place?’ I’ve no time for kings or queens or any of that self-important drivel. Stupid bloody institutions, if you ask me.”

“Then why did you marry one? And why did you come to a ‘royal’ funeral?” Snow growled back, irritated at their lack of respect.
“To make well sure the bugger's dead! And to find out who’s attending, so we know who we have problems with in the future!”

Regina calmed, taking a clean handkerchief from her bag to dab her eyes while at the graveside, Archie spoke his final words for the fallen, out of earshot.

“You coming to both weddings, Gina?” asked Tuck.

“I’m not sure. Emma’s still recovering. She was asleep nearly all of yesterday. We’ll see…”

“You should come!” urged Will, “After all, Ruby’s one of Emma’s mates and Mulan’s one of our own. Seems a pity to miss it. I’m sure Emma wouldn’t mind if you had to come without her…”

“We’ll see, Will. I’m not promising.” One main reason for avoiding it, was the certain knowledge that Robin would be at Mulan’s wedding, as the Best Man. After yesterday, she was not sure she should be anywhere near him. Not unless Emma was there too.

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When she arrived home to get changed out of her funeral clothes, Regina was more than surprised to see Emma not only awake, but up and making breakfast. Roland and Honour were busying themselves putting plates on the kitchen table. “Hi mummy!” Honour yelled, running into her knees. “Hi mam!” yelled Roland, “why are you dressed in black?”

“Because I’ve just been attending a funeral and burial. Well, several burials…”

“Was that King George? The guy papa killed with his hunting knife?” God, boys could be so blunt!

“Yes, Roland, the same. But I prefer you not to talk of such things. Not in front of Honour.”

“Why not?” said the ten-year-old, “Papa had to do it! He was gonna kill Emma, and you! Neal said he’d heard Phil say that she died outside the clinic and papa brought her back to life. He kissed her, and she woke up!”

Honour had been listening to her brother intently. “Like True Love’s kiss? Like grandpa did to grandma?”

Regina’s brow rose in surprise at her daughter’s remark, and the other at the loud crash of a drinks tray hitting the ground close by. She looked up to see Emma, looking almost in shock, but not from dropping of the tray.

“Damn! Oops, er, sorry!” the blonde looked panic-stricken. “I’ll just…erm…” raising her arms, the broken glasses and jug disappeared from sight into the kitchen. “I’ll…I’ll get some more…”

So many thoughts ran through Regina’s mind as Emma returned with a large plate of pancakes. True Love’s Kiss! Where did she get that idea? Then she also remembered something Robin had said to her last night. Something she only picked up on later.

“There have only been two great loves in my life and I lost both of them! One of them to a red-haired bitch who even now I want to kill and the other to a savior…a saviour who I’ve also started having…feelings for…”

The women stared at each other intensely, each wondering what was going through the other’s mind. “Well eat up! Don’t let ‘em go cold.” The blonde urged. Anything to change the current topic. It seemed to work as everyone tucked in, Roland leaning over to grab two more pancakes with his bare hands.

“Roland, you know better than that! Don’t lean across and grab, ask someone to pass you the plate, please!”

“Sorry!” he groaned, his smile never wavering and revealing those dimples he always used with devastating effect.

The next few minutes passed in contented munching, until Honour spoke up. “Mummy, papa’s going to Prince Philip and Mulan’s wedding. Can we go to that one as well please?”

Regina felt awkward. Henry had said everyone was invited to the second wedding on board the Jolly Roger. But knowing Robin was going to be there made her feel odd. Especially after the things he said last night.

“I don’t think so, my darling!” said Regina, “You’re already going to be a bridesmaid for Ruby and Dorothy and it’ll be a long day. Mulan’s won’t start till later in the afternoon and I’m not sure your mum’s even well enough to go out!”

“Hey!” said Emma, “I’m fine, but I’m not going to miss Ruby & Dorothy’s! They’re friends!”

“Well Hon, if Emma’s going, we definitely won’t be going to Phil, Rory and Mulan’s!” grumbled Roland.

“What do you mean by that?” said Emma, irritated by his tone. “Roland?”

“It’s obvious!” said the eleven-year-old, now looking surprisingly glum. Very unusual for him. “We all know you don’t like papa! Even if he did save your life!”

Honour looked at her brother, then to Emma, her little face crestfallen. “You don’t like Papa?” she seemed almost tearful and the hurt look made Regina feel awful.

“Roland! How could you say such a thing? Take that back, immediately?”

Emma’s heart broke as she saw Honour’s sad face, her lower lip beginning to tremble and a tear build. She had to say something! She couldn’t bear it!

“Honnie, listen to me? Rollie’s wrong and I like your papa very much! Your mummy and papa were together before he died, and I was worried when he came back that she might not love me anymore. But that isn’t true, is it? Your mummy loves you, Rollie, Henry, me AND your papa! And you know what? Your papa and I had a nice dinner last night, so we could get to know each other! He is a lovely man and loves you so very much!”

The little girl sniffed, nodding quietly. “And you love papa too?”

“I like him,” she said, choosing her words carefully. “And he’s a great dad - just like my dad!”

Roland watched Emma intently. “Do you mean that Emma? That you like him?” he eyed her suspiciously.
“Yes Rollie, I mean that. I like him.”

“So. You’re ok with Papa coming over here?”

Emma returned his look, knowing she was now being hustled by a master. “I am, Roland. Your father is welcome over here…anytime.”

“And we can stay for Phil’s parents’ wedding? So, we can see our Papa today?” Checkmate! The little bugger’s just played me.

“Of course, if your Mummy is ok with that.”

It was Honour’s turn to tighten the screw. “Can papa come and see me be Ruby’s bridesmaid?”

“Honour, your papa may be busy!” Regina intervened. “Philip’s father has asked him to do something special, called a Best Man, at his wedding. He may be too busy preparing for that.”

“Can you ask him? And tell him Honnie’s going to be bridesmaid? He’s bound to want to come!”

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**The Jolly Roger – Friday morning**

Storybrooke Harbour had never witnessed anything like it. The infamous former pirate ship, bedecked in garlands, flags and flowers, stood out in the clear blue sky. Along the adjoining quays, people had started gathering early and now a large crowd had assembled along the dockside and on board to witness not one, but two weddings of some of their most illustrious citizens.

On the fo’c’sle stood Captain Killian Jones, resplendent in full naval uniform, which he hadn’t worn for decades, and realized that perhaps a little less rum and a little more exercise may be in order. On either side stood Rosie Sage and Tink, while in front stood immediate friends of the brides-to-be, separated by an aisle.

Merlin had already provided a sound system from somewhere to relay the proceedings to the nearby well-wishers. His son Charles had sorted out suitable wedding music – Merlin had insisted his son restrain his more adventurous tastes and stick to the classics. “Nothing weird alright Charlie? This is THEIR day, after all!”

As Roland and Honour were Ruby’s pageboy and bridesmaid, Regina had no choice but to stand close to the front, to collect them after they had done their duties. Emma, using a wheelchair to prevent anyone accusing her of ignoring Whale’s explicit instructions, now realizing who was conducting the service, offered to wheel further back and leave her wife to it while she joined the crowd.

“Don’t be silly, Emma, you’ll miss seeing them back there and besides, I want pictures! Honnie’s five already and she’s never been a bridesmaid.” She saw Emma looking up toward the centre of the little stage. “What’s the problem? Why are you suddenly…oh…oh!” she paused, realizing Emma had spotted Killian Jones on the stage and had suddenly become uncomfortable. The blonde looked down, anywhere to avoid his eyes.

“For goodness sake Emma!” she whispered, “Guyliner’s your history now, just avoid him and you’ll be fine.”

Emma, still facing down, lifted her eyes to see whether he had spotted her. Would he be unfriendly? Sarky? Deliberately avoid her? Why the hell am I nervous? She’s right, he’s over me! I’m over him! I am! She repeated the words to herself even if she didn’t properly believe them.
Killian’s mind seemed elsewhere. Either that or he was deliberately avoiding glancing her way. As he shuffled several sheets of paper, Emma couldn’t avoid gazing at his uniform. A military uniform she had never seen him in before. An embroidered navy-blue tailcoat with gold and white braiding, over a white formal shirt, breeches and white stockings. *Like something out of Pirates of the Caribbean!* she thought. Her heart fluttered at the sight of him in what must have been his original British Navy uniform. With his neatly trimmed beard and freshly scrubbed expression, she had to admit he looked *fucking hot* and it showed off his body to perfection! Odd feelings swam through the blonde, memories of what he looked like under those clothes.

Killian looked up, scanning over the deck for the brides-to-be before tilting his head to his right to exchange words with a tall brunette who seemed to gaze lovingly at him. Emma recognised her as one of Merlin’s daughters. *The one who had driven the huge truck full of medical supplies into the forest.* Killian seemed to be smiling at her, winking and sporting a flirtatious grin. *He was flirting with her!* A feeling of anger swam through the Saviour.

“Why’s *she* with him?” she growled, just out of earshot of anyone but her wife.

“Who? Oh, her! She’s one of Merlin’s daughters. You met her two days ago. Rosemary, I think…”

“Rosalind, or Rosie, actually!” said a voice to Emma’s right. Henry. “I met her at the Locksley. She’s really nice!”

“I never saw you arrive! When did you get here.” Regina added.

“A couple hours ago. Vi and I met Rosie properly this morning. She helped set up the speakers on the docks. Rosie’s great! She helped organize the weddings!”

“Hmm, she would, wouldn’t she!” Emma snarked. “Why’s she up there with Killian?”

“Oh, Rosie’s been with him the last few days! She was sailing on the Jolly with him when Spencer attacked the clinic. That’s why he didn’t know about it. I think they’re kinda going out together…”

For some reason, that made Emma’s blood boil. *Going out together! How could he? So fucking soon!* She knew underneath she was being ridiculous. She had moved on before him but, even so, she couldn’t hide her irritation. She felt her wife’s arm slide around her back as the brunette leant in and whispered. ‘Emma! Emma, he was bound to move on! You did first, so it’s not surprising he…”

“Yeah, I got it! Please, let’s just change the subject…” she growled, embarrassed at her own reaction.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” Killian called everyone to order when he received a nod from Merlin at the back of the ship. “Could I have your silence please. The brides have arrived.” Giving a nod to Violet at the back, a beautiful piano solo started to play as figures boarded from the rear of the ship.

“That’s lovely!” said Regina, looking at the short playlist Henry handed her. ‘Radiant as a Bride’ she read.

Gasps were heard from most of the women as Ruby Lucas, escorted by David Nolan, slowly made their way up the aisle towards her destiny. As she came closer, Regina couldn’t help be amazed by the sheer beauty of the bride’s pure white wedding dress. Made from pure silk, and probably some magic, the boat-necked, three-quarter length sleeved dress flowed over her, accentuating her curves perfectly. It was timeless and elegantly aesthetic, and she looked absolutely stunning. The bride had left her hair long and flowing, creating a beautiful relaxed demeanour.
Even Emma choked at the site, a welcome distraction from Killian. Her friend looked truly wonderful and she couldn’t help but grin at her father, seeing him escorting the bride in his prince’s uniform. He winked at her as he passed. Roland followed, holding the bride’s silk train up as though his life depended on it. Further gasps and passing comments such as of “Aw! How lovely! Beautiful!” came from the guests as immediately behind Roland, Snow White escorted Honour, both impeccably dressed in matching gowns. Emma could see a tear already forming in her mum’s eye as she blew her daughter a kiss. Regina looked down with pride at her beautiful little bridesmaid and pageboy as they left the group to stand with their mother. “Well done, my angels!” She whispered.

Ruby was trembling slightly, as she stood in front of Killian, awaiting her bride. Seeing her nervousness, he leaned over to her ear to whisper. “Don’t worry love, I assure you, you’re not as nervous as me! You look absolutely drop dead gorgeous, Rubes! Try to relax now.” He rested his hand on hers as she squeezed her bouquet in a death grip. She slowly relaxed and breathed again, smiling at him in gratitude.

The piano music was still in full flow when the second bride appeared at the back. She stepped slowly forward, stumbling slightly as her nerves starting to get the better of her. “Bugger!” she breathed, panic in her voice. Her escort stepped closer to her side, moving his right arm from around hers to gently wrap around her waist to support her and let her straighten herself. In his calm, assuring voice he whispered, “It’s ok Dorothy! Relax. Just lean on me if you need to? Don’t worry about anything. You look absolutely wonderful today, all is well, and your bride is there waiting for you. Let’s get you married, yeah?” She looked at him and smiled. “Thanks, I needed that! Stay close…please?” He smiled at her, releasing her waist to take her arm again. “Of course!”

Honour’s best friend Alexandra, in a matching bridesmaid’s dress, following her and Robin up the aisle.

As they made their way, Dorothy relaxed a little, seeing all the smiling welcoming faces and most importantly, Ruby. The pair had decided to wear matching wedding dresses, forgoing the idea that they shouldn’t see each other before the wedding. However, Snow did manage to persuade them that is was unlucky to see each other that morning. So, Ruby had spent the night at David and Snow’s, while Dorothy joined Mulan and the Merry Men at the Earl of Locksley. Separated from their loves; but now they were to be united.

As Regina saw the arrival of Dorothy to stand beside Ruby, she was surprised to see Robin at her side. He smiled at her as he stepped up to the stage, also giving Emma a little wink when he spotted her. Regina looked at her wife. Was that a blush on her cheeks?

“Ladies and Gentlemen,” Killian kicked off, “We are gathered here today to witness and support the marriage of two exceptional people. Two women united in love. I’ve known Ruby for some years now and Dorothy only recently, but I know I speak for many when I say I cannot imagine a more perfectly suited couple! Now, the brides-to-be have said they do not wish to make public speeches themselves, so I call upon Doctor Hopper to say a few words before they begin making their vows.”

Archie stepped up in front of the pair to deliver a short speech. He knew them well. Unknown to everyone else in the town, Ruby and Dorothy had been patients of his as he had guided them in coming to terms with their losses, helping them move on. He gave a brief eulogy, saying how valued both of them were in the town, their friends, their achievements, all while throwing in some light jokes at their expense. The fiancées rolled their eyes at him, laughed at him and Ruby shed a silent tear as she remembered when they all thought he had been killed by the Evil Queen. As he finished his speech, Killian thanked him and stood before the brides.

“Ruby, would you repeat after me please?”
Killian: “I call upon these persons here present to witness that I Ruby Rose Lucas, take thee Dorothy Gale, to be my lawfully wedded wife.”

Ruby: “I call upon these persons here present, to witness that I Ruby Rose Lucas, take thee Dorothy Gale, to be my lawfully wedded wife.”

Killian: “To have and to hold, from this day forward, for richer, for poorer. In sickness and in health…”

Ruby: “To have and to hold, from this day forward, for richer, for poorer. In sickness and in health…”

Killian: “And forsaking all others, to love, honour and cherish, till death do us part.”

Ruby: “And forsaking all others, to love, honour and cherish, till death do us part.”

“Dorothy, your turn!” he smiled at her. Would you repeat after me please?”

Killian: “I call upon these persons here present to witness that I Dorothy Gale, take thee Ruby Rose Lucas, to be my lawfully wedded wife…”

Dorothy made her vows as Ruby had, moments ago. Ruby couldn’t stop the huge grin, a tear falling as she heard her lover declare herself. Coming out of her daze, she didn’t her what Killian actually said, until she felt a light tug on her side. She looked down to see Roland Locksley’s dimpled cheeks and cheesy grin.

“Ere you go, Rubes!” said the young man, offering a cushion supporting two rings. That brought a loud chuckle from the audience, a raised brow from his father and a face down snort from his mother.

“Thanks, Rollie!” said Ruby, stooping to kiss his cheek and taking a ring. Dorothy matched her on the other side and he blushed, deciding women kissing him may not be too bad after all!

Ruby took her fiancée’s hand, easing a ring onto her finger. “Dorothy, I’ve loved you from the moment I met you! I give you this ring as a symbol of my love. I commit my heart and soul to you.”
Dorothy giggled, now taking Ruby’s finger to ease her own ring on. “Ruby, I love you with all my heart. This ring is a token of that love. I marry you with this ring, with all that I have and all that I am. I commit my heart and soul to you.”

Killian stepped closer, taking Dorothy’s left and Ruby’s right hands together between his own. “Well then, by the power vested in me under maritime law, I am delighted to say I now pronounce you duly married! You may kiss your bride.”

The newlyweds turned, wrapping their arms around each other as their lips met in a soft, gentle kiss. Nothing too heated. Giggling, Dorothy whispered, “first of many, wife of mine!”

The crowd applauded, and the guests onboard gathered around, offering congratulations and hugs. As Robin hugged Ruby, Emma overheard him. “So is it to be Ruby Lucas-Gale, Ruby Gale-Lucas, or…”

“Ruby Lucas,” said Dorothy, now at her side. “And Dorothy Lucas! We’re not big on double barrelled names and I’m proud to have my wife’s name.”

“Are you really sure?” said Ruby, “I don’t mind…”

“I’m very sure!” said Dorothy.

“Well then,” said Robin now releasing Ruby to envelop Dorothy in a hug. “Congratulations Mrs. And Mrs. Lucas. I know you’ll be truly happy!”

As the women then moved to hug Killian and their guests, Regina studied Robin. Being distracted by the ceremony, she hadn’t noticed that he was wearing a modern, strikingly sharp deep navy-blue single-breasted suit with white formal shirt and tie. *Seriously fucking gorgeous! Good enough to eat!* She thought. “Where the hell did he buy that?”

Aware she may have been staring a little too much for her own good, she glanced back to see if Emma had spotted her, surprised to see that Emma was now staring directly at him too, with an odd, almost lustful look in her eye. *What was that?*

“Daddy, you came!” yelled Honour, lifting her arms to be picked up by her father. Roland had already scarpered to play with a couple of friends he’d seen at the quay.

Robin smiled. “Of course I did, my little love! You’re a bridesmaid - I could never miss that now, could I?” He collected the little blonde into his arms, enveloping her in a cuddle. “You were brilliant and I’m so proud of you, my girl!”

Honour beamed. “And you can play with me daddy?” she snuggled in, watched by Emma and Regina.

“I would love to but you know, Mulan’s getting married in a little while? I’m helping Philip at their wedding, so I need to stay here; but I promise you, I will come and find you straight after that!”

Emma watched him as he cuddled his daughter, his eyes closed in bliss. That dinner she’d had with him made her see him in a different light. A loved and loving father first, a deep, thoughtful and caring man and a natural born leader. *Yet a father first and foremost!* Then, she recalled those raunchy dreams she’d had about him the last two days! *And bloody great in the sack!*

“You look nice, daddy,” said Honour, before another voice chipped in. “He does, doesn’t he? That’s a beautiful suit, Robin. Where on earth did you get that around here?” Regina purred admiringly.
“Jefferson sorted me out, with a little magic help from Merlin. He also made me the dinner suit for when I took Emma out. He took one look at me, said I looked a right ruddy mess and so he’s currently making me a new ‘wardrobe’! I thought that was what you hang the clothes in!” he smirked.

Regina chuckled, then Robin turned, spotting Emma below, as she was still sitting in her wheelchair. “Emma, didn’t get a chance to say hello. Thank's for coming out with me last night. I really enjoyed myself!” Then, without waiting for a response and still holding Honour in one arm, he leant down to place a kiss on her cheek. Without thinking, Emma responded in kind. However they both, again, felt that weird tug. A pull, which seemed to guide their mouths slightly to their right, causing their lips to meet. *Again that buzz, that electric pulse!* Surprised, they nonetheless both enjoyed the sensation. As Robin pulled back, the pair gave each other an intense, intimate look. For a moment the world around them disappeared to leave them staring into each others eyes, the silence overwhelming.

“Er...” Emma started, nervously. “Me too. It was lovely. I had a wonderful time.” the last words said as a whisper.

Regina spotted the exchange. *If I didn’t know better I’d say they were flirting with each other! Anyone else doing that to...well, either of them, I’d toast them in a heartbeat!*

“You look enchanting, Emma,” he continued, eyes boring straight into hers. “So much better than when I last saw you! That ivory complements your hazel eyes to perfection.”

“You flatter me, kind sir!” she countered, “You've scrubbed up pretty well yourself. Nice suit! Works wonders with your shoulders. Women just aren’t safe!” she said the last in a slightly sarky tone, but another look altogether in her eyes. *Regina knew that look! They ARE flirting! What the hell?*

“Sorry to break up this mutual admiration society!” she whispered to them, “but some of us need to get the little ones home! Emma, shall we take a quick drink with the happy couple, then head off?”

“NO MUMMY! I wanna stay with daddy! You promised!” Honour yelled, tightening her hold on her father.

“Honour, I never promised! I only said that we’ll see! Emma, how’re you feeling?”

“Gina, I’m fine. I don’t mind and frankly, now I’m here it would be different to see my first poly wedding!” she looked at the refreshments tent on land nearby. “And I could definitely do with a drink...”

Before Regina could remind her she was still on strong medication, Robin jumped in. “Excellent! Rory, Phil and Mulan are kicking off their wedding in an hour. Dot and Ruby made some arrangement with them and said they were all going to share the reception. So, they're coming back up to watch it, then it’s going to be one big party together. Everybody’s going to be here!”

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The next hour passed in a blur as Ruby & Dorothy posed for endless wedding pictures outside the large marquee where others ordered drinks. Eventually Robin & Killian corralled everyone back to the Jolly just before the second bridal party arrived.

With most of the attendees now gently intoxicated and relaxed, Archie Hopper took centre stage this time, to officiate. Mayor Philip and Princess Aurora arrived onboard to loud applause from the
guests, as they walked up to meet Archie, partly to welcome the pair, and partly in recognition of the recent service he had, days earlier, performed in reluctantly stepping up to the mayorship, while assisting the heroes in resolving the clinic hostage crisis.

As attendees settled, more clapping and cheeping rang out, as Ruby & Dorothy came back on board, still in their wedding dresses, to step nearer the front, to reserved seats next to Snow and David. “You don’t think we’re going to miss this, do you?” Ruby announced to general laughter from all and a wink from Philip.

Archie briefly took Aurora and Philip to one side to quietly remind them of the order of service. Emma and Regina this time sat a little further back from the little stage, although Emma spotted Henry close to the front, holding a small red box. “Gina, what’s he doing? Henry didn’t tell me he was helping?” she whispered.

“Me neither. But doesn’t our boy look handsome in that morning suit?” she breathed, proudly.

“Yeah, he really does! Sadly, he’s not our little ‘boy’ anymore.”

“Perhaps not. But now he’s our ‘man’ and he’ll always be ours! Now shush, something’s happening.”

Archie stepped up to the microphone. “Ladies and Gentlemen, could all those sitting please stand as we welcome the arrival of the bride.”

From the ship’s stern, classical music began to softly play. Emma raised an eyebrow though Regina instantly recognized it. “Air on a G String. Bach.” she whispered.

Guests turned to look at the new bride. Emma spotted Violet standing by the ship’s lower rigging with a video camera in hand, filming. Gasps were heard from all around, as the Warrior approached. Aurora’s mouth hung open in surprise and Philip’s face beamed with pleasure at the sight approaching them.

Nobody had ever seen Mulan look like this before! The normally sombre looking tomboy, usually dressed in military-style clothing, had recently taken to wearing more feminine attire. She now wore a tight fitting, soft pink short-sleeved cheongsam, a traditional Chinese wedding dress, with intricate silver braiding, all of which showed off her feminine curves beautifully, including the small bulge of her abdomen which proudly showed the early stage of pregnancy. Her jet-black hair was now worn long curled and over her shoulder. She was truly a vision and her waiting partners were overwhelmed.

Mulan was escorted by the imposing figure of Little John, now attired in a silver-grey morning suit, followed by two little bridesmaids and an older pageboy. Regina thought she recognized the girls from Sherwood village, along with Philip Junior, Rory and Phil’s seven-year-old boy.

“You look wonderful!” mouthed a teary-eyed Aurora to her soon-to-be wife. “Perfection!” whispered Philip. Mulan smiled at her loves, clearly nervous at all the attention. A few feet before she reached them, Mulan stopped and bowed low, a custom from the land of her birth, a gesture of honour and respect. Aurora and Philip mirrored her actions exactly, rising and smiling amongst themselves. Seeing the warrior’s hand trembling, Aurora silently took it within her own, before turning to face the front.

“Friends and loved ones,” Archie’s voice boomed across the harbour, from the sound system. “We are delighted you are all here today, to witness the joining of these three remarkable people. All heroes and friends of this town. We have the Merry Men, the Storybrooke Militia, a fair selection of
royalty and councillors, plus so many well-wishers. We welcome you!” As he spoke, Aurora and Philip silently moved forward, taking Mulan’s hand either side as they calmed themselves. Archie now spoke to them directly.

“In this realm, marriage between two, three or more consenting people is a spiritual, sacred and legal bond; a life-long commitment, not to be taken lightly. So, I call upon those present to witness and bless this union. I ask the three of you, do you all consent to this marriage willingly?”

Each of the trio confirmed in turn. “I do,” before Hopper continued.

“Now before the vows are given, I believe each of you wish to make a short statement?”

Philip nodded, stepping forward and turning to stand directly in front of the two women, pausing to calm himself. “Aurora, my love,” he said taking his wife’s hands in his left, “on our wedding day, I made my life commitment to you. After being parted by dark magic, a sleeping curse and finally a wraith, we came together again with true love’s kiss. Somehow you managed to love this broken man and I continue to devote my life to you and the wonderful son you have given me. Today I renew my vow, and swear undying love and faithfulness to you, my darling Aurora.”

He then raised his right hand, to take Mulan’s. “My darling Mulan, we came together in desperate times. You helped transform me back from a cursed Yoagui, then joined me in battle as we fought so many. You saved my life several times and helped me unite with my sleeping beauty. I knew then, even when wakening Aurora, that I had feelings for you. I suppressed them, as was right, but when you left us I was inconsolable. It was only when, several years later, Aurora admitted her own feelings for you, that I was able to do so myself. We both sought you out and, when we confessed to you what you meant to us, I was overjoyed to find you felt something for me as well as Aurora. Mulan, if you will accept me as your husband I will also devote my life and love to you, my brave, wonderful, beautiful, fearless warrior.”

Mulan sniffled as her almond eyes started to water. However, it was Aurora’s turn. “My wonderful husband. I fell in love with you the moment I first set eyes on you! I knew you were the one for me. When Maleficent cursed me, you brought me back to life. When the wraith threatened me and Mulan, you sacrificed yourself for both of us. Brave, handsome, courageous and sometimes bloody foolhardy,” the audience laughed at that one, “you gave me the most precious gift of all, our son Phillip. When I confessed to you my feelings for Aurora after she left, you never judged me. Just loved me as I love you. I pledge undying love and devotion to you. Forever.” She lifted her husband hand to kiss it before turning to the warrior.

“My darling Mulan. I first met you when Phillip woke me. I was jealous, knowing he had feelings for you and you certainly showed a love for him. I felt threatened. However, when the wraith took him, you transferred your protection and loyalty to me. As we both pined for him, your loyalty became trust, our trust became friendship, then our friendship turned into something so much deeper. When we got Phillip back, I discovered I was pregnant, and you left before I could tell you how I felt. The day we all confessed to each other was the most joyous of my life. I love you Fa Mulan, and if you will accept me as your wife I also pledge my undying love, loyalty and devotion to you. Forever.”

“Uh oh... here she goes!” whispered Emma to Regina, nodded in the direction of Snow. Her mother could be seen sniffling loudly, tears raining down her cheeks. “She always does that!”

“She’s not the only one!” the brunette nodded in the direction of Little John and several others, who were also weeping. Mind you, Emma did notice Regina was also a little misty-eyed herself. She wrapped an arm around the brunette’s waist, pulling her just a little closer as Mulan turned to make her vow.
“Aurora, Phillip. I’ve always been a soldier, not a speaker, so this is very difficult.” There were a few ‘aahs’ of sympathy from the audience as Phillip merely stepped and kissed her hand. “Don’t worry my love. You don’t need to do this bit if you don’t want to.” However, she shook her head.

“I want to. It’s ok.” She breathed in to settle herself. “My father was a war hero, who I miss to this day. He taught me that honour was the most important thing in life. Honour to my country and honour to my family. Everything was about honour. However, Philip, when I first met you I felt another emotion. Love. I hid it, denied it for so long. You said I saved you, but you also saved me and as I grew to know you my feelings only grew more, though I could still never admit them. You quested to find Aurora and when we finally did find her, I saw you bring her back to life with True Love’s kiss, that overwhelming love you had for her. I then realized I couldn’t get in the way of such as wonderful thing. Yet, only days later, Phillip, you shielded both of us from the wraith. You sacrificed your life for us!” Aurora choked at the memory.

“Aurora, Phillip’s death drew us closer and I began to understand what he saw in you when my feelings grew for you too. I denied myself once again, feeling shameful. In the land of my birth, one woman loving another was simply unacceptable. So, I kept my feelings hidden, until a noble outlaw encouraged me to be brave and tell you. However, you then told me you were pregnant. I couldn’t ruin the marriage of the two people I loved, so I ran. Two years ago, you found me and the revelation that you shared my feelings was the greatest day of my life! So today I am hiding nothing. I am deeply and utterly in love with you, my prince and my princess, and your wonderful son. You have now blessed me with a child too, and I hope and pray he or she arrives safely. So, Your Royal Highnesses, I vow and pledge my love and devotion to you both. Forever.”

As the trio held hands and stared at each other, clearly deeply in love, everyone else seemed invisible. Until their thoughts were disturbed by Archie. “Well, that was rather moving, wasn’t it?” he said to a sea of silently nodding heads. “Let’s proceed to the vows, shall we?”

Young Phillip Briar, known to friends and family as ‘Pip’, stepped to Archie’s right, presenting three matching rings on a cushion. Henry Mills stepped silently to Archie’s left, holding a small wooden box.

“Now, as Phillip and Aurora are already married, they will make their separate vows to Mulan, after which she will reply to them both. Aurora, would you like to start?” The auburn-haired beauty stepped in front of Mulan as Archie handed her a card to read.

“With the lawful consent of my husband Philip, I call upon these persons here present, to witness that I, Aurora Briar, take thee Fa Mulan to be my lawfully wedded wife. To have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, honour and cherish, till death do us part.”

The princess smiled at her bride. Now Phillip stepped forward to deliver his vow:

“With the lawful consent of my wife Aurora, I call upon these persons here present…”

he repeated.

Finally, Mulan repeated the vow to them both in turn. Archie took each of the rings, the smaller two with a tiny ribbon indicating which one was Mulan’s and which Aurora’s. The married couple removed their existing rings to make way for the replacements. Three rings, each with entwined colours of rose, yellow and white gold to represent the trio, or ‘throuple’ as they now called
themselves. Aurora placed one on Mulan’s ring finger, Mulan on Phillip’s and finally, Phillip on Aurora’s. Henry stepped forward, Archie now drawing a long silk scarf, gold in appearance with symbols. This intrigued the audience, who had never witnessed this in a wedding ceremony before. He asked for the throuple to step closer and bring their three left ringed hands together. The trio gave him a smile as Archie slowly wound the soft material around the three conjoined hands. Then, picking up a small blue bottle, He loosened the cork before looking up at someone nobody had spotted on deck until now. Merlin.

“Where the fuck did HE come from?” Emma whispered. “Sshh!” she responded.

The Sorcerer gave him a brief nod, to proceed. The Cricket then slowly poured some sort of light oil gently over the part of the scarf binding the three hands. Regina could swear she saw a brief magical glow emanate from the material. It was over in moments before he again removed the scarf.

“I’m now delighted to say that, under the civil powers vested in me, I declare you three to be duly married. You may kiss your brides, or groom.”

Aurora giggled as three faces leant in, a tight fit as three pairs of lips briefly came together in a chaste kiss. “Hmn. Let’s do it our own way,” Philip whispered, as Aurora pressed her lips gently, but fully, against Mulan’s, while Philip kissed his auburn wife’s cheek. Mulan swiftly pulled back to now latch onto Phillip’s lips, Aurora kissing her wife’s cheek. Then Phillip finally kissed Aurora’s lips, as Mulan planted one on her new husband’s a cheek. It was a funny little display amid a few gasps from the audience. Emma grinned as she thought how often this trio must have practiced that! It was too smooth and quick to have been unrehearsed.

Regina also thought it looked slick and funny, but her mind was imagining herself, Emma and Robin doing something similar. Who would I have to persuade? Robin? Emma?

A loud cheer rang across the Jolly Roger and the surrounding quays and dock as the entire town seemed to celebrate the marriage. Aurora stepped up to the microphone, beaming with happiness.

“Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for coming today. My husband, my wife…” the last words got another cheer, “…and I, together with Mrs. Ruby and Mrs. Dorothy Lucas,” another cheer, “Would like to invite you to join us all in a drink to celebrate this wonderful day!”

Everyone on board surged toward the happy couples to congratulate them. Robin, seeing Honour getting nearer to being squished down below, moved closer to the couple before hoisting his little girl up into his arms, out of harm’s way. She giggled, enjoying every second. Robin felt a tug on his arm as Roland appeared. “Hi dad, nice suit! I thought you were going to be doing something too?”

“Yes, my boy. I’m Phillip’s Best Man. Normally that involves making sure Phillip has far too much to drink before the wedding, putting him in an awkward position but still getting him to turn up for the big event on time, then making an even more embarrassing speech to everyone later!” he joked.

“I heard that!” said a voice to his right, as Aurora kissed Robin on the cheek. “Good job we only gave you two days’ notice on the wedding date then, isn’t it?” she smiled.

“I still have the speech though!” he said with an evil look on his face as he pulled her into a hug. “Congratulations Rory! I’m so pleased for you. You deserve her!”

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The next few hours flew by. Rows of trestle tables and chairs had been arranged under marquees, vast plates of duck, venison and geese were brought to the tables. Wine flowed, and the party
atmosphere was electric. At the central table, Ruby, Dorothy, Philip, Mulan and Aurora all sat in line as the speeches came.

David Nolan gave a heartfelt Best Man speech about Ruby, one of his and Snow’s closest friends, and Dorothy. Emma looked proudly at her father, and the way he could always be relied on to tug the emotions for these kind of events. After he toasted the brides, Snow also said a few words extolling the importance of love and hope, which earned the usual roll of the eyes from her daughter, though Regina was strangely silent.

They were followed by Victor Whale, who surprised the Swan-Mills with an eloquence they hadn’t expected. He also admitted he had a terrible crush on Ruby at one time, then Dorothy after he met her. He pointed out just how perfectly suited they were to each other, and proposed the second toast.

Next up were the toasts to Phillip, Aurora and Mulan Briar. The pair had previously been asked what their preferred surname would be. Phillip even offered for them to have a new, original name for them all. But Mulan had insisted. She wanted to be known by the same name as her husband, wife and new stepson.

Robin made the speech. He spoke clearly and without notes. He talked of first encountering Mulan in the Enchanted Forest. Her saving his life with her ferocious swordsmanship. About her joining the Merry Men, “One of the finest and fairest ‘men’ I have ever known!” He spoke of their close friendship, forged in battle and struggle. He spoke of meeting Phillip around the same time as he first encountered Baelfire, or Neal Cassidy in this world. “A truly brave and ingenious man who went on to save the people of Storybrooke. You are still sorely missed, my friend!” He raised his glass as he said it and at least a hundred raised theirs to join him, including all the bridal party. That brought a slow tear from Emma and, at a far table, Rumple, who sat quietly with his grandson. Mulan and Phillip nodded in remembrance to their fallen friend. Robin then turned to more recent events and his friendship with Phillip as they tore across realms in support of women “far more bloody brave and foolhardy than us, eh Phil?” That earned chuckles from the crowd. He made some risqué jokes. Nothing too seedy or rude children as there were children present. Just gently pointing out that those two women he married would be the death of him.

“And as I finish, as the new Mayor, can I offer you some advice, Phil? Always remind them who wears the trousers in your house!” Some of the women stiffened at the supposed sexist remark until he followed it with, “So, do as you’re told when they put them on! Ladies and gentlemen, I propose a toast. Mulan, Aurora and Philip. The brides and groom!”

Everyone raised their glasses and clinked them shouting, “THE BRIDES AND GROOM!” before applauding the speech and cheering the happy throuple.

Emma and Regina had both been watching the speech, neither taking their eyes off Robin when he stood to speak. Regina kept thinking about whether she could ever have the sort of relationship that the Princess now enjoyed with her husband and new wife. Regina loved Emma and Robin. Loved them both and she couldn’t deny it. She knew she was being selfish. But still. Could she find a way to make Emma fall in love with Robin too? There were some good signs. Judging by the blonde’s outburst during her dreams, she had clearly felt something for him. And what about Robin? Could he overcome his honour-fixation to find Emma more than just attractive?

The pair stared silently at the wedding party, particularly at Robin, who was now talking to Aurora and Philip. Henry sat opposite, watching his mothers’ expressions and thinking they seemed to be in some kind of weird trance. Robin had been joined by a tall, willowy blonde, who was now standing close, touching his shoulder to attract his attention. Henry saw the reaction on both his mothers’ faces.
“Who’s she?” Emma growled, her eyes never leaving them as Robin smiled, turned and gave the extremely beautiful woman a hug. His other mother answered, loud enough for Henry to hear.
“That’s Celia. Merlin’s eldest daughter. I met her last night…” She sounded as pissed off as Emma.

“Another one? How many does he have, for god’s sake? One’s got her teeth into Killian, and this one…” she didn’t finish the sentence. Henry frowned.

“They seemed jealous!” he thought. Why?

“Why would you two care?” His mothers’ turned together to look at him, both now sporting frowns of their own which he found quite funny. “You did move on from Robin and Killian after all! Aren’t they allowed to move on from you?” He realised he’d said the wrong thing the moment the words left his mouth. Regina looked hurt, Emma angry and Violet embarrassed, having given him a light slap on the arm. “Henry!”

“How could you say that? To me?” Regina looked genuinely wounded by the comment.

“That’s a horrible thing to say!” followed Emma.

“They died, Henry! How could you say that?” added Violet.

Henry knew he’d spoken without thinking. “Sorry, mums. That came out wrong! Anyway, that’s Celia, or Cee. I was talking to her last night. She’s Merlin’s eldest. He has three daughters and a son, who’s here too. Cee’s great! She runs a business in England and, before you ask, she’s happily married with two children. She’s not after Robin, but she likes him. One of her boys is Disney obsessed, so she’s been taking selfies with him for them last night. You should go talk to her.”

Regina grimaced, realizing her son had guessed what she had been thinking.

“However,” he continued, “Killian is going out with Rosie. She sails with him to Arendelle tomorrow. Tink’s going too. So, Robin’s giving them a farewell party at the Locksley later tonight. I don’t suppose either of you will be going?”

“Definitely not, Henry.” Said Regina, not looking at her wife. “I don’t think your mum and I want be wanting to spend any time with guyliner. I’ve had all the time I need with that rum-soaked pirate!”

“Guyliner? Pirate? Jeez, still with the stupid names?” Henry’s voice rose slightly. “After everything he’s done and been through!” He felt his anger grow until, “No, no, I’m not doing this! Not again. I’m out of here!” He stood, turning to walk away.

“Henry, stop!” Violet yelled; but he didn’t turn back, just stormed off to another corner of the room, knowing if he stayed he would probably say something he might regret.

“What’s that all about?” Regina grumbled. “I only…” she stopped when she saw Emma’s face. The blonde looked sad as something caught her eye. Following her gaze, she spotted the pirate sitting at a table some distance away. Next to him sat Merlin’s brunette daughter, now leaning in and kissing him fully on the lips, in full view of Merlin’s younger daughter, son and the Sorcerer himself. The Saviour’s heart sank looking at the pair.

“Emma? Do you want to leave?” Regina whispered, touching her arm to distract her.

“No, it’s ok,” the blonde turned to look at her wife. “Ruby said they’ve got presents for Honnie and Roland. We’ll stay a little longer. It’s just odd, you Know? Seeing Killian with someone else. Henry’s right, he had to move on. After all, I did!”

“I understand. Whenever I see any other women, apart from you, beside Robin I kinda freeze. It’s stupid of me. We’ve moved on but, if we’re honest, we still have feelings for them, don’t we?”
Emma nodded, collecting the brunette’s hand. “True. But I don’t regret marrying you, Gina. Not for one minute!” She leaned over, pressing her lips against her wife’s.
Killian sails off on an adventure. Robin tells them he's off soon. Regina and Emma find a way to ease some tension...

Sun pierced through the curtains as Emma slowly woke up to yelling from outside the bedroom.

Last night, she and Regina had left the wedding party earlier to take the kids home, amid much protesting from Roland and Honour. As usual, the pair hadn’t wanted to leave. Robin had introduced his children to Merlin’s son and the two older Sage daughters, Celia and Rosie, who had taken them under their wing, danced with them, performed magic tricks and spent so much time, that the pair had moaned nonstop at having to leave.

Honour said she was in love with Charlie, Merlin’s son, and the young man had even gone down on one knee, mock-proposing marriage to the five-year-old as his sisters magicked a mini wedding dress and veil. She had giggled nonstop as Charlie messed around, his sisters encouraging them. It had been a great evening, and Emma knew she was being a killjoy, but the ache from her shoulder had started to kick in. When they finally got home, she’d clambered into bed, asleep within minutes. She now woke, finding Regina snuggled against her side.

“Wassup?” she groaned, still half-asleep. “What time is it?”

“Time you got a watch!” Her wife whimpered back, also half-asleep.

“Turn the sun off, please babe?” she waved at the curtain.

“Switch is outside – you have to get up. While you’re there, a coffee would be nice!”

Their semi-conscious dialogue was interrupted by an excited little girl bounding into the room and launching herself on to the bed. “Mummy!” Honour yelled as she drove under the covers from the bottom and crawling up and on to Regina.

“And what’s got you awake so early, little one?” Regina pulled her in for a cuddle.

“I wanna say goodbye to Auntie Tink on the boat! She’s going away today…”

Ugh. The last thing she wanted to do was stand around a windy dockyard watching the former one-handed wonder sail away. Also, Emma still had some sort of feelings for him. But Tink was her friend and it saddened her to think that the fairy that had gone through so much with her, wouldn’t be around for some time.

“I’m not sure, my love. Let’s see what your other mother thinks?” she said, nudging her wife.

Emma heard but tried to avoid an answer, so she pretended she had fallen asleep again. Then she heard the five-year-old’s words. “Emma won’t go, not if Killian’s there…” she said, huffily. That hurt Emma. First, it made her realise her feelings for Killian hadn’t gone unnoticed, even by Honour.
Second, Honour never called her mum, or mummy, or ma, even though she had known the girl since birth. It was the same with Roland. He always called her ‘Emma’ or ‘Em’, despite all her efforts to get close to him. They were still Robin’s children. So she stayed silent, listening…

“Don’t be silly, Honnie!” urged Regina. “Your momma has been very poorly. She needs lots of rest and for us to take care of her and love her…”

“But I wanna go see papa, Tink and Killy! They’re going away, mummy. Please!”

“Honour, look…how about we ask your papa to come and collect you and take you there?”

The little girl instantly brightened. “Yay! Please?”

She smiled as her daughter moved in to hug her. ‘I’m not saying he definitely can though, my love. Papa may be busy. But I’ll ask him when we get up. Now, what time is it?’ she peered at the small bedside clock. “Five thirty! Honnie, you woke me up at five thirty? Much too early, madam! Now lie still, snuggle in and give me at least another hour…”

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Two hours later, the Jolly Roger was ready to sail. Provisions had been loaded, final checks made, and the crew and their captain stood by the quay, saying their final farewells to those who had showed up. A bigger crowd than expected had come to see the former pirate-turned-hero depart. Dorothy Lucas was currently hugging Killian and wishing him a safe voyage, with Ruby and Rosie engaged in their own little conversation.

“And listen,” said Rosie, now whispering to the wolf. “If everything goes successfully and one, or both of you falls pregnant, tell my dad! He’s able to ‘speak’ to me, and all his children, without a phone, even if I’m at sea! I can then let Killian know, if that’s what you want?”

“Of course,” said the wolf. “I still can’t believe you’re alright about this! How come you don’t mind?”

“Well, Killian’s several centuries old and he’s got no children so far, which is almost unbelievable when you think about it! He and I may be a ‘thing’ or we may not, but I don’t want to stand in the way of anyone’s happiness. His or yours.”

“You’re a remarkable woman, Rosie Sage. Just one thing - please take care of him?”

“I’ll do my best, Ruby, I promise.”

Killian was going along the nearest group, which included his old First Mate, Mr. Smee. “I’m sorry I can’t join you for this one Captain! But I wish you fair sailing…”

“Thank you Mr. Smee. With your young family, I’m pleased you’re finally put down roots. I’m going to miss you, old friend.” Jones hugged his old shipmate before moving on to the various former crew staying behind. Finally, he reached his now closest male friend, grinning at him.

“Fair sailing, Captain Jones! It’s been one hell of an adventure but I’m sure a lot more awaits you. I hope you’ll return at some point?” Robin dragged his Underworld ally into a hug.

“Maybe,” he said, looking across at Ruby & Dorothy. “Though it may be some time, Rob. My reason for settling here has gone,” he said, scanning the docks for a familiar blonde figure. She wasn’t there.
Robin saw the sad look and knew where his mind was. “There’s someone out there for you, Killian. For both of us. It’s just painful moving on, but we will. Zeus seems to have given us a fresh start…”

“Aye, mate,” his smile broadened as Rosie came up beside him, “maybe sooner than we imagined! Take care old friend,” before finishing, “and keep an eye on her for me?”

“I promise.” The Outlaw shook the Captain’s hand before bringing him into a quick final hug. Both men looked a little red eyed at the other. They had shared a unique experience together. Sacrificing their lives for a lover, being brought back from the dead before discovering said lovers had moved on. “Farewell…brother.”

Ten minutes later, as he stood by the wheel, Killian was about to give his orders to cast off the ropes and weigh the anchor when he felt it; a magical wave swirling close by. He turned to his side to find her standing near, teary-eyed and looking straight at him. “Emma?”

“You were gonna leave, without saying goodbye?”

“You made it clear I was your past, Swan! You moved on, so I thought it would be easier this way…”

“Easier for who?”

“Both of us. It’s been a few weeks for me, five years for you. I can’t stay here, Swan. My feelings are…”

“Don’t go?” she interrupted, “please?”

“Again, Emma, you moved on! You’re married. Fate’s conspired against us and so there’s nothing for me here apart from painful memories. I have to accept that. You’ve made your life and now, I need to make mine.”

“Killian, I know we can’t be together, but I can’t bear you just leaving like this! With you hating me…”

He looked at the sad figure before him. She’d clearly been crying though he recognized the walls trying to hide her emotions. He knew she was being sincere. “Swan, I could never hate you! It’s just…everything here is a reminder of what we once had! Three weeks ago, you and I were destined to be together. I imagined us having children, a little girl perhaps, just like Robin’s. I imagined us together for eternity. Alas, I was wrong…”

“We may not be a couple anymore, but at least we could be…at least be friends?” she hated herself for almost pleading. Fucks sake, Emma, you’re the Saviour! Grow a pair! “I don’t want us to part like this!”

He stepped forward to grasp her shoulders. “I would like that; perhaps one day, but I need to get away from here. I need to get over what we had and consider my future.” He looked at Merlin’s daughter as he said it. “And I also have chores from Zeus himself! He gave me another life. I need to live it…”

Emma’s head slumped, the usually formidable woman realizing he was finally going. “Just…just take care of yourself.” The last words almost a whisper. “I do still love you, even if we can’t be together…”

Killian pulled her into a hug, oblivious to the fact Rosie was now next to the pair and listening. “I know, and you will always have a special place in this lost pirate’s heart. Take care of Henry, Emma.
And Robin’s children. And for the record, I think you and the queen were probably always meant to be…”

Unknown to them, Regina had been watching the exchange between former lovers and materialized close to Emma, taking the distraught woman in her arms. “Emma?”

“Take her home, Regina. Take her home and just promise me you’ll love her for the rest of her days?”

Regina looked at the former pirate. She had also had a long history with Killian Jones. *Hell, I even persuaded him to kill his father!* “I don’t need to promise you anything, but yes…you know I will.”

“Thank you. Now if you would kindly excuse me. We’re ready to cast off…”

Minutes later, Emma stood with her wife on the jetty as the Jolly Roger slowly pulled away from the berth. Cheers rang out and various good wishes were yelled as the vessel departed. Tinker Bell, tears in her eyes, waved farewell to her friends. Emma stood rigid, slowly watching the man she had loved above all other men slowly pull away from her. For good. Several hundred feet away now, the Captain turned, his eyes fixed on hers, until her figure became smaller and smaller as they moved towards open sea.

As the ship pulled even further away, they could just about hear the shouting as Killian yelled instructions to the crew. Moments later a large whirlpool appeared directly ahead and the famed pirate ship drove down into its swirl. A loud crack of thunder was heard, and the ship disappeared, to be replaced by calm sea. *Please come back one day?* She whispered to herself.

Her wife watched and held her the moment he left, seeing the tears openly falling down her cheeks.

“I’m sorry, Gina, I never meant…” she croaked guiltily, but the brunette shushed her, pulling close.

“There’s nothing to apologise for, my love. I know your relationship with Jones was every bit as strong as mine with Robin. I understand, Emma. No need to explain…” she said, placing a small kiss on the blonde’s cheek.

“I loved him, Gina, I really did! Then he died and I…I fell in love with you. I would never let my past get in the way of what we have now. It just hurts, seeing him come back and then leave again. You know?”

“I know, Emma, I know.”

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Later that evening, after dinner and with the two children in bed, Regina sat slumped on the sofa, Emma lying with her head in her lap as they both read, the older woman silently stroking her hand through her wife’s hair. Regina had a lot on her mind, having been given news by Robin, when he dropped Honour back, which bothered her enormously. Emma was also thinking much the same thing.

“Robin, Roland said you’re leaving Storybrooke? Is it true?” Regina was aghast.

“Not quite,” he said, “he overheard me talking to Merlin. I’m going to be gone a couple of months.”

“Why? You’ve only been back a week!” Emma added. “What on earth could possess you to leave your children behind…again?”
“One of Merlin’s doppelgangers did some investigations for us. It appears my sister Maria is not only alive and well but living somewhere in the west of England. He’s tracked down one of my grandfathers and several other cousins. Some of Marian’s family escaped too. I’ve no idea how, but it seems I have family still alive. Hopefully my sister among them. I’m going to visit them. Merlin’s daughter Celia lives not too far from them, so I’m going to fly back with her next week. They live in an area with magic, so he’s going to organize some more training too.”

Regina looked almost grief-stricken. *I’ve only just got him back. What if he decides to stay there… with his family!*

Robin wasn’t consciously reading her mind, he just knew where her thoughts were going. “I’m coming back, Gina! I have three children here!”

“Roland asked me to let him go with you. He’s only ten, Robin!”

“I told him I would talk to you about it first! You’ve been his mother these last five years. This is his home.”

“But what about Honour?” added Emma. "She’s going to be missing her big brother! She’s too young to be going on that sort of trip, Robin.”

“Well you could always all come with me! There’s nothing to stop you leaving here for a couple of months. Think of it as a long holiday!”

“What? You’re seriously suggesting we leave Storybrooke, and fly to England on a wild goose chase. With you?”

“Wild goose chase? Emma, we have addresses where they live. And why not? It’s not like you’re the Mayor and the Sheriff any more. You have time on your hands. It’s two months, not five years, Emma. I’m sure your parents, and Storybrooke, can cope without you for a while…”

“Then what? Live in some bloody British forest, squatting in squalid tents?” she snarked. “Sounds lovely!”

That made him angry. “We lived in the forest, in tents, in poverty, not because we wanted to! But to escape death from royal arseholes like your families, who were attempting to murder us, when we didn’t fall into line!” he snarled. “If you knew fuck all about our history, Emma, you’d know that the Mills, Charming and yes, the beloved White dynasties did piss-all to help their people! Just indulge in stupid, pointless feuds with each other for land or money! We lived in tents because there was no alternative! We didn’t have magic to fight back and we didn’t have armies to fight our battles!” he was seriously pissed off. “And for the record, my family live in houses. Some big, some small! Just like the people of Sherwood do now. No thanks to you!”

Emma was astonished at the outburst from the usually mild-mannered man, but did what she always did when under attack. She fought back, even if she didn’t always think through what she was about to say.

“That may be! But you don’t get to just come in here and tell us where our children are going!”

“I didn’t!” he growled back. “I told Roland I would speak to Regina first! And for the record, Roland is MY child and Honour is mine and Regina’s! This is none of your business!”

He regretted his choice of words the moment they left his mouth, seeing the obvious hurt they inflicted on Emma. The blonde said nothing, surprising Robin and Regina by just standing and walking silently away. “Emma!” Regina called, but she didn’t turn back.
The brunette was also stung by his words. “Are you saying, you no longer regard me as Roland’s mother?” she yelled, angrily.

Robin hung his head, realizing he’d gone too far. “Regina…I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have said that. Of course you are! And so is Emma. I just lashed out in anger. I’m sorry, I should go…” he stood to leave and almost left the room before she called back.

“Robin…wait! Look, I know you’re angry. What you said was spiteful, and what Emma said was also…unkind. But you should know she’s cared for them just as much as I have for the last few years!”

“I know! It’s just…No, it’s best I just go. I’ll talk to you tomorrow…” He stepped out without answering.

About an hour later, as Emma lay in bed trying to read her barely touched chapter, her phone sounded. “Sod it. I thought I turned it off.” As she picked it up she read the text message:

Robin: Emma, Henry gave me your number. I’m sorry for what I said earlier. It was unkind, unfair and untrue. You ARE also Roland and Honour’s mother, just as much as Regina. I lashed out at you stupidly because I was angry. I won’t bother defending myself because it’s hard to explain. But I do trust you Emma and you didn’t deserve that. You’re an excellent mother. I apologise…

She read the short message several times and sighed deeply. Now she had calmed and thought about what Robin had been through over the last week. He had returned from death to find his true love moved on, a son he barely recognised, and a daughter he didn’t know he had. All for saving her wife’s life! She knew she’d also been bitchy with her comment about his family living in tents. So she typed back:

Emma: I’m sorry too. I was patronising and snide, and I didn’t mean it! Thanks for the mother comment though. It’s appreciated…

She was about to turn off the phone and put it on the side table when the replay came:

Robin: Am I forgiven?

Smiling, she replied, earning an instant response, which made her chuckle:

Emma: I guess so. We can kiss and make up later…

Robin: Good! Though you should buy a boy a drink beforehand! I’m not that easy!

Emma: That’s not what Regina said! Good night, Robin…

Robin: Goodnight Emma. Sweet dreams…

Not if you knew the sort of dreams I’ve been having recently! She thought as she turned it off.
“Who’s texting you at this time of night?” said Regina, entering from the bathroom in a new silk nightdress, looking alluring as always.

“Your boyfriend. We just made up,” she said, simply before taking in the view. “Hmm. That’s new! What say you get over here and I take it off you…with my teeth?” she flirted, batting her eyes.

“You’re supposed to be convalescing, my girl. Doctor’s orders.”

Emma saw the frown. “He didn’t say anything about sex!”

Seeing the lusty look in her wife’s eyes, Regina decided to play dirty. “Besides, I’m not feeling in the mood right now. But…you know what might get me in the mood?”

“What?”

“You, telling me, in great detail, about your naughty dream involving a certain thief! And before you deny it, I heard some of it in detail. Confess, Emma Swan-Mills! You know, I definitely won’t be jealous. I might even feel…” she flattered her eyelashes at the blonde. “Aroused?”

You crafty, devious cow! she thought as the older woman slid down beside her, eye-sexing to the maximum.

Well two could play that game!

“You were there too, you know?” Emma purred, “the three of us, I mean.” Her right arm slowly curling around Regina’s waist to pull her closer, their hips now touching as they faced each other.

“I’m listening.” She tried to sound non-committal, but her eyes told a different story.

“You, me…and him. I can’t remember all the details, but…you and I were at some sort of grand party. You were wearing a white dress, almost like a wedding dress. So was I. We matched. We were both getting a little handsy, and you had your hand underneath…”

Regina moved her left hand down onto the blonde’s side, slowly letting it drift down under the teddy and over her stomach before smoothly sliding inside her panties to lightly cup her core. “Like this?” she purred.

“Ooh, yeah. Like that…” she responded, perhaps a little too eagerly. “Mmm…”

“Go on,” her partner purred. “Details please…”

“Well…we were standing behind a curtain, though how we weren’t seen I’ll never know! But I also had my hand up yours…” as she said it, her own right hand slid under the pale blue nightdress, delighted to find no panties underneath. She lightly cupped Regina’s mound, dipping a middle finger between the now damp folds, and earning a grateful gasp. “Like that…”

“Go on…” said the now panting former mayor, as she matched her partner’s actions with her own. Both women now breathing heavily, they tilted toward each other, each raising a knee, to allow each other easier access. “Em-ma…” the brunette moaned as two fingers slipped inside, a thumb lightly pressing on her clit. Regina copied the action to slip her own fingers inside the blonde.

“I don’t know where Robin came from, but then he was beside us. He pulled my hand out from in you, and yours from me and sort of…sucked our fingers, in turn, moaning to himself! You started kissing him, and then…it’s a bit hazy, but someone else appeared the other side of the curtain and told you you had to leave and go somewhere; I don’t know, make a speech or something. You were annoyed but told Robin to take me somewhere quickly and finish what we started. Next thing I remember, we’re running up a staircase and into a bedroom…”
Within a few minutes, both women, fingers now firmly embedded in each other, were picturing the scene, Regina imagining her two loves racing to screw each other into oblivion. Emma brought her mouth over Regina’s, to kiss her frantically, their tongues now wrestling in their wet, familiar dance.

Emma loved how her words had so quickly brought the woman into such a frenzied state. Regina then pulled her head back.

“Mo…more Emma! What happened next? Tell me!” she ordered between pants.

“Then…then…ooh, that’s good…keep right there!” she wheezed. “Then I remember a big bed. He laid me on it, pulled my pants and tights down in such a desperate hurry my heels were still on! And…and he tried to go down on me. But I stopped him, as I was too desperate. I pulled him out of his trousers and sucked him…hard.”

“Hmm…yes, he’s like that! He always was a giver and a reluctant receiver but…fuck, Emma! Right there! Right…right there! I’m close…go…go on!” Regina felt the familiar pull coming from her core, her left leg raised, her knee touching Emma’s, now starting to shake.

“I remember him lifting up my dress, right up, then lay down on top of me. I wrapped my legs around the back of him and ordered him in. He just, just drove in hard! I remember screaming, he felt so, so…” Emma’s mind was now replaying the dream in her own mind. As she did, she felt Regina’s walls tighten on her fingers as she violently orgasmed. “Hnnghh! Mmm, so, so good! So fucking good, yes!!” she yelled into Emma’s mouth as she peaked. The noise of her climax bringing Emma’s own orgasm on in a rush mere seconds later as Regina, even through her own peak, continued to drive her fingers harder into her. “Argh! Yes, yes, oh-so-fucking-yes!!” Emma yelled, as she clenched. She slammed her mouth against Regina’s to try to keep the noise down.

As their breathing gradually calmed, the now sweat-sodden pair looked at each other, neither quite believing how their passion had come about. “You ok?” whispered Emma, wondering whether her dream had caused any problem for Regina.

“Fine, though I’m astonished I got so turned on by the idea of you having sex with Robin, in a wedding dress and all! I definitely need a shower now! You?”

“More than fine! Though I wasn’t the only one in a wedding dress, remember? Perhaps that’s why you were annoyed, because you wanted to join us. And I’m definitely going to join you for that shower!”

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Two weeks since the Return.

One week on from the departure of Captain Jones and the Jolly Roger, Storybrooke and Sherwood began to return to normal. Emma, now fully restored to health, became restless. Having no choice but to leave her sheriff post five years ago due to mental breakdown, the Saviour had somehow spent the last two of them making herself busy with home repairs, housework, and study. She’d helped part-time with Ruby and Dorothy at Grannie’s, and helped her mother as a part-time teaching assistant at the school. Moving in together two years ago, and getting married in New York a year later, the women had somehow managed to pad out their days being ladies of leisure. Now, Emma wanted to do something full time again.

Regina had similarly become restless. During a recent conversation, Robin had referred to Merlin’s
comments about her mother never making real amends for her crimes. That thr staircase Cora ascended in the Underworld only led to judgement, not paradise! That bothered Regina. Could she ever be forgiven for the Evil Queen’s past crimes in the Underworld? Or was she destined to spend her afterlife damned in Hell for perpetuity! It wasn’t a nice thought.

“I’m going to see Violet’s dad today,” Emma announced over breakfast. “Mulan told me he’s looking for a couple of extra deputies. I thought I’d apply.”

That surprised Regina. “Hank Morgan isn’t exactly your biggest fan, Emma! Have you mentioned it to Violet? She might be able to help soothe the way, if you’re serious.”

“I’m not sure I should be asking Henry’s girlfriend to help me get over her dad’s little problem with me.”

“A ‘little problem’ you’ve never actually apologised for! We told him how it happened, but you never actually apologised.”

“Yes, I guess I need to do a bit of grovelling…”

“Good luck with that. After I’ve dropped off the children, I’m going to see the Sorcerer.”

“Merlin? Why? Something to do with Robin?”

“No, something to do with me. I’ve got some questions about…well…my history!”

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**Storybrooke Police Station**

Sheriff Hank Morgan looked over the antiquated police station and couldn’t understand how it had been allowed to fall into such disrepair. Peeling paintwork, dirty floors and windows, rusty jail cells, obsolete computers and overflowing filing cabinets. He’d taken over the sheriff role, at Mayor Briar’s request, only a week ago. A born soldier, Hank had assisted David Nolan as a deputy between his daughter Sheriff Swan becoming unwell and standing down, and George Spencer winning a definitely fraudulent mayoral election. David resigned immediately the election result was announced, as he could never face working for that crook!

Hank assumed the disorganization started once Keith Nottingham took over as Sheriff. An old lackey of Spencer’s, the pair were as thick as thieves and attracted the same sort of people. Nottingham was deeply suspicious of David Nolan, Mulan and the other ‘heroes’ who had tried to help, instead bringing in a team of trusted men who had previously worked for him in another realm, when Prince John usurped King Richard to take the throne.

A former Knight of the Round Table, Sir Morgan of the Court of Camelot always took great pride in making sure his men, and some women more recently, were of the highest calibre, well trained, disciplined and polite to a fault. In return for dedicated service, he liked to make sure they were properly paid, trained and looked after, the welfare of their loved ones provided for in the event of their loss. His team appreciated him and he them. Now, looking at the sorry state of the police station, he figured this would be a symbol of change in the small town.

With all Nottingham and Spencer’s deputies being sacked, or jailed, on the orders of the mayor, Sir Morgan now needed a new team. Quickly. He first turned to Mulan, who he knew to be an excellent soldier and swordsman (or is it swordswoman? Either way, she was good).

“Sheriff, you asked to see me?” said the warrior.
“I did Miss Fa – oh, I’m so sorry, I forgot! Is it Mrs. Fa now? Or Mrs. Fa-Briars? Forgive me, I’m not sure...”

“Just Mrs. Briars - but please just call me Mulan!” she smiled, sitting down opposite his desk.

“Ok, Mulan, then please just call me Hank. Congratulations, by the way! Violet said it was a beautiful wedding. I’m sorry I missed it, I was the only one on duty...”

“No problem and I’m sorry you couldn’t be there. Now what did you want to talk to me about?”

“Well, you’ll be aware I’ve taken on this role on a temporary basis. There’ll be Sheriff elections before the end of the year and I don’t think I’ll want to stand. However, I need help and advice now and I also need four deputies.”

“You know I’m pregnant, Hank?” she brought her hand down to cover her abdomen, “I would be more than willing to help normally, but...”

“Oh, no, no no, I knew that, and I understand! I’d never assume anything less; your child comes first, always. I just thought that, as you were a deputy here longer than me, you could advise me who I should be considering for the roles. You’ve more experience. I’m surprised you didn’t apply for the role yourself?”

Well, I thought about it, though Phillip’s now the Mayor, and my husband. Neither of us, nor Aurora, think it appropriate to have the office of Mayor and Sheriff held by people related, as it could be a conflict of interest.”

“Yes, Phillip explained it to me, too. We both agreed you’d make a first-class Sheriff, though he said he would stand down as Mayor the moment you said you wanted to run for Sheriff...”

Mulan smiled broadly, a rare sight for the usually serious faced woman. “Phillip said the same to me, but I don’t want him to stand down. I think he’s making a difference and I hope he stands for the election.”

“Well, he’d be an excellent candidate. I’d vote for him...”

“Thank you. So, back to the subject - who are you thinking of for deputies?”

“Well, Dorothy Lucas seems a good candidate. I’ve seen her wield a sword with some of the militia when they train on the ridge. She’s intelligent, calm, strong and seems to have people’s trust...”


“Bill Spear, one of the militia captains. A bit wild in his youth, but he seems to have mellowed since he married young Gwendoline.”

“Also very good,” Mulan added, “his combat skills are excellent. I’ve helped train him and he bested me a few times too. Something I’m not proud of. Any more?”

“I was going to ask one or two of the Merry Men. Do you think Robin would mind me poaching?”

“Not at all, though it always seems strange. Something about poachers turning gamekeepers!”

Hank chuckled at that. “Apart from that, I’m not sure who we can consider. I asked David Nolan if he could come back, though he’s not sure. He’s offered some part-time support, but I think he’s enjoying being a farmer...”
Just then the door creaked open and Emma walked in, seeing Mulan and Sheriff Morgan engaged in some sort of impromptu meeting.

“Good morning, Mrs. Swan-Mills. Can I help you?”

“Well…yes. Could we talk somewhere, Sheriff?” she looked across at Mulan, who got the message and stood, ready to leave.

“I need to go. Hank, let me think of some other names, yes? I’ll call you in the morning?”

“Yes, please…and thank you, Mulan, once again. I appreciate your advice.”

As Mulan left, Emma stepped forward, sitting on the vacated chair without being asked.

“What can I do for you, Emma?” he stiffened, his manner noticeably cooler than with Mulan.

She paused, uncertain how to start. “I understand you’re looking for some new deputies?”

_He hadn’t expected that._ “You’d like to apply? A former sheriff applying for a deputy role?”

“Yeah. Well, I’ve been out of it for a while now. I’m certainly rusty…”

“You know there’s an election for Sheriff in November? You want to run then?”

“Absolutely not! I don’t need that all over again…”

Hank looked at her, choosing his next words carefully. Violet said he needed to finally forgive Emma for _that_. She _was_ cursed after all! It was just hard to accept anyone who could rip his own daughter’s heart from her chest just to control her to upset her own son. That was just, so, so _wrong_!

“I know you can do the job Emma! probably standing on one leg, with your hands behind your back, but…”

“It’s still the Dark One thing, isn’t it?” she blurted, knowing _that_ look. “There’s still people here who look at me…well, strangely, as though I’m going to go dark again. I was cursed, Hank! I had no control over anything I did! You still find it hard to accept that anyone who did what I did, to your little girl, must be…”

“Credit me some intelligence, please Emma!” he jumped in, “Violet and Henry have both explained to me, numerous times and at length, the circumstances at the time. I understand that, though must admit it still haunts me! That was five years ago, though my mind went straight back to it when I saw Mr. Collin’s in Grannies last night.”

“Mr. Collins? Who, oh you mean Dopey? What’s he got to do with anything?” she realized the connection the moment the words left her mouth.

“Yes, Dopey. You may recall he became a tree at that time, but nobody sought to try and turn him back until Merlin got here two week’s ago. The Dwarves were trying to escape you, as I recall…”

“Yes, but…but that was _Dark One_ magic! I didn’t know how to change him back. What could I do?”

He ignored the question. “Have you apologized? Have you been to see him? I’m sure that would help.”

She heard Regina’s earlier words replay. “You never actually _apologized, Emma_!” Shit!
“Yeah, I guess I’d better go and do that. Look Hank, I’m sorry ok! I guess I’d better be going. I hope you find your deputies. But just for the record, I’m truly sorry for what the Dark One… wait, no, for what I did to Violet! I apologized to her, many times, but I guess I owe an apology to you, too. I’m sorry…” she mumbled before standing, turning to head for the door. However, before she reached it, Hank spoke.

“Thank you, Emma! I accept your apology. And I’m sorry I’ve been a bit… brusque with you. As it looks like Vi and Henry are getting ever closer, I must try to do the same and let bygones be bygones.” He stood and walked around to offer his hand.

“And for the record, you would be an excellent, proven and very welcome deputy, at least till I stand down. I agreed to take on this role when Mayor Briar asked me, but I don’t intend to stand for election. I’m by nature a soldier, not a policeman. I think your experience would be invaluable. When can you start?”

“Wait, what – you’re offering me the job?” she said, shaking the hand.

“Yes, Deputy Sheriff, I am!”
How to get to Paradise

Chapter Summary

Regina seeks advice from Merlin on her fate. Robin and Roland leave for England and a few weeks later Regina gets a big surprise!

Chapter Notes

I only started this a few weeks ago and can't believe how many chapters it's taken to get this far! Perhaps I'm just being too wordy and need to cut back. I really hope you're enjoying it and again thanks for all the positive feedback. I really appreciate it!

The surprise ending is the first of several over the next few chapters.

Enjoy!

Fi

Storybrooke Hospital

Regina noticed the changes in Storybrooke Hospital almost immediately. It looked freshly painted, the floors freshly stripped and polished, the bustling staff in new uniforms and the reception desk bristling with new IT equipment. Merlin's doing! She assumed.

“Good morning! Mrs. Swan-Mills, isn’t it?” said the receptionist who she vaguely recognized.

“Yes. Good morning. I’m here to see Professor Sage?”

The younger woman looked at her screen. “Yes. He’s just come out of theatre so, I’ve paged him, and he’ll be with you in a couple of minutes. Second floor, room twelve.”

Regina smiled back, pleased at the courtly efficiency. She headed into the newly refurbished elevators, up to the meeting room before knocking gently. “Come in!”

As she walked into another refurbished office, Merlin appeared to be dictating notes to a senior nurse who tapped into her tablet. “Thank you, Rose, could you let me know when Vincent is ready?” The nurse nodded and stepped away as the silver-bearded man stood and approached his new arrival.

“Mrs. Swan-Mills, lovely to see you again! You’re looking so much better; how are you feeling?” He stopped and, without asking permission, gently placed his warm hands either side of her face to gently massage her recently restored jaw. Reminding herself it had only been ten days since the man magically healed her battered features, she smiled back.

“Much better thank you, Professor. Apart from some soreness and aching for the few days.”

“To be expected, unfortunately,” he said, satisfying himself all was healing correctly. “You have
Victor Whale to thank for the important bit, the surgery underpinning it. Tricky thing, surgery on the
mandible. Needs a delicate touch.”

“Impressive, seeing as he got his medical degree from a curse…” she was unable to resist.

“The same way you and I got our own skills, you mean? Through magic? Actually, Victor is a rather
brilliant surgeon, though I know you dislike him. His skills will be much in demand in New York…”

“So, you’re taking our only surgeon from us? I know I’ve had issues with him in the past but he’s all
we have, and now he’s spending most of his time in Robin’s…in Sherwood.”

“Where he’s needed, and appreciated, believe you me! You’re aware my daughter Annabelle will be
staying here in Storybrooke for the next six months? She’s a first-class surgeon, a Cardiologist as it
happens. My field is Obstetrics and Gynaecology.”

“You’re staying?” Regina was surprised the world’s greatest sorcerer would be sticking around.

“Coming and going. I’m training up another surgeon; I think you’ll like him. Plus, you now have a
paramedic on call between here and Sherwood. I believe you know her. Lady Caroline? Robin
Locksley’s cousin?”

“Carrie? I thought she said she was a nurse. Is she trained?”

“Of course, Anna and I trained her ourselves. Magic, of course! She was already a very skilled
midwife. She always undersells herself. She’ll be a brilliant asset to the town.”

Regina sighed. In years past, she would have been at the very epicentre of the town, not allowing
changes or hires without her strict permission. Now, the entire community had woken up, thanks
mainly to the arrival of man in front of her. And Robin. “Good. I like Carrie. A wise decision…”

“Thank you. Now, you asked to see me? Any problem?”

Regina stalled, unsure how to begin. “Well, this is difficult. I need advice. Not medical advice, nor
magical. More…moral.” The Sorcerer nodded for her to continue, staying silent.

“Robin tells me you’re able to communicate with the Underworld? With the dead? He didn’t give me
any specific details but, I need to know…” she stopped, gathering her thoughts. “Am I damned,
Merlin? No matter how I lived my life since I was…the Evil Queen?”

Merlin’s expression changed as he studied her eyes. For a moment she felt more like prey being
watched by a calculating predator. “No, Regina. Everyone is capable of being pardoned by the gods.
If they are genuinely contrite and try to atone for their sins.”

“So my parents? They’re not together in the afterlife?”

“Hmm. I cannot and will not give you the details, but suffice to say your father is now in Paradise,
with those who loved him and those he loved.”

“And my mother, the Red Queen?”

Merlin sighed. “Cora would have been weighed and assessed, like everybody else, to see not only
whether she was truly repentant for her crimes, not just to those who knew her, but the rest of the
people whose lives she damaged. Whether she did anything during her life to rectify some of those
actions. Did she ever seek forgiveness? Did she show any form of contrition? Without that, gods will
always seek eternal retribution.”
That told Regina all she needed to know. *My mother is in Hell!* She swallowed, realising the implications.

“I committed many crimes as the Evil Queen. I took many innocent lives. I’m reformed now but is there *anything* I can do, after the event, to avoid eternal damnation?”

“You could just as well be asking a priest! Of course there is. You’ve lived a good life these last few years. Don’t just regret your past crimes; do something about them! Speak to people you’ve wronged. Don’t just ask forgiveness but do *something* to help them now! Your magic provides you with good fortune, so use it. There’re people still living in the forest who’re still there because their parents were killed or harmed. Return their stolen property, or money. Try to heal their pains. And then, only then, ask for their forgiveness.”

“I think there’s a good few who could never forgive me, no matter what!”

“True, but you know, the gods see everything! They see into your soul. They see whether you’re trying to gain forgiveness for your own sake or whether you truly mean it!”

Regina knew she wasn’t going to like the answer but didn’t remember killing any woman here. “In Storybrooke? Her foster mother?”

“Yes, Johanna Mendel, a former ladies’ maid to Queen Eva. Your mother threw her off the clock tower, while you watched - and you laughed, as I recall! The dream catcher showed everything...”

Regina felt sick at the memory of her mother’s final murder before she herself died as a result of Snow’s trickery. Everything he said was true and she felt ashamed.

“While you’re at it, remember Sheriff Graham Humbert? That poor man you held captive and whose heart you crushed? Well, part of his salary *was* supporting a young boy he fathered when he was murdered! The boy's name is Christian. He’s about twelve years old now, and still lives in the woods under canvas. Rarely comes out, even for the Merry Men. He’s alone. Perhaps he could be helped by a *truly repentant* former queen?”

Regina was now sobbing, pulling out a cotton handkerchief to dab her eyes. “Graham had a child? How could I have never known that? “If I had, I would never have…! Oh god, I really don’t deserve forgiveness, do I?”

Merlin stood, walking around his desk to sit opposite her, collecting her hands. “You do if you earn it! Yes, you *were* a monster; that’s why they called you the Evil Queen! But, you CAN still do something to balance the scales. It is never too late, if you TRULY repent and try to do something to atone for your crimes…”

She nodded, sniffling. She needed to do something…
Another week passed, and the day came when Robin, and Roland, would leave for England. A day Regina had not been looking forward to. She hadn’t seen him all week, though she had managed to tame her longing for her former love, though the thought of him being out of her life again, even for up to two months, was depressing.

The initial argument Robin had with Emma about his trip had been settled. The two of them had again apologized to each other and although they hadn’t kissed, they hugged it out. Regina finally agreed that Roland would benefit from seeing his only remaining biological family and the trip to Europe could be educational. Mr. Jasper, the Headmaster of Storybrooke School, had also agreed. Honour would stay behind this time, though there were many tears shed at the news her newly restored daddy would be leaving them for six weeks. His other daughter Robyn had also been distraught, but he’d assured them both he would be back with Roland, that he loved them so much and the next time he went on a trip like this he would definitely be taking them with him.

“But why you going away, daddy?” the little blonde one groaned. “Why can’t I come?”

They’d been through this several times already, but Robin again patiently explained it. “Honour, I’m going to be meeting some uncles and cousins and family I’ve never met before. And hopefully find my little sister Maria too! Rolly and I are going to have to do a lot of tiring travelling, and I’m not quite sure what it’s going to be like. I’m also going to have to go to a ‘special’ school so some of Merlin’s friends can teach me more magic.”

“School?” said Robyn, currently sitting on his knee on the sofa, Zelena having left them to talk. “Like my school?”

“Yes, my darling, a little bit like your school, but a magical one. Sometimes, Roland will spend some time with my family while I’m in a school in Avalon.”

“Avalon? Isn’t that where Arthur was supposed to come from?” asked Emma. “We went to Camelot and it was supposed to be somewhere near there, so how come you need to fly to England?”

“Merlin said there’s several places called Avalon as decoys against former dark forces. Apparently, the real Avalon is in the far west of England, in a place called Cornwall. It’s hidden from the non-magical world, like Storybrooke, but it’s a world centre of magic.”

“I’ve heard Rumpelstiltskin mention it.” Regina added. “A place of ‘healing’ from magic as well, if I recall? Why do you need to learn there? Why not with Merlin, here? What can you learn from a ‘Hogwarts’ that you can’t learn here, from Merlin himself?”

“Dad said Robin’s a ‘Stage Ten’,” Celia Sage added, having been listening to the conversation. “There’s things that need much more intense training. Divination, mind reading, multiple persona control and of course, realm-jumping. Dad’s taken me to Avalon once to meet some of my former brothers and sisters. It’s wonderful, but a bit weird…”

“Realm-jumping!” gasped Henry. “Robin can jump through realms without magic beans? That means he must be able to go backwards and forwards in time! That’s fantastic!”

“Yes and no. There’re loads of very strict rules about that! If you do anything wrong, anything, you can screw up thousands, millions of lives in the future! Henry, imagine you could go back in time to stop Hitler or any other dictator being born? If you did that, you and billions of others would cease to exist, replaced by others! That’s why he needs special training. I don’t know what they do there, but dad says it’s the best way to teach Robin how to control his new powers.”

Robin stayed silent, looking at his two five-year-old girls, balanced one on each knee. “I promise
we’ll be back as soon as we can!” He kissed each on the top of their heads as he hugged them. Honour and Robyn both leaning into his chest, hugging him tightly. Regina and Zelena both exchanged a look, knowing they had totally fallen in love with their father, and he with them. Regina wondered to herself whether Robin would still be the same person when he returned, with seemingly limitless powers. Zelena wondered whether he would be an even bigger, unstoppable threat to her relationship with Robyn.

As hugs and kisses were exchanged, Roland being completely smothered by Regina, she whispered to Robin. “Robin, may I have a quick word before you go? Emma, would you join us please?”

Both nodded, though slightly confused. The three left the small group as Regina led them into the living room at the back before closing the door. Emma and Robin gave each other a look, unsure of what she was going to say. “Gina, what is it?” said her wife.

“I wanted to tell you both about something I’ve decided to do with the rest of my working life. I need to tell you now as, when Robin gets back, the three of us we will need to organize Honour and Roland’s school pick-ups and drop offs.” Both nodded for her to continue.

“Well, it’s five years since I was Mayor and you’re aware, I haven’t been able to face a full-time job since…well, you know.”

“Go on,” said Emma. “What have you decided to do?”

“I want to become a paramedic. Eventually a doctor.”

“Waat!” said Emma, “where the hell did this come from?”

“Blimey!” said Robin. “That’s a change and a half! What brought this on?”

“I spoke to Merlin and he said something that deeply disturbed me. Robin, do you remember last week you told me about ‘making amends’ for the lives I ruined?”

“Yes Gina, but I didn’t meant…”

‘You were right! I need to make some sort of recompense for the lives I’ve destroyed! So, I figured a good way would be to do something specific. I have no wish to return to being mayor or anything like that in the future but, well, I was chatting to Caroline yesterday and I looked at what she was doing. She said she was only a nurse but she’s a hell of a lot more than that! Merlin’s training her up to be a full paramedic and I realized that was one way I could get my hands dirty and help people, seeing as we’re seriously short of trained medics. So, I asked him to train me. With magic of course, to save time. I’ve no wish to spend five years in medical college…”

“When did you decide this?” said Emma, a little hurt she was only hearing this now. How could she keep this from me? “Thanks for letting me know! It’s not like I’m your wife or anything…”

“Good on you, Regina! I think it’s an excellent idea” said Robin, earning a glare from Emma.

“I finally decided this morning, Emma…and thank you, Robin…”

He smiled back but saw the annoyed look in the blonde’s eyes, knowing a storm could be brewing between them. “Well, good luck. Whatever you decide, I’m sure we’ll be able to work the children around us all. Now, I best be going. Merlin’s sorted out tickets and money for the journey and something called a ‘passport’. I think we have everything so…I guess I’ll see you in six weeks?”

He wanted to kiss her goodbye properly, but Emma was standing right beside them, but he felt
awkward. So, he wrapped his arms around the brunette, pulling her into a hug. “Take care, Regina. Look after each other and our loved ones…”

She looked up and into those blue eyes that never failed to mesmerize. “Be safe, Robin! Please take care of Roland.” The pair were inches from each other’s mouths, Emma watching intently and oddly enough, without feeling any sort of jealousy. “For heaven’s sake, Gina - just kiss him already!”

Regina looked a little shocked by her remark, but Robin just looked down at her lips and smiled. “Well, if Emma insists?” before then pressing his lips firmly against hers. Regina felt the familiar buzz and although hesitant for a second, responded by pressing back into the kiss. No tongues were introduced, but it definitely wasn’t chaste! It lasted a good five seconds before they separated, Regina’s cheeks blushing as she looked at Emma before stepping out of his arms.

“Yeah, have a good trip, thief! Take care of Rollie.” said Emma, who, without prompting, stepping into the space vacated by Regina. Robin, without hesitation, wrapped his arms around her, just as he had Regina. “Always,” he whispered, before fastening his lips to Emma’s too. That caught the blonde by surprise, but after a moments hesitation, she responded in kind!

Regina stood transfixed, not believing the sight in front of her. Robin and Emma were kissing! And it wasn’t exactly chaste either! Seeing her two loves in an embrace sent all sorts of feelings though her. Surprise. Arousal? Longing? The pair seemed to sense her gaze, finally separating. It was Emma’s turn to blush. Robin, sensing the odd turn of events, realized he needed to leave.

“Well. Look after our babies, mums, and please keep an eye on Robyn for me? I still don’t trust her mother.” Both women nodded as he trooped out the door and back to join the rest of the party where they made their final goodbyes. Regina leaned in to her wife.

“Emma, what just happened back then?” The blonde studiously avoided answering.

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Mifflin Street – Seven weeks since the Return

“Hi Gina, hi Emma!” shrieked Roland, as the two women appeared side-by-side in front of the tablet. Roland had already learned how to use the new device for video calls, and he’d called them at least twice a week since he left Storybrooke, five weeks ago. He’d used it regularly, when Robin allowed, to keep up with his sisters, his big brother in Harvard and a couple of special friends back home. His father said he needed to look after the grown up device and be careful of local times to avoid calling people in the middle of the night due to the time difference.

“Hello, my darling!” said Regina, feeling a little weepy at seeing his magnetic grin. “We’ve really missed you, my knight! Is everything ok? Are you enjoying yourself?”

“It’s fine, mamma. Great actually! But I really missed you too, and we’re coming home next week! I spoke to Henry yesterday. He said he’ll be back home in two months.”

“Yes, we’re missing him too, Rollie!” added Emma, “It’s not been the same without our boys around! Have you been having fun with your papa?”

“Yeah! We went back to London for a few days, to meet some more of dad’s family. He has loads of them! I got to meet my Auntie Maria! She might come back with us for a while! She’s lovely, mamma, you’d like her! Although when she met dad, they kept crying all the time! He thought she was dead, and she thought he was dead. Dad said they were happy tears but…”

“I’m so pleased Roland, it must be wonderful for him! Where’s your father now?”
‘He’s with Gumpy! Hang on, I’ll get him…” the boy left the screen quickly to bellow something incomprehensible down the stairs, followed by “GUMPY, COME QUICK! MAMA’S ON THE CALL!”

“Gumpy?” breathed Emma to her wife. Who the hell is …”

After a short commotion, the women heard more than one deep voice get louder as someone entered his room. The boy came back to the screen, sitting on his bed as a large, silver-haired, grey-bearded man, seemingly in his eighties, settled down to Roland’s immediate right. “Mamma, this is my Great-grandpa, Gumpy!” he introduced the man, who wrapped an arm around his shoulder, pulling Roland closer and leaning in to the screen.

“Or you can just call me Christian!” He chuckled, his voice deep and rich. “Christian Locksley, at your service! It’s been wonderful spending time with young Roland here. Now, I guess you must be my mothers, Mrs. And Mrs. Swan-Mills? Robin told me how brave and strong you’ve been since he ‘died’, but he never told me how beautiful you both were…”

Emma and Regina smiled back, cheeks starting to blush. Though he looked at least double Robin’s age, she could still see the resemblance between him and his grandson. The light beard, through greyer. More lines certainly, no dimples, for a change, but that devious twinkle in his pale blue eyes. He even flirts like Robin! Thought Regina.

“Why thank you, kind sir, we’re flattered! Though please call me Regina. This is my wife, Emma.” She wrapped an arm around her other half. “It’s a pleasure to meet you, sir!” said Emma.

“Please, none of that ‘Sir’, ‘Lord Locksley’ or ‘My Lord’ rubbish! Just call me ‘Chris’, or ‘Gumpy’, as your delightful young lad keeps calling me! And Emma? So, you’re the ‘Saviour of Storybrooke’ right? Robin spoke very highly of you. Says you’re a legend over there!”

Emma was more than touched that Robin had spoken of her that way and her cheeks flushed.

“Don’t believe all you hear…Chris!”

Before he could reply, a loud noise was heard from his side, followed by a woman screeching and laughing. Two adults, a man and a long-legged woman in a red skirt, crashed into the room, falling on to the bed behind Christian and Roland. The woman appeared to be laughing, but trying to get something off the man. Roland looked behind and started giggling when he saw his father, clutching his mobile phone with the unknown brunette woman trying to get it. As the camera refocused, Regina felt a hint of annoyance at the sight of this woman clambering all over Robin on a bed! “Give it!” she ordered. “Robbie, you sod! Give it! Delete that photo this minute!” The woman, quite tall and lean, with long dark-blonde hair, clambered upright for a moment before launching herself on to Robin’s chest with her knees up, the former outlaw gasping as the breath was temporarily knocked out of him. “Roland, help me get your dad’s camera?”

Initially worried Robin was either being attacked, or molested, Regina stiffened to call out, before noticing Robin and his assailant, were actually laughing! Well, laughing and wheezing. “Coming Auntie M!” the boy yelled, as he tried to grapple with his dad for the camera. “Tickle him, M! Dad’s really ticklish on his feet!” The woman instantly obeyed, turning before grabbing a foot, dragging a sock off before forcing a knuckle into the base of his foot. “Argh! That’s…that’s not fair! Rollie, you…traitor!!” yelled Robin, giggling like a child. “You’re supposed to be on my side?”

Robin surrendered the phone to his boy, pretending he’d had it dragged from him. The older man, now also laughing at the antics of the pair, chided them. “Will you behave, you two? Honestly, making young Roland here look like the adult! We have guests, if you haven’t noticed?”
Robin, laughing and now lying flat on his back with his son triumphantly sitting on his chest, turned his head to see the tablet computer screen and two women, one scowling, staring back at him. “Gina? Emma? Sorry, I didn’t see you there!” He’d be blushing if his face wasn’t already red from the battle.

“Clearly!” said Regina, glaring. “And who’s your friend? This lady sitting on you, who so desperately needs your phone?” she frowned as the woman in red, now stepping up off the bed, straightened her skirt before walking around to join the older man to face the camera. Robin spoke “Oh, that’s no lady, Gina, that’s…”

“Maria Locksley!” said the now red-faced woman, out of breath. “I’m Robin’s sister. Hi!”

“Oh, goodness! Why...It’s lovely to finally see you Maria!” Regina’s expression instantly morphed from jealous annoyance, to sheer surprise. Now she could see the woman's proper, the resemblance was striking! Though less worn and very feminine, Maria had a similar look. It wasn’t just her colouring or those pale blue eyes. It was the intense expression and widening grin as she smiled, albeit with long wavy hair curling around slim cheekbones. Maria Locksley was simply stunning! Regina was temporarily lost for words at the sight, especially now Robin came to sit down on the bed next to her, bringing a protective arm around his younger sister.

“Maria, let me introduce two very special friends of mine! On the left is Emma, and on her left, is Emma’s wife Regina. They’re Roland’s step-mums and live in Storybrooke, near our new village. Emma, Regina, this is the little sister I thought was dead! We finally met up this week and I’d forgotten how annoying she can be! And a phone thief to boot!” At that he playfully dug a hand into her side, making her shriek, dropping the phone into his waiting hand. “Gotcha!”

Maria rolled her eyes at her brother, turning back. “It’s lovely to see you both, ladies! Sorry about the noisy fight, but this idiot, this swine, took a picture of me asleep, with my mouth open and a fake beard of Roland’s! I was just trying to get it off him to delete it before he posts it!” she jabbed him in the side as he pulled her closer and she finally rested a head on his shoulder, a happy smile on her lips.

Emma had been watching the happy interplay between brother and sister, with a silly grin on her own face. She imagined what it would have been like to have a big brother of her own. “So, Maria, what do you do? Do you live near your grandparents? Are you married?” as she asked, she immediately regretted the last question, thinking she may have been too nosey. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to pry…”

“It’s fine, Emma, I don’t mind. I’m a freelance veterinary surgeon and I live in London, a good five-hour drive away from my Gumpy here. But I try to get down to Avalon whenever I can. Oh, and I’m single now; divorced about two years ago. No children yet.”

Emma also saw the strong resemblance to Robin. She is very beautiful! Emma had never really taken the time to admire other women before, though since starting her first, hopefully only, lesbian relationship with Regina, she started to notice other women more. She thought how much Ruby would like this one!

“Maria took me to the Tower of London, mamma” said Roland, butting in. “It’s where Queen Elizabeth and her dad used to cut the heads off and burn people they didn’t like! We went on a big wheel near the River Thames and had a meal up a really, really tall tower called the Shard. We went to see a big show in the evening and there was a green witch called Elphaba and lots of really good songs!”

“Elphaba? You took him to see Wicked?” asked Regina, being reminded the story was very loosely
based on her sister's life. Roland nodded. “Well, you lucky thing! I’m going have to visit London some time myself!”

“Definitely mamma! You and Honnie and Emma have to come!”

“We'd love to!” added Emma. “But first, we need to get you both home safe and sound. Robin, do you need collecting from the airport next week?”

“We’re bringing a lot of stuff back with us, as we’ve done lots of shopping, so thanks, but don’t worry. We’re also bringing somebody back with us. I’ll hire a van or something.”

“Somebody else?” The brunette’s eyebrows rose.

Maria waved a hand. “Yup, can’t wait! I get to see my nieces! I’m coming over with Rob and staying for a couple of weeks!”

Regina smiled warmly at her. “That’ll be lovely! I’m so looking forward to meeting you, Maria. I’ve already made good friends with your cousin Caroline.”

“I can’t wait to see Carrie too! She was my very best friend until…well, you know?” She looked at her big brother with a tinge of sadness. He just tightened his grip, pulling her in closer. “I know”.

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The day after Roland and Robin’s last video call, Regina had woken up feeling decidedly odd. Light headed, she’d tried to manage breakfast but the strange taste in her mouth put her off. She hardly managed her coffee either. Emma, seeing the brunette feeling under the weather, assumed she may have a bug brewing and opted to drop Honour off at school on her way to her formal interview with Hank Morgan and Mulan. Regina had gone back to bed for another hour, before deciding she should fight it and would be fine after a decent walk.

That’s how she now found herself sitting in Granny’s nursing a coffee. Even that smelt weird.

“Regina, you feeling ok?” a kindly voice sounded. She looked up to see Dorothy Lucas looking down at her with some concern. “You seem awfully pale! Can I get you something?”

“T…thank you!”

“No problem. I know Leroy’s fry ups aren’t your thing, but I didn’t know they’d do that to you?”

“Coming through, my hot stuff!” she said, pecking Dorothy on the back of the head as she squeezed past her to Leroy and Nova, sitting at a nearby table. Although the dwarf looked delighted to see the plates laden with bacon, eggs, sausages and fried bread, Regina clearly was not. The smell made her retch. She shot up, squeezing past Ruby as swiftly as she could, before racing into the ladies’ bathroom where within seconds she was kneeling against and dry heaving over a toilet bowl. “Oh god! Not now…” she groaned as the retching kicked in again.

She stayed like that for another minute before Ruby appeared from nowhere, one hand resting on her back and the other attempting to lift her hair from her face and away from the bowl. “Th…thank you!”

“No problem. I know Leroy’s fry ups aren’t your thing, but I didn’t know they’d do that to you?”

“It’s not that; Emma has fry ups too. It’s just…” and again, she turned her head down to retch once again. “Let me just rest here a moment. I’ll be up soon.”
After resting outside to catch her breath, Regina decided to go to the drug store. Roaming the shelves to find anything to stop the nausea, she came across something that drew her attention, freezing when she saw a particular package she’d used the last time she’d experienced sickness like this.

No. It can’t be that, surely? I protected myself! And Emma!

Just wanting the pain to be over, she grabbed several packets, before making her way to the counter, greatly relieved to see a sales assistant she didn’t recognize or, more importantly, recognize her.

One hour later, a shell-shocked former queen sat on the bathroom floor, too stunned to speak. She barely heard Emma banging the front door shut and making her way into the kitchen, arms full of groceries. “You back, babe?” she yelled as she saw Regina’s keys, a bag of pain killers and Dioralyte on the kitchen table. Hearing no answer, she popped a few items in the fridge before taking her coat and shoes off and walking up the stairs.

“Gina?” called Emma as she stepped into their bedroom. The older woman’s jacket and bag lay across the bed and the en-suite bathroom door open. She stopped the moment she saw the brunette sitting on the bathroom floor, knees up to her chest. “Regina, are you ok?” She bent down over her, worried.

Noticing her wife for the first time, Regina looked up, white faced. “Not really, no!”

“What’s wrong, babe? Are you ill? Rubes said you were sick! Have you been to the doc-?”

That’s when she saw the pregnancy stick on the sink. Stepping closer she picked it up, eyes instantly drawn to the blue line and baby figure.

Positive!
Her pregnancy confirmed, Regina gets a check over by Merlin. Now it's Emma's turn to get a surprise! A decision needs to be made and Robin and Roland return from their trip.

**Chapter 28**

“You’re pregnant? What the fuck, Regina!” the words left her mouth without thought. “How could…” She stopped herself. That was a bloody stupid question. For a split second, she imagined her wife had betrayed her but fortunately she had the good sense to stop herself. “When did you suspect?” she tried to sound calm, seeing the panicked look on the other’s face.

“About two hours ago. When I saw them in the drug store. I was sick in the Diner…”

It was Emma’s turn to be shocked, turning instead to silently collapse by the bathroom wall, next to her spouse. Nothing was said by either for a good two minutes, until Emma finally spoke.

“Robin’s?”

Regina nodded. “You’d know, you were there!”

Emma nodded back. It was another stupid question. “But how, Gina? I thought you used protection? We both did! Did you use the wrong spell?”

“Same one as you. I’ve used it a couple times in the past and I know my own magic, Emma. It could only be that one night in the Locksley Arms. I’ve never been with him since, I swear! I wouldn’t, not without you…” at that, she quietly collapsed into light sobs. Emma wrapped a shoulder around her to comfort her as Regina rested her head on her shoulder.

“Hey, hey! It’ll be all right! We’ll get through this…like we always do!”

“I was so careful with that bloody spell! I always am!” she said, now sniffling. Until she fell pregnant with Honour, she was certain she was infertile, due to the drug she’d taken many years before. However, as an added precaution, she’d long used the spell, just in case.

“Urgh. Too much, Gina! I don’t need to know how many men you’ve slept with, thanks. Anyway, the first thing we need to do is get you checked over and confirm you’re actually pregnant. Those testers can sometimes be wrong. Then you need to weigh up your options.”

The brunette nodded. “Strange. I took a potion to make me completely barren; and now that bloody man has got me pregnant…twice!” although she said the words she knew she never meant them. Honour was her absolute world. Though she dearly loved Henry and Roland, her little girl somehow completed them.

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The following morning, Regina sat in a consultation room at Storybrooke Hospital. She’s been nauseous on waking but hadn’t thrown up like she did yesterday. Emma had decided to join her, just
in case Dr. Whale was the medic on call. She noticed how much things had changed here since Honour had been born. A repaint, new carpets and curtains, new IT equipment. It all looked as though serious amounts of money had been invested. Even more unusual, when Emma phoned to book on Regina’s behalf, she’d been asked whether it was for Obs and Gynae. Saying yes, she was offered a female doctor, which she accepted straight away, not even realizing they had one.

A very prim, neatly starched (the uniform at least) nurse stepped into the room. “Good morning, ladies. Mrs. Regina Swan-Mills, isn’t it?” Regina nodded back. “Mrs. Sage is ready to see you now!”

“Mrs. Sage?” muttered Emma, “We were booked to see a doctor!”

“Yes, Mrs. Sage is a doctor. She’s a senior surgeon, hence the title. So if you could join me?”

The slightly imperious nurse led the pair into an adjoining room, to be greeted by Annabelle, Merlin’s youngest daughter. *Merlin’s kids seem to have taken over the fucking town!* thought Emma. *Remembering the recent clash with her and Regina, she almost wished it was Whale!*

“Ah, Regina & Emma Swan-Mills, we meet again!” said the cheery blonde. “Do please take a seat. How can I help you?”

Regina didn’t waste time. “I believe I may be pregnant, Doctor…sorry, Mrs. Sage. I took a test yesterday which came back positive.”

“Oh, let’s check for certain. Those little testing kits aren’t always reliable.” Anna started typing into her PC. “And while we’re organizing that, let’s ask a couple of questions. I have your recent history here and it seems Doctor Whale did give extensive notes on your last pregnancy. So, when was your last period?”

“Roughly two to three months ago. I have very irregular periods,” she looked at Emma, “well since after I gave birth to my daughter, five years ago.”

“And was this pregnancy planned, Mrs. Swan-Mills? Are you on any fertility meds or treatments I need to know about?”

“Just call me Regina. And no to both, it certainly wasn’t planned.” She looked at her wife, who looked sympathetic, though not pleased.

“Fair enough. Let’s run a blood test and take a urine sample, so we know for sure. I’ll also take your blood pressure and prescribe some vitamins while we wait.” She looked at the history. “As this isn’t your first pregnancy, you’ll already know all about the does and don’ts regarding your diet and exercise routine, so I won’t cover that unless you want me to.” She stopped, now looking at Emma and trying to be cautious in her next choice of wording. “So, I understand you’re a gay couple? If this wasn’t a planned pregnancy, do you want to look at all options available?”

Regina’s eyes sprang wide, understanding fully what the woman was hinting at. “NO! Absolutely not. If indeed I am pregnant, I’ll neither wish to abort it or put it up for adoption!” She turned to look at her wife, ensuring Emma fully understood her opinion. If she disagreed, this could seriously damage their marriage! Emma recognized that look. *It wasn’t up for debate. She’ll have it with or without me!*

“Of course. We’ll do whatever’s necessary.” Emma added, a lack of commitment in her voice.

“Always good to know your partner has your full support at times like this,” said Anna, seeing the waver in the younger woman’s voice. “Now, one final thing. Until everything is confirmed, I won’t
be putting this into the records. However, as you may know, my father may be the Sorcerer but in this world he is a professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. This is his specialist field, so I would like to share notes with him, if you’ll allow? Seeing as this could be a ‘special’ case.”

“What do you mean, ‘special’? What’s so different that Merlin needs to be involved?” asked Emma.

“Regina has magic. Strong magic. Each potential foetus can be affected by it, and some can actually fight against the mother’s own. And that is definitely something my father knows more about. So, may I discuss it with him?”

Regina nodded. “Yes, that makes sense. Let’s get the tests done, please.”

It was later that evening when they received the call from the hospital. Roland and Honour were now watching a Disney film and Emma tidied up in the kitchen.

“Regina? It’s Anna Sage. I just wanted to let you know that the bloods have confirmed everything. You’re definitely pregnant. From the hormone levels, probably seven to eight weeks.”

“I see,” she replied, not altogether surprised by the news.

“I’m going to prescribe you some mild anti-emetics and supplements to help with the sickness, along with vitamins and the like, as I mentioned earlier. I told Professor Sage and he asked if he may pop around to see you for a few minutes this evening? He said he’ll bring the medication with him. Would 8pm be ok?”

A few minutes before eight, Regina was in her bedroom, changing into a nightgown and robe after a warm bath. Emma was sitting with Honour on the sofa when the knocker on the door sounded. Regina had told her to expect Merlin and to let him into the sitting room.

“Good evening, Emma! Apologies for the late visit, but Anna insisted I bring these over…” he handed the package over. The blonde was once again overwhelmed by the sheer magical aura that seemed to just glow around the man.

“Hi. No problem. Come on in, Regina’s just had a bath. She’ll be right down.” Emma led him past the children watching TV and into the sitting room, waving him to take a seat, which he ignored. Instead, he surprised her by smiling gently, before turning to softly collect both Emma’s hands in his own.

“Anna must have got you two mixed up! She said Regina was the one whose was pregnant! Oh well, let’s take a quick look, shall we?” And before she could even reply, he continued. “Yes. I can sense the baby already! There’s definitely a magical presence in there already! Can’t you feel it?”

“Wait…what? No, Regina IS pregnant, not me!” she said, irritated at his assumption.

“Then I’m sorry to upset you, Emma, but you most certainly are pregnant! I can sense it!”

Merlin didn’t seem the slightest embarrassed, merely surprised. “Both of you? Well, that’s a surprise!”

“Hold on, I’m NOT the one whose pregnant! I thought you were supposed to be the bloody expert?” she said, irritated at his assumption.

“Then I’m sorry to upset you, Emma, but you most certainly are pregnant! I can sense it!”

Emma stood dumbfounded. He was the Sorcerer. Why would he say that? “That’s impossible, I can’t be! Regina and I…she’s the one who…” before being interrupted by Regina now entering the
“Emma, what’s with the shouting? Hello Merlin, sorry, I mean Professor Sage! Your daughter said you were popping over.”

“Good evening, Regina,” he said, realizing he’s completely floored the Saviour and deciding he’d already said enough on that subject. “Yes…well, I was just going to drop your medication off and give you a quick check. May I?” Then, without asking, he took both her hands in his own. Regina could instantly sense a low level of magic course through her body. A tingle, a throb that gently pulsed its way throughout. He closed his eyes in deep concentration, before declaring:

“Good. Well, you’re definitely with child, about seven or eight weeks, I believe. I can just about sense a heartbeat, which is slightly unusual at this stage, but not abnormal. Interestingly though, I can also sense a tingle of magic there! It’s very slight, but it’s there. Hormone levels are fine, although you seem a little dehydrated. Nothing to worry about; I brought over some multi-vitamins and zinc, which’ll help.”

“You can tell all that, just with magic?” she said, astonished. “Emma, do you hear that, I’m…” it was only then she noticed Emma had disappeared. “Oh! Well…thank you for coming across, Professor. I’m a little surprised to be getting house calls from a royal gynaecologist!”

“You’re welcome. Please just call me Merlin, I only use the titles when I’m working, or for getting tables in restaurants. Can be useful…”

“I’ll bet!” she chuckled. “You arranged that dinner for Robin and Emma, didn’t you? L’Auberge Cachée? Pierre Roch? You’re moving in very exalted company these days, Merlin?”

The Sorcerer smirked. “Perks of the job! Although in Pierre’s case, I knew him in Paris a very long time ago. When I trained in London, his daughter Mia and his granddaughter were in a car crash. I performed surgery on them both, but it was a close thing. Pierre has magic too, you know? But decided to stay away from it for good in a non-magical world. Didn’t want to have all that power…”

“I’m beginning to! It’s odd, for the last few years there’s only been me, Emma, Gold and a handful of others here with magic. Now we’ve Robin, you, your entire family, even Hook. And some of the magic is leagues stronger than mine! I’m starting to feel a bit redundant here…”

“Redundant? You’ve a baby on the way! Unless you’re thinking of…”

“No! Absolutely not! I spent my life thinking I could never have a baby. I poisoned myself and regretted it ever since. I could never live with myself if I terminated this! And Robin would never…” she froze, realizing she’d just blurted out his name!

“My confidentiality is assured, Regina. I assumed it was Robin’s! The magic trail off your baby is strong and it has his tones in it, although there’s something else there. This little one…” he paused to look at her abdomen, “will hold very powerful magic indeed!”

“I…um…well, thank you very much for calling in, Merlin. I guess I better find out what’s happened to Emma.”

“Yes, she disappeared, and I think it may be something to do with what I said. I’ll see myself out. Goodnight Regina.” Then, in a silent whirl of golden mist, the Sorcerer was gone.

It was a good half hour before she came up to the bedroom, assuming her lover was asleep. Instead, the bed was empty and the light on in the bathroom. “Emma, you ok?” Silence. So, she walked in, surprised to find her wife in her nightdress, sitting on the floor with her back firmly against the wall.
Emma was merely staring into space, her mind clearly elsewhere. “Emma my love, you alright?”

No answer. The blonde just kept staring in to space. “Emma, what is it?” Then she saw the used positive pregnancy detector, now lying on the floor in front of her. “Emma, I put that in the bin! Why on earth did you take it out?”

“It’s not yours. It’s the second box you bought.” The blonde almost whispered.

It took a moment for Regina to comprehend what she’d heard. Lifting the stick, she saw the familiar line and the baby face. “You, you’re pregnant? You’re pregnant too?” she gasped.

“Seems so. Merlin said he sensed it. Looks like your thief really did a number on both of us, huh!” said the blonde with a hint of bitterness, still staring expressionless at the wall opposite. Regina walked to the bin, lifting the lid to retrieve her own stick which still lay, wrapped in tissue, at the bottom. She silently sat next to her wife on the bathroom floor, holding both pregnancy detectors.

“Emma, did you have any idea? I felt some sickness, but…you?”

“Nope, nothing, but I didn’t even when I was expecting Henry! I still can’t believe it…”

“I don’t understand. I put that barrier spell on both of us! You did it too! It should’ve worked!”

“It’s not like either of has practiced that one! I was on the pill when I was with Killian and you thought you were infertile. Still, Hood getting us both knocked up in one night is kind of impressive!” she tried to joke, albeit without any trace of humour.

They sat side by side in silence for a good ten minutes, lost in thought. Eventually, Regina broke it.

“I’m sorry Emma, I know the circumstances are not ideal but, I can’t just terminate this! I hope you’ll forgive me, but I just couldn’t…” she desperately fought to hold off tears.

Emma broke out of her thoughts when she saw the older woman now shaking. “What? No, Regina, no! For god’s sake! I would never expect you to have an abortion! Not after everything you’ve been through!” She brought her arm around the other woman’s back, gently pushing her head to rest on her shoulder.

Quietly sobbing, Regina took the free hand in hers. “What about you? What are you going to do?”

“No idea! First, I guess it’s my turn to visit Merlin. Then, who knows?”

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After a sleepless night for both women, the pair now again stood at the hospital reception desk.

“I’m sorry Mrs. Swan-Mills, if I recall, Professor Sir Merlin Sage’s schedule is booked solid all week. However, his daughter can see you. Would that be ok?” The hospital receptionist asked.

Emma huffed, getting more frustrated and angsty. “Not really! It’s…a magical, medical problem! Something he already knows about. It needs to be him! Look, could you just…” she was interrupted when the receptionist picked up another call on her headset.

“Nurse Shaw. Oh, Professor, it’s you. Good morning!” the woman brightened and seemed to straighten, primming herself as she heard a voice at the other end. “Yes, Emma Swan-Mills, that’s correct! Yes, ok, I’ll send her right up!” Ending the call, she looked up at the pair. “Well, it seems Merlin…sorry, Professor Sage, seems to have been expecting you! Go right up; second floor, room
Several minutes later, the Sorcerer was waiting at his office door to greet them. “Emma, Regina! Lovely to see you again, please come in.”

“It seems you were expecting us?” a note of suspicion in Regina’s voice.

He waited to close the door behind them before answering. “Well I told Emma she was pregnant last night. She was more than surprised, so no doubt she wanted to verify things and then come in. I’m assuming you carried out a test, Emma?”

The Saviour nodded in reply. Regina was a little testy at his calm exterior. “Merlin, what do you know? You told Emma she’s pregnant before she knew herself. You told me all about mine. Come on, what do you know?”

The Sorcerer smiled benignly at the pair. “Everything we say in this room will remain strictly confidential unless you decide otherwise. Let’s see. I sense that you’re both pregnant, probably about seven or eight weeks, I would guess. Both foetuses are clearly healthy at this stage as I can hear the heartbeats!”

“Impossible!” said Emma. "You can’t tell a heartbeat until at least eight weeks. It’s too early. I checked online…”

“A scanner can detect around eight weeks, but the baby’s heart starts around six. I detect it once it starts and even now, I can sense that both your babies will have magic. Rather powerful magic, actually. I also recognize the signature coming from both of them. They clearly share the same father. Would I be right in assuming Robin of Locksley?”

Both women looked at each other. Regina nodded without comment. He continued. “That explains the magic. An usual situation. I’m assuming you both wish to continue to term?”

Regina nodded firmly and without hesitation. “Yes!”

“And you, Emma. I sense you’re having doubts?” his eyes searched into hers for any sign of hesitation.

“I don’t know. I’m still in shock. I never imagined being a mother again. We’ve been looking after Honour and Roland anyway. Henry’s all grown up and well, I’m not sure. It’s only last night you told me I’m pregnant! It’s just too early…”

“I know it’s difficult to talk about Emma, and I promise I won’t judge you, but if you are considering a termination I need to know as early as possible. I will leave you to consider. Meanwhile, I suggest you both come in two weeks for a scan. If you prefer, my daughter Annabelle can take things from here and of course, when it comes to examinations most mothers-to-be would prefer a female doctor, so I’ll leave it with you. Now if you’ll excuse me…”

A few minutes later as the two of them left the room, stopping at the cafe first. Emma noticed Merlin now further down the corridor, shaking hands with Ruby and Dorothy Lucas as he led them into an adjoining room. She made a mental note to ask. First, she needed to think…

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“Hi Mums!” Henry sat, slouched on the bed in his student digs, facing his mothers on the web call. It was his second year in Harvard and he’d now moved from the group rooms into his own larger suite in a student house close to campus. After a wobbly first year away from home, he was now really
getting into his stride in the social life and his studies in English and Medieval Literature; he was excelling in both. Although it had only been a week since he last spoke to them, they both looked tense, like they had the weight of the world on them. “You look worried. Something wrong?”

Damn, the boy always was so perceptive, especially when it came to them. “We’re fine Hen!” Emma jumped in, “just a few things on our minds right now. Nothing for you to worry about.”

Henry looked at the tired expressions on both of them, like they hadn’t slept. “Ma, don’t do that! Something’s bothering you. What is it?”

“We’re just a little under the weather, Henry!” said Regina, “I picked something up, and I think your mother caught it from me.” She lied. “Nothing a decent night’s sleep won’t sort out. Plus, I guess we’re also missing you. And Roland.”

“Yeah, he’s skyped me a few times! Someone in England bought him an iPad and he’s been calling me even more than you guys! He told me all about the trip so far and apparently, they’re in Stratford on Avon today. Robin said they’re going to be visiting Shakespeare’s grave and a bunch of other stuff. I must admit, I’m jealous! Mind you, what about finding Robin’s sister alive, eh? Brilliant or what?”

Regina smiled broadly. “Yes, I’m so pleased for him. Your mother and I spoke to Maria a couple of nights ago; she seems really nice.”

“And bloody gorgeous too! A couple of mates were in the room with me when Rollie rang. I won’t tell you what they said when they saw her, but…woaar!”

“Henry, don’t swear.” Regina chided gently and earning him an eye roll from his blonde mother. “And don’t talk about Robin’s sister like that!” Emma added. “She’s probably old enough to be your mother!”

“What can I say? I’m an average straight male! Can I help it if I notice good-looking women? You two should know all about that!” he sarked back, albeit with a silly grin on his face.

“Hey!” they both answered in unison, earning a laugh from their son. “I do not ‘notice good-looking women’, as you so graciously put it!” said Regina. “Only your mother. She’s the only good-looking woman for me.” Emma smiled across at her.

“I’m glad. Sorry mums, couldn’t resist it! Anyway, are you going to have some sort of party for Rollie when he gets back on Friday? Honour says she wants to. He’s called her a few times. Robyn too.”

“Roland’s has been calling Honour? When was this? I don’t remember her doing that!”

“Grandma lets them speak to him from school before they go home. Zelena knows about it too.”

“Why wasn’t I told?” said Regina, with a hint of annoyance. “I don’t mind them calling each other but I think we deserve to know!” She looked across at Emma. “Did you know about this?” Emma shook her head “No, I didn’t.”

“Well, I guess the girls know Ma doesn’t like Robin all that much. Honour and Robyn want to speak to their dad, so it’s not that surprising!”

“Henry, I DO like Robin! I told them both that weeks ago. I wish people wouldn’t think I have a problem with him. I don’t!” Though I’d like him more if he hadn’t just got me up the duff!
“It’s not me you have to convince, ma, it’s Roland and Honnie! Anyway, enough about that. What’s got you both so worried you’re not sleeping? Come on mums, I’m not stupid. It’s certainly not a flu bug. What is it?”

“It’s just ‘women’s issues’ Henry! Nothing we’d feel comfortable about discussing with our son…”

“Oh,” Henry paused, assuming she was referring to periods, or something…gynaecological. Definitely not something he would want to hear his mothers talk about. “Ok, but promise you’ll tell me if it’s something serious? I do worry about you, mums.”

“We promise, Hen! If it was something serious, we would tell you. Now, tell us what you’ve been doing to blow your monthly allowance…”

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Friday morning came. The morning Roland and Robin would return after their six weeks in England. Fortunately, Regina had no further morning sickness for the past week since she started taking the pills Anna had prescribed. The young doctor also recommended chewing small pieces of raw ginger to combat any nausea, which seemed to do the job.

Regina, freshly bathed, smiled to herself as she stood naked in front of the full-length bedroom mirror, hands placed either side of her abdomen. Five years ago, she just knew she was barren, having poisoned herself to avoid giving her mother what she wanted. An heir to a stolen throne. Years later, having lost her soulmate, her true love, she found herself pregnant by him. The joy her young daughter gave he was immeasurable. And now she was being given another gift. By the same man. Her thief.

“Well my little one, are you a beautiful princess like your sister, or a handsome knight like your brother? I don’t care; all I know is I will love you forever! Now grow safely, my darling; you have a wonderful family waiting.” First, I need to tell your father!

Emma stepped into the bedroom unnoticed and saw her wife, standing naked and gazing at herself in the mirror as she spoke to her belly. Regina was always stunningly beautiful but seeing her like this, in all her glory, brought so many emotions to the blonde. She looked so serene, so calm, that she didn’t want to disturb the beautiful view. Especially as it was turning her on.

“Gina,” she said as softly as she could, causing the brunette to jolt regardless. “Sorry, I didn’t want to disturb you. Plus, I was enjoying the view…” she flirted.

Regina rushed to cover herself with a dressing gown; wholly unnecessary as the other woman had enjoyed the site on many occasions. Regina blushed. “Was there anything you wanted, or were you just getting an eyeful…” she smirked.

“Bit of both, actually! But I wanted to tell you something. I’ve…I’ve reached a decision.”

“A decision, about…” led the brunette, until she pulled herself back. “Oh! You mean a decision about…” she looked down towards Emma’s own stomach, still washboard flat after eight weeks.

“Yeah, that’s why I went off for so long yesterday. I needed some time to think. I went walking down by the docks. I spent two hours just sitting, looking out to sea.”

Looking for a certain pirate, no doubt? Regina thought but said nothing. “And your decision?” The older woman knew no matter what it was, it was going to be a huge change to their relationship.

Emma exhaled loudly. “When we left Merlin, I was just…dazed. It’s over twenty years since I last
got pregnant and the experience then was just horrible. Giving birth in prison isn’t conducive to
happiness and my memories of that time were just…awful. I couldn’t face that again…”

“I’m ashamed to say Henry was partly right. I hated Robin. Really hated him, Gina! He’s everything
a woman wants in a man. He’s warm, kind, loyal, loving, a brilliant father and the man who
sacrificed his own life for you! I can’t compete with that, Gina. He’s the father of your children and
even Henry thinks the sun shines out of his arse. And now he’s got the gods’ blessing and even has
magic. Powerful magic. And what can I give you?”

Regina didn’t wait for her to continue. “Your love, Emma! Your love, just as I have given you mine!
You forget, you also gave me Henry! You also put your life on the line for me, taking the darkness
in my place, remember? Emma, our love is true! Please don’t put yourself down to me. You’re my
wife! I made my vows to you, and you alone.” She placed a hand on the blonde’s cheek as a single
tear fell. But Emma wasn’t done and carried on.

“I thought about you and…the baby to come. I never thought for a moment of asking you to do
anything but have that baby, Gina. You’re a wonderful mum and hearing you just now, nothing’s
changed. This baby will be blessed with you but, it also needs…its father. This baby has a father and
he needs to be involved full time. He needs to be here…with you!”

“I thought about you and…the baby to come. I never thought for a moment of asking you to do
anything but have that baby, Gina. You’re a wonderful mum and hearing you just now, nothing’s
changed. This baby will be blessed with you but, it also needs…its father. This baby has a father and
he needs to be involved full time. He needs to be here…with you!”

“Emma, I’m NOT letting you go…” she pulled the blonde to her, wrapping her arms around her
waist and pulling her closer, “I’m not…”

“Let me finish! Please. I thought about the life in my own womb. For a brief moment, I thought
about terminating…” Regina winced at that. “But I couldn’t, Gina, I couldn’t do that! I thought about
adoption too. Just for a moment. Can you imagine that? After Henry, after spending all my childhood
in homes, I actually thought about it?”

Regina stayed silent, still holding her but placing a small kiss on her cheek.

“I walked through the park and saw Dad playing with Neal. They were laughing, and Dad was
doing that pretend fighting with those wooden swords. Neal’s almost a teenager, but they were still
horsing around. They looked so happy Gina! And that’s when I realized. This life inside me wasn’t
planned. I actively tried to prevent getting pregnant but dammit, this life, this child in me, he or she
has defied the odds. It took me a few hours to realise it, but…I want this baby, Gina! I want it!” she
sniffed. “I want it to have a loving family. Two mothers. And I want it to know its dad, from day
one, not wait twenty-eight years like I did! So…I’ve decided that, if everything’s ok, to go ahead and
I don’t care who knows!”

Regina nodded gently, keeping her wife held tightly against her and smiling. “This is your choice,
but I think you’re making the right decision, Emma. We’re going to do this together, like we always
do!” she then placed a small, moist kiss on her wife’s lips. “Together,” she repeated.

“So, we’re really each going to bring a new child into this family?”

“We are. Let’s face it, Emma, we still have enough energy, we have no financial issues, we’ve done
it before and we have the space. It’s be hard work yes, but we’re no longer battling demons, witches
and insane demi-gods every five minutes…”

“We need to tell the kids, Gina. After the first trimester just…in case. Not sure how they’re going to
take it. Henry might be awkward - he already thinks we’re middle aged! You already know the first
question he’s going to be asking?”
“Who the father is! So, we both know who we need to talk to before any one of them…”

Emma unexpectedly burst out laughing. “Robin’s so going to shit himself! One night in the sack with two women and he’s got both of us up the duff! I kinda want to get his reaction on camera!”

“I prefer the word ‘pregnant’, my dear. Or ‘with child’. ‘Up the duff’ sounds so coarse. But yes, he’s going to be…surprised, to put it mildly.”

“You nervous about telling him?”

“I should be, but I’m not. It’s Robin. He’s a lot more mature than you give him credit for, Emma. I suspect he’ll be apologizing to us both, before pledging to do everything to help us raise them.”

“We’ll see,” said an unconvinced Saviour. “I still say he’ll shit himself.”

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It was just after noon on Friday afternoon when she received the text from Robin:

**RL:** We’ve landed! Waiting for luggage to arrive and Roland half-asleep on Maria. We’re picking up a van here. We’ll call when we’re on the road.

**RS-M:** Welcome back! Don’t drive if you’re too tired, Robin. We’ve missed you both…x

**RL:** We’ve missed you too, love! Long drive ahead. I’ll call you when we’re closer. xx

**RS-M:** Stay somewhere if you’re too tired. xxx

**RL:** Will do.xxxx

She smiled at the text. She’d missed them terribly but just knowing they were now safely back in the country made her feel so relieved inside. She touched her abdomen again to sense her little one. “Papa’s nearly home, my sweet,” she whispered to herself.

It was early evening when the white 12-seater hired Transit came within a mile of the Storybrooke town line. Robin now sat hunched over the wheel, fighting tiredness. Roland lay on the back seat, head lurched back in deep sleep, while Maria Locksley looked around, excitedly.

“So, Rob, let’s get this right so I don’t screw up. Regina WAS your girlfriend. You were killed five years ago, saving Regina from the god of the Underworld. You spent three weeks dead, but it was five years up here. Meanwhile, Regina decides she likes girls too, and moved on and married Emma, who’s also the Saviour. And her folks are Snow White and Prince Charming. Sounds completely
normal to me!” she roared with laughter.

“Sort of ok so far…go on!” said the outlaw, smiling back at the ridiculous situation.

“Now unbeknown to you, while you were in the Underworld, you left Regina in the Pudding Club…” She saw the confused look. “Pregnant! She gave birth to Honour four years ago. You also have another daughter, also called Robyn, named after you, ‘cos they thought you were dead, and she’s a year older than Honour. Her mum’s the Wicked Witch who got also got pregnant by you, and who you porked, because you thought she was Marian! All correct so far?”

He winced at the reference to Zelena and Marian but nodded for her to continue.

“So the men are all there? I’m looking forward to seeing John again – and Mulan joined you too! So she’s still there?”

“Yup, she’s a close friend. She got married last month, to Princess Aurora and Prince Philip!”

“Both of them! Is that even legal?”

“It is in Storybrooke! I was Philip’s Best Man!” he said proudly. “They got married on Captain Hook’s Jolly Roger! Straight after Ruby Lucas, or ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ in the books, got married to Dorothy Gale…”

“Dorothy from the ‘Wizard of Oz’? That’s hilarious! And more gays! What is it with Storybrooke and lesbians? The men around here can’t be up to much if the girls keep marrying each other instead…”

Robin sighed, thinking of Regina and Emma. “Perhaps you’re right, though…” He stopped talking as the van went over the town line, instantly feeling his magic return like a jolt of electricity. “Oooh, that’s good.”

“What’s that?” asked Maria, seeing his change of expression.

“Something I didn’t tell you about. When I came back, Zeus gave me some extra…abilities.”

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It was around seven in the evening when the Transit pulled up outside the mansion. “Come on Rolly, wake up!” Robin nudged his son gently. “You’re home.” The three tumbled out of the van, Robin propping his sleepy son as he trudged slowly towards the door. Before they even reached it, it opened and a beaming Regina stood, arms wide, to welcome them. “Roland!” she pulled him into her arms. “I’ve missed you so much!” He didn’t hesitate. “Hi mamma, missed you too!” He chuckled, hugging her as though his life depended on it.

Finally letting him go, she saw her thief. “Regina,” he said simply, pulling her into a tight embrace. She relished the feel of his strong arms wrapping around her once again, his familiar scent, his light beard tickling the side of her face. Him! As his head leant against hers she pushed her body even tighter into him, her hips against his calves, almost forgetting where she was. “Welcome home,” she whispered.

Maria Locksley watched from a respectful distance. I thought you said she’s your ex, Rob!, she thought to herself. That’s when she noticed a lean, athletic blond step out from the house, watching the still embracing pair with an odd look on her face. “Emma, right?” she said, distracting her and hopefully letting her brother know they weren’t alone. “Yup, and you’re Maria? That webcam doesn’t do you justice!” she replied, offering a hand. Hell, I see what Henry means. She thought.
Seeing the offered hand, Maria looked at it and said “Nope, you’re family now!” before pulling Emma into a light hug of her own. “Any mother of Rollie’s is family to me!” she said before adding a light kiss on the cheek. Emma, who didn’t normally respond well to hugs from strangers, saw her wife looking at them, so couldn’t resist, responding with a light kiss of her own before they separated.

“Emma,” said Robin stepping in front of her, “did you miss me too?” before dragging her into a hug.

“Oof! Yup, I remember saying to Regina, “where’s that annoying man? I really miss him!” she snarked. He completely ignored the barb, and carried on hugging regardless. Emma rather liked it, though she’d never tell him that! As they separated, he saw that Maria had already done the same to Regina. “God, you can really see the family resemblance, she said, looking into the younger Locksley’s eyes.

“Yeah. I got all the pretty bits and sadly, poor Maria got the leftovers!” joked Robin, pleased to see how quickly his baby sister had warmed to them. “Oh, do shut up, thief!” chuckled Regina.

“Rob, I love them both already!” said Maria.
You're BOTH Pregnant?

Chapter Summary

Honour is reunited with Robin and Roland after their trip. Ruby and Dorothy go for their first scan and Emma and Regina break the news to Robin.

Chapter Notes

Still with me? Great. Lots going on right now...

Chapter 29

Although Regina offered to put Robin and Maria up for the night, Robin declined. “Thanks for the offer, Gina, but I’ve a big van of stuff to drop off at the village, and I’ve already arranged for someone to collect it tomorrow. So, we’d best be off.” He kissed Roland’s head goodnight, promising to be back in the morning.

“It’s a shame Honour went to bed before you got here. She’s going to be upset she missed you,” added Emma.

“I know. I’ve missed her, and Robyn, terribly! Those ‘web calls’ aren’t the same, are they? Tell her I promise I’ll be over in the morning, once those lazy good-for-nothings have helped me unload the van. We’ve got a few things for all of you. Would ten o’ clock be ok?”

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He turned up just before ten the next morning, as promised, freshly scrubbed but slightly the worse for wear. The previous night, there’d been far too much revelry as the men celebrated his return. John, Tuck and a few of the men who remembered her, had been ecstatic to see Maria Locksley return to them, alive and in good health. Tears of joy were shed, remembering the way she’d disappeared, presumed dead. Many years ago, John had been like a second big brother to Maria and she cried with happiness at seeing him again. Then later, when Caroline, her cousin and once closest friend in the world, had appeared in the bar at the end of her shift the tears started all over again. It had been a very emotional evening.

Honour had screamed when her father first walked through the front door, racing over and jumping into his arms, not letting go for dear life. “I missed you so, so, so, so much Daddy!”

“And I you, my love! You have no idea!” Robin held her tightly, repeatedly kissing her cheeks to make her giggle with happiness. A few minutes after she’d calmed, Regina brought in the lighter boxes Robin had left by the front door when his little girl had swamped him. Maria had stood back watching the happy reunion. Emma joined them from the kitchen, bringing a pot of tea and cups on a tray.

The little group walked into the living room, finally followed by a sleepy Roland, who had slept in
late. The women settled on the sofas while Robin knelt down on the floor next to his little girl. “Now Honour, we’ve brought a couple of things here for you. You can open these two today. Open the biggest one first…” said Robin, pushing a larger box on the floor in front of her. Her eyes bulged with excitement and she ripped off the paper to reveal an elegant light wooden box within. Emma bent down to help her with the tape binding it and when it was ready, Honour opened it to reveal clothes. Not what she was expecting. However, as she pulled out the garments she realized it was some sort of costume. Then there was something glistening!

“Mama, it’s a tarara! I gotta tarara!” she yelled excitedly.

Regina knelt down to take out the rest. “Yes, you have, my love, and it looks like your beautiful ‘tiara’ comes with a whole princess costume!”

“I’m a princess, mama! I got a princess costume and a tarara!” she said excitedly, pulling the fake ermine and silk gown around her and placing the glistening tiara on her head, lop-sided. She didn’t notice Maria silently taking pictures of the seriously cute little blonde in her new outfit.

“Mama, Emma, I’m a beautiful princess!” she yelled, before noticing that under the paper still in the box there were more clothes. Reaching in, she roughly hauled out everything else onto the floor. The next costume had lots of small items, fake weapons and a hard breastplate. There was a sword, plastic of course, and a bright silver shield! As Regina laid them out carefully on the floor, Emma was he first to recognize it. “It’s a warrior costume, Honnie, just like Mulan’s!”

“I can be Mulan!” she shrilled. “A princess or a soldier!” The girl beamed at her father. “Thank you, thank you daddy, it’s lovely!” she jumped up, placing a sloppy kiss on Robin’s cheek as he beamed back. “You’re very welcome, my sweet. Now, I need you to open your other present.” He brought a small wrapped box from his pocket, handing it to her. “You need to open this one a little more carefully though.”

Honour slowly unwrapped and opened the silver box. Inside was what looked like a flat silver and blue locket. Emma reached down and prized the tiny clasp open. Inside was what appeared to be a translucent stone, with something small inside it. With a flick if his wrist, Robin made a large magnifying glass appear, handing it to Emma. “Look inside the stone, Honour. What do you see?” Emma held the glass in place for the girl. Set inside the pebble sized clear stone, there was a 3D image. “It’s a swan, Daddy. A swan wearing a tarara. And a bow and arrows.”

Regina bent over to look through the glass too, and immediately recognized the significance. “It’s something to do with your family, Honour! Look, there’s a beautiful swan. So, that’s clearly your mum here. There’s a crown, it’s a little bigger than a tiara. So I guess that represents me, as I was once a queen. Then behind it is your papa’s bow and arrows, held in a quiver. It’s us. It’s daddy, mum and me! It’s very beautiful, Honour!”

“So I can wear it and have you all close to me! It’s wonderful, daddy.”

“I’m glad you like it my love, but it isn’t just jewellery! It has special magic set in to it. If you ever need to get either of your mums or me, because you need our help, you’re in trouble or really frightened, you just wrap that in your hands and think of one, or all of us, and we will get the message and come running to help you! It’s like a special, magical phone.”

Regina and Emma both looked at him, a little mystified. “Robin, where on earth did you get this?”

“Avalon. I bought it from a local sorcerer recommended by Merlin. Each of us has to do a short spell and vow on the stone, then it gets linked to each of us, and we’ll be able to ‘hear’ Honour in our minds.”
Emma was turning the little locket over in her hands. She could now feel a low burr of magic inside. “It really is beautiful, Honnie. You’re a very lucky girl!”

“And I’ve the best daddy ever!” she said, jumping onto his lap. “Did you get anything for mummy and Emma?”

“I did indeed, my girl. Thank you for reminding me.” With that, he pulled two similar boxes, each exquisitely wrapped, from behind him. “M’ladies, these are for both of you…”

Emma hadn’t been expecting anything and was surprised when he handed her a black, shiny box identical to Regina’s. Opening it with polite thanks, she gasped when she saw a large diamond, attached to a silver necklace. A pale lilac teardrop-shaped gem, cusped within a silver horn. It wasn’t too big to be worn under clothes, but the stone itself was simply stunning. Emma was slightly lost for words. Looking across, she could see Regina at a similar loss, holding the necklace’s twin. She’d already taken the magnifying glass to look inside the rare stone. Once again, there was a 3D hologram, but this time, her crown was set atop Emma’s swan, with no bow, arrows or quiver present.

“The crests were set inside the diamonds with magic, though unlike Honour’s, there’s no magic attached to yours. I wanted to give you both these stones as a sort of blessing. So that you know that I fully accept and support your marriage; your love of each other and the love you give our children. Roland called them the SwanQueen pendants. A symbol of something good and pure…”

The women both looked at each other. Emma heard no hint of dishonesty in his words. No hidden motive. The normally slightly sulky-faced blonde broke into a grin. “Thank you, Robin, they’re beautiful!”

“You’re welcome. The wizard who put the symbols inside the diamonds, said the silver horn is actually Welsh gold from an enchanted mine. I gather it brings good fortune and health. I’m glad you like it.”

Regina had already slipped her own necklace around her neck, showing it off to Honour, who was wearing hers. “What do you think, Honour? We all have necklaces now, though yours is even more special.”

“I love it!” She looked at her older brother, who had just shuffled down the stairs in his pyjamas. “Rollie, look what daddy got me?” She’d woken the jet-lagged boy earlier by climbing into his bed to wake him, earning a slightly surly response from the exhausted young man.

“Actually,” Roland said, pulling down the front of his pyjama top to reveal a similar, slightly squarer-looking locket, “I’ve one too, Honnie - same symbols as yours. Dad’s also got one for Robyn, but hers has only got the bow and arrows in it…”

Emma looked at Roland’s. His also had her swan symbol in it, along with Regina’s and Robin’s. The fact the man had also included her in his children’s precious gifts, touched her more than she expected. He means it; he sees me as their mother too!

Honour kissed her father’s cheek, climbing off his knee before walking to Maria, who she’d met on one of Roland’s web calls. “I’m glad you came back with Daddy, Auntie Maria. You’re very beautiful!”

Maria blushed, bending down to look at the necklace. “Why thank you, my lady, but hardly as beautiful as you! It’s so nice to finally meet you and your mummies. I think I’m going to like it here!”
“Will you play with me?”

Robin’s sister looked to the two women for their approval. Regina nodded. “I would love nothing more - Your Royal Highness!” she replied to the ermine-clad girl, elegantly curtseying. “What shall we play?”

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**Storybrooke Hospital**

“So, that black mass there is your bladder. Now look in this little round sack here; at this little peanut shape.” Anna moved her fingers across the screen. “That’s your baby! It’s about the size of a raspberry right now. I’m afraid there’s not much to see at the moment.”

The two women gasped. “Wow!” said Ruby, a tear in her eye. “Our baby!” said her wife, as Annabelle Sage gently rolled the scanner across Dorothy’s abdomen. “Why can’t we hear a heartbeat?”

“That’s not usual at this stage. most ultrasound scans pick them up from about nine weeks. Judging by the size, I reckon you’re about eight weeks gone. If we book you to come back in two weeks, all being well, you should be able to hear the heartbeat.”

“All being well? What does that mean?” said the anxious mother-to-be. “Is there a problem?”

“Nothing as far as I can see. We are always slightly more cautious in the first three months, until the foetus has really dug in. It all looks good so far, so just look after yourself and make sure you get plenty of rest.”

“I’ll be making sure of that!” said Ruby, entwining her wife’s fingers with her own. “This one’s definitely going to spend less time on her feet in the Diner.”

Annabelle smiled at the happy pair. “Seems you’re in good hands, Mrs. Lucas?”

“The best!” agreed Dorothy, beaming up at her True Love.

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From the back window, they watched Robin racing around the garden with Roland and Honour. He’d magicked a small tree house with a fort, which Honour and Maria were currently trying to attack, while Robin defended. The young girl was now dressed in her new Mulan costume. Robin’s sister seemed to be helping her, while Roland could be seen quietly climbing the tree behind, to get into the fort from above, without being seen. “Sneaky little sod!” breathed Emma to nobody in particular.

“Seems he’s adopted his father’s technique for breaking and entering! Stealth, distraction and coming in from where you least expect...” The women smiled at the happy scene and both laughed when the boy jumped from four foot up in the tree to land hard on to his father’s back. “Ouch!” Regina guffawed, “that must have hurt!” They stayed watching the happy little family without comment. Then, after a few minutes silence.

“So...when do you think we should tell him?” asked Emma.

“Soon. I know Robin well enough, to know he’ll be angry if we keep this from him. I’ve never told him I’m pregnant before! - I’m not sure how he’s going to react.”
“Wait till we tell him I’m up the duff with his kid too! That’s four kids, Gina! Think he’ll do a runner?”

“Not a chance! Mind you, he might be in shock for a while - I was!”

“Thank god we don’t have money issues; that would be a real bummer. Not sure I could manage two kids on my own at home while you’re at work. So, we’re definitely going to need a nanny. Shame mind, I was enjoying being back at work. I guess I’m going to have to tell Hank when I start to show…”

“Yes, I was enjoying the medical training with Caroline. Merlin was going to give me the magical immersion next week. I can hardly ask him, now he knows I’m pregnant; he might refuse. He’s going back to New York in a few weeks…”

“He could still agree. Heck, it’s only a few minutes for him to cram decades worth of medical knowledge inside your head…”

“We’ll see. That’s another reason we need to tell Robin sooner rather than later! Merlin knows and so does his daughter. If they let something slip to Robin before we tell him…”

“So, we tell him tonight. Perhaps get him over here and tell him over a drink? He’ll certainly need it…”

“I’ll ask John if he would mind Honour and Roland for us. Make some excuse about needing to discuss some changes to child care now he’s back. Do we still have those two spare pregnancy kits?”

“Yeah but…we’re both definitely pregnant Gina! My boobs are sore, I’m definitely getting tired earlier and I can’t seem to stop needing to pee…”

“Yes, me too. I’m also getting a little heartburn, but at least the sickness has eased off. I wouldn’t mind a glass of wine though, if I didn’t feel like throwing up at the smell of it!” As she spoke, she noticed Emma was silently holding, between two fingers, the bright diamond of the necklace Robin had given her. That’s when she realized she was doing the exact same thing. “Beautiful, isn’t it?”

“Hmm,” said Emma, “I like what he said too. About us and what it means…”

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He sat pensively nursing his coffee in Grannies, while Roland and Honour raced outside to play and catch up with the friends he’d missed during their trip. Robin was anxious, but he didn’t know why. Regina had seemed somehow different when she asked him to join them for a drink alone at the mansion later.

“Robin, we need to talk. I asked John if he could take Roland and Honour tonight, and he’s agreed. I’m afraid it can’t wait.”

“Who’s we? Gina, is something wrong with Honour? Or Robyn? What’s happened?” he said, worried.

“They’re fine, Robin. Nothing to worry about but…well, Emma and I discovered something while you were away. It can keep until tonight but, we really need to speak alone.”

Her slightly nervous voice continued to play in his mind when his thoughts were broken by a hand on his shoulder. “Robin? You still in there?” said the voice with a slight chuckle.
“Mu! Sorry, I was absolutely miles away! How’s married life treating you, Mrs. Briar?”

“Wonderfully, thanks - which is more than I can say for this baby…” she groaned, leaning back to lightly stroke her abdomen. Robin now saw the small rounded stomach, the first time he’s ever seen an ounce of extra weight on her. “My back’s killing me, and I’ve still got five months to go!”

“All the more reason Phil and I insisted you rest!” said Aurora, appearing beside them. “And why you’re getting a back massage tonight!” said Aurora as she joined them. “Mu, have you given Robin his present?”

“Present? Oh…right!” said the uncharacteristically flustered warrior. “Damn hormones, my memory’s hopeless! Rob, we have a little something for you.” She pulled a small package out from her satchel, placing it in front of him.

Robin looked at the small cardboard box. “A present…for me?” He opened it to reveal a small desktop frame with a black and white photo inside.

“Robin, we had a scan yesterday – Mulan’s sixteen weeks gone,” said Aurora proudly, “and this is our little warrior!”

Thanks to Merlin’s immersion, Robin knew what he was seeing. “Goodness, that’s just wonderful, Mu! Sorry, I was so tired last night, I forgot to ask Phil about your pregnancy. I’m delighted it’s all healthy and well. Must be so exciting for you?”

“I’ve been lucky so far, apart from a few aches and pains. Don’t think I can keep up being a deputy much longer though. I’m a balloon! And poor old Phil’s been putting in long hours trying to clean up all George’s mess, so Rory and I aren’t seeing too much of him at the moment.”

“You’re certainly NOT a balloon, Mu! You’re positively glowing! You’re carrying something wonderful within you, and I’m sure Rory and Phil know you’re more beautiful than ever! Thank you for my present. It’s lovely.”

“It’s not from us, Robin, it’s from your godchild!”

“What. You mean…”

“Yes Robin, we’d like you to be this one’s Godfather. We all agreed. We can’t think of anyone we would rather have in our baby’s life,” said Mulan, “please say yes?”

Robin was genuinely choked by the kind words. “I…yes, of course! I would be truly honoured. Thank you! Both of you!” he stood up to gently wrap his arms around Mulan, kissing her cheek, before separating and doing the same to Aurora.

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“So, Mulan’s asked you to be its godfather?” said Regina when Robin broke the news. How topical!

“Yes, I’m only just getting to know Phil and Rory properly! I was surprised, to say the least. A former royal family asking a simple thief like me.”

There’s nothing simple about you, you’re bloody perfect! Regina wanted to say, but with Emma standing next to her she thought it best to merely nod. He smiled back at her before becoming serious.
“Gina, you said there’s something you needed to talk to me about? Something that needed the children out of the way. So, what is it?” He could see how tense they were, constantly looking at each other, silently begging the other to start. He also picked up on the fact neither of them had a cider or a glass of wine in front of them, just orange juice. *Something’s definitely wrong!* Emma and Regina nodded to each other in agreement before continuing. Emma started.

“We do need to talk. It’s about something that…that’s happened. It’s going to be a shock, so you may want to take a good slug of that whisky!” she said, pointing at his still untouched glass. *This doesn’t sound good!* He followed her advice, and knocking back the amber liquid in one go, watched as Emma proceeded to pull a white stick from her pocket, laying it slowly on the coffee table directly in front of him.

“Merlin’s given you some sort of weird training for this world, so, I assume you know what *this* is?”

Robin looked down, seeing the now fading blue line and baby face. He felt the blood almost drain from his face.

“Emma! You…you’re pregnant?” he gasped. *How the hell? What about Regina? How could she?* But his mind cleared as she nodded, and realized the most likely reason Emma was now telling him this. The words ‘is it mine?’ on the tip of his tongue; somehow, he managed to stop himself. “How long?”

“Eight weeks. Merlin seemed pretty sure. The opening night at your new pub!”

She watched him closely, waiting for the inevitable panic to come. “And before you ask, I haven’t been to a sperm donor and, apart from you, two months ago, I haven’t been with a man for over five years…”

Robin sat, looking at the stick. *Pregnant! Eight weeks? This… is everything ok, Emma? Are you ok?*” He tried to act casual, but his mind was racing. *I got Emma pregnant! Emma, the Saviour! What the fuck!*

“Am I ok? I don’t really know how to answer that! I just found out a few days ago. I haven’t felt sick, not like Gina-.” She stopped abruptly, realizing she might be about to say more than she intended.

“Gina? What about Gina?” he looked across at the brunette, who stood to pick up her handbag, lifting something from inside and laying it on the coffee table, next to Emma’s. Robin’s eyes widened in clear disbelief, as he saw the second pregnancy test. Another blue line! Another baby face!

His mouth hung open in shock, staring at Regina. She slowly nodded before very calmly breathing, “Yes, Robin. I’m pregnant. Emma’s pregnant. We’re both pregnant. We’re both pregnant by you!”

They both stared at him, waiting for a reaction. Knowing he was too stunned to respond, just staring at the two sticks. The two women then looked at each other, still waiting for…something. *Anger? Panic? Denial?*

“I’m not sure what to say. Should I be offering my apologies? Or congratulations? How do you both feel about this?” Then he followed with, “What do YOU want to do next?”

Neither of them were expecting him to remain calm, though Regina knew what was meant by his question. “Well, I wasn’t thrilled when I found out! I spent most of my life believing I was barren. Then Honour came and I…I know this is going to be difficult. At my age, they rather charmingly
refer to this as a ‘geriatric pregnancy’. But nonetheless, I’ve decided, if everything goes smoothly… I’ve decided to keep it. I want this baby, Robin!”

He nodded silently, before turning to the other woman. “And what about you, Emma?”

“I admit, I thought about termination. An abortion. At first. It was a shock and, what with Regina expecting, taking on not one, but two new kids is going to be huge! Part of me is already dreading it.” Regina pulled closer, taking her hand and entwining their fingers. “But I thought and thought about it and realized if I did, that I probably couldn’t every forgive myself every time I looked at Honour or Regina’s baby to come. I’m in my forties now Robin, so this is going to be bloody hard work but…I’ve decided I want to keep it!”

Now Robin breathed out, loudly. “Thank the gods!” he groaned. “I can’t imagine being in your position right now and I’m sorry I’m the cause of this - but I think you’re both making the right decision!”

Regina looked across to Emma. “Told you!” the older woman muttered to her wife. Emma was sure he would have at least panicked. Or ran.

“It’s your bodies, so it’s ultimately your decision how you want this to work. But I promise I’ll do everything I can to help and support you, and the babies, after they’re born. I’ll be truly honoured to be a father to both of them. If you’ll let me…”

“We need to get safely through the first three months, but thanks,” said Emma. “I’m surprised you’re so calm! It’s not every day you get told you’ve got two women knocked up on the same night!”

Robin shrugged, trying not to be smug. “Perhaps I’m better at hiding my emotions than you think? Besides, it’s easier for me. For the next seven months I’m not the one doing the heavy lifting…”

“Wrong…you’re definitely going to be looking after Honour and Roland a lot more for the foreseeable future.”

He just laughed. “I can definitely do that. Compared to being dead, it’s a bonus! So, what’s next?”

“We have our first proper scans in a fortnight.” Said Regina. “Merlin’s handling it himself, so we want to keep things confidential. His daughter knows about me, but doesn’t know that Emma’s also pregnant. If everything’s ok, we should tell Henry, then perhaps Roland and Honour. However, please Robin, we need this kept confidential!”

“Gina, my lips are sealed. I don’t want to impose but - could I join you both for that scan?”

The two women looked at each other, both nodding. “Yes,” said Emma. “Robin, Gina and I’ve talked about this, at length. Whatever you and her are to each other now, or in the future, you’re always going to be these babies’ father. We’re already raising two of yours,” she glanced at Regina, who smiled back. “Don’t get me wrong, we love them dearly, but four kids, Robin! This is going to be tricky! I guess you and me are going to be in each other’s lives for a long time to come!”

Emma looked into his bright blue eyes, as he stood, walking around to kneel directly in front of her. He raised his hand, gently lifting her necklace, which she had been holding earlier, between his fingers. “Emma, as I already told you in that restaurant two months ago, you are and have been a wonderful mother, not just to Henry, but to Roland and Honour too. Those children inside you both may have been unplanned, but they’ll be loved and cherished by all three of us. I’m proud you’re going to be a mother to another of my children.”

Regina watched the pair gaze at each other, with so much intensity she almost felt like an intruder.
Her mind went to a thought she’d had several times since his return: *Maybe, just maybe, I can have it all!*

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“Roland, why so glum?” asked the Sorcerer, sitting down next to the boy on a fallen tree stump. “Something on your mind?”

Since Emma and Regina had dropped him and his sister off with Little John earlier that evening, Roland had watched as Anna and Merlin had given Honour some basic magic lessons. The girl went on to perform some small tricks such as levitating stones and changing the colour of her shoes, to cheers from Will and the men when she succeeded. Roland couldn’t help but feel envious at her new powers and had quietly left the group to sit outside and sulk. “Nah! I’m fine…”

Merlin wasn’t having any of it. “You know I can read your mind if you don’t tell me?” His eyes twinkled though there was a hint of seriousness in his voice.

“It’s just…it’s not fair! Regina and Emma have magic; Zeus gave Dad even more powerful magic; Henry’s got some and now even Honour’s got it! I’m the only ordinary, boring one in the family! It’s not fair!”

“Most people don’t have magic, Roland. It can be a blessing and a curse and people treat you differently when you have it. I know many people who have it who deliberately choose to live in non-magical lands so they fit in. And I know many who have it and they are completely unaware. Besides, how do you know you don’t have it?”

“Because I can’t do what Honour’s doing right now! I can’t make stones float in the air or change colours or…or…anything like that!” he pouted.

“Do you know how people get born with magic, Roland?”

“Well, yeah, sort of. Henry said you either get it when your mum and dad have true love like my dad and Regina had to give it to Honour. Or like Snow and David, for Emma. Or one of your parents has it and you inherit it.”

“What if I told you your birth mother, Marian, and your father had a true love relationship before she died?”

“Well then I would have magic too. But I don’t.”

“You sure about that, Roland? After all, Henry didn’t know he had it, till a couple of months ago, and he’s almost twenty-one!”

“Wait…you saying I have it too?” Roland’s demeanour changed completely. “I have magic?”

Merlin chuckled. “It’s inside you, my boy. I can sense it! But it hasn’t come through yet and it won’t until your mind and body are ready. It may be in a few weeks, months, or even years, but it IS there, Roland. It will come upon you when the time is right.”

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None of them could remember how it started. Only how it finished. It was shortly after five thirty in the morning when Robin woke.

An early riser from birth, Robin woke to a very new sensation. Instead of bed shorts and t-shirt, he
now wore nothing. Instead of cotton sheets, he felt only soft silk underneath him. And instead of spare pillows, he felt warm, naked flesh resting against him, on both sides. Opening one eye slowly, the first sight before him was of the top of Regina’s head as she rested, firmly asleep, on his upper chest, on his left, snoring softly. He felt the warm velvety softness of her skin as her naked body snuggled into his left side, her left leg coiled over his as he lay on his back, his arm around her shoulder. On his right side, he felt Emma nestled into him in a similar way to Regina, but with her head resting higher more his shoulder. The feeling of being almost pinned down by these two naked goddesses was utterly delicious!

This is ridiculous, he thought, feeling guilty that once again, he had intruded on their marriage, on their life. I’m a shit! I get them both pregnant, and now I’m having sex with them, again, even though I promised I wasn’t going to get in the way! As his feelings of self-loathing built, he couldn’t help remembering what the three of them had shared for the last few hours.

It started when Regina suggested dinner. After the large scotch he’d downed in one at news of the pregnancies, he’d abstained all alcohol on the grounds that, if they weren’t able to drink, nor would he. Dinner had led to chatting around the fireside. He’d talked about everything from Roland and the UK trip, tracking down Maria in London thanks to his cousins, their boy’s obsession with fairgrounds and the theatre. Regina talked about her morning sickness, the discovery she was pregnant and Merlin’s accidental discovery of Emma’s condition, Henry in Harvard, to the children and finally planning how they would need to refurbish the mansion to accommodate two more babies. Even without alcohol, the mood had been lighter, brighter and fun.

“Well I’d better be off.” He’d said, standing up to get his jacket and boots. “You two don’t need any beauty sleep, but I certainly do! Shall I look after Honour and Roland tomorrow night? As they’re in Sherwood I can do the school run in the morning so you two can have a lie-in…”

“Thanks,” said Regina, “mind you, John was already planning to do that. You could have your own lie-in.”

“True. Well, thanks for a ‘memorable’ evening. I definitely won’t forget receiving that news in a hurry! Sleep well, both of you.” With that, he brought his arm gently around Regina’s back to give her a quick side hug before leaving. As Emma was also in front of him, without thinking he brought his right arm around her, gently pulling the three of them into a light hug. Each of them reciprocated without thinking, with arms around the other two, to find themselves in a light huddle. “Goodnight, Gina…” he whispered, moving to kiss her cheek. Instead, she turned her head slightly inward and their lips touched in a gentle, swift kiss. Not heated, but not quite a peck either, with Emma just inches way as his head drew back. “And goodnight, Emma…” He turned, pressing his lips onto the younger woman’s, who reciprocated in kind.

It was just a moment, an easy show of acceptance and affection between the three. But they all felt something change between them. Surprisingly, it was Emma that made the first move, pulling the other two slightly tighter into their little huddle. “You know…” she said, giving Robin a second kiss on the lips before instantly twisting to do the same to Regina, “we could ALL have that lie-in...here,” she breathed. Robin had never seen Emma provocatively flirt before. She looked like a hungry lioness ready to devour him, which instantly made him stiffen below. He looked at Regina, who, initially a little shocked, now seemed to show a hunger of her own, which he knew from old, though he wasn’t sure whether it was directed at him or Emma.
“Gina?” he almost groaned, waiting for her signal. “I think that sounds like an excellent idea! We could all do with a…rest. And this time, perhaps a ‘proper’ lie-in?” Without warning, she pulled her wife’s head around to attack her mouth in an almost ferocious, deep kiss. “Mmmm,” came the noise from the conjoined mouths as tongues were clearly wrestling between them. Robin watched the display, merely inches away, and his breath and heart quickened, and his pants became ever tightened. A good half minute later, the panting women unsealed their lips to look at him. Two hunters after their prey! “What do you say, Robin?”

“It’d be ungentlemanly and, bloody stupid, to refuse!” he groaned. Emma’s quick glance down the front of his trousers saw the affect they were having on him. That bulge was enormous! “Well then…time for bed!”

Robin remembered the next three hours as though they had been a dream. A very vivid dream. After a nervous start by all of them as they kissed, petted and disrobed – all of them completely sober compared to last time – they had slowly come together. There had been delicate touches, whispers and cuddles. Their nerves calmed and all three slowly started moving together. Over the next three hours they had come together in all combinations they could think of. They’d kissed, stroked, licked, bit, sucked, scissored and fucked each other to oblivion, seemingly never to tire. As two worked together, one rested and watched. Several times they coupled tripled as a threesome to yet another orgasm. And each time they did, they all felt magic pass through them and around them. When Robin was deeply embedded inside Emma, Regina riding over her wife’s face, he’d kissed the older woman and they all felt that familiar electric charge pass right through them. Just as it had two months ago.

It wasn’t just sex. This was lovemaking and they all seemed desperate for more. Right up until Regina finally called time. “Enough! I’m…I’m done! Please?”

And now, lying in their bed with a silly grin on his face, Robin looked down at these two remarkable women coiled into him. Strong, brave, courageous, intelligent, loyal and loving. And he knew he was truly unworthy of either of them, let alone both. Nevertheless, as his mind lay in blissful comfort not wanting to move, his body told him he was desperately in need of a pee!

His magic could just apparate him from under the sheets, but that would wake them both. So, he gingerly eased his shoulder from under Emma, who was now snoring softly, groaning at the loss of his warmth, her head slumping into the sheets. It was only when he now turned to extricate himself from under Regina, he realized the two women had their fingers intertwined across his stomach. With his freed right hand, he gently pulled them apart, twisting himself to slide from under her. He wiggled, snail-like. down the bed to finally slide out the bottom. In any other circumstance it would look ridiculous. Now, all he could think about was emptying his bladder without waking either of them!

Standing, he magicked himself into a simple pair of black boxers, before creeping towards the adjoining bathroom. As he stepped in, desperate, he heard Regina's soft growl. “You’d better be coming back, thief!” he smiled at the thought.

Several minutes later, after a long and more than satisfying pee, a quick freshen up on the bidet, one of the best inventions of this world!, he thought, and a hand wash, he emerged to find Regina now entwined with Emma, in the middle of the bed. He crept toward the door. “Get back here,” groaned Regina, sleepily.

“It’s ok, Regina, I’ll leave you both to it…” he said, assuming Emma would now find his continued
presence embarrassing. That was until Emma now rolled her head back, voice croaking, as she pulled her duvet back slightly from behind her. “Just shut up and get in!”

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It was just after eight o’clock when he’d finally climbed out from between those sheets, having spent the last two hours snuggled against the Saviour’s backside, the woman still deliciously naked. Emma, now in the middle, had drifted back to sleep sandwiched between them, with Regina’s back now pressed along her front. Robin hadn’t wanted to leave at all; however, his cock let him down as it started to harden yet again, as it was sandwiched between the Saviour’s perfect, taut buttocks. You bloody traitor, haven’t you already had enough? He thought. Fearing his offending organ was going to wake her, he decided it was now time.

“Tea?”

“Hmm. Pleeeaaasssee!” moaned Regina.

“Yessss” hissed Emma, nodding without opening her eyes, a brief hand wave in approval.

He smiled as he looked at them, slowly starting to wake, before leaving to go to the kitchen. Using his magic, he added a silky black dressing gown. Fortunately, after five years everything in the kitchen seemed to be in the same place as he put the kettle on.

Upstairs, Emma slowly opened her eyes once Robin had left, to be faced with her beautiful wife’s head close and resting on her pillow, staring at her with a silly grin. “Morning, wife of mine!”

“Mornin’ gorgeous. Sleep well?” she pouted, pulling her closer.

“Very well, thank you, though I ache all over…”

“Yeah, me too. Anyone would think we’d been having sex all night! I don’t think I can walk.”

Both chuckled, the pair staring silently at each other, as they heard Robin crashing and fumbling around in the kitchen. Finally, Regina broke it.

“So…about last night? What was that…”

“That was you and me having a much-needed shag with your former, though we both know real, true love. And me taking advantage of that fact to have some fun of my own at the same time.”

“Uh-huh. Is that all? You sure there wasn’t more to it, Em-ma?”

“What d’you mean, Re-gi-na?” she said, mocking the brunette’s emphasis on her name.

“I mean, I saw you both in the throes of passion for three hours. A very good three hours, Em-ma! We’ve never shared someone before, but you and I both know that wasn’t just sex. You felt something, as did I. I felt the energy pulse four times last night. When the three of us all joined together. I saw the look on yours…and Robin’s faces. You two shared something, and I hope you won’t be stupid enough to deny it. I know you Emma, I really know you. I don’t have a problem with it. Hell, that was one of the best experiences of my life! You and I are permanent. We love each other but I’ve never denied my feelings for Robin. So, I need to know your feelings for him too?”

Emma knew she wasn’t getting out of this! She huffed and closed her eyes, squirming. “Gina, it’s too early in the morning!”
She raised her brow at the other woman. “Nice try! Now, an honest answer please?”

“Look, I like him, ok? Yes, I had a couple of dreams which…yes, he was in them. And, to be honest, he is a pretty sensational fuck! But that’s about it, I’m not in love with him, like you are! It’s not like Phil Briar and his bloody harem! So, can we like, drop this?” she almost pleaded the last sentence.

“Ok, for now, but can I take it from that little outburst, that you wouldn’t be averse to doing this again some time, or on a regular basis?”

“Better wait till my puss isn’t so sore!” At that, Regina burst out laughing, quickly joined by Emma.

“You are so crude!” she whispered, each shushing each other when they heard the gentle knock on the door, still giggling as Robin walked in with a tray.

“Tea, miladies?” he announced. “I see you’re awake.” He moved to place a mug on the tables either side of the bed. As he spoke, Regina flicked her hand and two matching purple nightdresses appeared over both women to cover themselves, so they could sit up.

“Why did you get up so early, Robin?” said Emma, with an odd glint in her eye.

“Well that depends, Emma. Do you want the polite, or the honest answer?” he held her gaze. Regina watched that chemistry between the pair of them. It wasn’t just flirting - there was definitely something else!

“The honest one. Always…”

“Well, I’ve always been an early riser, so I didn’t want to wake you. You both seemed so…serene.”

Emma smirked, sitting more upright, picking up her cup and taking a large mouthful. “And the honest answer?”

Robin had a mischievous glint in his eye. “I woke up against your back with a tremendous stiffy, so I thought it impolite to stay there. Besides, between the two of you, I think you almost broke my dick last night! So, I thought it best…”

“Phhuuuttt!!” Emma sprayed the bed with tea as she collapsed into laughter, Regina following but managing to hold her drink. “Emma!! These sheets are new on! Robin, did you have to…?” she said between her own chuckles, her voice a mix of disgust at Emma and shock at Robin.

“Erm…sorry!” he said, his eyes telling them he wasn’t sorry at all. ‘I’ll leave you to it…”

Regina calmed. “No…Robin, stay. I think we should talk.”

“SHIT!” Emma suddenly barked, changing the mood entirely. “Oh, shit, shit, shit! I completely forgot! On shit! Oh fuckedy-fuck! I gotta go!” She banged the cup down on the side table, jumping up and heading for the bathroom as her wife sat, bewildered.

“Emma, what the hell? Forgot what? What’s going on?”

She shouted from the bathroom. “The station! I promised Hank I’d stand in! Doug’s ill, he’s tied up all day and I promised to relieve Mulan at eight! Bugger, bugger, bugger!”

Robin smiled at the commotion, Regina glaring at him. “She seems to have picked up a lot of British swear words recently - I blame you and that ruddy pirate!”
“Can I help if she’s picked up ‘proper English’ bad language? Besides, ‘ruddy’ is also British English, as well you know!”

She smiled back. “Don’t be so condescending, Locksley! There, is that ‘proper English’ enough for you?”

“I think that one’s French.”

“Oh, shut up and help me change these sheets.”

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Ten minutes later, Robin and Regina stood in the kitchen, drinking more coffee while she finished frying a small batch of pancakes. “It’s always a lot quieter without Henry and the children. Peace and quiet is all well and good, but I still miss…” She was interrupted by Emma bounding loudly down the stairs, blonde hair still damp, tucking her sheriff shirt into her pants as she reached for her keys.

“Sorry babe, no time! I need to go…” With that, she grabbed the spare cup from the worktop, took a large slug, pulled a pancake into her hand before rolling and forcing a piece in her mouth. “Hmm. So good…” she nearly choked before taking another tea fix. “Gotta run! See ya later…” with that, she pulled herself into her wife, cupping the back of her head and placing a wet, pancake stained mouth onto the brunette’s lips. Without any thought, she released her hold and turned to Robin, standing on tip toes to also, without asking, place a wet kiss on his lips. “Great night! Not sure how I’m gonna walk today! Gotta go…”

They watched as the blonde, half pancake still clutched in her hand, ran to the lobby before forcing her feet into her boots while pulling her jacket off the peg to curl around her. A small fiddle with the cabinet below to remove her gun and she was gone!

“And goodbye to you too, Mrs. Swan-Mills!” said Regina to nobody, smiling as her wife ran out the door.

“She was running late, Gina. Be fair!” the outlaw defended. Then silence, as the pair stood sipping their teas, never taking their eyes off each other. Eventually, Regina being the first to break it.

“God, I miss coffee! The taste alone makes me feel sick now.”

“That’s why I made tea. It relaxes you, rather than stimulates. Definitely better for now…”

She rolled her eyes at him but knew he was probably right. The silence returned until:

“So, last night?” she said before taking a slurp.

“Indeed.”

“Indeed’? Is that it? Robin, last night you were told that you got two married women pregnant, in one night! That you’re going to be a father to two more children. ‘Indeed’ doesn’t really cut it!”

“What do you want me to say Regina? That I was shocked? That I was going to run and get on the next plane back to London? Yes, I was dumbstruck when you told me! Then, for a moment I was worried sick that you, Emma or both of you would get an abortion! I saw Emma had some doubts. I’m sorry that I’ve caused you so much stress and hassle Regina, but I could never regret having another child with you. Or Emma. Look at Honour! Look how much joy she’s brought to you. I’ve said nothing because I don’t know what to say! Do you want me to stay away? Be the sort of father who only comes over at weekends to take the kids out and buy them pizza? Because that’s not me,
Regina! I take being a father very seriously. I want to be in their lives. I need to be in their lives. In your lives!"

“You’ll always be their father Robin, and I’d never stop you seeing them. I know Emma feels the same…”

“Do you know what it’s like, Regina, dropping Honour and Roland off here at night and then going home?” he continued as though he hadn’t heard her. “For me, it’s only three months ago I had Roland under my canvas every night! I couldn’t bear to be parted from him. But now, I have to go back to the forest most nights without him, or Honour. I have to sleep alone every night, knowing the woman I’m still madly, infuriatingly in love with, has moved on! Moved on with someone far more worthy than me! I don’t say much Regina, because it breaks my bloody heart…” he stopped as his eyes watered.

*Oh god, he’s just as torn as me!*

“Robin, please don’t talk like that - you’re the most worthy man I’ve ever met!”

“It hurts, Regina, it hurts so much! I’m not sure how much longer I can keep this up. And please don’t get me started on Robyn and your sister!”

Regina, now close to tears herself, leaned over the worktop to take his hands. “I feel the same! It’s this true love thing! But what if I tell you we can change that? Change so neither of us be parted from them!”

“How? Without hurting Emma or damaging your marriage?” It was then he saw a hint of guilt in her eyes.

“Robin, don’t be angry, but I did something wrong when you were away with Roland. I spied on people to find out more about you…and Emma.”

“What…why? I’m an open book!”

“You remember the day you stormed the clinic and…killed Albert Spencer? The day you saved Emma? I heard rumours about what happened. I wanted to find out the truth.”

Robin didn’t like where this was going but nodded for her to continue.

“I used therianthropy, or shapeshifting, to change myself into something to spy on some of the people who saw what happened. I’m not proud, but I was worried.”

“Shapeshifting?” Robin smirked. “Into what?”

“A tabby cat! I went in to Granny’s and a couple of bars. Just sitting close and listening in to gossip. It’s been a useful source for me in the past. Well, I had heard rumours about what Gold was up to. About that day at the clinic. About you and Emma…”

“Go on! Forget rumours, tell me what you found out?”

“It took longer than I thought, but I remember Henry saying Ruby Lucas was there, when you saved Emma. She and Dorothy were at a table in The Rabbit Hole. I went close to Ruby’s leg to hear and she hissed at me – typical bloody dog! She almost kicked me when Dorothy picked me up and put me on her lap and started petting me, much to Ruby’s disgust! And mine! Me, a former queen, being petted!”

“I bet you made a rather beautiful cat! A rather sexy tabby! I would have done the same!” he
smirked.

“Yes, but I like you! Anyway, I sat there and kept quiet. That’s when Ruby started talking…”

“Dottie, must you keep on stroking that mangy moggy? Do don’t know where he’s been!”

“Oh hush! And I’m pretty sure he’s a ‘she’. She’s lovely. Now get on with the story, Rubes! You said he kissed Emma?”

“Yeah. Well we all thought she was dead. Robin had just pulled a bullet out of her but there was so much blood, Dot! She’d lost loads. Robin had her cradled in his arms and he was whispering something to her. She was barely with it, but she said something back to him about taking care of Henry and Regina. Like she knew she was going to die! Robin was trying to keep her awake and tell her she was going to be ok, and just hold on till the doctors came. That’s when she said it…”

“That she loved him? You sure you heard it right?”

“Yup, pretty sure. Wolf ears, Dot! I wasn’t that close, but I picked it up. She said to tell Regina and Henry she loved them…then she said she loved him and something about ‘sorry they weren’t going to get that second date! She collapsed after that and went still, but her eyes were open. He definitely said “I love you too, Emma” to her; then he kissed her forehead. That’s when it happened!”

“That funny warm golden-ey light? The one you said you felt after you kissed me awake?”

“The same! True Love’s Kiss! It was like a warm hair dryer being blown over me. It was weird. Everyone felt it, but I think only I heard them. Perhaps Gold too; he was there…”

“But True Love’s Kiss, Wolfie? That can’t be right. You told me Regina and Robin were together before he was killed. And now Regina and Emma. But Emma and Robin?”

“Only telling you what I saw and heard, Kansas!”

Robin sat quietly as she retold it, knowing the next questions were going to be awkward. “Gold also said something odd about it, just not so specific. So, Robin, somehow you brought Emma back to life either by a true love’s kiss, or something very similar…”

“I…I felt the wave and saw the gold light too! Merlin called it ‘octarine’.”

She fixed him a beady stare. “Robin, don’t avoid this. Do you have feelings for Emma? Yes or no?”

“Yes. But I don’t know what they are. I’m in love with YOU, Regina!”

“I believe you, and I’m very much in love with you, Robin, but this is important. I think Emma has strong feelings for you too, but she’s avoiding them. That’s how she handles things. Remember, she’s the one who kicked off last night’s little…escapade.”

“Regina, I think I know where you’re going with this. I like her a lot, but I’m not in love with Emma and I’m pretty sure she isn’t in love with me! She’s just very ‘sexual’.”
“I don’t believe that. I saw the two of you Robin! Last night in bed and before, I saw it. The looks you’ve been giving each other. This isn’t just sex, there’s a lot more to it…”

He decided not to argue any more. “And…let’s say there’s more to it. Perhaps our friendship is turning deeper. What do we do about it? We have children, Regina. We have others to consider…”
Snow Storm!

Chapter Summary

The first scan for our lovely parents-to-be as they all come to terms with the inevitable. Now Henry needs to be told but someone is being nosy and finds out beforehand. An over-reaction requires a change of plans!

Chapter 30

Storybrooke Police Station

“Aah, Deputy Swan-Mills! How nice of you to join us!” said Deputy Sheriff Briar, a sarcastic edge to her voice as Emma walked through the station door. “I thought you were going to be here over an hour ago. Hank said you’d be here around eight…”

“Sorry Mulan!” said the blonde, sighing and chucking her keys onto the side. “Something… happened at home last night. I was awake till about four and frankly, overslept.” That bit was at least true! “I’ll make it up to you, I promise…”

The former warrior studied her. “No need. Judging by the way you walked in here, I wondered what on earth she did to you last night?” she said, standing up and moving to the percolator to pour a mug of coffee. “Here, take this. Looks like you need it! I'm not allowed coffee at the moment.”

“Ugh, I do…thanks.” She said gratefully, taking the steaming mug in her hands. “I hope I haven’t screwed up your morning?”

“Not really. I rang Philip and told him I’d be late home.” She looked down and gently massaged her swelling abdomen. But I’m looking forward to giving up the night shift! I’m only eighteen weeks pregnant but I’m really starting to feel it now. This little one’s making me hungry all the time and I swear it’s started kicking me. Rory wants me to stop working but I need to do something…”

Emma looked at the pregnant woman, thinking of the child in her own womb right now and knowing she couldn’t say anything about that just yet. “But you’re still happy, right? Being pregnant and everything?”

Mulan looked at her as though she was mad. “Yes, of course! Why shouldn’t I be? I’ve got a loving wife and husband and soon, a brother or sister for Pip. It couldn’t be better!”

“Sorry, that came out wrong” she fumbled. “Obviously, you’re happy about the baby and all, I just…well, I was thinking about you and Rory and Phil. Together, I mean. I kinda…sorry, I’m making a mess of this! I guess I just wondered how it works? The three of you…” Even as she said it, she realized it sounded crass.

Mulan’s almond eyes flashed with slight annoyance. “I hope you’re not asking me about our ‘intimacy’?”

“No! Definitely not! I’m sure you’re all very happy in that department! I meant…well, do you still get jealous when they’re doing something together? Or does Phil, when you two want just a girls’
night out? I just wondered whether there’s any envy, or two against one, sometimes!” Nice going Swan. Wish I’d learn to keep my trap shut!

The former soldier calmed. “Yes, sometimes. I got jealous when Rory and Phil went swimming last week, and I was stuck in here working. Rory says she feels a little left out when Phil and I have our weekly sword practice. But jealous of Rory being madly in love with him, or him with her, never! He’s always suggesting Rory and I spend more time together. We have our date nights, in pairs or my favourite, when we’re all together. It’s a bit hard for couples to understand but it works for us. I’ve never felt so loved!”

“Sounds like you’d definitely recommend polyamory as a lifestyle?”

“If love is truly shared, definitely!” Mulan finally smiled. “Why? Are you thinking of signing up as a member, Emma?” she joked, though surprised with what Emma said next.

“Well I must admit I can see the benefits! More help with the kids. More support and hugs, plus, a lot more action in the bedroom!”

“Hmm. True! I can attest to that,” said the woman with a smirk on her face, “It sounds like you already have a candidate of your own in mind, Emma?”

That brought her back to earth. “What? No, erm...well, time you were going, I guess! Thanks for holding the fort…”

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“Then she started asking me about the three of us! Like whether we get jealous of each other or anything…” said Mulan, lying on her back on the sofa while Phillip massaged her feet, currently resting on his lap. He had large, soft hands and seemed to have acquired a knack for shoulder and foot massages, something both of his wives loved.

“That’s a coincidence,” added Aurora as she came into the room with a tray of coffees, resting them on the nearby table. “Regina was asking me something similar yesterday. She asked about Pip and how he’d like being a big brother. Then she said, ‘It must be lovely having a wife and a husband.’ She sounded quite jealous!”

“Can’t blame her…” chipped in the warrior, groaning with pleasure as Phillips hands did their work, rasping his fingers between her toes. “I can thoroughly recommend having a handsome husband with...ooh that’s good...warm hands. And a stunningly beautiful wife, of course…” she winked at the other woman.

“I agree. Where can I get myself a nice husband?” joked Philip. “Having two wives is tiring me out – maybe I need someone to share the load?” he joked, lifting a foot before giving it a peck with his lips.

“Oh, you poor old man! Most guys would give their right arm to have two gorgeous babes like us in their bed every night!” the auburn beauty replied, slumping down next to his other side to give him a peck on the cheek. “Of course, if we’re too much for you, perhaps we should just entertain each other, eh Mu?”

“Absolutely. In fact, as we’ve got a good few hours before we pick up Pip, perhaps my beloved wife
and I should leave our poor tired husband to rest, while we go and…rest?” she said, sitting up to lean across Phillip, capturing Rory’s lips with her own directly in front of him. A sight that even now always made him hard.

The two women stood up to take each other in their arms before delving into a more heated kiss. They both smirked into it, knowing the effect that always had on Phillip, now getting up with a resigned yet happy grin, and immensely tight trousers.

“You two will be the death of me! But I can’t think of a better way to go!”

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Another month passed since Robin and Roland had returned from England. Not much had changed, though Robin’s younger sister had firmly ingrained herself into Sherwood and Storybrooke, overjoyed to be back with her brother and favourite cousin. Maria had also become close friends with Annabelle Sage and the trio of women seemed to get on with everyone. Maria’s experience as a qualified veterinarian also extended to horses, which brought her closer to dealing with David Nolan at the new stables.

While Regina was delighted Maria was reunited with Robin, his sister’s friendship with her doctor worried her. Though Anna was bound by medical confidentiality, Regina worried that news of her, of their, pregnancies would leak. Regina’s belly was just starting to show the first signs of impending motherhood. So had Emma’s, to a lesser extent.

Over the last month, Emma and Regina’s relationship with Robin had also changed; becoming closer. Since the second time the trio had slept together, it happened twice more. Their third time had been spontaneous, the last time, one week ago, had even been planned. The women had never really spoken further about it, and Emma had hinted that she enjoyed taking advantage of Regina’s overwhelming pull towards the former thief, describing him as a ‘friend with benefits’ for them both.

Now Regina was pacing the scanner room, backwards and forwards, to the increasing irritation of her wife, who sat back on the lounger waiting for Professor Sage. “Heaven’s sake, Gina, just sit!”

“I can’t! Emma, I’m starting to show already. I’m worried that this’ll leak out. We haven’t even told Henry yet! What’s he going to think? Then when he finds out you’re pregnant too he’s going to be so angry we didn’t tell him! And what about Robin? Do we tell our own son that he got us both pregnant together? And what if your mother finds out? She knows everybody here. She’ll blab and it’ll go around the town in minutes!”

“Stop fretting and come sit down! We’ve already talked about this. Let’s make sure everything’s ok with the babies first. Then we talk to Henry. Now calm down and come here.” She reached up to take Regina’s hands in her own, pulling her gently onto the lounger beside her. “Robin said he’ll be here shortly…”

“And what if he’s seen walking into a pregnancy scanning room? How’s that going to look?”

“Gina, will you stop! Listen, I - ” But she stopped as the door opened. Merlin walked out with his usual confident demeanour, accompanied by a tall, muscled younger male doctor and Clarissa, Merlin’s PA.

“Emma, Regina, lovely to see you both! This is Doctor Burtonshaw, one of my colleagues from New York. David, this is Emma and Regina Swan-Mills, one of our most illustrious couples. Clarissa, could you hold all calls until after I’ve seen these patients? We don’t wish to be disturbed either…”
“Of course, Professor, I’ll see to it,” said the prim young woman, turning and leaving the room.

“Merlin, I told you we wanted this kept confidential! Not even your daughter. Yet here you are, bringing someone else into this! I’m sorry, no offence Doctor, but we really only wanted to deal with the Professor on his own! If you’ll excuse us…”

Burtonshaw turned to face her and that’s when she noticed it. He looked to be in his early thirties, fresh-faced and with a wholesome glow. Something familiar about his face!

“Well Mrs. Swan-Mills, it’s just as well I’m no ordinary doctor, then!” With that, a small swirl of blue light twirled around the younger man. His face and body instantly transforming from the medic’s and into the warm smiling features of Robin Hood!

“Robin, what the fuck?” said Emma, as surprised as her wife. “Why?”

“I know Gina was worried sick about people asking awkward questions, if I just showed up here,” Robin shrugged. “And you did invite me!”

“The temporary disguise was my idea,” laughed Merlin. “He’s pretty convincing, I’m sure you’ll agree? Anyway, let’s get on it, shall we - who wants to be first?”

Regina popped on to the couch, assisted by Emma, before lifting her dress to expose her abdomen. Pushing the top of her panties down an inch to avoid mess, Merlin swiftly smeared the scanner with cold gel and she hissed as the small but cold transducer was applied softly but firmly onto her skin. After a few seconds images started to form on the small screen, stared at intensely by Merlin for anything of concern. Seeing the change in his expression from that gentle smile to something more serious, the women became alarmed.

“Merlin, what’s wrong?” asked Regina, “What have you seen?”

“What…oh, nothing, nothing yet…I’m just concentrating. Give me a moment…” He moved the sensor across the remaining skin while clicking switches on the machine. As more focused images appeared, a heartbeat suddenly announced itself. A rapid swish-swishing noise accompanied by a sound like a horse galloping in the distance. “There you are!” he said, clicking a button to freeze the image, before pointing it out to his audience. “There’s your baby! There’s its skull, with the brain inside. I’m just checking the rest of the organs but everything looks fine so far. For twelve to thirteen weeks, that’s a nice strong heartbeat. About six centimetres; all looking good in there, Regina!”

A tear of joy ran down the former mayor’s face as she looked at the image. Her baby. She looked at Emma and Robin, both standing close with silly grins on their faces.

Merlin printed off three copies of two scanned images, handing them to Robin. After cleaning off the gel and straightening her clothes, Regina stepped off the little clinic bed to be replaced by Emma. Once again, the gel and sensor were applied. Again, it took a little while for Merlin to locate the lemon-sized foetus, lying on its front with its back to the scanner. “Come on little fella, let’s have a look at you!” As the Sorcerer maneuvered the scanner into position, they could see a hunched, still, top of the head and most importantly, no noise of a galloping heartbeat save for a whooshing sound.

Emma started to get anxious, squeezing Regina’s hand tightly. “Where’s the heart beat? I can’t hear the heartbeat, just that funny noise!”

“Emma, calm. That’s the sound of blood going through your placenta. Just give me a moment…” as he moved the scanner further into a new position and flicked two switches on the machine, the sound of another soft, quickly galloping heart came through the machine. “There you go!”
The expectant mothers and Robin exhaled loudly, all having unconsciously held their breath. “Thank goodness!” said the archer, greatly relieved. The two-inch long baby slowly lifted its head, seemingly annoyed at having its peace disturbed, turning and appearing to look straight at them, bringing a loud gasp from its parents. “Hello, beautiful!” called Regina, “your mummies and daddy are really looking forward to meeting you!”

“Congratulations to you as well, Emma. All seems to be well with yours too,” said Merlin, removing the scanner and printing pictures.

“Ours, not mine.” She said, smiling up at an emotional Robin to take his hand too. "They both have three parents. Nobody's getting left out."

"Perhaps three parents in more ways than you could imagine! And this one also appears to be have magic too, just like its sibling!"

Emma was more startled by this than the image on the screen. Why would it have magic? Mum and Dad are true loves, so are Gina and Robin! He told me Neal was mine and that's why Henry has it but – me and Robin?

"You're sure?"

"Yes, quite sure! I sense its magic already trying to reach out. It’s entirely hidden and the baby will be unaware of it, perhaps for years, like your Henry. But it is within him or her. It senses another like it in the room so it’s trying to link with your baby, Regina. I can also detect Robin’s magical signature in both of them. Congratulations, ‘dad’, it’s looks like you’re on the way to another pair of fine, healthy children!"

Emma felt the large warm hand tighten around her own, looking up to find the teary-eyed outlaw smiling down at her. “Thank you, Emma, for this.” He almost croaked the words out. “And you, Regina. Words fail me...” He bent down and kissed the blonde’s cheek, giving her wife a knowing look.

“Well, I’m all done so I’ll leave you to it” said the Sorcerer as he printed off three more copies and handed them to Robin. “Ladies, I’ll need to start putting your information onto the patient record, just for safety’s sake. Would you prefer pseudonyms at this stage?” Both women nodded. “Ok, we’ll update the records when you decide to go public.”

“Well…I’ve already started to show,” moaned Regina. “I won’t be able to hide this much longer. So, I guess we need to tell Henry first. Then Honour & Roland.”

“Yeah. Henry’s going to be tricky about this!” added Emma, “Once we tell him we’re both expecting, he’s bound to ask who are the fathers are! Bit awkward.”

“Miladies, would it help if you told them I was merely the donor? That you were hoping to have more, and I merely assisted?”

“Henry would see straight through that! He knows Gina and I never had plans for any more.”

As they contemplated their next steps, a soft knock sounded on the door immediately followed by Merlin returning. “I just thought I would let you know that Emma’s mother appears to be in the waiting room outside. I gather from the nurse that she’s here for your brother downstairs, although when she saw you coming up here, she asked after you. I could apparate you back home, but I wouldn’t advise it whilst you’re pregnant.”

“Crap!” said Emma. “If mum finds out, everyone in the whole bloody town will know before we
even tell Henry! Rob, could you -” she turned to see the twinkling blue eyed man had now been replaced by Doctor Burtonshaw, still grinning.

“Mrs. And Mrs. Swan-Mills, it’s been a pleasure meeting you! I look forward to the next time…”

Regina smirked at the impromptu disguise. “Goodbye, Doctor Burtonshaw. So do we!”

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Snow had been in the hospital a good hour, waiting for Neal’s arm to be seen for a suspected broken wrist, caused by horse play with his friends. Caroline Locksley had been called to assist and, after diagnosing it was merely a bad sprain, had set about binding the wrist. As she did so, Snow had spotted her daughter and daughter-in-law come into the reception area before heading up to the first floor. Determined to find out what was going on, the former princess called her husband to take their son home while she waited for her daughter. David had arrived promptly, confused until Snow told him she needed to wait behind to see a doctor herself. As father and son left, she bundled across to reception to ask which room they had gone in to.

“Mrs Nolan! You know I cannot disclose patient information!”

“Oh, come on, Agatha! It’s me, Snow! It’s my daughter, after all! We’re friends, aren’t we?

“You’ll have me fired! I definitely did not tell you that they went up to room 11 on the first floor!”

Snow took the hint, winked at her friend and took the lift to the first floor. She saw the closed door to Room 11, situated in a small, secluded area with waiting seats outside. The sign above the little nurse’s desk read Obstetrics and Gynaecology. That got her attention! Was one of them having a problem? Her curiosity aroused, she decided to sit and wait till they came out. After a few minutes, she saw Professor Sage, Merlin, glance at her before knocking and stepping into the room. A minute later, a handsome young man in a white coat, a doctor she clearly didn’t recognize, stepped out, followed by Regina and finally, Emma.

“Mum? What are you doing here?” Emma did her best to feign surprise.

“Your brother took a tumble! We thought he broke his wrist…”

Regina, always having had a soft spot for Emma’s little brother, gasped. “That’s awful! Is Neal all right?”

“He’s ok. Just a rather painful sprain. Robin’s sister has bandaged him up, and he’s wearing a sling. David’s waiting outside to take him home…”

“So why aren’t you with him!” challenged Emma.

“Because I happened to see my other child come into the hospital while I was with him!” she defended.

Emma rolled her eyes. “I’m not a child, mum.”

“How many more times!” the former princess sighed. “Emma, you will always be my child, no matter how old you are! I saw you come in here and I was worried! Are you ok?”

Emma froze. She hated lying, especially to her parents and especially after she had, years earlier, lectured them a number of times about telling the truth. “I’m fine, mum. It was just something routine…”
Snow looked at her, disbelieving and was just about to ask further when a voice beside her interrupted:

“It was a pleasure meeting you today, Emma.” said a handsome young man in a white coat and an English accent. “I wish other women were as diligent in their check-ups!”

“Who are you?” Snow asked abruptly, irritated at the distraction.

“Doctor Burtonshaw, one of Professor Sage’s assistants. Wait...you’re Mrs. Swan-Mills mother? So you must be the famous Snow White?” he said offering his hand for her to shake. “Delighted to meet you as well! I guess you’re here to sign up for our Pap smear test drive? We’re offering them next week, free to those without insurance. I’m sure as a leading member of your community, you’ll be encouraging your female friends and others to come along? Cervical cancer detection can save so many lives! Wouldn’t you agree?”

Emma and Regina saw Snow’s face turn bright pink, before the blonde raised her eyebrow to her wife as though silently saying “what the fuck is he doing?” However, seeing the rapidly rising crimson in her mother’s cheeks, Emma almost felt like bursting out laughing.

“Well I wasn’t here for...erm...yes, of course I’ll sign up. Good idea. Erm...well I’ll just be heading off! Emma, Regina...I’ll see you later.” She turned, trying not to look at the young doctor and headed straight to the elevator.

As the doors closed and she was safely out of earshot, Regina spoke softly to the young man. “And what the hell were you doing just then, ‘Doctor Burtonshaw’?” the brunette glared at him.

“Embarrassing your mother-in-law. Thought it might be a useful distraction. It worked, didn’t it?”


“What? It’s true - they are running them! Carrie told me. I was going to tell Snow about the two-for-one, bring a friend offer too. Sort of a ‘cheese and smear-test’ party, but she might think I was taking the piss! Which is also apt, as urine samples are also part of the health check!”

“Oh, do shut up!” said Regina between the chuckles. When the three stopped laughing, Emma looked up at him. “You know, being clean-shaven kinda suits you! As does the twenty years off your face and body…”

“Oi, ten years, missus! No need to be rude…”

Ten minutes later, Snow returned to the wagon in the car park, where a very bored Neal Nolan sat in the back, waiting, while David looked at messages on his phone. “Snow, you took your time!”

“Sorry, David. I saw Emma go in and I had to sign up for a health check. Nothing special…”

As she climbed in her passenger seat, she saw her daughter and daughter-in-law head for Regina’s car, with Emma taking the keys for the driver’s side. Something seemed odd. “David, just hold on a minute.” That’s when she spotted it. Regina had taken her coat off, laying it on the back seat. As she opened the front passenger door, she saw the brunette straighten before getting in leaning back to stretch and seeming to groan. Her normally perfect flat stomach now showed a definite bulge!

“Oh.my.god!” she breathed. “She’s pregnant!”

“What?” said David, waiting to pull away. “Who’s pregnant?”

“Oh...nothing. David, let’s drive. I just need to make a quick call.” With that, she pulled out her
cellphone, tapping in a number. “Caroline? Hi, it’s Snow again! Thanks…thank you for patching up Neal a little while ago. I’m calling because, silly me, I think I left my glasses behind. I was on the first floor, Room 11, I think…”

“Carrie Locksley chuckled. “Ha! Don’t think they’ll be in there, Mrs. Nolan! That’s the Utrasound Scanning room! Not unless you also came in for a pregnancy check up! You were on the ground floor, room 15 I think. I’ll go check for you and call you back if we find anything…”

“Of course, sorry. If you could check for me that would be great! Thank you Caroline.” She ended the call as a suspicious looking David eyed her. “What are you up to, Snow? You never take your glasses out of the house…”

She looked to check Neal wasn’t listening. He appeared to have fallen asleep in the back. “David, I think Regina’s pregnant!” earning a wide-eyed look from her husband.

“What! You’re kidding, how?” he asked, knowing it was a stupid question. “Obviously, I know how! But…who?”

“Could be a sperm donor! I think Ruby and Dorothy are trying for one that way. Or even a magical pregnancy. After all, they are both powerful sorceresses and I have heard something about that happening before.”

“I wouldn’t think so, Snow! Even with their magic, I don’t think two women can actually create a life on their own! We need to speak to someone with magic. Merlin and his daughter would be involved if Regina is having treatment there. Gold hates Emma and Regina right now so he wouldn’t be much help…”

“Blue!” said Snow. “She’ll know. She told me I was expecting Emma before I even knew. She’ll tell me…”

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After appraising Reul Ghorm of the situation, Snow made a hasty plan and now sat in the Diner, waiting for Regina to come join her for coffee. She told her she wanted to ask her something but didn’t specify. Finally, Regina walked in, having just collected Roland and Honour from school. “Hello, Regina! Hi Honnie, Roland!”

“Hi Grandma!” said the young girl as her brother ran down the back having seen a friend to play with. “Mamma, can I have a cup of tea, please?”

“Yes, my darling, you may. No sugar, remember. Ruby? Could I order two cups of tea please? Roland will just have water, if he comes back…” she said to the passing café owner who seemed rushed off her feet. “Sure. Gimmee a minute, I’m a little short staffed today. Dottie’s taking a nap…”

“Is she ok? Something wrong?”

“Just a little under the weather, Snow. Nothing to worry about…” she said, breezing past. Two minutes later, two cups of tea were delivered and Regina sat down to drink.

"Tea, Regina? I thought strong black coffee was part of your staple diet?" asked Snow. And not recommended for pregnant women, either! she thought.

“Hmm? Well I thought I could do with a change, and tea is more relaxing. Anyway, I'm sure you didn't ask me over to talk about my drinking habits?"
“Oh right! Yes, well, Regina. I was going to ask you if I could borrow Honour and Roland this weekend? David’s organizing a nature trail for some of the children by the lakes. They’re planning to stay out the night and come back Sunday lunchtime. Hank Morgan and Phillip Briar were going to accompany them, so everyone’s safe. There’ll be a barbecue, some games in the woods. Even some of the Merry Men will be there…”

“Why do you need Roland an Honour, though? Sounds like you have your hands full as it is…”

“Well, Roland is probably the most popular boy in the school. We have a lot of boys going but few girls. If Roland comes, I’m sure a lot more of them will want to come. It’ll be fun. Honour will like it too. David’s arranging for horse riding…”

“Riding! Mummy, mummy, can I go please? I want to go riding with grandpa!”

Regina smiled. “Ok, my sweet, I’ll ask Roland if he wants to join you. Anything in the forest he seems to say yes to! He’s Robin’s son, after all…”

“Snow’s smile dimmed just a fraction, but enough to be picked up by the other woman. “Yes… quite!”

“Well, as I’m sure Sheriff Morgan and Mayor Briar will also look after them, I’ll say yes.” Out of the corner of her eye, she noticed Reul Ghorm, the irritating Blue Fairy, who seemed to be staring at her intensely. *How long had she been there! Why’s she looking at me like that?*

“Something wrong, Miss Ghorm?” Regina rasped.

“Oh…nothing, Mrs. Swan-Mills. Nothing at all. My mind was miles away! If you’ll excuse me…” with that, the fairy stepped away to the counter nearby. After a couple of silent minutes, Regina stood up as the drinks arrived. “Honnie’s let’s take these out the back to your brother. We appear to have lost him again. Goodbye Snow, we’ll set up everything for the children to be dropped off once I’ve spoken to Emma.” With that she smiled at the other woman, before making her way out to the back, to the small garden.

As the door closed, the Blue Fairy appeared at Snow’s table, sitting down next to her to talk quietly.

“Well?” Snow asked, not wanting to beat about the bush. “Is she or isn’t she?”

“The queen is most definitely with child; I can sense it quite clearly.”

It was still a shock, even though Snow half-expected it. “Emma seems to know, though she hasn’t said anything to me! She made something up when I saw them. Is it ‘magical’?”

Blue’s brow raised. “Well it certainly has magic, if that’s what you mean? Even though it’s early, I can still detect its magical aura.”

“Well, having two powerful sorceresses for its mothers, I guess it’s bound to have magic…”

Blue looked surprised. “You think Emma is the other biological…parent…to this child?”

“Well it makes sense! Their magic has combined so many times. I’ve heard it’s possible.”

“Old wives tales, I can assure you Snow, it isn’t. It still needs a male donor or participant! This one has, I can tell by his own magical signature…” As the words left her mouth, she instantly regretted them, knowing where this was likely to lead.
“Wait, you KNOW who the father is?” Snow’s voice changed from wistful to annoyed in a matter of moments. “You know who has got my daughter-in-law pregnant?”

“Well…I don’t think I should say any more than that! It’s for your daughter-in-law to tell you, if she chooses.”

“TELL ME!” Snow growled. “Wait! ‘…his own magical signature’ you said! So that limits it to Merlin, Gold or…or…!” that’s when she realized who the culprit was. The bastard who had cuckolded her daughter. The man who swore he wouldn’t do anything to harm Emma’s marriage. “I’m going to fucking kill him!” she picked up her bag, storming out the café loudly, slamming the door behind her before Ruby could even give her the bill.

After she’d left the Diner, furious, Snow went home and immediately told David what she’d discovered. Now it was his turn to get mad. “So, Robin Hood’s been sleeping with my daughter’s wife? You don’t need to hit him Snow because I’m going to beat the living shit out of him; how dare he?”

After phoning into the station, David discovered Emma had driven across to Sherwood, to the Earl of Locksley pub, to drop off Honour with her father after school, so she could play with her friend Alex. He asked whether anyone else had seen Robin Hood, and was told by Hank Morgan that he was meeting the Mayor there too.

“Perfect. I’ll throttle him in front of his mates if I have too…” he growled, incandescent with rage as he thought of the indignity to his daughter. As Neal had gone to a friend’s house, Snow joined him for the short drive.

In the Earl of Locksley, Robin sat opposite his daughter, who was propped up on the table, showing her slowly how to move a silver coin across her knuckles, into her palm and out again to repeat. “Still can’t do it, daddy!” Regina sat beside him, laughing as she kept dropping the coin into his waiting hands. “You’ll get there in time, Honnie!” said Little John who sat enjoying the show. “Yer Pa can only do that on account of all the locks, chains and safes he’s had to pick!”

“Ignore John, my love. And don’t worry, it’ll be easier to learn when your hands get a little bigger…”

Emma was standing at the bar ordering their teas and coffees, watching father and daughter play with a small smirk on her face, imagining how much fun they were all going to have with their next little boy or girl currently growing inside her. Honour and the little group were so absorbed, they didn’t notice Snow and David enter the pub lounge until Snow, ignoring the rest of them, stepped up to Robin and placed a hand on his shoulder.

Robin looked up to see Snow standing above him, with an odd, angry look in her eye. He stood up, to ask what was wrong when suddenly and without warning, Snow swung her right arm and hand around fast to deliver a searingly hard slap across the archer’s cheek! “HOW DARE YOU! SHE’S MARRIED TO MY DAUGHTER!” she yelled.

Robin was stunned! He’d never expected that, though the shock was far worse than the slap itself, as the princess raged. “You promised us! You promised!” with that she spun her arm to deliver a second blow but as Robin now saw this one coming, he merely froze the limb in an instant, leaving Snow’s arm stuck in mid-air. He couldn't help noticing that this time, her hand was clenched into a fist!

"David, seeing his wife now frozen, came from behind her in an attempt to deliver a punch straight to the archer’s nose. However, as he launched his clenched fist, he felt something collide with it,
He looked up to see that Little John’s giant hand had wrapped itself around it, the bear of a man pulling close. “Beggin’ your pardon…prince, but you ain’t gonna hit my friend! Use that fist again and I’ll put you in hospital!” Then seeing Charming’s left hand tentatively reach down to where a short sword lay by his side, he growled, speaking slowly but with a menace few had ever witnessed, “and attempt to use that, and I’ll put ya in the fuckin’ morgue! Are we clear, prince?”

David felt the crushing pressure of the man’s hand on his fist.

The entire incident happened in a matter of seconds but Regina stood, totally shocked. “How dare YOU!”

“YOU SLEPT WITH HIM!” screamed Snow, now able to use her mouth and turning to Regina. “You slept with him and you’re pregnant by him! Deny it?” she spat, desperately trying to move but Robin held her in a ridiculously tight magical grip. “Let me go, Locksley, you bastard! Now!”

Having just noticed what he’d done, he instantly released her. She stood straight, turning to Regina. “How could you do that to her? To Emma? You betrayed her! You betrayed us!”

“She’s pregnant, Emma! She pregnant with his child!” she screamed, pointing at Robin.

“I know! She hasn’t betrayed me! Leave! Dad, please take her away. Now!”

“Emma,” tried David, “Regina is now pregnant by him! How is that not betrayal?”

“Because I’m pregnant by him too!” she yelled back. ‘We were together. The three of us, ok? Now get out, both of you! Get out or I’ll poof you back home myself!’

The words took a moment to sink in. “You’re pregnant?” Snow gasped.

“Yeah,” she said, moving quickly to Robin’s side to touch his slightly swelling cheek with the back of her hand, before delivering a short burst of magic to kill the sting. “Now go! We’ll speak tomorrow…”

"Emma! For goodness sake, I..." unfortunately, her mother’s words drowned as, twirling her fingers, Emma apparated her parents back to their farmhouse. A moment later, a wave of dizziness and nausea overcame Emma, causing her to buckle and fall to the ground. Robin, seeing her almost pass out, turned fast to pull an arm under her, protecting her head from any additional blow. Ooh! I dont feel so good!"

"Just rest up a moment, Emma. Merlin advised you both not to use magic in your condition; for good reason, it seems!"

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The silence in the bar was eventually broken by Honour. “Why did grandma Snow hit daddy? Why were they shouting?”

“She was upset with me, my darling,” Robin soothed, kissing the top of her head, “Don’t worry about it,”

“But she hurt you, daddy, I don’t think I like Snow anymore! I don’t think I want to go riding with grandpa now, mummy?”

“Of course, sweetheart. We’ll can all go riding another day. Emma and your papa ride well, too!”
John came closer, having made sure Snow and Charming had left. “Robin…ladies…I promise I won’t breathe a word about this to anyone! Not until you’re ready.”

“So, is that right? Emma and Mum are both pregnant and dad’s the dad?” came another voice. Nobody had spotted Roland till now. The boy had just come out of the bathroom when the commotion had started, listening at the bottom of the stairs when Snow had slapped his dad.

Robin silently nodded while the women just looked a little embarrassed. “So, Emma, it’s true? You really do like my dad?” he wore a huge smile on his face at the discovery. “As well as mum…”

Emma stood, bewildered by the comment, before looking up to see Robin also giving her that ruddy gorgeous Locksley smile. “Yeah, Ro…I like your dad…very much.” Without any hesitation, she gave him a short, chaste kiss on the lips, the first time she’d done it in front of anyone else, other than Regina. Robin beamed back, wrapping an arm around her.

“In that case, Emma, do you mind if I call you ma, like Henry does, in future?”

Her breath hitched, tears welling in her eyes as she looked across at Regina, who seemed to be feeling something similar. “No. I don’t mind at all, Ro. I’d rather love it, actually!”

The boy walked in front of her. “Dad, would you mind if I called Emma, ‘ma’ from now on?” Everyone looked to Robin.

“Of course not, my boy! I think she has been an excellent mother to you both while I’ve been gone. It’s the most important title in all the world, and you’re incredibly lucky to have not just one but two wonderful mothers here for you!”

The young man grinned, pulling Emma into her first real hug from him. “Hi, ma! I’m Roland, Rollie or Ro! Anything but ‘kid’!” Emma treasured the moment, trying her best not to weep.

"I see somebody’s been talking to Henry? I can do that Roland. Thank you!” she pulled him in a little tighter, dropping a kiss on his forehead.

“I do it too!” yelled Honour, seeing her big brother and stepping over to her. “You my ma now, not Emma…”

Regina wiped at a tear running down her own face, proud at the love being declared for her wife. *Their family that was now going to include Robin, their father, no matter what anyone said!* She pulled herself into him, placing a warm kiss on his lips before stepping back.

“Well, lovely family, now that Snow knows, it’s fair to assume the whole town is going to know tomorrow. So, I suggest we tell Henry as soon as possible! He’ll be upset if he’s the last to know!”
Roland Puts Him Straight!

Chapter Summary

Henry learns of the pregnancies and his response surprises them. Roland sets him straight on a few things. Robin stays the night and Snow plans something stupid. Rumple learns about the location of his youngest son. A plan is afoot!

Chapter 31

That evening, Emma and Regina gathered around the MacBook, Robin just out of camera shot, as they called Henry for their web chat. After a few attempts, the twenty-one-year old young man appeared in front of them, red-cheeked, as though he had been running. “Hi mums! Hi guys! How’s everything?” they all cheered back.

“Hello, my prince!” Regina started. “We’ve all been missing you. It’s been so long…”

“Only a couple of weeks, mum. But I’ve missed you all too. I’m back in a fortnight! You said you needed to talk as soon as we could? What’s up, what’s happened?”

Earlier, they had told Honour and Roland to try to stay quiet, until the mothers had told him their news. “Henry, there’s something that has happened over the last few months. Nothing bad; something rather wonderful, actually! And your mother and I, once we were ready, were going to make sure that you would be the first to know. However, something happened this evening, which caused our news to leak out. So, we need to tell you now!”

Henry looked worried. “‘Something wonderful but it’s leaked out?’ Mum, what is it?” His mothers looked at each other nervously, something the young man picked up on.

All right, here goes.

Emma decided to brave it and tell him first. “Henry, I’m pregnant! About thirteen weeks.”

Henry, slumped on a sofa, now shot bolt upright, his eyes bulging, as he realised what she’d just said.

“Whaat? How did that happen? No, please don’t answer that! I mean, why? Who? I didn’t even know you wanted another kid, ma!” he rambled, his mind racing. She’s pregnant!

“We hadn’t planned it, ki…Henry! It was an accident. I only found out a month ago, and I needed to keep quiet about it until the pregnancy was secure. I wanted to tell you as soon as I could.”

“Ma, please tell me you haven’t…cheated on mum? Surely you wouldn’t?”

Regina cut him off right then. “Henry, that’s enough! Listen to me! Do not finish that sentence! Your grandmother made a similar accusation against me, and that’s why it’s led to us doing this now before the whole town knows about it! Henry, your mother has not been unfaithful! Neither have I. I’m also pregnant!”

Henry almost fell of the sofa at that. “You? You’re pregnant too!” he gasped in disbelief. “Mums, what the hell’s going on?”

“Henry! Do not swear in front of your brother and sister! Yes, your mother and I are both thirteen
“Thirteen weeks! And you waited that long before you told me?” He started to get angry. “If both of you got pregnant around the same time, it clearly wasn’t an accident, was it? Or were you using a donor without talking to us first? What the hell were you thinking? You’ve got two kids at home already! And me! Did you give any thought about us? I can’t believe this…” he was yelling now.

“Henry – cut that out!” Emma yelled at the screen. “You have no idea! This wasn’t planned, and it was an accident.”

“Great, so it’s either some sort of magical baby between women, or a couple of guys got you knocked up! Nice going, mums! Thanks!”

“Henry!” roared Regina, “I’m not taking any more of this! You will apologise, young man, or god help me I’ll…”

He looked at them both, contempt in his voice. “I’ve had enough of this!” before turning off the call.

The women looked at each other in shock. “He just cut me off! Emma, he just cut me off!” she croaked, before bursting in to tears. Emma moved to comfort her, while the children just got up and walked away. Honour, seeing her father nearby, stepped across and into his arms. “Daddy, read me a story?”

“Of course, my lovely. Let’s leave your mums for a little while, shall we?” He quietly took his daughter upstairs.

While the distraught women curled into one another, an angry Roland crept upstairs to his own room. Pulling his tablet from out of a drawer, he set up his web call. In Boston, Henry Mills, now regretting his anger with his mothers, saw the flashing blue light. Groaning and assuming it was his mothers’ calling back to tear him off a further strip. He was surprised to see Roland’s face on the incoming call. Sighing loudly, he switched it on.

“Yeah Ro! What’s up bro?” He fake-smiled for the boy, who didn’t seem to be smiling back.

“You! You’re what’s up, dick head!” admonished his young half-brother. “Henry, there’s things going on you don’t know! So just shut up and listen!”

Downstairs, Regina and Emma, still clearly upset at Henry’s reaction, sat trying to figure out what to do next. They vaguely remembered Honour going upstairs with her father, and Roland disappearing as usual.

“What do we call him back, Emma? I’m not sure he’ll even take the call!”

“No! I’ll just get angry again. Right now, I just want to cancel his bank cards and see how the little sod feels then. I can’t believe he spoke to us like that!”

“You know we can’t do that. It’ll only lead to all sorts of other problems and he’ll turn closer to Gold. I just can’t believe Henry would react in that way. Did you see his face? It looked like he was…disgusted with us! Emma, what have we done? We’re both pregnant and your mother…”

“Fuck what my mother thinks - I’m married to you! We’ve got two children who are happy about this, and one brat who spoke out of turn. Yes, it was an accident, but a good accident! We now
know contraception by magic doesn’t work. Even so, we got pregnant by Honnie and Rowland’s father, a man who’ll help support and bring them up and who we both lo…like!” The near slip wasn’t missed by Regina.

The older woman kissed her cheek. “You’re right. I’m overreacting! But, I know your parents are going to be a problem. As for Henry…”

“He’ll get over it!” she said, by no means certain…

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“So Robin’s definitely the father? To both of them? You sure about that?”

“Emma admitted it to Snow! She was really horrible, Henry! She thought Regina was having an affair with my dad and slapped him around the face in front of everybody! Dad always said it was the worst thing ever to hit a woman, so he just took it! David tried to punch him, but John nearly squashed him like a bug! Your mums were so upset. So, they weren’t just sleeping with anybody. They slept with my dad!”

Perhaps it was the result of having Henry as a big brother, or the influence of the Merry Men, but Roland was surprisingly advanced for his years, and his understanding of people was strong. “Hen, they like my dad! I mean, Emma likes him too – she said so! I missed him so much, and now that he’s back, well, I want him to be with us. All of us together! What’s wrong with that?”

Henry listened and groaned. Roland was right. The number of times the boy had sobbed for his dead father as he sat in his step-brother’s room made his own heart break as he remembered the very little time he had with his own father. All the adults remembered Neal, or Baelfire, as a humble hero who died saving others, but he still died! His two mothers were great and loved him totally, but it could never completely fill that gap.

“Nothing, Ro, nothing’s wrong with it! It’s just the shock of finding out my mums are having two more, you know? It used to be just me! Then you, me and Honnie. Now there’s going to be five of us! Our mums are in their forties, that’s quite old to be having more kids!”

“Children, not ‘kids’, Hen! You said it yourself! So what if they’re older? They’ve all got magic! All three of them have got magic and they don’t need money cos they can make it! And anyway, if you and me could get my dad to move in, they’ll have him there to help as well!”

Henry sighed, realizing Roland had a point. He knew he’d reacted harshly and he owed them an apology. Thinking it through, he also realized there was no way they held it from him for thirteen weeks, as he had accused them. Emma said she had only known for a month and his other mother probably didn’t realise much sooner than that.

*I’m a tosser! Why didn’t I just keep calm? Why did I have to treat them like shit?* “Look…Roland, I guess you’re right. I shouldn’t have reacted like that but…I need to think. Don’t tell them you spoke to me, ok? Let me figure out a way to fix this.”

“So you’re going to stop being a wanker and help us, yeah? Like on one of your operations?”

Henry grimaced at being described that way but accepted he did have a point. “Yeah, like one of my operations. We need a name for it though.”

“That’s easy – Operation OutlawSwanQueen! Robin, Emma and Gina!”

“I like it! Operation OutlawSwanQueen it is…”
“I tried his phone too. He isn’t answering,” Emma seethed, “Pretty sure he’s avoiding us. Damn smartarse even disabled that hidden tracker app I put on his new phone!”

“I’m sorry he took the news badly, mi’ladies,” said Robin, entering the room after settling Honour and seeing Emma still pacing while Regina sat hunched. “It must have been a shock for him.”

“He still shouldn’t have spoken to us like that,” growled Emma. “I still feel so angry!”

Robin stepped in front of her, placing his hands on her upper arms. “Rightly so, and I’m sure it’s justified but try to calm yourself. Henry is a young man, with wild hormones who has over reacted. I’m sure in time he will realise that and apologise, but in the meantime, please try to relax, both of you. Can I make you a pot of tea?”

“Tea? I need a bloody whisky at this rate, pregnant or not!”

He didn’t say anything else, just slid an arm around her back to pull her in for a gentle hug, his hand guiding her onto his shoulder, just like her father did so often when she was stressed. “I’m sorry to have put you through all this…”

“Don’t be silly,” she sniffed, “we all knew the risks…”

“Well regardless, I for one am very proud to have you as a mother to our children, Emma.” and with that, he placed a soft kiss on her cheek. Without even thinking, she slid further into him, with closed eyes and a small smile on her lips. Regina looked at the pair as they hugged, with a knowing smile on her own face. As her mind wandered, two concurrent alarms on her and Emma’s phones indicated they had just received a message:

Henry: Mums, I’m sorry! I over reacted and I shouldn’t have said what I did! I need time to think, so I won’t be answering any messages just yet…

A few seconds later, another text came in for each of them:

Henry: I love you both. Sorry again.

The mothers looked at his comments, smiling. Perhaps things wouldn’t be so bad after all! As he left them to go into the kitchen to make tea, the phones bipped once again:

Henry: And for the record, Robin’s a brilliant dad! I’m sure he will be again…

That brought a worried gasp from Regina. “How did he know about Robin? Emma, if your mother’s already spreading this across town…” The younger woman looked equally horrified, realizing they may have a problem. At least she did, until yet another text came in.

Henry: And who went and gave Rollie an iPad? That boy is vicious when he gets angry! Probably had a point though. I was a bit of a dick…

Emma laughed at that, though Regina wasn’t sure whether to reprimand him for using such words to his mothers, or thank him for his apology. She chose to ignore it instead, walking into the kitchen where Emma was already showing Robin the texts. He looked relieved.

“Oh, so he knows! Well, I guess that’s another secret out the way. Should I have a word with Roland about his treatment of Henry?”
“Don’t you dare?” said Emma, “that boy did us a favour. I don’t know, but he somehow got through to him…”

Ten minutes later, the three of them shared a pot of tea, the pot being one of Robin’s gifts from England, ‘plus proper strength tea’ as he called it. They sat around the dining room table, Emma finally starting to relax.

“Robin, why are you so obsessed with tea? Is it some sort of daft forest ritual?”

“Not at all. I drink black coffee too, but coffee stimulates you whereas tea relaxes you. Besides, I seem to remember, somewhere in Merlin’s memories, that pregnant mothers shouldn’t drink much coffee as it wrecks your sleep and makes you anxious. A pot is better than a cup because it can brew and get stronger. Very important, as in this country, all the tea in the shops over here is as weak as gnat’s piss!”

Regina sniggered, eyes still shut as she savoured the taste. “Well compared to this, I tend to agree. Emma’s never really been a tea drinker though. That’s why we have decaff coffee in the house.”

“Which is like eating a bar of chocolate with the wrapper on!” said Emma, “I could get used to this though. How much did you bring back?”

“About fifty boxes. Along with chocolate and a lot of stuff you can’t get here. That’s why we hired a van.”

“English chocolate? Is that a thing?”

“The smaller companies, yes, not the big ones. The big ones sell the same shit as over here. But we brought back Belgian and Swiss chocolate, proper English cheese you can taste, and a load of beer hops for Tuck to seed.”

“Swiss Chocolate? I’ve tasted that stuff. Rob, you have to bring it here! I can guarantee you’ll get laid…”

Regina almost choked at that, nearly spraying the table with tea as she coughed. “EMMA!”

Robin and Emma roared with laughter as she recovered. After a few minutes chatting, Robin looked at his watch. “Well I don’t want to outstay my welcome, so mi’ladies, I’ll best bid you good night.”

The wives looked across at each other, saddened the improved evening was drawing to a close. As the three moved to the front door, a voice was heard from the upstairs landing. Roland.

“Mums!” It was the first time he’d ever used the word for both women, drawing a raised brow from Regina and a wet smile from Emma. “Does dad really need to go? Couldn’t he just stay the night? It would be great if he could take me into school in the morning!” he pouted, using his dimples to the maximum.

“Roland, I wasn’t planning to stay.”

“Sorry dad, I just remembered what ma said to Snow. I just thought at last we were becoming a family…”

Robin looked at the boy, knowing exactly what he was doing. Sneaky bugger – he’s playing them! He couldn’t help but admire his son’s innate ability to toy with adults’ emotions. Sure enough, Emma was the first to succumb. “You don’t have to leave, Rob! There’s a spare guest room, or Henry’s…”
“Stay.” Regina added, “It’ll be easier for you to drop Roland off in the morning. And Honour will be really pleased to find you here when she wakes up.”

“I don’t want to impose,” he said, looking at Roland, who he could have sworn winked at him, confirming every suspicion, before the boy saying in his best pleading voice. “I just want us to be together, dad. All of us!”

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Roland had been asleep for a good hour, though Robin, now lying in Henry’s bed, was wide awake, unable to settle. His mind flooded with everything that had happened since Zeus sent him back. So many wonderful things he hardly deserved. But being reunited with his beautiful son and daughters was the icing on the cake. His young sister and cousin were alive and well, which helped temper the shock of knowing his true love had overcome her grief and moved on to fall in love with another. However, Zeus’s gift of magic had given him the chance to help his men build a real home for their families. At last, a break from poverty for so many.

What he hadn’t expected was Emma! The woman who now seemed to continually invade his thoughts. Before his death, He and Emma were merely comrades, fighting on the same side. But now, the woman who had supported Regina in raising his children for the last five years, the woman who loved her as much as he did. The woman who had allowed her wife to be with him, was, like Regina, pregnant with his child!

The three had shared a bed; shared each other, not once but four times. Four times of absolute, ultimate heaven. His memories of their recent love-making (for that’s what it was – not sex) flooded his mind making his cock twitch unwillingly. Emma hadn’t just allowed it, she’d encouraged it and as his mind remembered her wonderful athletic body, her tighter curves, her taste, he’d realized his feelings for Regina’s wife had grown from mere admiration, or even lust, to something so much deeper. And that disturbed him. It’s still wrong! Dishonourable to both of them. They’re married to each other and I invaded their marriage, despite all my promises not. Snow was right, I’ve betrayed them!

He was so wrapped up in his thoughts, he didn’t hear the bedroom door creak open. Didn’t hear the soft padding across the carpet. Not until he felt a soft kiss on his forehead.

“Hey!” Regina breathed, almost whispering, “I knew you were awake - I could feel it!”

“Yeah…I was just…so much to think about. I couldn’t sleep.”

“Nor could we. Come…” she pressed her palm into his, encouraging him to get up.

“Gina, are you sure this is a good idea?”

“Robin…please?” she pulled harder. He gave up and rose from the bed, still holding her hand as he led him out and into her own bedroom. As he entered, he saw Emma sitting upright against the headboard, in the middle of the large bed, with a book on her lap and reading glasses perched on the end of her nose.

“I’ve never seen you in glasses before, Emma. They suit you!” Said Robin as Regina led him closer.

“Nah! Your son thinks they make me look like an owl.”

“Perhaps a rather sexy, bookish owl! I really must have a word with that boy about his manners…” Regina tittered. “Don’t you dare! I love his little put-downs. Reminds me of someone else I know…”
Emma moved to the side, placing her book and glasses on the side table. “Come on in,” she said, rolling the goose down quilt back. “Gina, it’s your turn in the middle.” As the pair climbed in, Emma flicked her fingers towards the bedroom door, casting a simple spell to prevent them accidentally being disturbed.

Regina slid into the centre, Robin easing in on her right. This time, Emma curled up, facing away from the pair as Regina curled herself into the blonde’s back with her arms around her. Robin did the same to Regina and the three pulled together effortlessly, as though this was a nightly occurrence. Emma sighed contentedly, flicking her fingers once more to make the lights turn off.

“Good night…my loves,” whispered Robin, without thinking. *Oh heck, did I just say that out loud? Hopefully they won’t have noticed!* Of course, Regina, comfortably sandwiched in the middle, had noticed, a warm smile rolling across her face in the dark as she pulled her wife closer. So too had Emma, who also grinned, comforted to know he seemed to be having similar feelings for her, as she had started to have for him.

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On the other side of Storybrooke, Snow and Charming were also having difficulty sleeping.

“I still can’t believe it, David, he lied to us! He said he’d never interfere with them; he promised me! And now look; Emma even said she was pregnant as well. By him!”

“I don’t like it either Snow, but Emma isn’t stupid. Whatever’s happened, she seems to want this.” said David, trying to calm her down. But Snow wasn’t having any of it.

“No, something’s wrong! Emma’s never shown *any* interest in Robin before, and I’m pretty sure he’s had none for her! He’s done something to her David, to both of them. Either that or Regina has. I’m sure of it. I don’t know what, but he must have used magic, or drugged her or done *something* to control her. We have to do *something*!”

“But what? Unless Emma wants to change, I don’t see how! I suppose I could go see Gold? He owes me for sorting out all Belle’s stuff when they split…”

“Good idea!” said Snow, now animated and planning. “He won’t talk to me as he knows I’m on Belle’s side! If you can find out whether Emma’s being controlled and whether he has any potion, or magic, or anything to stop him from being with her. I’ll go talk to Blue again. Perhaps she’s got a way of separating them…”

David watched the gleam in his beloved’s eyes, worried. “Snow, if Robin really is the father of Emma’s baby, we can’t just go trying to split them up!”

“We can if he’s controlling her! David, it took a long time for me to accept her marrying Regina. But it turned out to be a great marriage and I can’t have him undoing everything…”

“What if they do have feelings for each other? What if we’re making a big mistake?” *his thoughts went back to the time she persuaded him to help steal Maleficent’s egg, depriving her of her daughter.*

She’d stopped listening to him, instead retrieving her phone. “Hello, Blue? It’s Snow. We need to talk…”

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It was just after five in the morning. The little blonde, having woken up far earlier than usual, popped
downstairs to get a drink. Seeing Robin’s boots and jacket on the coat rack, she raced upstairs, assuming he’d be in Henry’s bed or the guest room. Finding him in neither, she tiptoed quietly into her mums’ room to ask where he was. She felt a warm fuzzy wave hit her as she stepped in. As she stepped closer to the bed, she saw not two bodies, but three. Her brunette mother, now on the left, seemed to be curled into Emma’s back, while Emma, now in the middle, was also curled, asleep, with her head resting on the chest of… “Daddy?”

Waking to the sound of his little girl, it took Robin a good few seconds to orientate himself. “Humph…er…hi Honnie,” he groaned, trying to wake and realizing his chest was pinned down. Opening his eyes to find Emma there, now also starting to wake, he finally realized the embarrassing position they were in. Caught red-handed - thank god we had clothes on! He opened his eyes, trying desperately not to flinch or react to his daughter catching him with the women.

“Honnie, why are you up so early?” he croaked. Emma, now awake and realizing the awkward situation they were in, slowly eased her head off his chest, realizing she’d also left a slight dribble on it and rubbing it off with her hand.

“Couldn’t sleep. Hug please, daddy?” she asked, arms out to her father. “Of course, my love, come here.” He lifted the girl easily from the side of the bed, lowering her on his right, close to the edge. Emma edged Regina backwards to give them a little more space, making the older woman harrumph at being disturbed. Honour now settled happily hugging Robin’s side as he lay on his back. Within a matter of minutes, the girl was sound asleep.

“Not that I’m complaining Emma,” he whispered, “I wouldn’t miss this for the world, but I thought you sealed the door?”

“I did, you saw me!” she whispered back. Robin wasn’t so sure, so he flicked his fingers to test the magic used. “Don’t think so, Em! You used a non-magical intruder spell.”

“Non-magical what? Don’t understand! What do you mean?” Emma’s whispering getting louder.

“The spell you used is for non-magical beings! Honour and Henry would come straight through that now. Same for sound-proofing spells. You need a different one to stop anyone with magic getting in or hearing you!”

“Whaaaat?” said Regina, who had woken a minute before and had been silently listening to their conversation. “You mean to say she could have heard us in here in the past?”

“Yup. Once her magic came in anyway. Same for Henry.”

Emma cringed. “God, that’s why Henry complained he often used to hear us when we were…cuddling! He’s now got magic too. He must have heard everything! Hell, this is so embarrassing!”

He kept his eyes closed, desperately trying to stifle his laughter, while making an attempt to soothe them. “You laughing at us, thief?” Emma threatened.

“So what?” he said, “He accidentally heard his married mothers making love? Just goes to prove that you are in love! He could just put his fingers in his ears and get as far away as possible, like most kids do…”

“Maybe. But just the thought of them hearing that makes me cringe! You know Gina’s a screamer!”

“Hey!” carped the brunette, digging her fingers into Emma’s side, “keep saying that sort of thing, dear wife, and I’ll give you fewer opportunities to make me scream…”
Emma turned to face her. “Sorry babe, I didn’t mean it!” she rolled over to meet Regina face-to-face and pulling her body in tight. “Let’s ask Boy Wonder here to show us the proper spell then, if he’s so clever!”

A moment later they felt the stream of octarine light surround the door. “There you go!” he said cockily, “wish I could have done that, and a soundproofing spell, when I was living in a tent…”

Emma chuckled, albeit quietly, so not to wake the little one. “Robin, I hardly think Gina wants to hear about you and Marian doing it in a tent?”

“I was talking about Gina! As you said, she’s a screamer!” that made Emma giggle even more.

“I’m giving you the same warning I gave her, thief!” Regina glared, a mischievous look in her eyes. “I can easily… withdraw my affections, for someone who appreciates my… enthu…sis… more! Perhaps the Briars would appreciate another… responsive woman?”

Instead of a reply, Emma wrapped her arms around her and rolled on top, gently forcing the brunette’s thighs to part as she pushed her own within, to lie directly on top of her, their mouths inches apart. “Nobody…but nobody… appreciates your ‘idiosyncrasies’ more than we do! Eh Robin?”.

He saw the instant change, from sarkiness, to playfulness, to lust, between the two women as they stared into each other’s eyes. He didn’t want to kill their mood. Far from it. Just seeing the blonde mounting the brunette was a turn on in itself but he needed to remind them that their daughter was currently in their bed and just about asleep, so perhaps this wasn’t the time? However, before he even said a word, Regina did it for him.

“Eugh! Emma - morning breath!” she gasped, killing their moment completely.

“Sorry,” she said, unoffended and rolling off the former mayor. “Should’ve brushed my teeth first.”

“And perhaps put our little girl back to bed first?” whispered Robin, with a smile on his face. “I’ll take her back to bed and stay with her. Give you some time for yourselves…” still lying with Honour’s head on his shoulder, he turned sideways to place a leg on the floor, twisting himself to rise with her now in his arms, still fast asleep, before standing upright and walking to the door. Both women watched silently as he led her out.

“I’m impressed – she’s getting heavy!” said Emma.

“He’s had a lot of practice with Roland.” Regina replied, proudly watching him. Part of her wanted to ask him to come back to bed after he’d settled her, but she understood he probably felt a little awkward.

Robin walked to the door with his girl in his arms, focusing to remove his magical barrier using only his eyes instead of his hands, before opening it and passing through, as quietly as possible. He nearly jumped when he saw Roland sitting quietly on the carpet outside, clearly expecting him, with a large grin on his face.

“Morning dad! Sleep well?”

“Shush!” he whispered, “we just got her to sleep! Ro, what on earth are you doing out here so early?”

“I was gonna ask you the same question!” he chuckled.
“Don’t be impertinent, young man! Why aren’t you in bed?”

“Couldn’t sleep. I’m glad you stayed over though…” he looked suspiciously between his father and Regina’s bedroom, giving a mischievous smirk. Robin realized he knew something. “Means you can take us to school?”

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**Later that morning – The Convent**

“So now you want me to verify whether Emma is also with child, and that the child is Robin’s?”

“Yes. And whether she or Regina or both are under any sort of spell or magic, or anything! Then what we can do about it? About him?” said Snow to the Blue Fairy.

“You’re asking me to remove Robin, from what could potentially be two of his own children?”

“If it saves my daughter’s marriage and her happiness, yes!”

“What if this IS a part of Emma’s happiness? What if she isn’t under any magical influence?”

“Emma does NOT love Robin Hood! I just know, alright?”

“Snow, what you are asking of me is not good, it is wrong. So, I must decline…”

“You refuse to help me?” Snow started getting angry.

“Yes, though I will find out whether Emma is really carrying Robin of Locksley’s child. But no more.”

“Right. Then as usual, I’ll have to do everything myself!” Without saying another way, she turned her back on Reul Ghorm and left, slamming the door loudly behind her. Blue winced at the noise, before sighing and mentally communicating with one of her fairies.

“Silvermist? We have a problem. Do you know where Merlin is?”

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**Gold’s Antique Shop**

“You’re aware that I threw your annoying daughter and cantankerous daughter-in-law into the public jail, for bursting into my shop uninvited, Mr. Nolan?” David had moments earlier banged on the shop door, but, despite seeing the closed sign, walked in regardless after hearing no reply.

“I am. And I apologise Mr. Gold, but I felt it couldn’t wait!”

Charming tended to be more civil, and polite towards him than Snow or her daughter, so his response was slightly less caustic than usual. “It never can, when it comes to your family! So, what do you want this time?”

“Emma said she’s pregnant and so is Regina. She implied they had the same father. I need to know whether it’s true and what we can do about it…”

“They are. He is. Nothing at all…” sneered Gold. “Anything else?”

“You know? How?” mumbled an astonished David Nolan.
“I am the Dark One, dearie? Magic, powers, that sort of thing? Your daughter and her wife are indeed both with child by Robin of Locksley. Their father is now an extremely powerful sorcerer in his own right and these two children, your granddaughter included, will inherit that power. Now, if that’s everything…”

“Granddaughter? I’m going to have a granddaughter?” David’s eyes started to mist.

“Indeed. Congratulations, well done, now get out…”

“And magic? How come they both have magic? Emma and Robin Hood aren’t…”

“True love, Dearie? How do you know they’re not?”

David was stunned. *He was going to have a granddaughter?* As a silly, happy smirk came over his handsome face, he felt a swirling wind build around him, twirling him, before depositing him on the sidewalk outside the shop. *He didn’t care, he was going to have a granddaughter!*

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“I told you Snow, I’m NOT going to talk to him!” seethed Belle, amazed Snow even had the audacity to ask her! “I want nothing more to do with that man!”

“I don’t need you to talk to him, Belle. I just need the dagger! You’re the only one who could get it without being hurt trying…”

“You so sure about that? You forgotten the last thing he said to me? Anyway, I’m not going to. Sorry Snow but that’s final. Why do you need it anyway?”

“I need Rumpelstiltskin to remove someone from the town. He won’t do it if I just ask! Well can you at least tell me where it’s located? I’ll have to do the rest…”

“And that’s it? No killing? Nobody gets murdered?”

“I swear. Nobody gets murdered.”

Unfortunately for Snow and Belle, their conversation was being observed, via the small mirror behind the library reception desk. In another part of town, a large silver and glass sphere was showing the scene, as the two observers listened intently when Belle finally conceded, giving Snow the last location she remembered for the Dark One’s dagger. The sword that ultimately controlled the Dark One and had given him so much pain throughout his long life.

“I can’t believe she would just give up that sort of information? Belle must know how much misery has been brought into Mr. Gold’s life by that dagger? She didn’t even ask who Snow White wanted to expel!”

“I agree. Rumplestiltskin has made many errors during his life as a result of that thing, but he is attempting to change for everybody’s sake. I think Miss French will come to seriously regret this…”

“So what do you suggest we do now, my Lord?”

“We need to speak to the Dark One. I’ll do it. We cannot allow him to be controlled again…”

---
It was two in the morning when Snow White broke into the antiques shop. After collecting various items from home, she texted David to let him know she was on to something, and would be back the next morning, not to wait up for her and ensure Neil was safely back from the babysitter.

Snow prided herself on her past ability to pick a lock, silence a dog or a bell and retrieve an object as required. Now, standing over a large walnut box, she picked the lock as silently as she could until eventually the mechanism gave way, leaving her free to steal the contents. The entire exercise took less than fifteen minutes as she took the blade and the oilcloth it was wrapped in, out of the ancient box before lifting it up in the moonlight to check the item. Satisfied, she dropped it into her satchel before closing and returning the box, then making her exit.

A minute later, as the shop lay still, two figures emerged from a magically hidden corner of the room.

“You have to admit, her breaking-and-entering skills are still very impressive, Rumple, even after all these years?”

“Aye, dearie, though I have to wonder at the stupidity of some people! If she’d found where the real dagger was located, she’d be a rather still corpse right now. Thank you for the tip off. I’ve put a tethering spell on that fake dagger she took, so I thought I might follow her, under a cloaking spell of course. Care to join me?”

“I need to get back to the hospital, though I would ask you to contact me as soon as she attempts to use it?”

“Of course. I’m disappointed Belle would so easily have revealed its likely location to her. Sadly, ever since she used it to banish me from the town, I’ve never truly trusted her sufficiently to ever again reveal its true location. It seems I was justified…”

“You’re not planning to speak to Miss French then?”

“Belle and I parted some time ago. I gave her the use of my library and a sufficient stipend, but I think our days of being together have long gone.”

“Never be too sure Mr. Gold. Now, as I’m here, I would like to talk to about your son. I have news of him…”

Rumple recoiled at the change of topic. “My Bae?” I thought you said…”

“Not Baelfire, Gideon! He’s been located…”

“Gideon’s been found? Where? Has he been harmed? What’s happened to him?” he said, becoming increasingly agitated. *He would mount an immediate rescue!*

“Calm, Rumple, please. One of my…agents…has tracked him down within the Dark Realm. He is still being held by your mother and is currently two years old approximately, so it seems the Black Fairy has not accelerated his age, unlike some other children. He’s not been cruelly treated, as far as we are aware, but a number of the children with him have been.”

Rumple seethed, remembering the cause of his boy’s kidnap, Belle’s decision to hand him over to the blue moth to prevent his father’s darkness consuming him. “I must rescue him!”

The Sorcerer smiled, placing a hand on his forearm. “I thought you might say that! However, she is well protected in many ways, so if you charge in alone, there is a fair chance that you, your son and the other children may be killed. So, I’m going to help you, Rumple. I will accompany you on this mission to free not only your son but hopefully all of them. The Dark Fairy has a few tricks of her
own and is still very powerful, so the three of us will go just to be sure of success.”

“Three?”

“Yes. I intend to ask Robin of Locksley to join us.”

“I think that’s unlikely. The thief has children here, and he’s been away from them for some time, with two more on the way. What makes you think he would even consider this?”

“Because he’s noble and honourable, as you well know, plus we three are the most powerful magicians currently here. Emma and Regina are currently in no state to apparate. Combined we three will be more than a match for her and her friends. He will agree…”
Chapter Summary

Snow tries to make peace with her daughter, Rumple gives her a thorough humiliation, Robin returns from his mission and Rumple is reunited with a VERY special boy...

Chapter 32 - The Rescue

During the day, Emma had received a number of texts from her mother. None apologizing for striking Robin but just asking to meet up. She ignored them all, until yet another arrived:

Mum: Emma, stop avoiding me. Call me! I want to see you!

The blonde felt annoyed her mother still didn’t seem to get what she had done! So, she finally texted back:

Emma: Well I don’t want to see you! I’m still angry! I’ll call you when I’m ready.

Mum: I’m sorry if I upset you. We still need to talk.

Emma: You did enough talking last night. You struck Robin. When you’ve apologized to him, then we’ll talk…

Mum: You can’t be serious! He got you pregnant!

Emma: I’m not discussing this. You know what you have to do…

Mum: He’s controlling you! Emma, see sense!

Emma: That’s bullshit! Good bye mum. Don’t text, apologise. To ROBIN, not me!

“Arrghh!” yelled Snow, annoyed at her daughter’s refusal to talk. She angrily threw the phone across the room into the sofa. As she seethed, her husband walked through the door, with a smile on his face! Somehow this made her feel even worse. She knew she was being petulant but couldn’t stop herself. “What’s with the stupid grin – did you even see Gold?” she sneered.

Charming’s smile changed to an angry frown in an instant as he saw his fuming wife. Normally, he could put up with her mood swings, but not this time.

“DON’T take that tone with me, Snow!” he almost growled the words. “Did you speak to Emma?”

“She won’t talk to me until I’ve apologized to Hood! And I’m not doing that till I’ve spoken to her!”

“Then I guess you know what you have to do. And for the record, Gold said yes she is pregnant, and so is Regina, Emma’s carrying our granddaughter, who has magic, and there’s nothing he’ll do about it!”
“A granddaughter? Emma’s carrying a girl?”

“Yup, so if Blue doesn’t find any proof of Robin forcing her or controlling her, then we owe Robin an apology!”

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After Robin had left that morning to take Roland and Honour to school, Regina and Emma had studiously avoided the subject of him sleeping in their bed last night, instead focusing on getting ready for their day. Regina now stood in the kitchen, preparing coffee and toast for her wife, her mind reflecting on how comfortable and natural everything had felt last night. At had been the third time in a row that Emma had instigated something between them and the outlaw and this time it had been different. There was no sex involved, just the three of them hugging and cuddling in to each other. Somehow, she and Emma had changed places in the night and waking to find her wife in Robin’s arms had been a strange experience. Knowing her two loves appeared to be getting closer by the day, whilst not leaving her out, made her feel comforted, secure. Unfortunately, her thoughts were disturbed by a yell from upstairs.

“Oh, fuck no! Come on! That’s way too early!”

Thinking Emma in distress, she ran upstairs into the bedroom, to see her standing in front of the long mirror, in her sheriff’s uniform, half dressed, neither her shirt nor pants fully buttoned. “Emma, what’s wrong!”

“I can’t get into these bloody pants! I’m the size of a sodding horse, Gina! They fit last week!”

Regina stepped up to her and could see the problem. Emma had taken a couple more weeks for her pregnancy bulge to start showing; now here it was in all its glory.

“You look fine, my love. Here, let me…” The brunette waved her fingers and Emma felt the fabric loosen as the waist of the pants expanded at least two inches. “We can easily adjust it as we go. I’ll show you the spell…”

“Thanks. I guess I need to tell Hank today that I’m not going to be able to sheriff in a few months, though it’s going to be bloody obvious when he sees this!” she said, pointing to the small bulge. “Geez, Mulan’s on leave next month too, so I’m going to drop him right in it!”

‘Nonsense, I’m sure he’ll find someone to fill in. there’s plenty of men and women in the militia who could step in. This baby’s more important! Now, shall we talk about what happened last night?” Regina raise her brow challenging Emma to avoid it any longer. “The fact we invited Robin into our bed yet again?”

Emma groaned. “Must we? You enjoyed having him with us after all, didn’t you?”

“You know I did. If it was left to me I would have him with us more often. But we’re married…”

“It’s no biggie for me anymore. You love him, and he loves you. The kids love having him here, he’s their father and we’re having his babies. Heck, he might as well move in…”

“I believe he loves you too Emma! Or at the very least, he is starting to fall in love with you! I’m not blind, I see the way he looks at you; like the way he looks at me. Something’s changed between the three of us even if we all choose to deny it. And that kiss outside the hospital! I’m convinced it was a True Love kiss that brought you back. That means something, Emma. And I think you…wait! What? What was that you said…about him moving in?”
“Well, it makes sense. Odd that we’ll be raising four of his kids and he’s living somewhere else for no reason. I mean, you love him, I…like him, the kids adore him. Even Henry, for god’s sake…”

“You like him? Sure it isn’t a little more than that?”

“I know where you’re going with this Gina, and I honestly don’t know! I mean, I like him…a lot…but that’s hardly the same as being in love with him, is it? I like being with Robin, he’s warm, kind and considerate, gentle even. I’m not used to that from a guy, even Killian. I have to admit, he’s brilliant in bed but he’s more than a fuck buddy or a friend with benefits. I honestly don’t know what to tell you. What do you want me to tell you?”

Regina studied her wife’s face closely before replying. “I want you to be happy, Emma! In whatever form that takes. I think you and Robin are dancing around each other because you both feel embarrassed to admit you have feelings for each other. You feel guilty because you’re married to me and feeling something for someone else. He feels guilty because he definitely feels something for you, something strong, so he’s worried about me and possibly breaking up my marriage. But that’s not going to happen! I really WANT you and Robin to be close. I hope you two eventually fall in love, I hope the three of us can be together, raising our family. But only if that’s what you also want, Emma!”

She stood silently, moving in front of Regina, wrapping her arms around her waist, pulling her in. They exchanged glances before the blonde finally said, “Let’s talk to him.”

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**The Library**

Belle yawned, turning off the desktop computer. It had been a relatively quiet day and she was bored. Locking the card indexes away for the night, she found the keys to lock the main door. She’d been using the flat above the library as her home for four years now, since her separation from Rumplestiltskin. It was cramped, especially when compared to their shared gothic mansion on the hill above Storybrooke, or even the spacious flat above the antique shop, but it was a home of sorts.

Belle and Rumple’s separation came as no surprise to the people of Storybrooke, but the nature of it had. In the first years of their marriage, Belle had regularly threatened to leave him on numerous occasions unless he reformed. On two occasions, she had even used the dagger to force him over the town boundary, and he’d had to trick his way back. However, this time it was the Dark One who threw Belle out, after she sent her newborn son out of his reach. Reul Ghorm had taken the child to a place of safety but had been intercepted on the way, almost killed, by the Black Fairy, who kidnapped the child, who had never been seen since. Despite efforts to locate his son, it had been fruitless.

The Dark One had sworn revenge on all those who had brought it about, especially the Blue Fairy and the Saviour, and it was only his own wife’s hysterical reaction to the kidnapping that placated him. Nonetheless he found it impossible to fully forgive the woman who had hidden his own son from him, until it was too late. Rumple had told her to leave, for good. He’d used magic to convert the flat above the library into reasonable quarters, given her a lump sum of money and insisted he was no longer beholden to her, or her to him, in any way, shape or form, and she was free to go. He drafted up a divorce paper and said when she wanted to, he would sign it and she was free to take another partner if she so wished.

Belle Gold had lived alone these past years. Initially enjoying her own independence for the first time in her life, she’d gradually become lonely and in need of some sort of companionship. She’s taken several lovers, including Will Scarlett. Her relationship with one of Robin Hood’s men had lasted for
several months, until it was discovered that his former true love and Red Queen, Anastasia, was alive. He’d let her down gently, before heading off and scouring the realms to find her. Then came Jonathon, the owner of the Rabbit Hole. One night, after drowning her sorrows yet again over the loss of Gideon, the man had offered her some comfort and a sympathetic ear. It led to them becoming lovers for several weeks, although his obsession with body building and spending an excessive amount of time with his friends had soured the relationship.

Her next intimacy came as more of a surprise. Her friend Ariel came to stay, following a heated bust-up with her husband Prince Eric. Over a tearful evening bemoaning the shortcomings of their respective husbands, Belle and Ariel had hugged it out over wine. Rather then let her sleep on the uncomfortable sofa, Belle had insisted the mermaid share her bed. Later that night, lying together and sobbing, they held each other in comfort before finally, Ariel kissed her. Belle had responded in kind, grateful for the affection, and before long the two frustrated women had gone on to have hours of frenetic, passionate sex. Neither had ever been with another woman before, and they both found the experience more than liberating. One night had turned into days, before the mermaid’s guilt over her adulterous behaviour, made her go back to attempt reconciliation with her husband.

The experience with Ariel had changed Belle’s perception of her own sexuality and she decided to broaden her own horizons. After a couple of no-strings-attached, one-night stands with two other women, one night she found herself back in the Rabbit Hole, sharing the bar with an equally despondent Zelena Mills.

What her estranged husband would think of her taking the woman responsible for his son’s death to her bed, she couldn’t imagine! The sex had been fierce, passionate and satisfying, but nothing more. Zelena had made it clear from the start that it was just sex she wanted. It suited them both, though, unlike Ariel, because it came without love or affection, Belle always felt slightly soiled afterwards. Soiled and dirty. And unfortunately, Belle knew why she couldn’t seem to form more permanent relationships; it was because, despite everything, she was still in love with him. Always him!

Her thoughts were interrupted by the front door clunking shut behind a visitor.

“Sorry, I wasn’t sure if you were still open?” said Snow White, now standing in front of her, looking sheepish.

“Did you get it?” asked the chestnut haired beauty. “The dagger?”

“Erm…yes, I did. But I don’t want to use it, after all. I guess I was wrong about something. I want to give it back.”

“Wrong about…what are you talking about? You go to all the trouble of breaking in and stealing the Dark One’s dagger? You know how dangerous that is? Then you changed your mind! What did you want it for any way?”

“To see whether Robin’s controlling Emma. By magic or a spell or something. I was going to get Blue or Gold to examine them to see…”

“Blue could do that! Why Rumple and the dagger?” she said, alarmed she’d told the woman where to find it.

“To send him over the border if he was controlling them,” said the former princess, looking ashamed.

“Send Robin…Robin Hood? Why on earth? That man is a damn saint! He even saved Emma’s life! He’s my friend! What about his children? They’ve only just got him back! Snow, how could you think that -”
“HOW INDEED!” said Rumple, appearing in front of them in a dramatic swirl of mist, causing Belle to drop her keys in shock and Snow jolting backwards, as though struck.

"Gold! I almost shit myself!” said the unusually potty-mouthed princess.

“Good! Now dearie, I believe you owe me something?” he said, opening his hand out to her.

Snow, slightly shaking, picked up her large handbag, withdrawing the ornate dagger and oilcloth and putting it in his palm. “I’m…I’m sorry, Mr. Gold. I just sort of panicked about something. I apologise….”

“For breaking into my shop? For taking the dark one dagger? For damaging the locks? Well dearie, I’ve a good mind to report this to Sheriff Morgan. Unlike his predecessors, he doesn’t believe former royal family members to be above the law! Perhaps a little spell behind bars may do you good? I should know, that’s where I usually end up when someone takes control of my dagger!”

Again, I’m sorry, I panicked…”

“You did, didn’t you? Panicking is no excuse for theft, Mrs. Nolan. The law is the law…”

“Rumple!” Belle intervened, “she didn’t mean to – ”

“I’m not talking to you, I’m talking to her! I’ll deal with you shortly!” His voice contained a hint of menace in it, something Belle hadn’t heard directed at her for quite some time.

He stared at Snow, who looked even more contrite, and rather afraid. “I know why you stole my dagger, and I also saw you do it. I was there! You were a fool to try, as you could easily have been killed, depriving your young boy, my son’s namesake, of a mother.” He continued to study her as she stayed quiet, considering his next actions. Whatever the two women were thinking, they weren’t expecting what came next.

“Take this!” he said, offering back the dagger for Snow to take. “Hold it, and ask me your questions.”

Belle was aghast. She knew that anyone squeezing the dagger felt, to Rumple, like someone holding his throat. “Ask me and I can only tell the truth. However, you may not like the answers.”

Snow gulped, taking the dagger in her hand and remembering not to squeeze. “Is there any spell or any magic currently controlling Emma, or Regina?”

“There that I am aware of.” He answered succinctly. “Next question.”

“Is it true Emma and Regina are both pregnant by Robin Hood?” Belle looked shocked at that one!

“They are. They both carry the Locksley magical signature. Next question.”

“I heard Robin brought Emma back to life with a kiss outside the hospital. Is that true and if so, how?”

“You know the answer to that already, dearie, you just can’t accept it! Yes, he used true love’s kiss; the magical wave that followed was quite definite. Next question.”

“So, you’re saying Robin Hood is Emma’s true love - as well as Regina’s?”

“Well done, give that woman a biscuit! You still want me to send him to another realm?”
Snow felt sick, as the full weight of what she had tried to do fell on her. “It’s probably me who deserves that! What have I done?”

“Another good question! You made a blithering fool of yourself, struck the man who saved your daughter’s life, and then planned to deprive him of his children. Just like you did to the dragon all those years ago. Quite the hero indeed! Perhaps you should consider working for the blue moth? She’s particularly gifted in depriving children of their father!” that last barb was aimed directly at Belle.

“Thank you.” Snow said, handing the dagger back to him. “Once again, I’m sorry…”

“Luckily for you, I’m feeling in a generous mood, so I will allow you to live. Expect an invoice for the broken lock.” Before she could say anything, a flick of his fingers transported Snow back into her loft, leaving him and Belle alone, for the first time in five years.

“That’s not fair. I mean, you…”

“Thank you, for not hurting her.” She felt awkward now, seeing the odd look on his face.

“Well, the Sorcerer is trying to encourage me to be more…benevolent. Though I am very disappointed that you so willingly told her where the dagger could be found!” He brandished the weapon. “You are aware, after all, what it does to me? That ginger malevolent bitch held me captive with it, and her psychotic sister before her. You understand the pain that goes with it’s use. You knew, but you told her anyway!”

“I’m sorry Rumple, she was desperate!”

“Desperate enough to separate a man from his children? Has the male of the species become so insignificant to you now, Belle?”

That last comment caught her. “What…what do you mean by that?”

“You can’t honestly believe I wasn’t aware of you and the witch? You have the freedom to do as you wish, with whomsoever you wish Belle, but surely, having sex with the very same woman who murdered my son? Who held me captive in a cage underground and tortured me? Have you no sense of shame?”

Belle had no idea he knew about her and Zelena, but she still felt angry at the stinging accusation. “Shame? After everything you’ve done? You’ve got to be kidding me! Zelena is not that person anymore!”

“Keep telling yourself that, dearie! Anyone capable of the foul deeds that woman has carried out, will never be capable of change. I could understand you’re wishing to be with someone for comfort. Will Scarlett, Graves, that over-muscled moron that now runs the Rabbit Hole. Why, I believe you even traded up with the mermaid, didn’t you? What’s her name – Ariel? Nice girl. She could be good for you. Shame she told her husband about the two of you. I gather they’ve now split, thanks to your…appetites. Perhaps she’ll come back? I could see you finding your happiness with her. Still, I don’t care anymore, whether your sordid interests lie in women or men are now irrelevant to me. But the witch? My, how you have fallen Belle…”

"HOW DARE YOU? GET OUT! JUST, GET OUT!” she yelled, furious how he seemed to look upon her with disgust.

“All in good time, dearie! You forget yourself. You happen to be in a building owned by me, living in a flat above also owned by me, and you even receive a stipend from me! Yet you thought nothing of revealing the whereabouts of the dagger which ultimately controls me; without even asking how it
would be used! The dagger which causes me immense physical and mental pain when handled by others. But you thought nothing of telling Snow White…”

“What do you want from me, Rumple? An apology? Yes, I apologise for telling her where to find it! I’m sorry she intended to hurt Robin. I’m sorry…”

“But you went ahead and did it anyway! Just as well it was a fake.”

“Look, I already said that…hold on…a fake?”

“Of course. After you sent me across the town line, forcing me to leave for the land without magic against my will. Do you seriously think I could ever trust you again with the very object that controls my entire existence?”

Belle knew everything he’d said was true, so she changed the subject. “All that business with Snow White. What you said to her – about Emma and Robin? Was any of it true?”

“All of it is true! Frankly, I don’t care whether you choose to believe it or not, for I have bigger fish to fry. I’m leaving next week to hopefully recover our son. The son you lost by trusting his life to the blue moth and the Saviour! Yet another poor judgment, Belle.”

“Gideon? You’ve found him?” she gasped. She’d long lost hope of ever being united with the baby she handed over to Reul Ghorm within a day of his birth; all to avoid his father infecting him with darkness.

“Merlin has located him. He’s still being held captive by the Black Fairy, so Merlin is mounting a rescue mission. We leave shortly. We’re also taking Robin Hood, the man your friend would have me remove from Storybrooke!”

Belle ignored the aside, just remembering the last time she saw him. Their son. Her eyes welled up. “You really think you can bring him back? Bring back my baby to me?”

“OUR baby, Belle! You so easily forget he’s my child too! I will readily die trying - I can’t lose him like I lost my Baelfire. There’s also a chance I may not return. I’ve made arrangements for that eventuality and updated my will to leave my entire estate to Henry, though I have made a small provision for you as well. Good day, Belle.” There was no warmth in his voice. Without another word, he apparated from the room in a cloud of smoke, leaving Belle entirely speechless with tears in her eyes at the remotest possibility of being reunited with her baby. The baby she so stupidly gave up. The biggest regret of her life.

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“So, you’re risking your life to save Gold’s son? What the hell, Robin?” Emma was furious, though tried to keep her voice down when they met in the Diner. Robin had fetched Honour from school and agreed to meet them there. He’d just broken the news to them of the Sorcerer’s mission.

“Merlin’s asked me to help them on the mission. He thinks the three of us, with the intelligence he’s got from his agents there, should be more than enough. He thinks the Black Fairy’s also got around fifty child slaves captive. I couldn’t refuse.”

“Of course you could have!” Regina was also angry. “Robin, you’ve got two children here and two more to come! What the hell were you thinking?” she seethed. “What if something happens to you?”

“Tell me the two of you would have refused? You’ve both risked everything to save people here.
We’ve even gone to the Underworld for Emma! Regina, Zeus gave me this magic, this ‘gift’. As a father, I couldn’t refuse…”

“And if you don’t come back, what then Robin? How do I explain to my child that the father he or she has never met decided to sacrifice himself on a fool’s errand?” Emma knew that, under the circumstance, she was being unreasonable. She knew she would have gone if asked. “And why didn’t Merlin speak to me or Regina? We have powerful magic ourselves, unless you’ve forgotten? Or is it just a cock-waving thing? All boys together?”

“You know why, Emma! Of course, you’re powerful but you’re both pregnant! You know Merlin and Whale advised you not to use any magic. It’d be bad for our unborn children, you know that! You get dizzy using basic spells. Apparating could put you in a coma!”

He could see they weren’t convinced, their angry glares hiding the worry they both clearly felt. “We’ll take care, I promise! Merlin has some sort of time control on his realm jumping. Apparently, while may be away for a few weeks in their time we’ll be returning here shortly after we’ve left! He thinks it’ll seem like less than a day here…”

Regina saw the determined look in his eyes, knowing he wasn’t going to change his mind. He was a natural hero and the plight of others always took priority. She and Emma shared a look of concern, now realizing how it must have felt for Henry seeing his mothers’ battle some demon or crisis, unable to help.

Robin turned to Emma. “Now, you wanted to ask me something?”

Emma had been about to suggest he move in with them but, after what she had just heard, now wasn’t the time. She stood up to call Honour, who had been playing at the back of the diner with Alex. “It’s ok. It can wait till you’re back.” That earned a quizzical look from him. “Just…just take care Robin, ok! We’re gonna be worried until you get back safe. Just make sure these babies’ father comes back in one piece!”

Although Robin had never publicly shown any affection with Emma in Storybrooke, to prevent tongues wagging. But this time he placed his hands on her upper arms, leaned down and placed a small, chaste kiss on her lips. “I’ll do my best, I promise.” As he pulled back, he saw the coy smile on her face, no longer embarrassed or awkward. Regina appeared by her wife’s side, with a little smile of her own. He leaned down to place an identical kiss on her own lips, which emitted a small sigh.

As though this wasn’t enough and oblivious to those around them, Regina brought her right arm around his back, her left arm around Emma’s, pulling them both into her. Robin and Emma copied her movements, until the three formed a small huddle, their foreheads almost touching, as though in a conspiracy. Robin whispered, “take good care of each other, love each other and our babies! I’ll be back. I love you - both of you!”

The last three words brought a gasp from Emma, leaving her temporarily speechless. Regina’s mind whirled at the admission. Tell him you love him too, Emma! she thought, though the blonde couldn’t, or didn’t, respond. Just stood there with her mouth open, dumbstruck!

As the three finally pulled back from their ‘hug’, Regina finally became aware of their surroundings, blushing and moving over towards the small play area where Honour and Alexandra sat. Robin nodded to Emma before walking out of the diner.

As Emma walked across to join her wife, they were unaware that one person in the room had not only seen their behaviour, but had also heard them!
Emma and Regina both pregnant? Robin’s the father? He loves both of them? Stepping from her stool behind the counter, Ruby Lucas waited patiently until Robin and the Swan-Mills family finally left. Almost immediately, she raced back to the sitting room at the rear.

“Dottie! You have no idea what I’ve just heard!”

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The following morning, just after six o’clock, their sleep was disturbed yet again, this time not by the children but the phone ringing. They tried to ignore it, but it persisted. “Ugh, bloody hell, am I never to be allowed a lie-in anymore?” Emma groaned. As her brain started to function, she realized that, as people usually left a text message for her, it could be serious. Leaning across, she picked it up from the side table. “Yup. You better have a good reason for calling at this hour?” she grunted.

“Emma? It’s Merlin! Sorry to disturb you but I thought you should know we’re back! We’ve succeeded in recovering Rumpelstiltskin’s son, but…”

The blonde was wide awake within seconds. “You’re back? You only left yesterday!” Then she remembered Robin’s comment about time travel. “You said ‘but’? Is everything ok? Is Robin…”

“We’ve been away about three weeks in the Dark Realm. Robin’s hurt, Emma! I thought you should know. He’s in Storybrooke Hospital right now. He’s undergoing surgery as we speak, but he is stable…”

Robin’s hurt? In hospital…surgery? Emma suddenly felt sick, her stomach lurching as she bolted out of bed, racing into the bathroom to vomit violently into the toilet bowl. “Emma? Emma? You still there?” called Merlin from the speaker.

The sudden movement had woken Regina, who yawned, wondering what had happened and why she could hear a tiny voice nearby. Hearing the noise of Emma heaving her stomach in the bathroom, she looked to where the voice came from, seeking the phone lying there. “Hello? Who is this?”

As she wiped her mouth, sitting back on the floor, Emma slowly calmed, figuring out her next steps. However, Regina had already appeared beside her. She had already dressed herself, presumably with magic. “Emma, you ok? I just spoke to Merlin. I’m going to the hospital. Now!”

“Wait, I’ll go with you! We can’t just poof there, not like this. We need to drive. Let me get ready…”

Regina didn’t argue. The small amount of magic she had used moments ago to dress and tidy herself had already made her slightly dizzy and she didn’t want to think what would happen if she apparated. Half an hour later, the Swan-Mills Mercedes pulled up at the hospital, Regina having earlier phoned Little John, who had willingly agreed to rush over to the mansion rather than have them drag Roland and Honour out of bed. As the pair walked into the reception area, it seemed to be packed with people, including many children, despite it only being 6.40 in the morning.

It was pandemonium. Several children were being moved on gurneys, crying parents seemed to be hugging others, and at first glance the orderly calm seemed to be replaced by a sense of urgency. From a side door, Caroline Locksley appeared. “Regina, Emma! Good, you’re here. Come with me!” she instructed, leading them to a side corridor. “Robin’s out of surgery now, let me take you to him…”

“Carrie, what’s going on? Who are all these children?” asked Regina.

“They’re from the Dark Realm. These are the children the Black Fairy kidnapped over many years. I’ve counted over eighty so far. We’re trying to identify them all, so we can try to reunite them with
their families, if at all possible…”

“Eighty children?” Whistled Emma, realizing the full scale of the rescue operation.

“Yes, Merlin can tell you the full story. Apparently, there were several deaths during the rescue. We’ve about twenty injured, as it seems the bitch lashed out at a number fleeing. Can you imagine that? Trying to kill small children? We’re trying to operate on all of the seriously injured as quickly as we can, though as you can see, we’re a bit understaffed. Last I looked, Anna and her father are sharing one theatre, and I gather Victor’s just operated on Robin. He’s probably still unconscious, but we’ll see in a moment.”

As the trio turned into a ward room, they passed Victor Whale, still in surgeon’s scrubs, consulting with a nurse about his next patient. He hardly had a moment to acknowledge them before darting into another room. Regina shivered when she saw the blood stains on his scrubs. How much of that is Robin’s? she thought.

Caroline led them into a recovery room, where they were shocked to see Robin, his left arm and leg heavily bandaged, lying flat with tubes heading into his mouth, arms and side, a heart monitor beating quietly. Regina brought her hands to her mouth as she looked in horror at the bruises on his face. She looked to Emma, who now had a tear running down her cheek. Leaning over Robin was the Sorcerer, now shining a light into his pupils. “Ah, Emma and Regina. Just the people!”

“The Black Fairy did this?” asked Regina. “What happened?”

“What happened, was the successful rescue of over eighty children, including Rumpelstiltskin’s son, plus the vanquishing of three very fierce and powerful dark magicians! This man is a hero!”

“Successful? Look at the bloody state of him!” yelled Emma.

“Yes, it does look bad doesn’t it? But I can assure you, he will make a complete recovery. He did take on the darkest force in all the realms. He killed her too!”

“ROBIN KILLED THE BLACK FAIRY?” Emma couldn’t believe her ears. The fairy who had placed a curse on them all, sending her into a mental institution. The woman whose power exceeded everyone else’s. The woman who was only defeated by Gold’s sleight of hand, sealing her in her own realm with no hope of escape. “I can’t believe it!”

“It’s true! He drove a short sword right through her brain, just like King George! Death was instant of course, though six of her most trusted acolytes, all with magic, set about attacking him after she was slain. He dealt with most of them, but a few blows got through. His tibia and femur on his left leg were broken and he got some wounds to the head. Victor’s repaired the bones with steel pins and a plate. Don’t worry about all the tubes, they’re just assisting his breathing and monitoring him till he wakes. Once he’s awake and the bruises have come out fully, we’ll set about repairing his body with magic. Just like we did with you, Regina!”

Regina winced but exhaled heavily, relieved to know he’d recover. “What now? How long will he be here?”

“Well that’s the good thing about magic. Victor’s done the hard stuff. As soon as everything comes out, which won’t look pretty, we can repair the muscle and skin tissue. You could both help with that as healing magic won’t affect your foetuses. Three to four days and he could go home, although I’m not sure who would look after him. Perhaps better if he stayed at Sherwood Clinic? We’re looking to at least at a two-week recovery.”
“We’ll take care of him!” insisted Emma, earning a sad smile from Regina. “He’ll be surrounded by his children, in more ways than one.”

“Talking of children, what’s going on with all of those downstairs?” asked Regina. “It’s chaos down there!”

“Rumpelstiltskin’s already on the case. He’s using a few tools to help locate their next of kin, if they’re still alive. Reul Ghorm and Silvermist are getting pixie dust to use, similar to finding a true love or a soulmate. It’ll take a while, and some may have to be adopted, but it has to be better than a life in chains down a mine!”

“Gold’s been helping? Not just going after his own son?” said Emma, remembering the Dark One’s self interests were always placed ahead of any noble cause.

“More than just helping! He destroyed at least a dozen of her demonic guard! We couldn’t have done it without him! Robin took on the Dark Fairy and her personal guard himself. It was quite a magical battle and they were closely matched. Remarkable, when you consider he’s only had magic for a few months! Quite the scrapper is our Mr. Locksley, when he’s in a corner. I certainly wouldn’t want to come up against him!” he smiled down at the patient.

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Rumple sat back in his rocking chair, his baby boy now asleep in his arms. When they’d rescued the children from the Black Fairy, it hadn’t taken him long to recognize his five-year-old boy, even if he hadn’t been armed with pixie dust purloined from the fairies. Gideon had eyes just like his mother’s and an expression to match. The boy had been kept separate from most of the children, probably due to the fact he was the Black Fairy’s grandson. He hadn’t been put to work in the mines but was instead heavily guarded by Fiona’s most trusted demons. Battling them had taken its toll and Rumple winced at the aches and pains running throughout his body. He was covered in bruises, but it had all been worth it. He now had his son!

What he hadn’t accounted for was the change in the youngster as they moved from the Dark Realm. He had instantly been transformed from a relieved and tired five-year-old into the baby in swaddling he had never had the chance to meet! The Sorcerer was the only one who didn’t seem shocked, even though the age change didn’t seem to happen to the other children rescued. The moment they all reappeared at the hospital, Merlin had instructed one of the fairies, Nova, to assist in getting him everything the Dark One needed for a couple of days, till he found his feet with his new charge. And now, after the young fairy had assisted him in transforming an unused bedroom into a nursery, set up the bottle heating equipment and supplies, she turned to him and smiled.

“Well, that seems to be all in order. Is there anything else you think you may need, Mr. Gold? Perhaps a cup of tea while you settle your son?”

Rumple gave her a tired smile. “No thank you Nova, you’ve already done more than enough. It’s been a while since I raised a son, but I think I’ll take it from here…”

“Very well. I’ll leave you in peace. Just let me know if you need anything.” With that, she pulled her wand from a hidden pocket, before disapparating in a soft golden mist.

“Well my boy, alone at last!” He stroked the baby’s pink cheek. “I can see your mother in your eyes, but I also see your brother too. I think you would have got along well with my Bae.” The tiny bundle’s mouth turned up in a sleepy smile at his touch, completely captivating the Dark One, who had fallen in love all over again.
Chapter Summary

Snow apologises to an unconscious man, Emma owns up to her feelings, Robin wakes up and Belle is reunited with someone very special...

Chapter 33

After they left the hospital, with Robin still unconscious, Regina and Emma had gone their separate ways. Emma to start work at the station and Regina back home to relieve John. It was now just after nine and the children were late for school. Looking at her phone, she spotted a message from the Robin’s best friend:

John: Thought you had enough to deal with, so I dressed and took them to school! I’ll be going to Ruby’s after that. Buy you a coffee if you’re free? I think you probably need it. How’s my boy?

She smiled at the message. It was typical of John to help, just as he had always done after his best friend was killed all those years ago. Although surely younger than her, Little John had acted like a big brother these last five years. He’d helped Roland come to terms with his father’s death, been a shoulder to cry on when she grieved, supported her through therapy and even her early tentative relationship with Emma. He was more than a brother, he was the best male friend she had.

Regina: It’s me that owes you that drink! I’ll see you there. Robin’s still unconscious but they tell me he’s going to be ok. Thank you, once again! xxx

She made her way to the diner. Emma had taken the car so, forsaking magic, she decided to walk and give herself some fresh air. A number of villagers smiled at her as they walked past, including some who usually seemed uncomfortable around her and Emma. Reaching the Diner, Regina could almost sense their conversations tail off as they spotted the former Evil Queen enter. However, everyone seemed to be looking at her and smiling? That’s when it dawned on her. They know!

Little John waved from one of the tables by a window. “Gina! Over here…” He stood, leaning across to her and, without asking, enveloped her in a bear hug. She always rolled her eyes when he did it, although actually loved his simple warmth and friendliness. And his forest smell, which always reminded her of Robin.

“So, I know about Rob but…how are you?” he whispered. Until moments ago, she’d presumed only he, Merlin and Annabelle Sage knew about her pregnancy. “I’m fine. John, have you said anything about…you know?” she looked down at her small, but noticeable, bulge.

“No, of course not! Don’t be silly, Gina, I promised I wouldn’t! Mind you, Snow White’s been in here, so…”
“That could explain it! Sorry John, I know you’d never do that to us...”

“Enough said, now sit ye down and tell me about our boy! What happened to him?”

Regina relayed all the events of the morning, including Merlin’s version of events. “So now he’s pretty beaten up. Once he’s safe to leave, he’ll come home with us...”

“He’ll like that, havin’ his family around him. It’s when he’s happiest. Can I go visit him today?”

“Oh course! Hopefully he’ll wake soon. Best check with Carrie first though. I’m going back there once I’ve spoken to the Mayor. You know about the children they brought back?”

“Yup. Blue’s taken the ones who didn’t need the hospital over to Sherwood. They’re doing something to find their parents...if the poor little buggers still have any!”

“Yes, that’s why I’m going over to see Mayor Briar. I had some experience with adoption agencies and Henry, so I thought I could perhaps offer my help...”

“Great idea. Sorting out eighty kid’s lives is goin’ to take some doing. Can I tag along? I’ve got a free day from the pub and I’d love to help...”

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Telling Sheriff Hank Morgan that she was almost four months pregnant and having to cut back in a few months, wasn’t as hard as Emma thought it would be. Nonetheless, he seemed startled by the news.

“Well, I’m happy for you Emma, and I’ll be sorry to lose you. Though I must admit I’m a little surprised! If you and Regina were planning to have another child, it would have been helpful to know that when he asked me about the deputy role, especially as you knew Mulan would be leaving shortly. I’ll need to find two new officers, not one...”

She wanted to snap back that it was none of his business, but she also realized he was just thinking ahead. “I’m sorry Hank, this wasn’t planned. I was unaware I was pregnant when I applied.”

“Oh well, these things happen! Provided you’re happy, I’m happy for you. I guess Henry’s going to be thrilled to be a big brother again!” The moment he said it he could see by the look on her face there was an issue. “Emma, I’m assuming he knows?” A horrible thought came over him as he remembered Emma was in a lesbian relationship. It wasn’t planned, but she’s gay! Has Emma been unfaithful? What about Regina?

The Saviour could see the concerned in his eyes as he thought through what could have happened. Knowing news would leak out soon anyway, she decided it was time to tell him and get it over with.

“Look...Hank, you’re probably going to be hearing bad things about us very soon, thanks to my mother and others, so best that you hear it from me rather than town gossip!” She stole herself to explain, taking a breath. “The truth is, although it wasn’t planned, Regina and I are BOTH pregnant, both due around the same time, and they share the same father!” Hank arched an eye in surprise at that last piece of news. However, he and Emma nearly jumped at a voice from the doorway.

“Robin?” said Mulan from the arch, having just walked in but hearing Emma’s admission. “They’re Robin’s, right?” The former warrior, now seven months pregnant and looking uncomfortable in an obvious maternity dress, stepped up to the seated blonde, placing a hand on her shoulder in an attempt to make her feel less awkward. “Seems like you and I have more in common than I thought!”
“Please don’t tell me you’re expecting Robin’s baby too?” Emma joked, nervously, “I’ve had enough unexpected shocks these last few months…”

Mulan giggled, a most unusual behavior for her. “Nope, definitely Phillip’s!” she said, gently massaging her abdomen, “and Rory’s of course! No, I meant the situation between you, Regina and Robin…”

Emma was surprised, but not shocked, at the remark. “Rob, Gina and I aren’t together like you three.” She defended.

“You quite sure about that? I was in the diner yesterday. I saw you all. You seemed…close!”

Hank could see the blonde’s cheeks reddening, so decided to change the subject to spare her blushes. “Emma, let’s assume you have two or three more months working before you go on maternity leave. I’ll let you choose whatever level of physical work you’re comfortable with. Mulan here’s stopping at the end of this week so if you are ok being more station based that would help us too. Now then, we have a mini crisis on our hands today. You heard about the children being rescued?”

“Yeah, I just came from the hospital as Robin’s been injured and has just had surgery. There’s a load of lost kids of all ages milling around there while some are being operated on. Apparently most of them are in Sherwood right now, so Regina’s going over there to help find homes for them…”

“Robin’s been hurt?” said Mulan, suddenly alarmed for her friend. “You never said! I need to go…”

“Ride with Emma then, Mulan.” Said Hank, “apparently there’s thirty odd children at the hospital that Blue hasn’t seen to yet. Apparently, she’s checking them for hidden curses or spells. Until we figure out where they go, we need to organize accommodation. I’ve a couple of rooms free, so I could take up to four if that helps? Let me know how you get on. And give Robin my best – that man’s a bloody hero!”

“I know!” said both Mulan and Emma, simultaneously. They looked at each other, a slight hint of embarrassment on both their faces, before trooping off to Emma’s car.

As they rode the short journey to the hospital, Emma gave a look to her diminutive, heavily-pregnant driver. “So, you and Robin, what’s the story? You’re obviously close!” she tried to hide the hint of jealousy.

“We are close,” the warrior answered, “Nothing romantic, I assure you. I regard Robin as my big brother. He took me into his group at one of the worst times of my life. When I confessed my feelings for Rory, he never judged me, just told me to follow my heart and tell her. However, before I could, she told me she was pregnant! I couldn’t stay so I left, and Robin invited me to join the men. He accepted me without reservation and I loved him for it. I taught them how to use the long sword properly and he taught me archery and knife throwing…”

“Merlin told me yesterday he used the short-sword to kill the Dark Fairy! Same way he finished Albert Spencer…”

“That’s his signature method! He said it’s the quickest, most painless way to do it, though he agonises for weeks after, even when he’s been forced to kill out of necessity. Though they all deserved it for their crimes, he suffers immense guilt afterwards. After my own father, Robin’s the most decent man I ever met!”

“Did you ever get to meet Marian?”

“I did, briefly. She was lovely. Very beautiful and a great fighter. He was a broken man when she
died!” Emma could see the normally controlled woman’s eyes water at the memory. “She was definitely his first true love.”

Emma silently gulped at the woman’s reaction but carried on. “So, what does that make Regina?”

“His second true love, I guess! I never really saw them together, though from what John and Will told me it was there again. If we’re lucky, we can get more than one…

“That explains you, Phillip and Aurora, right?”

“Exactly. They both own my heart and soul and I wouldn’t have it any other way.” He watery eyes gave way to a smile. “So, what about you, Emma? When are you going to finally admit that you’re in love with two people? You know you don’t need to wait as long as I did?”

Emma could have argued, but she could see it was pointless. “It’s complicated. I’m pretty sure he doesn’t have the same feelings for me. Regina yes, but me? I’m not so sure…”

“Nor will you ever be, if you hide from it. Take the chance, Emma, I don’t think you’ll regret it!”

“Is this because you don’t want to be the only poly married couple in all the realm?” she chuckled. “We call it a ‘throuple’ actually! And yes, it would be nice to have others. I thoroughly recommend it! You get twice the love, twice the support…”

“And the sex is bloody brilliant! I know, I’ve been there!” said the blonde, both women now collapsing into giggles. As Mulan wiped the tears from her eyes, she couldn’t help adding, “So Rob got you both pregnant around the same time then?”

“No around the same time – the same bloody night!”

Mulan laughed again. “Different isn’t it – with three of you?” Emma could only nod her head in agreement.

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As they walked into the reception area, it seemed things were slowly getting back to normal. There were only a dozen or so children waiting to be seen by the fairies. “Ok, let’s see who we have here…” As Mulan left to deal with a separate group, Kathryn, the former Princess Abigail who had once been married to her father during the curse, stepped up to Emma with a clipboard in hand.

“Emma, good to see you. We’ve covered most of the children and found lodging for them, but we’ve got a few waiting for Silvermist or Blue to try. You just missed your mother. She’s gone up to see Robin.”

Emma jolted. “My mum’s here visiting Robin?” She didn’t like the sound of that!

“Yes, she went up to the Post-Op rooms a few minutes ago. You should - ” she didn’t get a chance to finish the sentence as Emma leapt past and started bounding up the stairs. She raced through the corridors toward the room Robin had been in a few hours ago. *If she slaps him again, I’ll ring her bloody neck!* However, as she moved closer to the room, as she was about to charge in to find her mother doing or saying god knows what, she hesitated on hearing Snow’s voice. She sounded, *different!* Opening the door silently, she leaned in to listen to what her mother was saying to the clearly still unconscious man.

Snow was sitting on a stool at the side of Robin’s gurney, the machine steadily beeping to check any
changes in his heart rate, a pump measuring and ensuring his breathing. As some of the bruises had made his face swell, he looked even worse than this morning. Emma tried to ignore it as she craned to listen to her mother.

“I’ve lost her too many times, Robin. You should’ve seen her when Neal died. She was devastated! When she found out what I did to Maleficent’s daughter! I still thought I was helping her. She never fully trusted me after that. Her dad, yes, but not me and it was my fault! I persuaded David to go along with it even though he was dead against it. That poor girl - what I did to her! Then I lost her again when she took on the darkness to save Regina. It took Hook to bring her out of it.” She stopped to dab her eyes with a hankie. Emma wanted to say something but couldn’t.

“It was horrible when you and Hook died, but I never expected the grieving to be so bad! Regina and Emma were completely lost, Robin. We all tried to pull them out of it but when the two of them finally got together I was just so stupid! Henry and David said it was a good thing, but me? I definitely didn’t help. David made me see sense before I lost her again. Then you came back! You, Regina’s true love. You gave your life for her just like David did for me, so when you came back I knew Emma could never compete. I hated you, Robin, for destroying what Emma and Regina had, but yet again, I was wrong…” she seemed to pause, taking large gulps of air. “I don’t know what’s going on between the three of you, but I can only guess! I even stole Gold’s dagger because I thought I could force him to get you out of the way! That’s the person I’ve become Robin!” Emma froze at the confession but listened.

“Gold confirmed everything! He said not only were Emma and Regina carrying your children, but that you gave Emma a True Love kiss! You actually brought my dead daughter back to life with True Love’s kiss, yet I was trying to get rid of you! I’m so sorry Robin. I was wrong again and now Emma hates me once again. I don’t know how to make it up to you, but I need you to come back… my Emma’s daughter will need her father!”

“Daughter? I’m having a girl?” gasped Emma, making Snow freeze when she realized she wasn’t alone.

“Emma! I didn’t see you there…”

“Gold said I’m having a girl? Is that true?”

“That’s what he said, as well as calling me a fool…”

“Can’t argue with him there! But you stole his dagger? How stupid is that? You could have got yourself killed! He threatened to end me if I went there again. How are you even here?”

“He probably didn’t want to kill me in front of Belle! I know I’ve been stupid. I’d better go…” she stood up to leave but Emma stood to face her.

“Mum, wait! I don’t hate you. I just wish you’d think before you act. I’m a grown woman, and I don’t need protecting, and I’ll choose who I’m with; whether it’s Regina, Killian…or Robin. Things are complicated right now but…when he wakes up, you need to give him a proper apology, not just one when he’s unconscious!”

Emma stepped around her mother to sit on the vacated stool, collecting Robin’s hand in her own and rubbing it gently. As there was no reaction, she stood to lean over him, placing a small kiss on his forehead. Snow watched the little act and the softer, caring look on her daughter’s face as Emma’s eyes never left his heavily bruised face.

“I will, I promise. Emma…you really think you love him?”
“If I’m honest, I think I started falling in love with him when we went out to dinner a few months ago! It’s all been a little strange. For all of us. I denied my feelings, for Regina’s sake, but she seems to be encouraging us.”

“So, she wants what Aurora’s got? A beautiful wife, handsome husband, children. But is it what YOU want, Emma? If you take up with him, there’s other things to consider. How will it affect your marriage? If it is true love between you, will Regina get sidelined? Or will you? What about Henry? How will this affect him?”

“Look it’s complicated ok? I don’t have the answers but it just…feels right. I think I want this though…”

“Then if you’re sure, I’ll support you. I just don’t want to see you get hurt.”

Emma looked down at Robin’s bruised face and exposed chest. The bandage had been taken from his head. With a sad smile, she started to run her fingers through his slightly blood-matted dark blonde hear, still sweaty from having been bound. “Robin would never deliberately hurt me. I’m sure of that now.” She gently massaged his head, monitors continuing to ping and the respirator gurgle. “You know how he got into this state?”

“No, not really,” said Snow, watching her daughter caress his head, “I rang Little John to find out where he was, to apologise, and they told me he’d just been hurt…”

“He did this saving over eighty children from the Dark Fairy. Her guards hit him with dark magic, but he got them out…”

“The Dark Fairy? How did he get there? How on earth is he even alive?”

“Robin, Gold and Merlin went on the mission together. The Dark Fairy’s dead. Robin killed her…”

“The Dark Fairy’s dead? But I saw Gold yesterday! He couldn’t have…”

“Magic and time travel, mum! They took two or three weeks over there but over here it seemed like they got back this morning. According to Merlin, Robin got hit the hardest because he took on the worst job, filleting the bitch!”

Somehow the news just made Snow feel even worse for her actions. Robin had, again, put his life at risk, and this time not just for Regina. “I misjudged him. Robin. I misjudged his motives when it came to you two.”

“Yes you did,” replied Emma, though never taking her eyes off him. “But I did too, when he first came back. He accidentally read my mind once, and because he felt guilty, he made me read his! Robin’s suffered a lot in his life, mum, but having seen it, I think he’s the most honourable man I’ve ever met. Even compared to dad!”

“Perhaps that’s just as well Emma, seeing as he’s going to be your daughter’s father! I’ll leave you be…” Snow silently turned, walking out of the room as her daughter continued to preen him.

“Wake up,” she whispered, bringing her lips again down on his forehead. She so wanted to get on with using magic to heal his bruises but knew from Merlin she should wait until he woke. “Honnie and Roland need you back. I know Regina does. And though I’m scared to admit it, I do too!” If it hadn’t been for that damn tube invading his throat to force air into his lungs, Emma would have sealed his mouth with her own. Instead, she had to settle for his cheek before whispering even more quietly, “I remember what you said yesterday, but I couldn’t answer you. I did what I usually do, building walls. But Archie’s right, I need to own up to them. It took me a while just to admit it to
myself. I love you, Robin Hood!"

A moment after she kissed him, the rate of the electronic pinging noise from that infernal machine next to him accelerated dramatically, followed by another, harsher ringing noise from a bell next to the respirator. “Shit! What have I done? NURSE!!” she pulled back, going to the door to shout down the corridor. “NURSE? ANYONE? COME QUICKLY!”

A nurse she didn’t recognize came out of a side room before rushing into Robin’s. As Emma went back in, she heard gurgling and saw Robin’s chest lurching up. “WHAT’S HAPPENING TO HIM?”

“It’s ok, miss! He’s just coming out of the coma. Let me focus, please?” The woman quickly turned off various switches on one of the machines before pushing a hand firmly under the back of Robin’s head while speaking into his ear. “It’s ok, Robin, it’s Livvy, try to stay calm! You have a tube in your throat that’s helping you breathe. I’ll have it out shortly!” In a smooth, expert manoeuvre, she lifted and tilted his head back and with her other hand, drew the tube out from his mouth and throat, causing him to loudly gag and wretch, although his eyes didn’t open and he remained still. After a few changes to the settings, Nurse Whitehand turned the heart monitor back on. “There now. He’s now breathing on his own! I think he’ll be waking up before long. Are you family?”

“Well…I’m carrying his baby, if that counts!” her hand tapped her abdomen, making the nurse chuckle.

“Well good for you! Now, if he wakes over the next few minutes, could you press the buzzer?” she pointed to the device. “He’ll probably be very thirsty now the tube’s out, but we don’t want to give him too much liquid too quickly. Don’t be surprised if he’s a little disorientated at first. Now, if you’ll excuse me…”

“Thanks! Sorry I panicked a little back there…nurse? I don’t think we’ve met? I’m Emma, Emma Swan-Mills.”

Livvy nodded back. “Ah yes, I know of you, but we’ve never actually met. I’m Lavinia Whitehand, Gilbert’s wife. You remember Gilbert? One of Robin’s Merry Men?”

“Yes, of course, he’s one of the guys who saved us at the clinic! The sword-thrower?” she smiled, taking the nurse’s hand and shaking it. “Thanks again, Livvy, my family owes you!”

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It was another three hours before Robin finally opened his eyes. Emma had earlier gone back downstairs to help Mulan and the others find and put the children in temporary housing around the town. Nova had been joined by the Sorcerer, still wearing scrubs from theatre, to help identify the children and their families by using magic.

As some of the older children had been clearly traumatized, having been held in captivity by up to a decade, Merlin had earlier come up with a surprising proposition. “If we can identify their parents or next of kin, I could wipe their memories from the time they were captured. Obviously, their minds would be younger, so we could have them revert back to the bodies they had at that time. It’ll be like the Dark Fairy never happened, although their families will be a bit older.”

“You could really do that?” an astonished Snow White, now joined by Charming, gasped at the thought. “Wipe all the bad memories AND make them as they were before she kidnapped them?”

“I can, provided their parents or guardians are in full agreement. If so, it’s a fairly straightforward
process.”

For the next two hours, as parents, now older siblings and guardians came to reclaim their lost children, Merlin’s idea was presented to them. Nearly all agreed, and the Sorcerer had spent the next two hours reading each child’s mind to locate the exact time of capture before casting the memory wipe and turning adolescents and younger children back into the babies they were. Many families were finally reunited and, amidst many tears by all, left to start raising their new, or restored, babies.

As the outlaw slowly opened his eyes, he was met by a friendly, relieved figure looming over him. “Hi, Big Bro! Make a hobby out of trying to get yourself killed then?” she squeezed her older brother’s hand as a small tear fell down Maria Locksley’s cheek. “I’ve only just started getting to know you again, you bastard! Stick around, yeah?”

Robin tried to say something back but, as his throat felt like sandpaper, all he could manage was “Gah.” He raised his hand to wipe the tear from his sister’s cheek; that’s when he saw the canula in his arm and a little clip on his thumb. “Hey, don’t move! They’ve wired you up for sound here. Let me get a nurse and we’ll have all this stuff off you in a jiffy!” he saw her call out and someone appeared at his opposite side.

“Oh, Rob, nice to see you back with us! Now give me a moment and I’ll sort you out; your throat’s a little sore from a tube we had down it, so don’t try to speak until I’ve given you a little water…”

Livvy? Tube? What the fuck was going on? Robin wasn’t sur, but as his senses recovered he realised he was in a hospital bed. Maria saw his confused look and took his free hand. “Rob, Merlin told me you collapsed straight after you killed some bitch and her goons! Something about ‘dark magic contamination’ which I didn’t quite understand. You broke your leg too. Anyway, you all got back here, and you fell into a coma last night and they operated on you this morning. You’ve been out all day! Livvy here’s been keeping an eye on you. I gather you know each other?”

“Oh, I know this rogue all too well, don’t I Rob?” said the nurse, propping his head up to give him a few sips of water from a beaker, making him cough and splutter before croaking:

“Maria, never play cards or darts with this woman, or her husband! They’ll take you to the cleaners!” he managed a smile, just visible under the bruises.

“Oh, you cheeky sod!” she chuckled, “I’ll take that as flattery from the master himself!”

“Maria, what are you doing here?” he groaned, shifting to look at her.

“Trying to check up on my big brother after his dumb adventures! You look like shit, Rob! I got a call from Carrie saying you were hurt. What were you thinking?”

He ignored her chiding. “What about the children we brought back? Are they safe?”

“There’s a whole bunch of people downstairs trying to sort them out. Snow White, some of the fairies. Most of the kids have gone, but there’s still a few. You know you had a few visitors today?” she stated, teasing him to reply, though he only raised an eyebrow. “Regina and Emma were here first thing and then Emma came back…”

“Emma was here?” He sounded surprised. In his dream he thought he saw her leaning over, talking to him, kissing him.

“Emma was here quite a while Rob,” Livvy chimed in, “her mother was here too. Snow White left with her tail between her legs! I think Emma was annoyed with her. Still mustn’t gossip; must get on.
I’ll bring you something to eat in a little while, after the Professor has looked in on you. Now don’t do anything stupid like try to get up, cos your leg’s been operated on! Trust me, we’ll try to get you out of here as soon as possible…”

“I do; thanks Liv, I just want…”, though before he could finish, he was interrupted by a door crashing open and Honour bursting in, closely followed by Little John trying to keep up with the excited five-year-old. “Papa! You’re awake!” Her smile turned to worry as she saw the heavily bruised face of her father. “Papa?” she started to sniffle. Roland had silently entered the room, sauntering over to the gurney while collecting his little sister in his arms and hopping up on to the side of the gurney, Honour on his lap and next to his father. “Don’t be frightened Hon! It’s really daddy under all that, but he got beaten up by some bad people!”

Robin saw the frightened expression on her face. He took her hands in his. “It’s me, Honnie. Please don’t be frightened! It’s only a few bruises, I’m sure. I’ll be out of here soon.” The little blonde slowly smiled, curling to leave her brother’s lap and resting on her father’s right side, head on his chest.

“Gentle, you two!” warned Lavinia. “Go easy on your father, he’s just woken up! And don’t go near his left leg, either of you!”

Honour looked up adoringly into Robin’s eyes. “Daddy, Rolly says mummy and ma are both going to have babies?” as the little blonde spoke, Robin saw his son blush with embarrassment. “What? It’s not like you told me not to say anything!” her defended himself, his smirk and dimples going into overdrive. Robin sighed, knowing the next bit was going to be awkward, especially with his sister and friend present, but couldn’t be avoided. “It’s true, my darling, your mums are both pregnant and in a few months’ time, you’re going to be a big sister.”

His daughter beamed with happiness. “And you’re their daddy too?” she said, a picture of innocence. Robin just nodded and smiled back.

A stunned Maria looked at her brother open-mouthed. At least he looked embarrassed! she thought, as he silently pleaded for her to keep the news confidential. At least for the moment. She exchanged a quick look with Lavinia, who was clearly as surprised as her. “Well that’s lovely. More nephews or nieces for me!” she smirked at Robin, a look that said, ‘what the fuck have you been up to, big brother?’

The door again opened, making everyone turn. Doctor Whale entered with the Sorcerer close behind. “Ah! It’s my future cousin-in-law, I gather?” said Maria, “I hear congratulations are in order?” That drew Robin’s attention while Victor Whale smiled and blushed.

“Thanks. It’s true, I have asked Caroline to be my wife and I’m delighted to say she agreed.” Said Whale proudly.

Robin looked astonished. “Well…er…congratulations!” was all he managed. Fortunately, Merlin, or Professor Sage when at work, stepped in.

“Good to see you awake, Robin! I know you’re keen to get out of here, so let’s allow Victor to check your leg as he did the important bit. If he’s happy, I’ll get to work on the muscle and skin repair. Then we can make a decision.” Merlin had already adopted the manner of a professional and business-like medic. Victor politely made his way around Maria to lift the sheet over his leg, the woman quickly getting the hint and getting out of the way for the two men to check him over.
“Well, it all appears to be healing well enough Robin, though if you stand on it without sufficient
time to heal, you’ll probably cause more harm than good.” Whale intoned. “I’ll give you a choice.
Either stay her one or two nights more to rest up, or we release you but on the condition that
wherever you go, you do not stand on it for at least two days, you rest and have someone able to
keep an eye on you!”

“The second option. No offence, Doctor, I’m grateful for all you’ve done but I want to leave! I’m
sure John and some of the men would help…”

Livvy interrupted just as another figure walked into the room. “Actually Rob, Emma said they want
to take you back to their place. She was quite insistent!”

“Robin, you’re awake!” said Regina walking in, a wide smile despite looking tired but relieved.
“Nurse Whitehand is correct. We want Robin to convalesce with us. With his family!” She beamed
down at him as though they were quite alone. “Emma and I want you home, Robin.”

“In that case,” Merlin added, “let’s get that muscle tissue sorted out.” It took him a matter of moments
to wave his hands over the damaged area. The feeling of ripped and torn muscles moving back into
place made Robin wince in pain, though he held until it had finished. Regina and Maria held his
hands encouraging him to withstand it. Once the Sorcerer completed the main areas, Merlin then got
to work on repairing the skin itself, earning another loud hiss.

“Better. Now what about those bruises? Let’s see about tidying you up a bit, shall we?” As he raised
his palms, Regina stepped in.

“Professor, may I?” her eyes begged. Merlin nodded. Bringing both hands to Robin’s cheeks, she
focused her energy onto his face, Honour and Roland watching open-mouthed as the swelling started
to subside and the bruises evaporating to leave normal, albeit unshaved, skin.

“There, handsome as ever…” she grinned as she brought her hands away, but not before Robin
curled his right hand around the back of her head, pulling her in for a chaste peck on the lips, making
her blush, Honour grin, Roland roll his eyes and Maria and Livvy give each other a knowing look.

“Right, that all seems to be in order, so I’ll get the paperwork signed,” said Victor, “Livvy, could you
get us a wheelchair, so Mr. Locksley can finally be on his way?”

“Wait, I don’t need a wheelchair.” grumbled Robin. “Just a couple of crutches will do!”

“You’ll do no such thing!” Regina glared at him. “You broke your leg - no arguments! You’re going
to rest up!”

Merlin sniggered. “Oh, my dear Robin, I think you’re going to be in good hands!”

“Wow! I can’t believe it - Dorothy’s pregnant?” Belle hadn’t been to the diner for a few weeks, so
was eager to catch up on news and gossip from her friend. “I didn’t even know you were trying,
Rubes? You could have told me!” Belle tried to hide the disappointment at not being told earlier.

“I know, but under the circumstances, I wasn’t sure whether it would upset you! Especially after,
well, you know…” Ruby tried not to mention Gideon’s name but saw Belle’s eyes reddening at the
reminder of her lost son. “Dorothy had talked about it before but, well Merlin told us it was possible
for the two of us to have a combined baby…with the right donor.”

“‘Combined baby’? Sorry I don’t understand…”
“Merlin used magic to combine our DNA. I don’t quite understand it properly myself, but it basically means the baby Dot’s carrying has just as much of my genes in it as hers. Just add magic sperm and then…”

“Magic sperm? Where do you get that from? Haven’t seen that advertised!”

“From a donor who has magic. It’s needed to make the fusion work…” Ruby regretted her answer the moment it left her lips, knowing what question was coming next. But it was her friend, after all.

“So, who’s the father? There aren’t too many magical males around. Merlin? His son? Kathryn and Ella have both told me he looks like a Greek god!”

Ruby snickered. “Charlie, and yes he does! He’s fucking gorgeous. Dot and I both have a bit of a crush on him but no, he isn’t the donor…”

“Then who? Come on Rubes, tell me? We’re friends and you did hold out on telling me you were trying for a baby! It’s not…it’s not Robin, is it? It’s either him or Merlin. Now I know you liked mature guys in the past.”

“For heaven’s sake Belle, stop!” she giggled. “It’s neither of them. We did think of asking Robin to be the donor, but it’s just as well we didn’t, seeing as he’s got two more on the way! Have you heard about Regina and Emma?”

“Yes, Rumple came into the flat to confront Snow. She stole his dagger to try and…never mind that. He told her that Emma and Regina were pregnant by Robin, and that he was a true love to both of them!”

“That explains how he brought Emma back to life! Earlier I saw the two of them kinda smooching with Robin in the corner of the Diner yesterday. I think they got pregnant around the same time Dot and I did. I reckon we’ve got another poly family like Rory, Mulan and Philip brewing. I don’t know whether to congratulate him or feel sorry for him. Five kids, if you include Henry! Mind you, he’s got other problems right now, what with being in the hospital all bashed up and all…”

“Robin’s back? From the Dark Realm? Already? But they only went yesterday…”

“You living in a cave, Belle? Haven’t you heard? Rob killed the Black Fairy, but her guards injured him. He was in a coma, the last I heard. Him, Merlin and Gold brought loads of kids back with them first thing. Everyone’s at the hospital or Sherwood trying to find their folks! Belle? Belle, are you alright?”

Belle had gone as white as a sheet. “Gideon! Did they bring Gideon back?” she yelled. “IS MY SON ALIVE?” she screamed, moving to grab her bag and coat. “Where are they now?! Ruby, this is important! Where is Rumple?”

“Last I heard he was at Robin’s pub, helping sort out the lost parents. Here, let me phone around…”

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It was a good twenty minutes later when the two women banged furiously on the antique shop door. Rumpelstiltskin sat quietly in a mothering chair next to the new crib, feeding a bottle to his ‘one-week-old’ baby. The baby who, in the Dark Realm, had been a feisty five-year old-boy. Magic and time were a truly remarkable thing.

“That sounds like your mother, Gideon. Shall we let her in. Or not?” He looked down at the baby, suckling contentedly. He’s only had him home a matter of hours and already he was thoroughly
smitten, knowing already he would willingly die for this child. “I guess we’d better. I am supposed to be not such a Dark One these days, after all…” With a flick of his fingers, the lock on the front door clicked and the door opened, to the surprise of both women.

Belle rushed in ahead of Ruby, ready to yell. However at that moment, a large yellow cardboard sign appeared directly in front of them, which read:

Come in QUIETLY!!

In the spare bedroom!

Belle tiptoed into the back and up the small staircase, with Ruby close behind. As they slowly moved to the bedroom, it already opened as they reached it. She held her breath in anticipation, and the last thing she expected to see was her estranged husband, sitting quietly in a Victorian nursing chair with what appeared to be a newborn baby in his arms as he administered a small milk bottle. “Come in. We’ve been expecting you, haven’t we…Gideon?”

Belle’s mouth hung open in astonishment as she felt herself welling up. “Is this…is this really him?” she whispered. “It is! Gideon is as good as he was. As good as the day you sent him away…” his voice hardening towards the end, noticed by Belle and Ruby.

“May I hold him?” she trembled as she asked. “Please…may I hold my son, Rumple?”

The Dark One stayed quiet for a few moments, his eyes searing into Belle’s. “You may…but on three very strict provisos!”

“What…strict provisos?”

“First, that you vow NEVER to separate, or even attempt to separate, me from my son ever again! Second, that you never allow or assist anyone to use my dagger against me. And third, you NEVER leave him in the hands of, or anywhere near, that fucking blue moth, or the witch ever again!” His eyes tore into her, showing he meant every word. “If you insist on continuing to have sex with that vile bitch, I want my son nowhere near you!”

That last comment really threw Ruby. She knew that Belle had recently experimented with lovers of both sexes but had no idea she and Zelena had been together!

“I promise, I promise Rumple! Anything! Just please let me hold my…our son!” He looked at her closely, the woman he had loved. He knew how desperate she had been these last five years. He knew that, despite all his anger at being deprived by her, of his son at a time he could have saved him, he still had feelings for her. Nodding silently, he stood, walking across and placing the tiny life into her arms. Overcome with emotion, all she could manage was, “Ooh, my god!”

For the first time in five years, a trembling Belle gathered the baby, now slightly dozy, into her arms. “Oh, my little darling! I’ve dreamt of this…” tears cascaded as she placed a kiss on the baby’s head, the little one opening his brown eyes for a moment. ‘Gideon…I’m your mummy! I’m so, so sorry I ever let you go!”

Ruby had stood watching, unnoticed and now feeling like an intruder. The Dark One seemed unusually tired, probably not surprising, seeing what he had been through. “Mr. Gold, I’m so pleased you have your son back. Is there anything you need?”

He slowly looked up at her, exhausted. “Thank you, Mrs. Lucas, but we’re fine. And congratulations to you and your wife on her pregnancy so far! A child with three genetic parents! Highly unusual,
though a growing trend in this town, it appears…”

_How the hell did he know that? Oh yeah, he’s the Dark One. But ‘growing trend’?_. “Erm, thank you, yes, we’re thrilled. But growing trend?”

“How the hell did he know that? Oh yeah, he’s the Dark One. But ‘growing trend’?_. “Erm, thank you, yes, we’re thrilled. But growing trend?”

“It would appear so. Now, Mrs. Lucas, as I said, we’ll be fine here. You should get home…” His voice indicating that this was not a suggestion.

“Yeah, sure. Belle, you ok if I head off?” But Belle heard nobody except the contented gurgles of her newborn.
The Return of the Author

Chapter Summary

Robin convalesces in Mifflin Street and the ladies do all they can to help him relax. A surprise visitor comes back for the weekend...

Chapter 34

That night, Robin begrudgingly accepted a wheelchair and ride in the ambulance back to the mansion. It was in his nature to hate relying on others, but he did so reluctantly. Insisting that neither Regina or Emma use teleporting magic in their condition, he used his own to deliver him from the lounge and into their spare bedroom. Another magical burst and he’d transformed into a loose T-shirt and bed shorts and now lay between the soft, silky sheets, his left leg now re-bandaged until the bones and muscle had fully healed internally. Whale had told him he would be able to use crutches in a day or so.

“I brought you a cup of tea,” said Regina, walking in and placing it on the bedside table. Emma followed her in and the pair of them sat on either side of the bed, careful not to disturb his leg. “Are you hungry? Can we get you anything?”

“I think I lost my appetite. But your company would be nice!” Regina smiled back at him before giving Emma an odd look, which he picked up on. “Is there something wrong? Has something happened?” The brunette seemed to be trying to communicate with her wife using just her eyes. Robin was so tempted to read her thoughts but resisted, remembering how Emma had felt previously. “You clearly want to tell me something. Emma?”

“Nothing’s wrong,” Emma hesitated, “It’s just, well, we were going to suggest something before you went off on your ‘Dark Realm Boyband Tour’, but I guess it can wait…”

“Clearly it can’t, as I can see it’s bothering you. Why don’t you just say it?”

“Ok, well it’s like this. Your ki-children are here, Gina and I are currently carrying the latest members of the Locksley ice-hockey team, you love Regina, so we figured…”

“I’ve also fallen I love with you too, Emma!” he interrupted. “Sorry if that complicates things.”

The simple, easy way he said it took them both by surprise, and the women stared at each other astonished, before Regina slowly broke into the biggest shit-eating grin Emma had ever seen. “You’ve fallen for me? Really?” she almost whispered the last word. He merely stared, nervous at his admission before whispering, “I have!”

“Oh god, I’m so glad you said it first!” Emma croaked before moving up the bed and forcing her lips down hard onto his, pressing down in a heated kiss lasting a good few seconds before coming up to breathe, with tears in her eyes. “Because I’ve fallen in love with you too, Robin Hood, or Robin Locksley, or Robin-whatever-the-fuck you want to call yourself these days!” She pushed her lips back down onto his for a second, gentler go, their mouths now moving together in tandem, tongues searching before Robin eeked out with a grin, “Sorry for the hospital-breath, love - I haven’t eaten since yesterday!”
“You’re forgiven – though it’s not the most romantic response I’ve ever had to one of my kisses! Gina here once came out with ‘Well that was more than acceptable!’”

All three laughed as Regina raised her hands, apparating a tray containing a bowl of soup and roll, plus a second, smaller bowl with toothpaste, toothbrush and a mug of water. “Well it was! Anyway, you can use this to freshen up. If you two intend to make out like horny teenagers again, I want in on the action!”

“I’m up for that!” said Robin, again surprised how feelings between the three of them could turn to lust in a matter of seconds. Even the two of them in the same room seemed to inflame his desires these days “This may not be the size of your bed, but I could always welcome the company?”

“Hey, big boy, hold it right there! You’ve still got a weak leg, remember?” rebuked Regina, “I said ‘make out’, nothing more - at least till it’s better!” she followed with a devilish, insincere smirk, walking around to bed to take her wife’s arm. “Emma, we need to let him rest.”

Robin groaned. Emma apparated a TV into the room, plugging it in and handing him the remote. “Here, take this if you’re bored! We’re gonna go make sure your children are settled. We’ll freshen up and may pop in later…”

Robin rolled his eyes in resignation but attacked his soup with gusto.

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“So, you knew about those two to being pregnant by Robin?” said Lavinia, annoyed her big news was no surprise to John. “You knew and you said nothing?”

“A promise is a promise, Livvy, you know that! I couldn’t say anything – I promised Regina.”

“I knew too!” said Mulan smugly, propped up against Aurora on a bar stool at the Earl of Locksley. “Emma told Hank Morgan and I overheard. John’s right, they’ll announce it when they’re ready.”

The little group huddled around the bar were Robin’s closest confidants. Knowing the outlaw’s judgement was usually sound, they mostly accepted his benign leadership without question. They were currently joined by Kathryn, the former Princess Abigail, and husband Frederick. “I think it’s lovely! Regina deserves it after everything she’s been through. Emma’s helped her come back from the edge, but if they can somehow both have more with Robin, well bloody good luck to them! I’m rather envious!” Then seeing a slightly disappointed look from Frederick, she added, “at least I would be - if I wasn’t already married to the best looking guy around here!” she pouted at her husband.

“Nice recovery, love, but not convinced!” said Frederick, though there was no malice in his voice. “Let me ask you something. If you could have anybody else, in addition to my undevoted love of course, for the perfect poly marriage, with no repercussions …who would it be? No lies now! Just… be honest…”

Kathryn realized she couldn’t answer that question honestly, as a picture of David swam into her mind. She opted for the next best thing. “Charlie Sage, Merlin’s son!”

“Ooh yeah!” said Livvy, “That chest - he’s a piece of art!”

“Definitely! His eyes! They drill right through you!” said Aurora.

“His bum’s lovely and tight too!” said Mulan, earning a cackle from the other women, who all seemed to nod in agreement.
“Fred, I think you and Phil need to keep an eye on these wives of yours!” added Will.

“You may be right, old son!” said Phil, clearly not in the least concerned.

“Don’t be silly, darling!” said Kathryn, “Don’t pretend you’ve never fantasized about two women in your bed? Every man here has! Apart from Phil, obviously. Deny it and I’ll know you’re lying! Do you imagine it’s different for us women? We have fantasies too! But the important thing is, if it’s just using our imagination, it gets the motor running!” she pulled herself in close to her husband, so nobody saw her swipe her hand across the front of Frederick’s jeans, giving his hardening package a light squeeze. He grunted, “Hmph! I guess I do get to drive the motor home!”

“Yeah, mate, and let’s face it, Kat’s certainly a classic model! Not some clapped out, old banger!” added Will, earning a guffaw from the others and an attempted clip around the ear from John.

"Thank you, William! I think I’ll take that as a compliment!"

Little John turned to look at the heavily pregnant warrior. “It’s nice to see you out of an evening too, moo!” said the gentle giant. “How’s everything going with the pregnancy? What are you now, seven months?”

“Twenty-nine weeks! But I just want it to be over now, John. And have him with us. I feel like a beached whale! I can’t run now and even sitting behind the desk at the station is awkward. I look hideous and Hank still has to find my replacement and now Emma’s going to be leaving in a few months too!” Even as Mulan said it, Aurora pulled her closer to stop her but John got in first.

“Don’t you be so bloody silly, Mulan!” he chastised, “There’s nothing hideous about you! You’re blooming, everyone can see it, and you’re doing the most important thing any human being can do, you’re bringing a new life into the world! So what, if you can’t run? So what, if you can’t sit behind a fuckin’ desk? You’ll be able to do all of that soon enough, if you even want to! Morgan will sort out the station. I heard this morning that Prince Charming’s gonna step in part-time, anyway. Young Liz from Phil’s militia’s offered too, so he’ll be fine. Just you bloody well focus on what matters. You, your missus here and Phil, that little scamp Ping and what yer carryin’ now!”

“I agree with the big lump!” added Will, “you’re doing just fine, M! Enjoy the break, cos once that little un’ gets out, you three’ll want all the rest you can get!”

“Thanks guys”, said Aurora, tightening her hold on her wife. “That’s what me and Phil have been telling her these last few weeks. One day, she’ll believe it!” Mulan gave an unusually embarrassed smile to them all, before silently turning and pressing her lips to Aurora’s, earning various ‘aahs’ from the group.

“Hang on a minute. The Deputy Sheriff job?” said Will, an idea popping in his head. “Hasn’t he tried Ruby and Dot? They’ve both done part-time before!”

“Hank’s already asked Ruby, but she’s going to be busy with the Diner, especially now Dorothy’s pregnant…” said Mulan.

“What, Dot’s in the family way too? Blimey, I never saw that one coming! Who’s the father?”

“It would be impolite to ask who the donor is. I gather she’s about three month’s gone.”

“Everyone’s having babies, it seems. Lots of playmates for your little one!” said Fred, nodding to the Briar pair, “so are you three having a little boy, a girl or are you not telling? I thought you said ‘he’ a little earlier!”

“Figure of speech, Fred,” chuckled Aurora. “We want the surprise, so we asked Victor not to tell
A little earlier, Honour had been in to lie with Robin as he read her a story. Roland had followed for a hug and a chat and now, with both of them sound asleep in their own rooms, he was bored. Really bored. Emma had shown him how to use Netflix and he’d surfed the various offerings but wasn’t in the mood. He was frustrated and thanks to all the sleep over the last two days, wide awake and wanting desperately to get up.

“Cheer up, Robin!” said his beautiful brunette true love as she stepped into the room. “You’ll be up and about soon enough. Anything else you need?”

“Your company? I got a kiss from Emma but I’m still waiting for yours!”

“I think you’re right…” She smiled, stepping close and leaning over him to capture his lips without further ado. “Hmm, nice minty breath this time. Very good!” she whispered into his mouth before continuing, Robin’s hands now enveloping her cheeks and moving into her hair, making her almost purr.

“Hey, you starting without me, babe?” said Emma, walking in to see the passionate caress and moving to Regina’s side to wrap an arm around her waist.

“No, just trying to even the balance,” she said, turning in Emma’s arms and gifting her a full-on open-mouthed kiss of her own, her arms wrapping around the blonde to pull her even closer. The two women, now only in nightdresses, stood melded into each other, apart from their lower halves, the two small pregnancy bulges somehow sliding to the sides of each other. Robin had seen them like this a number of times now, but still marvelled at the sheer symmetry and beauty of these two beautiful women together. Unfortunately, their intimate embrace always did things to his cock. Sure enough, he felt it harden once again.

“Girls, I don’t think seeing you two together like this is doing my blood pressure any good! Bit frustrating, seeing as you’re giving me a raging hard-on and lying here there’s very little I can do about it.” The pair peeled their lips apart, looking at him in unison before Emma’s lips turned up in devilish grin.

“Blood pressure, eh? Tension?” she looked at her wife, now sporting a sly expression of her own. “We can’t have that now, can we? What you need is a decent massage!” She moved her mouth back onto Regina’s for a final deep kiss before they slowly peeled apart, walking to either side of Robin’s bed. A small blue bottle apperated into her hands. “Gina, I don’t think we want oil on his clothes now, do we? Perhaps you could oblige?

A twist of the queen’s fingers and Robin’s T-shirt and bed shorts disappeared, making both women gasp when a now fully engorged penis prominently rose on display, no longer sheathed. “Oh my! Robin…” said Regina in admiration. “You really are… quite tense! Let’s see if Emma and I can alleviate that, shall we?” She opened her palms to allow Emma to pour a small amount of the oily substance into her hands. Emma poured a small measure into her own palm before placing the little bottle down. “This is a little something Emma and I got from Princess Jasmine, from Agrabah. We met her when you were gone. It’s a soothing little ointment. Now close your eyes and try to relax.”

Robin tried, feeling the four soft, oily hands working their way over his chest, shoulders and stomach from either side. God, it felt good! The smell of frankincense and musk drifting over him. However, lying in front of two exceptionally beautiful women massaging him couldn’t block the fact he had an erect penis at full mast in front of them.
“Ladies, this really isn’t fair. Far from calming me I think I’m going to explode…”

“Patience Robin - good things come to those who wait!” whispered Emma, as her hands drifted over his navel and stomach to the soft downy hair below. She stroked around his inner thighs, spreading her oily hands and kneading the muscles before, without any warning, taking the base of his swollen penis firmly into her left hand, making him gasp and shudder when her right hand gently cupped his balls. She squeezed the shaft, slowly moving up and down. Trying to contain her own excitement at the absurd situation, Regina leant over to place a moist kiss on the helmet, causing Robin’s erection to twitch violently. “Ye gods! So much for easing the tension!” muttered the over-excited outlaw, feeling a warm shiver run through his entire body. These sultry demonesses truly had him under their control. And he couldn’t have been happier!

Easing her body onto the bed, Regina lowered her mouth slowly over the twitching brim, sucking hard on the helmet, before slowly easing the top of the hard shaft into her mouth. Emma watched her wife slowly absorb him, before moving her hands to join hers, then leaning in to slide her mouth round his lower shaft, before raking her teeth gently up and down the flesh, bringing a loud hiss from Robin. He finally dared open his eyelids, to witness an unbelievable sight that would stay with him forever.

Regina and Emma’s upper bodies now lay across the bed on either side, Regina being careful to avoid touching his bandaged leg, their heads either side of his cock, dragging their teeth gently up and down both sides in unison, taking turns to suck hard on the top. “Oh god, miladies, that is toooo good!” he groaned in ecstasy, hearing a giggle from one of them. The pair, silently working in tandem, now appeared to be battling to insert their tongues into the little sensitive slit at the top, as Regina’s left and Emma’s right hand fingers interlinked around his ever bulging shaft to pump him together. As he watched, their mouths curled, before coming together in a kiss around his brim.

“Jeez! I swear I’m about to explode, ladies! You better stop, or I’ll never be able to return the compliment!”

“That’s the whole idea, thief!” breathed Emma as they continued to pump. “Now shut up and let yourself go!”

Realising they weren’t going to stop, and his attempt to hold back being pointless, Robin now relaxed to enjoy the imminent orgasm. “Emma, Gina! I’m going to…aaarrrggghh…jeez!” Emma, her left hand cupping his balls as her right continued to pump, felt the signs of imminent release, his torso rising against the pressure.

“Here, let me,” she breathed, pushing the brunette’s lips away with her own to wrap her mouth over the dome, sucking hard. She instantly felt the salty seed rise, hitting the back of her throat, before swallowing quickly to avoid choking. She pulled her mouth off him as his body started to settle, though they continued pumping.

It took a matter of seconds until he groaned. “Cumming again!” This time, Regina felt the second major twitch and repeated Emma’s actions, now bringing her own mouth over him to suck hard. “Huuunnnhhh!” he growled as he came again, almost as violently as the first time. She swallowed, pumping him a few more times to ensure his finish before finally withdrawing her mouth to delicately wipe her lips with her fingers, before doing the same to Emma’s. “Two climaxes within seconds of each other. I guess that explains how he managed to get us both pregnant!”

Robin’s eyes shut in bliss as he seemed to sink deeper into the sheets. “That was extraordinary! But what about you two? What can I do for you?”

“You can start by going to sleep! You need rest - don’t worry about us, we’ll…take care of
ourselves!” grinned Regina, winking at Emma. “Now-go-to- sleep!” she said, kissing him between each word. Before he could reply, Emma’s face appeared above him. “You-heard-the-lady!” she said, also punctuating each word with a kiss before rising and walking around the bed to take her wife’s hand. “Goodnight and sleep well, Robin.”

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Regina woke at six thirty, the sun beaming through the curtains and the delightful warm feeling of her wife’s equally naked body pressed into her side. She’s slept wonderfully for the first time in weeks and didn’t want to get up, but the alarm on the dressing table insisted. Last night, after they left Robin to sleep, she and Emma had made love for a good hour and they’d settled into each other’s arms enjoying the afterglow.

Now, she looked at her serene, beautiful Saviour with a satisfied smile on her face. Emma never looked as contented as when she was asleep, her frown lines now invisible. “Em, it’s time to wake darling,” she whispered into the blonde’s ear, “your turn to take them to school…”

Emma grunted something unintelligible, trying to pull Regina closer. “Nah, stay here…” The brunette resisted, chuckling and pulling herself away, clambering unsteadily from the bed. “I’ll make you some coffee. That’ll help.” Realising Roland, always an early riser, could walk in on them once she broke the soundproofing charm, Regina focused her magic, making two identical white silk nightdresses appear on herself and her still dozing spouse. She popped into the ensuite bathroom to relieve herself before stepping out of the bedroom. Looking to her left on the landing, she noticed the door of the guest bedroom, Robin’s room, slightly ajar. Stepping forward to peer in, she was surprised to find the sheets ruffled up but no sign of her outlaw. ‘Shit! Robin?” she ran in, praying he hadn’t fallen. No sign, so she checked the bathroom. Nope. Skipping quickly down the stairs, she was relieved to find her thief standing by the kitchen counter, sitting awkwardly on a high stool, opposite Honour and Roland.

“Robin, what are you doing? You’re not supposed to be up!” her voice showing a hint of annoyance.

“Couldn’t sleep love! I desperately needed a pee and I certainly wasn’t going to magic up a bedpan, so I gave myself some crutches and came down here to make a pot of tea…” As he explained, she saw the children happily munching on buttered toast. “These scamps must have heard me!”

“You could have used magic to get your tea! Robin, you’re still supposed to be resting!”

“Make tea using magic! Heaven forfend, Gina, have you lost your mind? That’s sacrilege to an Englishman! Real strong tea, real teapot, scalding water, brew for five minutes!”

“You, Robin Locksley, always were obsessed with your ridiculous tea rituals…”

“I’m a Locksley too, mum!” piped up Roland. “Roland Locksley, tea drinker!” That’s when she noticed her eleven-year-old boy with his own mug. And Honour? The young blonde, grinning, was also holding a smaller cup of tea.

“Like father, like son I see! But Honour? Robin, I’m not sure children her age should be drinking tea.”

“Nonsense! It’s water, tea leaves and a little milk. Besides, I diluted it a little for her…”

“I like it mummy!” she said, slurping her drink. “Why can’t I be a Locksley like Rolly and Daddy?”
Regina was surprised at the question, not sure how best to answer. “Well…Roland had your daddy’s surname before I even knew him. When you were born, your daddy wasn’t around.”

“Yeah, Hon,” added Roland, “when you were born, your name was Honour Marian Mills, after my birth mum. Then when mum married Emma, she got it changed to Honour Marian Swan-Mills. I stayed at Locksley.”

Robin watched the exchange, wanting to ask why Roland hadn’t changed his at the same time. Regina saw the enquiring look in his eyes, so answered it herself. “We asked Roland if he wanted to change at the same time, but he said no. He wanted to honour his lost father.” Her eyes reddened at the memory of his passing.

Robin, touched, brought his hand across to his son’s cheek. “Thank you, my boy.”

“I wanna be Locksley too! Can I change it, mummy, can I?” said Honour, seeing how pleased Roland's decision made her father. He looked at her with love in his eyes.

“My love, you were named after your two wonderful mummies. And Roland’s mummy, and two of them have cared for you and loved you since the day you were born. Emma Swan, Regina Mills and Marian Fitzwalter are the three bravest, brightest, most loving and most courageous women I have ever met. You should feel proud to have their names…”

A small cough behind alerted them to Emma, who had come silently down the stairs just in time to hear Robin. She blushed slightly when he included her in his eulogy, too embarrassed to say anything. She merely stood beside him, giving his cheek a short kiss as his arm briefly went loosely around her waist. Roland watched the little interaction between Regina’s true love and wife with interest. He decided to press a few buttons.

“So, ma, what do you think? Should Honnie be allowed to change her name to Locksley?”

Robin looked severely at his boy. *Cheeky little bugger - clearly Will and Alan have rubbed off on him!* “Roland!” He warned. “That’s unfair! I’ve just explained why…”

“Just askin’ dad, no harm done!” the boy continued. “Everyone’s allowed an opinion! Why can’t she be Locksley, or Locksley-Swan-Mills, or anything else…”

Emma stepped in. “You’re absolutely right, Ro! Honnie should choose whatever name she wants, though best to do it when she’s a little older and knows for certain, right? Besides, I don’t mind if she wants to drop the ‘Swan’ bit. For me, Swan is just my adopted name. Strictly speaking, I’m a Nolan. I should have gone back to Emma Nolan or even Emma Charming, but I didn’t because it would be too much hassle and I couldn’t be bothered. Your dad’s always your dad, and he’s your hero, just like mine is to me. You two are Locksleys, just as much as him, so I think you should do what you want…”

Robin was touched, returning a silent kiss to Emma’s forehead. “Honour, you’re my beautiful daughter and you’re a Locksley in spirit, whatever your name. Perhaps you will change your name to something else when you’re older? Some take their new partner’s name, or not. You’ll do what you want when you’re older.”

The little girl smiled, seemingly happy. “I will. when you all get married. Just like Mulan did…”

Three pairs of eyebrows rose, but they said nothing. Roland just chuckled.
Another two days passed before Robin was properly back on his feet again, albeit using crutches. Merlin’s magic had certainly made a good repair, but he still needed to build his muscle strength. Both women were out; Emma on duty and Regina to meet his cousin to discuss her post-birth paramedic training. As he looked out of the window at rain hitting the porch, his phone vibrated:

Will: You finished sleeping yet, o magical child rescuer? Heard lots about your goings on. Disappointed you haven’t told me all over a beer! Or are the likes of me too low for the likes of you?

Robin grinned at his friend’s message. Although John, Tuck and some of the boys had popped over to see him, it had been several weeks since he’d seen Will, his sole companion on many a mission. He’d heard from John that Anastasia, the former Red Queen, had arrived in Sherwood. Apparently, the pair were making up for lost time.

Robin: You’ve always been too low for me! Anyway, you took your time! The boys came over to see me, but no Scarlett. You’re finally going to put your hand in your own pocket and buy me a drink yet?

Will: Not when I’ve a mate who makes magical money! What you doing?

Robin: Being very bored, and I’ve been on drugs for this stupid leg. Just started walking about today. I guess I could do with a drink.

Will: Well stop wasting time texting me! Go put your magical underpants on and get to the Earl for twelve. There’s someone I want you to meet. If you beg nicely I might even buy one!

Robin: Scarlett putting his hand in his pocket? Wonders will never cease! Cheeky bugger. Just get over here. Do you need me to bring you over a wheelchair and blanket!

Will: Shut up, you idiot! I’ll see you there…

Robin smiled at his friend’s unsuitable remark. He’s missed his old chum and realized he also missed the companionship of the guys as much. Yes, perhaps a beer with them would be just the thing! So, sending a short text to Regina and Emma letting them know where he was heading, he changed to leave. It was moments later Regina responded, concerned as to whether he was fit enough and encouraging him not to drink too much. Emma replied she’d like to join him once she finished work, if he was still there. He’d replied to both before moving, with crutches, to the hall to put on his coat. As he did, he heard keys jangling in the front door lock as a large, dark figure walked in.

“Henry! What are you doing back? I thought you had a month to go before the next college break?” He grinned at the broad shouldered six-foot-two young man, feeling slightly awkward at being caught in his mothers’ home.
Henry smiled back. “Hi Robin! Moved in already?” said the Author, moving forward to lightly hug the man before he spotted the crutches. “Ooh, the Black Fairy hurt you real good, didn’t she?”

“No, it was a couple of her demons who got me from behind. I…wait…you know about that?” Robin was astonished. “Don’t tell me that’s in your bloody storybook too?”

“No, not yet! But you’re making quite a few stories for yourself since you got back, aren’t you? Building a village, rescuing my mums from King George. Killing the Black Fairy!”

“It has been an eventful few months, certainly. But how did you even know about the Black Fairy?”

“Roland keeps in touch. He’s quite the geek-freak with that iPad of his! He’s told me all about your… goings on.”

“Never mind that my lad – while it’s lovely to see you, how come you’re home? Not bunking off, are you?”

Henry chuckled. “Hardly. No, Friday’s mostly a revision day so I’m not missing anything. I thought I’d drive back for the weekend and surprise my mums. I kinda owe them an apology…”

“You still haven’t said you’re sorry? Henry, that’s like…days ago! They tried to call you!”

“I know. I kind of apologized by text but I haven’t spoken to them since. I was going to do it tonight…”

“Do it quickly then! You hurt them Henry. They may be both seem very strong but when it comes to you…”

“Yeah, something about a ‘serpent’s tooth?’ I know!”

"How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child!” said Robin. “Act 1, scene 4, I seem to recall?”

Henry was astonished. “You…you’ve read King Lear?”

It was Robin’s turn to burst out laughing. “Sorry Henry, I’m messing with you! One of the problems of Merlin’s knowledge saturation is I’ve picked up all manner of things. He’s been around a long time so most of it is fairly irrelevant, but some of it rather interesting…”

Henry gave him an odd look. “Interesting’! Ok, let’s see. “John Steinbeck’s first novel?”

“Cup of Gold,” the Outlaw said without hesitation.

“Who wrote Antigone?” Henry was determined to catch the grinning man.

“Sophocles. Next?”

“What does ‘absquatulate’ mean?” He was determined to catch him out. Robin pondered.

To leave somewhere abruptly. Next?”

“Who was the mother of the nine Muses and what were their names?” That should catch the bugger?

“Mnemosyne, of course. Let’s see, Zeus’s daughters are Clio, Erato, Polyhymnia, Terpsichore, Calliope, Euterpe. Melpomene, Urania and Thalia. I met Terpsichore and Urania briefly, lovely
people…”

“Holy fuck! Ok, last one. What does ‘compersion’ mean?”

“The opposite of jealousy. It’s a feeling of joy when you see someone you love, love another…oh!” Robin realized the smart-ass boy was leading him somewhere.

“Ok Henry, enough questions. My turn! Now answer a few of your own. Why have you waited three days to tell your mums you’re sorry for how you reacted on that call? You know you treated them badly, so when are you going to be a man and apologise properly?”

“Whoa! It’s not every day your forty-something mums tell you they both got pregnant! It was a shock, ok? And I don’t need you having a go at me. Your son did quite a good job of that! And anyway, it seems you’re responsible for both ‘unexpected’ pregnancies? Either they could have taken the pill, or you could have used something…” He knew he was being petty. "Hell, he and Violet thought he could have got her pregnant last year.

“Life is never that simple, Henry. As I’m sure you’ll discover. However, I don’t regret it. I was always in love with Regina and my feelings for Emma have grown over the last few months. I’m sorry if this upsets you Henry, but I am deeply in love. With both of them!”

The Author studied him intensely, trying to find any trace of deceit. But in his heart, he knew the man was being honest. “I believe you, but it’s fucking weird, right? I mean, you getting BOTH my mums pregnant! Have you moved in, because the way Rollie tells it, you’re well on the way to being Storybrooke’s second ‘throuple’!”

“No. I’m here convalescing here the last few days. Your mothers asked me to rest here after the hospital, but I haven’t ‘moved in’. Unless you forgotten, I have a village to run and I was planning to go there when you walked through the door. As for the relationship between your mothers and I, I’m not sure what to tell you, Henry. They are already married and happy and I would never seek to change that. I think Emma has some feelings for me, like Regina. I know I am in love with both of them, but I would never be so arrogant as to suppose…” he trailed off.

“I get it, Robin, I do. You’re all feeling a bit screwed up and not sure where it’s heading? Well it’s heading to the maternity unit. In five months, you’ll have five kids in Storybrooke! Hell, some people would be running to the hills by now!” he chuckled the last words.

“I would NEVER abandon my children, Henry!”

“Yeah, I get that. Anyway, after Roland gave me a bollocking,” Robin smirked at the ridiculous British term, “I got to thinking about it and he’s right! He and Honnie need you in their lives. I should know, I’ve heard everything about my dad, but I barely remember him. I would give anything to get him back! I don’t want that for Rollie and Honnie. I know Regina has always been in love with you but…but…I don’t want you hurting my other mum!”

“Henry, I promised your mums I wouldn’t get between them and I meant it. I care for Emma more than you know. Things have changed between us, but I’ll leave it for your mothers to decide what to do about it and what they want to tell you. I would like to tell you more, but I won’t break their confidence. You’ll just have to trust me…”

Henry looked at him curiously, staying silent for a while before changing the subject. “So, you really killed the Black Fairy and rescued loads of lost kids, eh? Sounds pretty awesome! I wanna know all the details - sounds like it would make an epic book!”
“All in good time, Henry. Do your mothers know you’re back?”

“Nope, only Roland knew I was coming for the weekend. I was planning on surprising them, though I think ma is probably still angry with me. She has a problem with me standing up to her and the last time we spoke, I yelled and hung up on her…”

“You’re more like her than you think, Henry! She’ll be fine. Emma loves you, even if she can get a bit angsty at times. Clearly it runs in the Swan-Mills genes! I honestly think when you apologise, she’ll probably do the same to you for overreacting herself. So, be the man and get your apology in first!”

Henry broke into a smile. “Yeah, I can do that.”

“Excellent. Now young man, How about I buy you a pint! Emma said she’ll call in after work, so how about giving her that surprise? Will said John and some of the boys will be there…”

“You know I’m not supposed to drink until I’m twenty-one? That’s in October.”

“Only a few months away then - I won’t tell the landlord if you won’t?” said the landlord of the Earl of Locksley, “and I’m pretty sure you haven’t exactly been teetotal in Harvard, hmm?” he winked.

“I don’t know what you mean?” he said, unconvincingly, walking away.

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A few minutes later, Robin and Henry apparated just outside the big oak pub door. Henry had missed his burgeoning powers when in Boston, and was now reminded how enjoyable travelling in a mist could be. What he didn’t enjoy was the low scream next to him as his body solidified.

“SHIT! WHAT THE HELL!” yelled Grace, dropping her bag in fright as the pair appeared in front of them. He looked up to discover a familiar friend. “Henry? Henry! You scared the life out of me! What are you doing here? I thought you were still at university?”

“Sorry, Grace. Long story, but I’m only back for the weekend. I’ve popped over with Robin for a drink. What are you doing here?”

“Well obviously, I came for-” she stopped the moment she saw the other man on crutches. “Robin! Hi, how are you? I heard you were injured…”

“Hello Grace. I’m fine thank you.” He remembered one of Henry’s early girlfriends. “Would you like to join us? You’re most welcome…”

“Oh, erm. Well…” the girl mumbled, remembering why she was here. “That would be lovely. Thanks.”

As the three made their way in, Robin hobbling, Henry pulled open the large door to let him through. As he stepped in, a loud cheer erupted from a good two dozen people within. “Hooray!” they yelled.

“What the fu…” he mumbled to himself as he realized Will, John, Tuck and a number of the boys were gathered around, clearly waiting for him. Will stepped up to greet him, slapping a hand on his shoulder as others came to join them. “Mornin’ chap! How’s the conquering hero today?”

“Tired and…thirsty!” he replied, looking at the gathering. “What’s all this then?”
“Alan, get the man an ale!” yelled John to the bar. “Will told us you were poppin’ in. We couldn’t let me moment go without a little thank you now, could we? There’s a lot of happy families around right now, Rob. You and Merlin really pulled off a miracle there!” he gave the man a hug, nearly pulling him off his crutches.

The little group made their way to the bar, where Robin winced as he lifted himself to sit on a bar stool. “That’s kind of you to say, but a lot of it was Rumpelstiltskin. He was the brains behind it. It was Merlin’s idea, but Rumple planned it. I don’t remember too much after …”

“After you killed one of the vilest witches who ever drew breath. Don’t sell yourself short, Rob! Yeah, Merlin gave us the details. And there’s quite a few people around want to shake your hand,” said John.

“How is Rumple? He took quite a pasting himself.”

“Nobody’s seen him since he got his son home. I think they’re gettin’ reacquainted.”

“Wait, my grandpa’s got Gideon back? He’s alive?” said an astonished Henry, realising he had another uncle.

“Yup! Rubes said she saw the nipper. Belle’s over with ‘em too, apparently,” said Tuck.

“Well that’s cause for celebration too! Perhaps this’ll help the Dark One become a little less dark.” John added.

“He’s changed, guys!” Robin defended, “Merlin seems to be helping him overcome his curse. I can’t say he’s entirely reformed but, over the last week in the Dark Realm, I saw a side to him you couldn’t imagine. Losing two sons is going to damage anybody but I think getting back will be the making of him.”

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We Want you to Move In!

Chapter Summary

As Robin's injuries heal, Emma and Regina, seemingly with Robin's support, offer him a more permanent arrangement. Our trio are finally cementing their relationship!

Chapter Notes

To those of you who have stuck with me on this, my first story, thank you once again!

I received lots of personal messages, some asking me to increase the level of smut, and some to reduce it. This chapter is one of the most sexual ones in the story, though I'll be pulling back into a slight change of direction after this chapter, with a couple of worrying cliff hangers to come. Hope you enjoy.

Chapter 35

It was only two hours later when Hank Morgan, former Knight of the Round Table and now Sheriff of Storybrooke, received a call from Mulan, currently sitting with Philip and Mulan in the Earl of Locksley. She’d rung to confirm her leaving schedule at the end of the week. Hank could hear the background noise.

“Sounds noisy over there, Mrs. Still-Just Deputy Briar! Is everything ok?”

Mulan laughed. “It’s fine, Hank. I’m at the Earl and Robin’s here, so there’s a bit of a celebration going on and people keep arriving. Henry’s here too. He’s taking the weekend from college. Supposed to be a surprise.”

“Henry? So, I take it he hasn’t told his mothers yet?”

“Don’t think so. Emma’s supposed to be coming over this evening.”

He finished the call and looked out of the office glass to see his deputy, the former Sheriff and Saviour, her legs on the desk, screwing up sheets of paper and aiming them in the waste bin. She was clearly bored out of her mind on an exceptionally quiet day. He walked out to her. “Emma, I just got a call from Mulan. She’s at the Earl of Locksley and she said there’s a commotion, a crowd starting to build over there. Nothing’s wrong so far but might be a good idea to take a look? Visible police presence and all that…”

“In Sherwood? Do we even have jurisdiction over there these days? I thought the Merry Men were effectively the police?”

“Well it wouldn’t do any harm now, would it? How about you go and see - after all, you said you were going over to meet someone after work anyway, didn’t you?”
It’s then she remembered that someone was Robin. “You said a commotion?”

Yeah, she didn’t say there was a problem, only a large gathering. Something’s happening, so it wouldn’t hurt.”

“You’re right, I’ll check it out. You sure you’re ok here?”

“It’s dead around here, so unless it picks up, I’ll just be doing the admin. Now Mayor Phil’s got the new computers for us, it should be quick. If there’s a major disaster or catastrophe I’ll call you. So you go on, you get off and let me know if there’s anything going on over there, ok?”

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By the time Emma reached Sherwood, there was indeed a large crowd spilling out onto the forecourt outside the village pub. She guessed there’d be no problem as Little John and the boys were more than capable of taking on all comers; and even if there was, would she be allowed to intervene?

Everybody seemed happy, tables had been placed outside the front and as she looked closer, most of them were filled with couples with very young children or babies. Walking past many smiling faces and through the pub door, she saw a small cluster around the bar and in the centre of it, a familiar face. Robin. A tall brunette woman seemed to be hugging him, quite aggressively, planting a kiss on his cheek. Emma felt a flash of annoyance, though it quickly evaporated when she noticed Robin wasn’t actually hugging or kissing her back, but saying something quietly to her, smiling as she drew back. Irritated, Emma walked over to find out who the over amorous woman could be.

“You can’t imagine what this means to us, Robin! To have Matty back in my arms! Derek and I lost all hope and we just assumed he was…was…” she started to tear up, when a man holding a baby stepped in beside her to bring an arm around her shoulder.

“We are forever beholden to you, my lord! Laura and I assumed the worst, but you have given us back our son. I will be forever in your debt…”

He hadn’t noticed Emma approach as he lifted himself, stiffly, from the stool, placing a gentle hand on the woman’s arm. “There is no debt and you’re welcome Laura! I’m just glad we got everyone out safe and sound. In fact, the person you really need to be thanking is Mr. Gold. I was in her castle, dealing with the Black Fairy and the guards; Rumple, on the other hand, was the one who liberated the mines. He was more responsible for rescuing Matty than me.”

“Humble as well as honourable! Your reputation does you justice, Sir Robin!” said the teary-eyed man. “I shall be sure to thank him too. The three of you are true heroes - not just the sort who only protect their own! I may be just an old tanner, but if there is anything, anything I can do for you, I will happily oblige, my Lord.”

_Only protect their own – was that a dig at me?_ Emma thought, watching them.

As he shook Robin’s hand, yet another woman appeared. A tall, striking and flamboyantly dressed brunette, almost barging the tanner out of the way in her rush to grab and hug Robin. “Thank you, thank you, thank you, my lord!” said the over excited woman. “I thought my Rose long gone!” Emma noticed a smaller, blonde girl moving in behind her, holding another small child in her arms. It took a while to recognize the older woman. Delphine, the proprietor of the nearest thing to a brothel they had in Storybrooke. She’s carefully evaded the Sheriff’s Department for years by always being one step ahead of them when it came to being discovered. Most people in the town regarded the ‘services’ she and her four girls provided as a necessary evil. They were discreet and as no actual harm was being done, they tended to be left alone. However, seeing the woman drape her arms
around Robin and drop a kiss, quite unexpectedly, on his lips was a step too far for the Saviour.

“Ahem!” said Emma loudly, making the group turn and notice her for the first time. “I hope I’m not disturbing?”

“Emma!” said Robin, a look of genuine delight on his face. He gently but firmly moved Delphine to one side before clumsily standing up from his stool, without a crutch, to face her. “You’re early,” he breathed, hobbling a couple of steps forward to put his hands on her waist, tilt his head and, without warning, gently capture her lips with his own, in a chaste kiss. For a moment, she hesitated, but then disregarding their audience, received his kiss and pulled her hands around his head to steady herself. Realising where she was, Emma pulled her head back a fraction to whisper, “Robin – I’m still in uniform!” as her cheeks blushed.

“I’m sorry, my lord, I understood you were now single? I meant no offence,” said Delphine, realising her faux pas may have been misinterpreted when she saw the brief, angry look on Emma’s face.

“None taken, Delphine,” said the outlaw, between Emma’s lips and never taking his eyes off her. “I’m pleased Rose is well. As I said to Laura and Derek, you need to thank Rumpelstiltskin…”

“Are you…are you two together?” said the confused younger girl, presumably one of Delphine’s ‘assistants’.

“In a manner of speaking,” Said Robin in a ‘matter-of-fact-don’t-argue’ way, trying to spare Emma’s blushes.

“We are!” said Emma firmly, not taking her eyes off him either. “And I’m carrying his child! Good enough?”

“Perfectly,” said the madame “Though I’m a little surprised. I was under the impression this lady and Mrs. Swan-Mills were together?”

“We are! And Robin is very much a part a part of it…” she looked into his eyes as she said it.

“Well…that’s lovely! Still, I owe you my Lord. I’m forever in your debt…” the owner of the brothel, for the first time in her life, seemed almost embarrassed.

“You owe me nothing, Miss…” Robin repeated. “Daughters are a truly precious gift, which I’ve only recently come to appreciate. Do please take care of her…” He and Emma looked intensely into the other’s eyes, their audience seeming to drift away.

“I will sir!” said Delphine, stepping close to the pair to ensure they wouldn’t be overheard. “And can I just say that we also offer a very special experience for couples! A very special massage service. We can even accommodate triples, if that’s your preference? On the house, of course…”

“Thanks, Delphine. We’ll bear that in mind!” He tried not to hide a smirk. As the woman withdrew, Emma collapsed with laughter into his chest.

“Did she really just offer us -? Actually, I’m not sure what she did just offer us!” he whispered, slightly confused, which just made Emma chuckle more.

“I think Delphine was offering us a lot more than a massage!” she tried to keep her voice low to prevent being overheard.

“Oh, I see!” he said, catching on to what the woman did for a living. “I guess we’d best pass on that, then. Besides, I’m sure it’s not a patch on your ‘massage’?” he winked, remembering the previous
night’s activities, which had so relaxed him…eventually. Emma’s cheeks flared. However, their little flirtation was brought to a rapid halt when she heard a familiar voice.

“So, it’s all true then?” said Henry, now beside her.

“Henry?” gulped Emma. “HENRY!” Pulling away from Robin, she turned and pulled her son roughly into her arms, hugging him ferociously. Difficult to do when the son in question was now a good six inches taller and considerably broader than her. It had been over two months since he left Storybrooke and a week since they last spoke and argued. She was hurt but still missed him terribly. “What’re you doing home? I thought you…”

“I took the weekend off, to see you and mum and… to apologise!” He looked guilty, but hugged her closer. “I’m sorry, ma, I should never have spoken to you like that! I over-reacted and it was stupid of me…”

“I’m sorry too, Hen!” she breathed into his chest. “We surprised you and I snapped at you too, like I do…”

“No, ma, you’ve nothing to apologise for – but I do! I know you were worried about telling me and I sounded off at both of you. You didn’t deserve that.” He still held her close rather than look her in the face. He looked across to see Robin, who was sporting a benign smile on his face as he gave a small nod of approval to the younger man. *He’d been right! The first thing she would want to do was apologise back.* “Just say you forgive me?”

“All forgotten,” she said, standing on her toes to plant a kiss on his cheek. “Does mum know you’re back?”

“Not yet. I was going to surprise you. I got home, and Robin was just coming out here. He offered to buy me a beer…” The moment he said it, he realized he may have dropped Robin in it. “Er…sorry Robin!”

“Did he now?” said Emma, raising an eyebrow at the outlaw.

“He did.” said Robin, unabashed. “Storybrooke may be in Maine, but Sherwood is run on English rules, far older and far more sensible! Eighteen years minimum, not twenty-one, but always in moderation.”

“Hmm. I beg to differ on that. You’ve been here a few hours at least. How many have you had? I hope you’re not leading my son into bad ways? Regina may have something to say about that…”

“He’s only had one pint, as has Robin!” boomed John. They’d hardly noticed they had an audience. “He would have had a couple more, but we’ve been distracted by all the parents comin’ in! You probably saw some of ‘em’ outside. Most just came to thank Rob and Merlin over there…” he pointed to a corner of the room.

Emma was surprised to see Merlin, sitting bolt upright with his hands on one of the tables, eyes closed. Opposite him sat his son. *Charlie?* He sat in the same manner. Between them sat his daughter, Anna, the doctor. All three held the same position, eyes closed and with an odd smile on their faces.

“What are they doing? It looks kinda weird!” said Emma. “Should we be worried?”

“Don’t disturb them.” said Robin, “They’re having a family get together. They communicate with each other by a kind of fairy magic. It’s a sort of group telepathy. They’re having a chat with Rosalind and Celia.”
“They can do that?” said Henry, astonished. “Even though Cee’s in London and Rosie’s on the Jolly? I read something about that in one of grandpa Gold’s books, but I didn’t realise they could do it in groups, or long distance. That’s just awesome! Can you do it yet, Robin?”

“I’m learning. I know the basics, but Merlin’s teaching me how to tune it. It’s a mind-reading skill, so you have to be careful not to invade someone’s mind, their privacy, too much. Both sides have to have total trust…”

“So, it’s something you, mum and ma could do with your magic? Me, eventually?” Henry was astonished.

“In time. Linking into someone’s mind is a powerful thing, not to be taken lightly.” Robin and Emma exchanged a knowing look, remembering recent events. “Doing it without consent is abuse, Henry, whether accidental or not.”

As they talked, Emma’s phone chirruped, the tone she’d set for receiving family text messages. Picking it up, she glanced at a message from Regina. “It’s your mum, Hen. She’ll be here in an hour after collecting Ro and Honnie. You want me to tell her you’re here?

“No, I want it to be a surprise. I have to go back Monday and, before you ask ma, I do have permission. Perhaps when she gets here, we could have a chat? Just the three of us?”

“Sounds an excellent idea, Henry,” said Robin. "Emma, I’ll take the children outside for a play. You two and Regina have much to discuss, without any distractions.”

“Robin, you’re still on crutches! How can you ‘play’ if you can’t walk?”

“The boys and I will find a way. What about you? You’ve been working all day and you’re four months pregnant. Let’s get you a seat. Fancy a drink? Tuck’s got a new line of non-alcoholic drinks in.”

“Yup, Mulan says the ginger beer’s good for pregnancy sickness, too,” said John. “Sit yourselves down and I’ll get it sorted. Rob, you shouldn’t be standin’ too much either!”

“Yeah, Mother Hen!” said the outlaw to his fussing protector, earning a chuckle from Emma. He looked back at her with a twinkle in his eyes. “What?” said Emma, noticing his gaze. “Do I have something on my face?”

“Yep. A beautiful pair of eyes, a cute nose and highly kissable mouth…” he flirted.

“Again Robin, I’m on duty!” rebuked the blonde. “And I’m sure Henry doesn’t want to…” it’s then she noticed her son wasn’t even listening, just staring into space, a sad expression on his face. “Henry?”

“What? Oh, sorry ma, I was miles away! I was just thinking about that telepathy thing. About how it could have saved us in the past. I could have avoided being kidnapped. I could have warned Dad! He needn’t have died…” He looked at his mother, regretting his reminder of painful times. “Sorry ma, I know talking about him upsets you.”

Robin looked at mother and son, seeing the pain still there, below the surface.

“I knew your father, Henry! In the Enchanted Forest. He was a remarkable human being. He was selfless, despite his difficult past. The man who ultimately enabled your mother here to be reunited with her family and break the curse, despite nobody realising it at the time. He was the only boy ever to escape Neverland when Pan was at the height of his powers. He thought nothing of putting his life...
on the line to get back to you when you were kidnapped. And a very good swordsman, though his persuasion usually got him out of awkward situations. Mulan and I both have fond memories of him…”

“I know some of it. I’d like to spend some time with you one day and write it all down. Everyone just keeps spouting that dad was a hero, but I really want to know the details. How he lived, who he knew, why he did what he did? I just feel it’s a big piece missing. He was a hero, but why?”

“He still IS a hero, Henry!” boomed a new voice from his side, surprising the group. Unnoticed, Merlin had finished their family ‘call’ and now stood beside them, Charlie and Annabelle close behind. “Your father has, since his death, saved more souls in the Underworld of other realms than you could imagine! He and King Arthur continue to work wonders. You should be extremely proud of him…” Emma listened as a single tear fell down her cheek in memory of Neal.

“I am proud, but it’d be easier if I’d spent more time getting to know him…”

“You will, my boy, you will!” he turned to his son and daughter. “Now, let’s get that drink I promised you. Tuck has boasted of some new ales and he rarely disappoints.” Merlin walked to the bar to place his order. His son Charlie had already started talking to a couple of women nearby, who looked starstruck, as though they were being attended to by a rock star. Annabelle, still sporting a silly smile, stepped closer to Robin’s side.

“Everything ok, Anna? How are your sisters?” asked Robin.

“Cee’s great. She’s bought into some sort of IT business in the UK which I didn’t quite understand. She’s coming back to New York with her boys, so she’ll be over here to visit again. As for Rosie, she, Tink and Killian are now in Arendelle. Apparently, she met Queen Elsa, who wants to give up the throne for her sister, because Princess Anna and Kristoff now have children, whereas she’s still single. Anna had twins a few months ago. A boy and a girl. Elsa thinks Anna and Kristoff should secure the line of succession, though Anna’s refusing, saying she should give it time. Anna sounds hilarious - she says Elsa has the hots for Killian!”

Emma listened intently as soon as Killian was mentioned. “But…Killian’s not interested in her?” she asked, trying to sound nonchalant, taking another sip from the ginger beer handed her by John earlier. *Why wasn’t he interested? Elsa was beautiful, stunning even. Tall, blonde like her. Just his type.* Although strictly speaking, Emma had never been with another girl until Regina, she and the Queen of Arendelle had kissed. *Quite heatedly, the first time she had ever made out with another woman!*

“I don’t think so. Besides, Killian’s kind of a one-girl guy and Rosie IS pregnant!”

The crash of a beer glass hitting the flagstones and smashing was heard by all. “Uh, sorry!” said Emma, turning her fingers to make the offending glass fragments and spill disappear, hoping nobody noticed her reaction to the news. Robin and Henry did. “Did she say who’s the father?” said Henry, deciding to draw the sting quickly.

“Well Killian, of course!” said Anna as though it was the most obvious answer in the world. “She’s four months gone, I think. They’re thrilled. We were just talking about dates – I’m kinda hoping they’ll come here to have it. They’re heading for Agrabah next and Elsa’s joining them for the trip.

Emma’s mind swirled. Her feelings for the former pirate were still there, still strong and, although she had moved on with Regina, a part of her still wished Killian was here with her. Just like Neal, her first true love.
It was only seeing the conflicted look on Emma’s face that Annabelle remembered just who her sister’s current partner used to date. “Oh, Emma, I’m so sorry! I completely forgot…”

“It’s ok, really. I just want him to be happy! After all, it’s the past, right? We’ve both moved on.”

The past. Moved on. So why did it still hurt?

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Less than an hour later, Regina walked into the pub, preceded by Roland and Honour racing ahead. The children ran up to their father, almost knocking him over as they hugged him. “Go easy on him, kids! He’s not quite ready for the rough stuff yet!” Emma chuckled. She turned to see her wife, who was wearing a navy-blue cotton dress that flowed over her new, fuller shape. Clearly tired from the day, her pregnancy bulge clearly visible, but as elegantly beautiful as ever. “Hi, Babe!” said the blonde, still sitting, as Regina leaned over to place a kiss on her lips.

“I got told off for that,” said Robin, smiling at his brunette love. “She told me she’s still in uniform!”

“Yes, but I married her!” replied Regina, giving her a quick peck again before moving to Robin’s side to deliver him the same kiss, regardless of who saw them. “Have you two been boozing all day?” she smirked, taking each of them by the hand.

“How dare you!” said Emma, pretending to be offended. “I’ll have you know this is non-alcoholic and anti-emetic. And technically, I’m still on duty, though the station’s so dead today that Hank kicked me out to check on the crowd out here. Locksley’s the one who’s been in the pub all day boozing!” she grinned at him. He now had Honour in his arms while Roland had raced off to talk to Merlin about god-knows-what.

Robin rolled his eyes at her. “Thank you for that, Emma!” he squinted back. “I would love to have been ‘boozing’, as you both so delicately put it, but I’ve been somewhat distracted. I’ve been here over four hours, and this is only my second pint. If that’s boozing I’ll be almost teetotal at this rate!”

“You’re not getting any sympathy from me, thief! My wife and I are already currently teetotal… partly thanks to your good self!” she countered.

“Thank you for the ‘partly’ bit! It takes two to tango – or three in our case! Anyway, never mind all that. There’s someone who wants to see you!” he said lifting his eyes and brow for her to turn around at the figure who had just come up behind her.

She turned to see her adult son, now standing in front of her. “Hi Mum!”

“HENRY!” she yelled. “What are you…why are you…shouldn’t you be…” She stammered, dragging him into a tight hug. As with Emma, he towered over her, collecting his brunette mother in his long arms and placing a kiss on the top of her head. “It’s all good, mum. I’ve just got the weekend off. I go back Monday!”

She clutched him tighter, rising on her toes to place a kiss on his cheek as he stooped over her. “It’s lovely to see you, but why are you really here? Weren’t you supposed to be somewhere else…”

“I came to apologise, for what I said to you both last month. My reaction was cruel and stupid and I just apologised to Ma, but I needed to do it to both of you!”

Robin watched them. “You three need to talk. I’m going to take Honour and Roland - wherever he’s gone - outside for a bit. Take all the time you need. It’s Friday, so I fancy take-out tonight. Mexican sound good?”
“Sounds lovely, Robin,” said Regina, never taking her eyes or hold off her son. ‘We’ll come out to see you after. Henry, are you staying with us tonight?” her eyes almost pleaded. Please don’t say you’re going to Gold’s!?

“For a family take-out? Try to stop me!” he grinned, waving to move his mothers to a quieter corner table away from the bar, still holding the almost empty pint. They sat together, directly opposite their son.

“Henry, is that beer?” she would normally scold him, but knowing how he reacted last time Emma over-reacted, she decided to stay her hand. “It is. Legal age is eighteen in Storybrooke, based on English law! Far more sensible, I think. It’s odd how in this country you can buy guns, and knives, when you’re a kid but no alcohol? Seems the wrong way around to me. Perhaps you should take it up with the proprietor?” He saw his older mother’s brow arch, ready for her usual response.

“However, before you flip, and then I flip, I should say I’ve only had one pint so far. Anyway, let’s not change the subject. Let’s talk about you, ma and Robin!”

The women looked to each other awkwardly, wondering how this necessary conversation would go. Emma jumped in first. “Henry, your mum and I aren’t looking forward to this, but we’ll try to be honest. What do you want to know?”

“How far along are you with each of your pregnancies and when did you find out?”

“I’ll start,” said Regina. “Henry, we both fell pregnant at the same time. I found out first after I felt some morning sickness a couple of months later. Your mother found out shortly after, when I went for a check-up at the hospital. We decided to hold off telling anybody, including yourself, until we had decided what to do, and second, to make sure we both got through the first three months, or trimester. There’s a much higher risk of miscarriage until then, so we wanted to be sure. We had to tell you when we did, because your grandmother overheard something and reacted in her usual way! We had planned for you to be the first person we told, after Robin, but things happened!”

“Roland told me Grandma punched Robin! How’s she and Grandpa taking all this?”

“I’m not sure, to be honest,” said Emma, looking slightly guilty. “I saw her in the hospital, but I told her I don’t want to see her again before she apologises to Robin.” I haven’t spoken to her since. Dad hasn’t said anything, though I must admit I’m starting to miss him more. He’s usually the more balanced one!”

“You told me on the call, when I blew up, that it was unplanned. That’s what I don’t understand! How can both of you get pregnant at the same time? Sorry…I don’t mean how…but at the same time? Did you wish for it or something?”

Regina reddened. “Obviously we won’t be discussing the more intimate details, but all I will say is that feelings between Robin and I have always been very strong. After all, he sacrificed his life for me! And while your mother can speak for herself,” she looked across at Emma for support, “it’s fair to say that the relationship between her and Robin has also changed.”

Emma nodded. “I’ve fallen in love with him Henry, It’s as simple as that! When he first came back, I was angry, with him and Killian, for returning. Crazy isn’t it! They both died in their own ways to save us. Killian was my own love, after your father of course. And yet, after a very short time, things between me and Robin started to change. It’s hard to explain but after we reached an understanding and it escalated rapidly. He took me on an evening out and it kinda grew.”

“But you’re now nearly four months pregnant? That’s like, only around the time they came back? How could you-”
“I really hope you’re not about to ask whether Robin is the father or not? Because your mum and I would find that really offensive. We’ve never been with anyone else and although we thought we were taking precautions, Robin now has very powerful magic that even he is trying to understand!”

“Ok, I’m sorry I didn’t mean to offend you! I just need to understand, So, you’re keeping the babies and it looks like I’ll be having a couple of brothers or sisters soon. But how does that leave things with Robin? Has he moved in?”

“We’ve asked him to move into the guest room while he’s recovering. We thought of asking him to stay though we haven’t thrashed out the details yet.” Said Emma, “but as he’s soon going to be the father of four kids living with us, he’s going to be a permanent fixture.”

His other mother watched him intently. “Henry, do you have a problem with that?”

“No…no problem, though that’s not what I meant. I’m asking about your relationship! You and mum are married, and you’ve now got a significant other moving in. What will he be to you? To both of you?”

“Henry, I’m not sure whether we want to discuss that with you right now!” said Regina. “That’s between your mother, Robin and I and it’s deeply personal! We’ll see in the fullness of time.”

Henry puffed, a quizzical look on his face. “I guess that’s fair enough, though you may want to make the position clearer for folks living around here. It may not be any business of theirs but Roland and Honour have to mix with everyone when you two don’t. This changes everything for them, mums!”

Regina frowned, looking to her wife who seemed to nod in agreement. “So, what do YOU think Henry? About Robin living with us?” said the blonde.

Henry gave a loud sigh before answering. “You want me to be honest?” His mothers nodded.

“Well…he’s a cool guy. Really cool. He’s loved by almost everyone in both towns. He’s a fantastic father to Ro and Honnie. He’s a natural leader, kind and considerate and when he was with mum the first time, I saw how happy he made her. How can you not like someone who died to save your mum! I used to imagine him as my own dad, as I hardly got to know my real one. And if it’s true that he and ma have fallen in love with each other, as Roland said, then I think there’s only one thing left to do…”

“Which is?” asked Regina.

“Precisely what Aurora and Philip did with Mulan. Ask him to marry you and make it official!”

Two days later, on a warm Sunday night, Robin, still temporarily living in Regina and Emma’s spare bedroom, now felt almost restored. Hobbling now, without the use of crutches, he’d spent the last three days surrounded by the family and loved every minute of it. Honour seemed to gravitate to her father’s bedroom at night, snuggling under the covers to be with him. Roland joined them a few times. John had collected Robyn from Zelena’s cottage, dropping her off at the mansion on Saturday night, and Robin had delighted in reading them bedtime stories, before he kissed them goodnight. However, as they couldn’t settle and clambered into their father’s bed.

And the next morning they were there again, snuggled into his sides before he even woke. Regina had looked in on him when she couldn’t sleep. Just knowing he was in their house, so close, still had an effect on her. Now she looked in on the guest bedroom, at the three incumbents in the double bed. His two daughters were resting on either side of his chest, looking contented and safe, while Robin
himself had a soft satisfied smile. The sight made Regina’s heart ache. *Could she really have all this, and Emma? How on earth did she deserve it?*

She’d wanted Robin in their bed, as did Emma. With all the children around, it was thought best to stick to their respective rooms. Emma seemed just as frustrated and, a clumsy half-hearted and unsuccessful attempt at lovemaking between the two women the previous night had done nothing to alleviate her own irritation. And now, looking at the three lying together, she sighed as two arms curled gently around her sides to rest on her growing bulge. “Hi,” whispered her wife, “tea?”

“Please, my love.” She whispered back. “Sorry…I woke early.”

“I understand. Perhaps we should have that ‘talk’ with him…about moving in? I was going to say something before he went off on that stupid jaunt…”

“Perhaps. I’m just worried…”

“Why? Do you honestly think he’ll say no? Gina, he’s being asked by, dare I say it, not one but two gorgeous women, to move in with them and his kids! We’re both pregnant, by him, and you know he worships you and he even said he’s in love with me! So, what’s to lose?” Her whispering became louder. “And if he does refuse, he’s a fucking idiot!”

“I totally agree - I would be!” Said a deep voice from the bed. “And by the way, you’re crap at whispering, Emma!”

“You’re supposed to be asleep!” admonished Regina, albeit with a smirk. “We’re talking about you, not to you!”

“Begging your pardon, miladies, but you worry too much!” Honour snorted on his left side, still deeply asleep. “Emma, just ask your question!”

“All right, jug-ears! We’d like you to consider moving in here. You’ve Honnie and Roland, plus you’ve put both of us in the family way. You’ve-”

“I think it takes two to do that Emma - or in our case, three! Even so, the answer’s yes.”

“Yes? Just like that?”

“Well not quite. I wasn’t lying when I said I’ve fallen in love with you, Emma! As I am with Regina. There’s nothing I want more than to bring up our children together. The three of us. Though there’s a couple of things I need you both to agree on…”

The women looked to each other, wondering what was coming. “Such as?”

“The forest is a big part of me! I have Maria, Caroline and the men. They’re family too, so I want us to keep a base in Sherwood as well as here. Not during school days obviously. There’s a large suite of rooms at the Earl, plenty big enough for all of us…”

“You expect all of us to move to Sherwood?” said Emma.

“No, of course not. Emma, your family is here, and your friends. I just want us to have a second home. It’s only a few miles away and money is no longer an issue for any of us. I thought it could work when they’re not at school. I am running the Earl as a business, after all…”

The women looked at each other, neither seeing any particular problem. “Ok, that seems fair. Anything else?”
“If I’m to sleep here, we get a new bed for this room! This one is bloody awful and I regularly sleep on the ground! God alone knows how the girls manage in it.”

That made both women chuckle. They all knew that, once things had settled, it was unlikely Robin would be spending most nights in anywhere but their own bed. “Agreed. How are you feeling?” said Regina.

“In desperate need of a bath! I’ve only had a rubdown with a cloth the last few days. I must stink!”

“Probably, but no more than usual!” teased Emma, “wanna hand?”

“Only easing these two off me, so I can stand.” The women went either side, lifting the children gently from him to lay them back down. He immediately apparated on to his feet, before quietly hobbling out of the room, and into the wives’ bedroom, with their adjoining bathroom. The women followed close behind, unsure how unsteady he would be as he hobbled, proudly, without crutches. Moving slowly to the large slipper bath, he turned the taps on before clumsily slipping off his boxers, to the obvious delight of the two women behind as they admired his tight little buttocks now on display. Emma felt like a pervert watching him, though she was the first to comment.

“Let me get you some foam bath! It’ll feel good.” She appeared to his right, a bottle of something in hand as she poured it into the cascading water. He waited a few minutes for the large bath to fill then gingerly stepped in, easing himself into the warmth.

“Better?” said Regina, seeing the look of bliss on his face as the foam encompassed him.

“So much better!” He groaned, before remembering he’d just taken over the bathroom. “Sorry, am I in the way?”

“Nope. Gina and I can use the loo next door. Though you don’t mind if we get ready for bed?”

“Of course not. Pretend I’m not here...” As he sank back, he opened his eyes to see Emma, already now stripped down to her bra and panties, looking at herself in one of the two mirrors, as she brushed her teeth. As she then moved to wash her face, Regina now came in to join her, also just in her underwear, as they stood side by side completing their ablutions; clearly a nightly ritual and completely comfortable in each other’s space.

He couldn’t take his eyes off them. The blonde and the brunette, both beautiful, strong, sassy women in their own right, but together they were completely captivating. The most wonderful women in all the realms, here with him. They exchanged little comments, which he didn’t really pick up on during his admiring gaze. They were now facing each other, looking down at their swollen abdomens, comparing them. Robin desperately tried to focus on what they were saying.

“You’re carrying lower. I reckon that’s a girl, Gina!” Said Emma, now belly-to-belly with the brunette.

“No, it’s just the same as yours - you’re an inch taller than me. I reckon we’re both carrying boys!”

“Nah, I’m carrying the boy. Henry was out the front, like now. Robin, what do you think?” Emma said when she realized he had been staring.

“I think I’m the luckiest man alive! I’m lying in a hot bath looking at two semi-naked goddesses comparing bellies. Bellies containing my babies. Unfortunately, as a result I’m now also a man with a raging hard-on who can’t get out of this bath without serious embarrassment! Ladies, you’ll be the death of me!”
“Well we can’t have that now, can we? Shame, I’ve bought some stretch mark cream I was hoping you’d apply!”

“Well, perhaps I’m rallying! Give me ten minutes, ladies!” he sounded desperate to comply.

After his soak, Robin slowly limbed out of the slipper bath, magicking himself a large white cotton robe before stepping out of the bathroom. The site awaiting him took his breath away. Regina and Emma now lay on soft cotton towels on the large bed, heads either end of the bed and still in their underwear. They seemed to be massaging some sort of cream into each-others toes and feet. Regina saw the quizzical look on his face. “You know, it’s not easily bending over when you’re this shape!” she explained. *This shape being thanks to you!* Didn’t need to be added. She pointed towards a small tray beside the bed holding two small bottles of oil, one clear and one blue, and several small hand towels.

“Robin, would you do the honours?” asked Regina, her voice sultry. Emma turned herself to now face him, lying beside the brunette, an odd look on the face.

“You don’t need to ask.” He picked up the clear bottle. “Is this the stuff you used on me?”

“Yes, the blue bottle is. It’s from Agrabah and Princess Jasmine swears by it. It smells divine and she said it can be used safely all over the body. The clear bottle is an oil to prevent or reduce stretch marks. We’re going to get a lot bigger than this, Robin, and we don’t want to be left with unnecessary wrinkles afterwards. So, would you mind?”

“Certainly. Though I don’t want to get oil on your clothes. May I?” with a smirk and a flick of his fingers, two bras and two pair of panties now lay in a neat pile beside the bed and the women lay completely naked before him, a small look of surprise on both faces. “Hmm. Emma, may I do you first?”

She giggled. “You may, but I think we need to balance things up a bit!” With a flick of her own magic, the Outlaw’s dressing gown now also lay on top of the underwear pile, leaving him also completely naked. Pretending not to be bothered, and desperate to avoid letting himself get too aroused, he swiftly palmed a small amount of the oil, gently easing it over Emma’s swollen abdomen and working it into her skin all around, almost touching the faint line of pubic hair, before working around the sides. She loved the feel of his large, confident hands, realizing he’d definitely done this before. Perhaps to Regina, or Marian. She didn’t care, she just knew it felt good. “Hmm – that’s nice.”

For Emma, the experience seemed to be over far too quickly as she opened her eyes to find he was now already working on Regina similarly. She saw the look of bliss on her wife’s face. “Ladies, I would happily cover a wider area for you but I’m not sure how safe this other oil is? I gather some can cause irritation…”

“No, you did just right, Robin! The blue bottle’s for all-over use. It has an olive oil base with lots of exotic ingredients but according to Jasmine, can even be used…internally.” Regina used the last word with a wicked grin worthy of her sister. “Lucky old Aladdin!” said Emma, remembering the other Saviour’s few days in Storybrooke.

“Well in that case, ladies, a full body massage it is!” After toweling his hands dry of the first oil, he now repeated with the blue bottle’s contents, which were far more fluid and a lot more for such a small bottle. Robin could smell the soothing aromas of frankincense, possibly jasmin, patchouli, myrrh, musk and a couple of others with which he was less familiar. It smelt wonderful and clearly seemed to be having a remarkable effect on Emma, who moaned gratefully as he worked over her shoulders and arms. Regina now watched with interest as he tenderly worked the oil into Emma’s
sides, gently but firmly enough to be felt, working around her breasts, avoiding the peaks and being careful to respect her dignity. *Or at least until she asked him too!* His hands continued to work down as he shifted lower for access, wincing a little as his recently broken leg had to adopt a new position to support him. Avoiding the formerly massaged abdomen, his hands now worked her left hip, front and back, one hand cupping her buttock and squeezing gently as the oil spread. Emma gasped loudly when his left hand worked around the top of her inner thigh, gently sliding to squeeze the limb. He meticulously worked all points on her leg, avoiding the feet, before continuing at her left hip. As his right hand now rolled between the thighs, always being careful to avoid her core, Emma’s whole torso rose, almost in expectation of his touch, and Regina could see her wife, eyes closed in concentration, in utter bliss. A bliss that seems to be turning Regina herself on as she watched. “It must be my turn by now?” she whispered into Emma’s ear.

“Not yet - he’s missed a couple of bits!” Emma groaned, noticeably opening her legs a little wider. “I’m sure I paid for the gold service!” Robin and Regina looked at each other in shock, before he burst out laughing, causing Regina to follow too before saying, “Get in the queue, bitch - I’m still waiting for my turn!”

Robin smiled down at them before again filling a palm with the blue oil, and again working it all across Regina’s body. As with Emma before, she groaned in delight, savouring every squeeze, every touch, every near-miss on her most delicate areas. Robin was now savouring her reactions, becoming more emboldened as he saw Emma eyeing her wife’s reactions enviously. After a good fifteen minutes, he pulled back onto his haunches.

“Now then, would you both like me to do your backs – or would you prefer Emma’s Gold Service? It seems a small price to pay for the ‘Platinum Service’ you gave me the other evening?”

Regina’s eyes flew open, meeting Emma’s. They shared an evil grin. “Need you ask?” said the blonde.

“Very well. Lie still, side by side, and close your eyes. Seriously, close your eyes now!”

The pair did as he instructed, Regina putting her left arm around Emma’s head, pulling herself closer. Emma slid her oiled right arm behind Regina’s back, as they lay together, hips touching. Robin thought, only for a moment, how best to proceed. Summoning his magic, he rose, floating above them, allowing himself to ease the aching on his bad leg. Moving toward their heads first, he placed a warm kiss on Emma’s mouth, then Regina’s in turn, savouring their individual tastes as his tongue skirted their lips.

“No peeking now!” He whispered, floated lower, surveying the visions before him. Their breasts, growing slightly fuller due to the pregnancies, showed nipples hardening in expectation. He cupped his left hand on Regina’s left breast, his right hand on Emma’s right peak, before pushing the two breasts gently together, allowing the pair’s stiff peaks to graze gently against one other, almost in combat. Regina slowly opened an eye at the odd, sensitive feeling and her breath hitched as she watched him roll the two nipples, one dark and one pink, together. “Don’t play, Robin!” she warned, regretting it as he swiftly pulled both little peaks into his mouth, grazing both in his teeth, slowly pulling back and making both women hiss in unison. “Geez!” groaned Emma. “Oh god!” said Regina.

As he feasted on the two hard nubs, twirling his tongue around both in a figure eight, he made himself float lower. His hands worked lower across their freshly oiled bellies, but this time they weren’t stopping. Both women seemed to instantly know what he was planning, and as Emma’s thighs parted gently, willingly, Regina lifted her left leg up, parting her thighs before lowering it onto the inside of Emma’s right thigh, opening them both fully up to what was to come.
Holy fuck, just look at them! Don’t mess this up, Robin – just don’t! He prayed as is hands continued their journey, his right moving directly down between Emma’s thighs, his left to Regina’s, cupping both mounds, before working his fingers around the edge of their centres, delighted when he heard appreciative moans. Pressing his palms on the sensitive areas above, he didn’t want to rush, just to give them the sort of explosive relief they’d given him days before.

Emma opened an eye, squinting to see what he was up to. To her astonishment, she saw the slightly ludicrous sight of this naked man now floating inches above them. As she watched, she felt his warm hand between her legs, she saw his left hand on Regina, presumably giving her the same treatment. She was tempted to say something sarcastic until she felt his warm fingers entering her, probing, while his thumb rolled gently over her clitoris. She felt the electric buzz and stiffened, turning to Regina as she lay beside. “Oooh!” groaned the brunette, finally opening her own eyes. Seeing the blonde beside her staring back, she pulled her in with her free hand, her mouth latching onto Emma’s in a frenetic kiss. Their tongues sliding alongside each other in their familiar mating ritual, until Regina breath suddenly hitched as Robin sucked on her own clit with his lips. The women now curled their upper bodies in towards each other, each wrapping her hands around the other’s head to aggressively deepen the kiss as much as they could, given their positions. Emma’s tongue was now firmly embedded in her wife’s mouth, sliding up the inside of her cheek, as Regina’s tongue massaged it. It was wet, it was messy, it was wonderful!

Robin heard the wonderful noises above him as he worked to build them to their climax. Seeing the moisture now starting to flow from them both, coating his hands, he eased two of the fingers of his right hand, already smeared with Emma’s love juices, out of her before plunging them back in again alongside his third finger. A loud “Aaah!” came from the Saviour. He did the same into Regina’s entrance. Now he started to work the pair of them in tandem, his thumbs now pressing gently onto the hard nubs and earning a “fuuck!” from the Queen. The wives kiss broke as Regina looked down at him. “Enjoying yourself down there?” she croaked, beaming at her partner as he settled into his rhythm. “You have no idea!” he said, before latching his lips around Emma’s clit, drawing a loud hiss. Emma loved watching Regina cum. It was one of her favourite moments when they made love. Faces now inches away from each other, they now lay, staring into each other’s eyes intensely as Robin ploughed into them. Emma felt a small increase in force and size, realizing he must have inserted a third, possible even a fourth, finger into her. Seeing Regina twitch, she knew he had just done the same to her.

“You close? I am!” She breathed into Regina’s mouth. Regina’s eyes fluttered, the tell-tale sign of an orgasm starting to take over. “Mmmm!” was all she said as the pulsing between her thighs began. Seeing her losing her control had an immediate effect on the Saviour, whose body now responded in kind. “Oh fuck!” she groaned. Instead of pulling each other into another kiss, the two women just looked deep into each other’s faces, green and blue, pulling closer, their breasts squashed tightly together, relishing watching the orgasms hit the other. And they did, together! Emma’s eyes watered and her lips trembled. Regina’s fierce brown eyes squinted as she dragged her teeth over her lower lip. They came loudly, shaking and yelling each other’s names into their faces in worship, as Robin continued below, regardless.

As breathing calmed, the pair slowly peeled apart, eastern scents of the blue oil now combining with other, more earthy, essences. Emma watched as Robin, having now removed his fingers, floated down onto the bed, between their thighs, with an oh-so-smug look on his face. “I trust the Gold Service was to your satisfaction ladies? You’ll be recommending it to your friends?”

“The ‘service’ was most acceptable” said Regina, “Though if you offer it to anyone else we know, they most certainly will no longer be required,” said Regina, with a lecherous grin, as he now licked his right and left index fingers in front of them. They watched him groan in delight, though Emma couldn’t resist a comment. “So, which of us tastes best?” she asked.
“Well…this one…is rich, exotic and mellow,” he rose and slowly wiped his left ring finger, which had been in Regina, across Emma’s lips. She smirked, giving the digit a little nip with her teeth. “And this one…vibrant, tangy and intoxicating!” He wiped his right little finger across Regina’s lips. She dragged her tongue across it with an evil grin. “But together…” he now pulled both middle fingers into his own mouth, sucking on them exaggeratedly with his eyes shut. “They make the perfect blend!”

“Underneath it all and beneath all that flattery, you really are an old pervert, aren’t you, Locksley?” chuckled Emma. She was neither shocked nor disgusted by his display, which she found, oddly erotic!

“Less of the ‘old’, thank you Emma Swan-Mills! Now, I best leave you to your sleep…” He rose slowly, reminding himself he was still a little unsteady on his feet. Worse still, he was still naked and sporting a semi-erection. He magicked a dressing gown back on himself. “So I’ll bid you good night…”

“You’ll do no such thing!” scolded Regina. “We paid for the full treatment!”

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Settling Down as a 'Thruple'

Chapter Summary

The rest of Storybrooke gets to know about the Mayor, The Saviour and the Thief, and their new relationship. Rumple and Belle try to work together for the sake of the baby. All is well until Emma gets a nasty shock.

Chapter 36

The following morning, Saturday, was a slow start. Robin, usually the early riser, had again woken to find himself with Emma and Regina wound tightly into his sides, heads resting either side, on his chest. They’d finally fallen asleep, after a good two hours of vigorous lovemaking, with him spooning Emma in the middle. So somehow, they’d moved around in the night. It was a lovely feeling to once more have these two naked goddesses resting on him, pinning him down, but unfortunately, lying on his back had again left him with a parched throat and a need to pee.

Extricating himself slowly and carefully from the bottom of the bed, he was relieved to find his left leg now being more co-operative. Standing, and apparating a pair of black boxers to cover himself, he crept silently into the bathroom, quickly relieving himself before washing and leaving to make a pot of tea. Stopping only to take off the magic shield on the bedroom door, he stepped out on to the landing.

He was more than surprised to see Honour and Robyn, sitting quietly on the landing and playing with toys, whispering to each other, a short distance from the door.

"Mornin' daddy!" said Honour, a big grin on her face. "Hi papa!" said her sister.

"Girls? What on earth are you doing out here? Shouldn't you be in bed, or downstairs? " He knelt down to deliver a quick kiss on the top of both heads.

"It's late, papa!" said Robyn. "Honnie and I woke up in your bed, but you weren't there! Henry made breakfast, and he an' Rollie have gone to socca! We couldn't find you."

"Henry said you might be in with mummy and mamma, but we couldn't get inna door and he couldn't magic us in. So he said we should wait till you got up!" added Honour.

Robin was silently relieved his new spell to soundproof and lock it had worked. The last thing Emma and Regina would want is the girls coming in to see the three of them together. Honour had already blundered in recently, but he wasn't ready for them to be witnessed by Henry as well!

"All right, if you've had breakfast already, come with me while I have some. I'm going to make your mummies some tea. I promised Roland I would go to the match, so I'll make some tea and tell them you're downstairs." As he turned to lead them, Honour said. "I'll go for a wee first and come down."

In the kitchen, as he brewed a pot of tea for the women, he lifted his older daughter onto the kitchen worktop to chat to her. Robin had spent a lot less time with Robyn than his other girl and was enjoying a few minutes alone. He avoided all mention of her mother. Since he'd returned from England, Robin had been having counselling sessions with Archie Hopper to help control his hatred
of Zelena. The wise man had advised him to use intermediaries in all dealings with her regarding Robyn, so John and the guys had usually been the ones to collect and drop her off at the mansion or Storybrooke.

Although her hair and eyes showed a look of her mother, Robyn appeared to have a shy, gentle nature compared to the former Wicked Witch, who thankfully was now powerless. Heading towards her sixth birthday, the girl showed some strong artistic skills, like Roland, and her guest bedroom at the pub were littered with her paintings, drawings and sketches. Rather intelligent for her age, she had been placed in a faster learning stream at school and whilst excelling in her grades, showed a love for the outdoor life in the forest, having made a good friendship with Alan a Dale and his boyfriend, who took her under their wing when she and Honour came to visit her father's friends.

"Robyn, would you like to come and watch Roland's football match with me? I'll be leaving soon..."

"No thanks daddy, but I would like to come with you and Honnie to help Auntie Maria when the deer babies come, if you'll let me?"

"Of course, my love. We don't know exactly when, but Maria will give us a few hours notice, so I will call you once I know." He finished boiling the kettle, prepared a pot and poured two mugs of tea to take up to Emma and Regina, though as he placed them on the tray, his younger daughter appeared in the kitchen, giggling.

"Something funny, Honour? Something you'd like to share?"

"Um...I popped in to mummy and mamma to wake them up cos it's late, an' they were snuggled up but...they didn't have any clothes on!" she sniggered.

"Oh," said Robin, trying his best not to smirk. "Perhaps they were hot! You know, now you're a little bit older, Honour, you should really knock before you go into your mothers' bedroom in future. They could be getting changed or something..."

"But you were in bed with them too, like yesterday, but when you came out you had your pants on."

"Yes...well, maybe it's because I'm used to living in the forest, I don't get too hot...or cold. Still, you should always knock in case your mummies need their...private time."

"What...like for cuddling and stuff?"

"Yes. Grown ups need their private time."

"Mummy told me off once for not knocking!" piped up Robyn. "She was quite angry, though I think it was because she still had somebody with her and they had no clothes on either!" Robin tried desperately to hide his surprise.

Belle and Zelena? He never thought either of them gay...or bi! He remembered something Rumple said about them trying to repair their relationship. Was this the cause of it? He also remembered something about the Dark One forced to make a magical vow never to kill her. Though he knew the man had even more reason than him to end her life. He needed time to think how it would affect his
daughter. Perhaps he needed to speak to Regina. However, his phone went off, interrupting his thoughts:

Roland:                   Dad, you weren’t in your bedroom? Henry’s given me a lift to football. Should be done by 13.00. Can you come see me? xx

Good. That would give him time to feed them, freshen up, wake Emma and Regina and hopefully go a little earlier to watch him play. He texted a reply.

Dad:                       I’m fine, my boy. Just held up, but I’ll come to see you. Love you xxx

Then he saw the next text. From Henry. OK, here we go!

Henry S-M:                 I’m taking Rolly to the fields for his soccer match – though he says I have to call it football! Ma should have done it, but it seems she slept in. Honnie and Robbie woke up, so as you weren’t in the guest room, and mums’ was locked. I had no choice but to leave them. CU later.

Then came the supplementary text, also from Henry. This one made him cringe with embarrassment:

Henry S-M:                 Thank god you sorted out their room lock and soundproofing! Now get them a new alarm clock!

He wasn’t relishing the conversation he knew he needed to have with Regina and Emma. They’d agreed on no secrets and he didn’t want Henry surprising them with this. The next half hour he spent making breakfast for his girls, before taking up two hot drinks. Honour, at his suggestion and a promise to play, went into the little playroom to entertain herself with her Wendy House dolls.

As he entered the bedroom, he saw the wives still asleep, though as usual, they appeared to have gravitated together in the vacated space, into a hug. They looked serene, happy to be in each other’s arms. He dropped their cups on either side of the bed, tempted to just sit and look at, rather than wake them. He sat on the edge on Emma’s side and grinned as his mind went back to what they’d all been doing just hours ago. After their first heavy bout of lovemaking, being careful in their fecund state, they’d all sat drawing breath, when Regina looked at him in a quizzical way. As they drank glasses of water, all sitting facing each other. The questions and answers that followed, led to all of them discovering something new about their other lovers:

“You’re a dark horse, aren’t you? I had no idea you were so...kinky!” said Regina, taking him by surprise. Emma’s brow raised.

“Kinky, my lady? To what are you referring?” said Robin, nonplussed, though Regina was not to be deterred.

“That nipple-on-nipple thing! You rubbing Emma’s against mine. Don’t get me wrong, It felt quite nice, though a bit ticklish but, seemed a little kinky to me!”

“Well…I wouldn’t call it kinky! Erotic perhaps. Making love with you two is wonderful, and I have to admit I rather like it when I see your breasts pressed together. They are, like the rest of you, very beautiful. Is that kinky? Perhaps, perhaps not…”

“What else do you like to see us do?” asked Emma, sporting a salacious grin.

“Well, I’ve answered one question already. I think it’s your turn. If you really want me to say more, you have to promise me you will answer a same number of ‘similar’ questions, openly and honestly?”
“Fair enough,” answered Emma without hesitation as Regina also nodded. “Ask me what you want. I’m a modern girl, so you can’t embarrass me! Or Gina, for that matter.”

“We’ll see,” said Robin, smugly. “Emma, what’s the most erotic thing you’ve seen Regina and I do?” Emma’s cheeks pinked for a moment before she answered.

“Watching Gina give you a blow-job! She’s such a classy lady after all; so, seeing her suck you is a real turn-on! If it’s just been inside me, even more so!”

Regina almost spat her drink out at her wife’s frank admission. Before she could react, Emma spoke again. “How about you Robin? What is the single most erotic thing you’ve seen the two of us do?”

Robin was not to be cowed. “I love seeing you on top of her, Emma, lying between her thighs, with Gina’s legs wrapped around yours, grinding yourself in. Also, that thing you do where you lift her leg over your shoulder, move in between, open each other’s lips and press your cores together. That never fails to arouse me!” he admitted. “I could happily just watch you do that for hours!”

“You mean ‘tribbing’?” Regina now decided to brave it and join in the shockingly intimate detail, knowing they were trying to out-embarrass each other. “It does feel lovely, but it’s hard work to actually stay or come like that. It can also make your thighs ache. There’s a lot of jiggling about, but when we finally get our clits to line up and rub against one other, that’s bliss!” She said it to embarrass him, and surely enough, seeing the sudden heated look on his face, so worth it!

“Hmm,” said the blonde. “Definitely agree – like a little electric jolt! So, what about you, Gina? What’s the most erotic thing you’ve seen Robin and I do?”

“There’s been a few! I love seeing Robin driving hard into you, particularly that gritted-teeth look on your face when you come! But more than that, I love seeing him going down on you, like he’s enjoying a feast! It must be rare for a woman to learn more about giving cunnilingus from a man, but I have learnt…” Robin blushed even more at the praise. He definitely wasn’t expecting this!

Emma saw his blush, and rejoined the attack. “Back to you Rob – where, or who, taught you to do that? Gina just basically said it wasn’t her! Most guys I’ve met will only do it if we ask, but don’t really want to, even if they expect it in return! You seem to really get into it. Who made you the King of Cunnilingus?”

It was his turn to choke on his drink. “Thank you for the high praise! I guess your thanks should go to Marian and her former ladies’ maid, Sophia.”

Regina gave him an odd look. “You were with her maid, before Marian?”

“No. The three of us were…together, briefly. Nothing serious, but in her time my Marian was quite the lustful lady, though we would never be unfaithful to each other. She came from a landed, wealthy family related to the King. We experimented, told each other what we liked; showed each other…”

“Marian was bisexual, like us?” said Emma, surprised. “I’d never imagined that from the brief time I knew her in the Forest. She was certainly beautiful, but didn’t seem that way.”

“What way? Like you and Gina? Or Mulan or Aurora, or even Ruby? All very different women. Is there a ‘type’?” Both women nodded in agreement.

“Next question’s mine, I believe.” He gave Regina an intense look. “Do you two ever indulge in bondage or have any sex toys?” Now it was Emma’s turn to spit out her drink.

“Wow! We’re really going there, aren’t we?” she laughed aloud. But Regina merely gave him a
devilish grin. “Both. We have a selection and, if you’re a very good boy, one day we may introduce you to them!”

“Then I shall endeavour to be a very good boy indeed! I could imagine you would make quite the delicious Dom, Gina.”

“Actually, I usually take that role,” said Emma with a smile, “though we do swap regularly. I think I could enjoy having another ‘sub’ involved…” she saw the heated look on his face and the now present bulge in his boxers. “Let’s lighten up the questions a bit? Rob, if Gina and I didn’t exist and you HAD to choose someone else, currently living, to be with, one woman and one man. Who would you choose?”

“Hmm. Difficult. I’m not really into men, and I personally can’t stand the feminine-type men, so I suppose I would choose someone like August Booth. For the woman, if she was living in this realm, I rather like Celia Sage, or if she were unattached, Ruby Lucas. What about you, Emma?”

“Well I’d have to agree with you on Ruby for the girl!” That earned a glare from Regina. “What? Babe, you know she’s hot! And those legs are to die for! As for the guy, have you seen Merlin’s son Charlie? He looks like a Greek god! Maybe a bit too young and I'm not in his league, but, wow!”

Regina knew Emma had a thing for Ruby, so, she decide to go controversial herself. “Yes, Charles Sage is stunningly beautiful, for a man! A bit too classic and chiselled for me, though. I like my men rough and natural. So, if Robin didn’t exist, I’d choose David Nolan. He has everything…”

“Fuck, Gina! That’s my dad you’re talking about! C’mon...please?”

“But you wouldn’t have existed darling, would you?” she replied innocently.

Robin just laughed, knowing the reasons she’d said it was to get a reaction from Emma. “You didn’t say who your choice of woman would be, Gina. If Emma didn’t exist…”

“Well, Ruby Lucas is certainly very striking! But I think I would want a more mature woman. So I think Caroline, your cousin,” she answered without hesitation. “She’s lovely. Elegant, feminine, intelligent, beautiful, kind. Any man, or woman, would be blessed to have her. Whale’s definitely punching far above his weight there.”

“All the things I’m not then?” added Emma, a clear look of jealousy on her face.

“Don’t be silly, darling. This, as you said, is just make believe! I have fallen in love with you so very deeply, and I’m yours, and Robin’s, forever. Now, all this talk has made me horny again. What say we go for round three?”

Robin mind flew back to the present as he saw Regina roll away from Emma, starting to wake and yawning. “Robin? What are you doing? What time is it?”

“Just after eleven; I brought you tea but thought you needed a lie-in, after last night’s exertions.”

Her eyes lifted now, awake and panicking. “Eleven? Robin, you shouldn’t have let me lie in; I needed to take Roland to his game! He should have been there an hour ago! What were you thinking?”

“Calm, Gina, it’s all in hand. Henry took him to the game. I’m heading over there to watch him in a few minutes. Stay and rest. Honour and Robyn are playing in the doll’s house, and I’ll take them
with me. Have your tea and relax, have a bath and I’ll see you when you’re ready.”

She relaxed a little. “Um, thank you Robin, you’re an angel…”

“A very tired angel, if I’m honest! Once again, last night was absolutely wonderful, if a little… exhausting!”

“Are we a bit too much for you, thief?” she gave that delicious throaty chuckle he so adored. “Bitten off more than you can chew?”

Bending and whispering in her ear, in the deep growl that always did things to her. “I assure you, Mrs. Swan-Mills, I am more than capable of chewing you, over and over again, as you well know!”

“Hmmff. Best get back in bed then!” groaned Emma, clearly having just heard him as she woke.

“And good morning to you too, Emma Swan-Mills.” He kissed the brunette’s cheek before leaning further over to do the same to Emma. “However, regrettably, I’m off out to see our son at the football match. Gina'll fill you in…”

Emma’s head lifted, raising the quilt and looking down. “Who put me in the teddy? Gina, you’re wearing one too? Hardly your colour, is it?”

“Actually, that was me,” admitted Robin. “Honour came in, so after I poofed them on you both to spare your blushes. I didn’t have time to think about the colour. Rather pretty, don’t you think?”

“The ivory is rather lovely, Robin. Not usually my colour, but nice. Wait – you said Honour? How did she get in?”

"I took the barrier down to go downstairs. She and Robyn were waiting for me outside on the landing and she said she needed the loo before joining me downstairs. She must have popped in on her way down. Sorry ladies, I should have put it back up after I left."

Emma and Regina winced in unison. “Oh, just great!” said Emma.

“Don’t be so dramatic, Emma!” Regina chided, “we told Henry last night we’re now together. He’ll know, despite the pretence of our guest bedroom, that we probably sleep together. It's only a matter of time before we talked with Honour.”

“Perhaps it’s time Robin just moved in here, and have done with. Stop all the pretending!”

The pair looked at him, awaiting his reaction. “Well you’ll have no problem from me! I’ve made it as clear as I can. I love you. Both of you! But you are the married couple, so whether we make this public, or not, is down to you. Henry and Roland. So, I’ll let you make the decision…”

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Robin got to the football ground shortly after noon. Roland’s team had just arrived on the field to start the second half and they were down one goal. Spotting his father, he yelled across to him. “Dad, you’re here! I thought you’d never wake up!”

That earned a big laugh from those in the crowd that heard it!

“Don’t be daft, Ro, I couldn’t miss this for the world!” That earned a suspicious eye roll and smirk from the boy. Seeing his son, now eleven and changed so much, brought a lump in his throat, realising the strong resemblance he now bore to Marian. He stood watching his boy charge on to the pitch, when a voice called to him.
“Rob, are you with anyone? Come, sit with us!” He looked over to see Mayor Philip sitting on the stand with Aurora. He smiled at them and, through force of habit and upbringing, gave a slight bow to the royal pair.

“Stop, we’ll have none of that!” chided the former Princess Aurora, with a smile. “We’re friends Rob, and we already told you, go bowing to us and I’ll keep calling you ‘My Lord’! Come join us? Pip’s down there. I saw him at half-time and he’s a bit annoyed we’re losing. He took a knock earlier on but he’s ok now. I worry he gets a bit too competitive sometimes – like his father!” she rolled her eyes at Philip.

“So not fair! His other mother is the one who can’t stand losing a battle!” he smiled, kissing her brow.

“Where is Mulan. On duty?” he asked after his friend.

“Yeah, till one. You know her, she’s nearly seven months gone now, and still keeps feeling she needs to work till she drops! We both keep telling her to take it a little easier but she insists she’s letting Hank down if she doesn’t put in the hours! You know how she is…” said Philip, exasperated.

“Perhaps you could have a word?” asked Aurora, “She thinks we’re nagging but, coming from her best friend?”

Robin smiled at the loving pair. “I’ll try, but you know Mu! She’s as single-minded, or some might say, stubborn, as her wife!”

“Hey, I’m not that stubborn! I rested when I was expecting Pip!” said the former sleeping beauty, earning a chuckle from the outlaw.

“You have two remarkable wives, Phil! I hope you know that?”

“I do indeed, Mr. Locksley, I do indeed! However, I understand from the town and village gossip that you are also blessed with not one, but two, rather powerful, single minded women in your own life?” As Philip said it, Robin noticed Aurora sitting up attentively, waiting for him to admit it.

“I may be ‘blessed’, but the ladies in question are also a married couple. So, I’ll let them decide if, how or when, to say anything publicly. All I’ll say is, between you two and me, I’m happier than I’ve ever been.”

Aurora beamed. “I’m happy for you; you deserve this! All I’ll say is that, after having Pip, persuading Mulan to join our marriage...completed us.”

Philip nodded. “It’s different from most people’s expectations. They don’t understand. We’re no different from every other family, but we have fifty percent more love! Mu’s now as much a part of me as Rory, and as Rory is to her. It just works. But as the only guy in this trio, in this it can sometimes feel intimidating, like nobody outside understands you. I can’t tell you the number of times I’ve had stupid remarks about being with two women. Like the whole thing revolves around sex, which is ridiculous. Mu and Rory fell in love before I was even brought back! So, if you ever need to talk, I’m here.”

“Thanks. Perhaps sooner than you think!”

The reminder of the game was watched in silence, until a late pass from Roland to Pip to head into the goal brought the trio, among others, to their feet. “Yes! Great goal Phil!” yelled the archer, proud his son had contributed to the equalizer. Philip Senior was already on his feet yelling.
The rest of the game passed smoothly enough, though Robin wondered where Henry had gone. He thought the young man was going to join him in watching the game. He thought no more about it until, a few minutes before the end, Henry walked out from within a small hospitality tent, closely followed by a young blonde girl around his age. Henry looked a bit dishevelled, as was the girl, who seemed to be adjusting her skirt. It took a minute or so for Henry to spot Robin, sitting beside Aurora and Philip in the stand and looking straight back at him! Despite there being a seat beside the Outlaw, feeling slightly awkward he pretended he hadn’t seen him and ushered his friend further along to sit closer to the front.

As a supreme archer, Robin’s eyesight was as sharp as an eagle’s. He obviously saw Henry’s brief glance in his direction, the flush of his cheeks and the deliberate avoidance. A subject for later, perhaps? The young woman behind him was definitely not Violet! Realising it was none of his business, he decided to ignore it and concentrate on Roland.

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An hour later, Robin and Roland trooped into the diner for a post-game hot chocolate. Henry had totally ignored Robin at the end, shuffling off somewhere without even stopping to talk to Rowland. However, Robin’s attention was now diverted by seeing Rumpelstiltskin sitting in a corner, with various people, including Dorothy and one of the fairies, surrounding him. Since the attack in the Dark Realm, Merlin had already told the Outlaw how Rumple had safely rescued his son, Gideon, amongst the children and the boy had been transformed to his state before the kidnap by the Black Fairy.

The Dark One sat with the baby in the crook of one arm. Belle, his estranged wife, sat silently nearby, never taking her eyes off the precious bundle. “Good afternoon, Mr. Gold! I trust young Gideon is now well and recovered?”

Looking slowly up at the archer, Rumple gave a tired smile, almost like he’s just recognised an old friend. “Mr. Locksley! I’m pleased to see you’re up and about! All well, thank you – how’s the leg?”

“A little bit of hobbling, but almost back to full strength, thanks. Though I suspect I’m getting a lot more sleep than you?” he said, smiling down at the baby.

“He’s quite the light sleeper. Good job I survive with so little.” He was interrupted by Ruby stepping between them, handing over a bottle of milk.

“Here, Mr. Gold, I warmed it to just over skin temperature, as you asked. Coffee’s on its way. Anything else you need? Or you, Belle?”

“Perfect. Nothing else thank you, Mrs. Lucas. And thank you again for bringing over the clothes last night! Now, Mr. Locksley, would you join us for a coffee?” That brought a look of surprise from the other people standing around. It was more than rare for the Dark One to show hospitality to others.

“I’d like that, but just a pot of tea? And on one condition. Namely that you just call me Robin? Would you mind if my son joined us?”

“Of course not…Robin. In which case please call me Rumple! It’s Roland, isn’t it?” he said, looking at the curly haired youngster. “What would you like to drink, young man?”

“A hot chocolate please, thank you Sir!” said Roland, knowing the reputation of the Dark One.

“Lovely manners, my boy! Of course. Ruby, would you oblige? And perhaps a tray of pastries and cakes. This young lad must be famished. I understand he’s just got back from a football match. If any
of his friends arrive could you do something for them as well?"

Robin watched as the former scourge and menace of the Enchanted Forest and Storybrooke, now seemed to turn into some sort of benevolent uncle. He also noticed how Belle, his wife, said nothing, merely watching events. It seemed curious to him that the baby’s mother was not involved, merely sitting silently, close to Gideon. His mind went back to Robyn's comment about her and Zelena in her bedroom. *Was it anything more permanent, or some sort of fling?* Belle didn't seem unhappy. If anything just the opposite, although he hadn't heard her speak to Rumple yet.

“Belle, we haven’t spoken in months! How are you?” He stooped over to place a light peck on her cheek.

“I’m well, thank you Robin! Sorry, I’m still a little overwhelmed. I just never imagined having Gideon safely back with us! Rumple told me what you and Merlin did, and how you were almost killed! It was my fault he got kidnapped by her in the first place. I’ll be forever in your debt!” As she spoke, she never took her eyes off the baby. He’d heard how the Gold marriage had fallen apart over the loss of their little one.

“You owe me nothing, Belle, I’m just pleased everything worked out. A few months ago I came back to discover an extra daughter I knew nothing about. A child is an extraordinary blessing...”

“It is indeed,” added Rumple, lowering his voice to all but those closest. “Which is why I have an additional favour to ask of you. As, unfortunately, most of the town seems to be aware, the relationship between Belle and myself was...fractured...by Gideon’s kidnapping.” He looked across at the librarian. “While I don’t wish to discuss the details, we are trying to repair this, for Gideon’s, and all our sakes...”

Robin smiled, not quite sure where this was leading to. Belle silently nodded in agreement and he caught the nod Rumple gave her, as he encouraged her to continue.

“Robin, we’ve known each other a while, all the way back to when I first saw you cure Marian with the wand you stole, albeit temporarily, from Rumple when she was pregnant. I’ve come to know you over the years and you are one of the most honourable, kindly, honest and moral men I’ve ever met! The best example for a child or a young man. Would you be willing to be Gideon’s godfather?”

Robin was taken aback. “I’m...well this is most unexpected! But yes, I’d be deeply honoured!”

“Thank you,” said Gold, a little more formally. “And for the record, though you say we owe you nothing, I insist on showing a small token of our appreciation. I know that, now you have your own magic, you also no longer have need for funds. So perhaps, Belle, if you wouldn’t mind?”

His estranged wife passed Robin a long box, gift wrapped. He took it, slightly bewildered. “Well...thank you, but you know, there's really no need...” He opened it to reveal a thin, foot long, intricately carved stick with a cloth and bone handle. He could feel energy coming from it straight away. “Is this some sort of wand?”

Rumple saw his confusion. “It’s a wand of destiny. Extremely rare, it allows one to create gateways into other realms. Either Merlin or the Hatter can show how it should be used. It’s useless to all, but a handful with a particular type of magic. I cannot, and even the Swan-Mills women would be unable to use it, but sorcerers of your level are sufficiently powerful to wield it. It may save your life one day, and I hope you’ll use it with the utmost caution. It’s my gift for helping me bring Gideon back alive. I suggest you keep it in your magic-free facilities in your new village.”

“Thank you! I will. I’ve only had magic a matter of months, and despite an induction in Avalon a
month ago, I know I have much to learn,” he said, looking over at the tiny baby, which Rumple was about to pass to his mother. “But I do know a fair bit about baby boys! May I be allowed to hold my new godson?” Belle beamed in agreement, carefully passing him from Rumple and across to Robin as he placed the wand down in front of them. Robin collected Gideon into his arms.

“Hello there, young man! I’m so very pleased to meet you. I’m your Uncle Rob. Roland, would you like to meet young Gideon?” The curly-haired adolescent looking over at him. He’d been chomping on a doughnut dropped off by Ruby moments minutes.

“Papa, he’s so cute! Is there such a thing as a godbrother?”

“If not, there should be!” interjected Rumple. “And you, young man, will be his first one!”

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After having agreed to meet Henry, Emma and Regina arrived at the Diner, walking outside to find the children. Emma’s mouth fell when she saw, in place of the diner garden, an enormous trampoline spread across the entire area. At least fifteen children were screaming with laughter as they floated directly above it, dropping at different times onto the surface before being bouncing up again, much higher than physically possible. Some children remained suspended a good twenty feet up! Several adults, including Ruby, Ella, Jeffersen and Mayor Philip, stood around the sides, roaring with laughter at the antics of the happily screaming and yelling children.

Regina looked up in horror when she saw Honour and Roland in the thick of it, even higher than the others. “Honour? Roland? Come down this minute!” as she looked to who was creating this happy mayhem.

“It’s not up to me, mum!” shouted the young man. “Best ask dad!” She turned to her side to see Robin, hands in the air, orchestrating the action. Opposite him, she was shocked to find the Dark One, bearing a huge grin, and chuckling as his own hands moved in tandem. Belle was standing close by, also giggling, while she snuggled a young baby.

“Robin, what the hell are you doing?” she yelled across. Robin answered but didn’t turn his hands or face away from the children.

“Playing, Gina! But I need to focus! I’m doing the bouncing and Rumple’s keeping them within the barrier, so nobody falls out! Jump in with them, love!”

“If it hasn’t escaped your notice, thief, not only am I wearing a dress but I’m also pregnant. Emma, don’t you dare!” she said looking at her wife, who stepped closer, considering getting on it and enjoying the fun.

“Well I’m getting on! I’m not pregnant...” said Ruby, who screamed when, the moment both feet landed on the net, she flew up into the air, plunging down softer than usual, only to be lifted even higher. Her initial shock turned into a loud laugh as she was suspended, only to fall and shoot up again before her bottom had even touched the net.

“Shove over, Wolfie, I’m having a go!” said Philip, yelling when after a small bounce he was propelled a good thirty feet into the air and just held there. “I know that’s you doing that, Locksley!” he laughed.

“Guilty!” said the outlaw as the Mayor plunged down, before stopping just feet away from the net. “Woo Hoo! Who needs Disney World when we got this!”

The fun and screaming continued a few minutes more before Robin and Rumple closed off the game
to various groans from the exhausted children still desperate to continue. As everyone stepped off the
net, Emma walked up to Robin, placing a short peck on his lips without even thinking about the
audience. “Having fun, Locksley?” she whispered. “If somebody hadn’t put me in the family way, I’d be up on there too!”

“Sorry about that,” he pecked her back. “Can’t have your waters breaking in mid-air now can we?”

Once all the children were off, Rumple flicked his fingers and the enormous magical trampoline
simply vaporized.

“How on earth did you get Gold to come out to play?” she whispered when he was out of earshot.

“Look at Belle,” he replied. “They’ve got his son back - it seems to have changed him. They asked
me to be Gideon’s godfather, too!”

“Gold! You gotta be fucking kidding me? You’re going to be godfather to the Dark One’s sprog?”

“I seem to recall you having a child by his other ‘sprog’?” Robin said calmly. “People change, Emma.”

“I agree. But him? You know he threatened to kill me the last time I went into his shop
unannounced?”

“I’m sure he’s put that behind him. But I’ll have a word - Can’t have my child’s mother vaporized
now, can I?”

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Several weeks passed without incident. All of the rescued Dark Realm children whose parents
couldn’t be tracked, had now been assimilated into new homes. Life had calmed and there were no
further crises to deal with. After his weekend break, Henry returned to Harvard to continue his
studies.

Regina and Emma were now five months pregnant and as word had spread, most people in
Storybrooke were now aware of their unusual condition, who the father was, and the fact he’d now
moved into the mansion in Mifflin Street. Snow had made a suitably groveling apology to Robin,
who had accepted it with good grace. Robin was fully restored to health. As Henry and the children
were now fully aware of their new arrangement, it made no sense for him to remain in the guest
room, so they moved him into their main bedroom fairly quickly. The change had been surprisingly
smooth for all.

Emma particularly loved the simple domesticity of the situation. Having Robin there, somehow
seemed to make things calmer all around, as both she and Regina could be quite stressy people. Plus
the additional pregnancy hormones didn’t help. Honour and Roland seemed to be closer to her since
he moved in, and she delighted in the fact she was now ‘ma’ or ‘mamma’ to them, not ‘Emma’. It
seemed as though the closer she got to their father, the closer his children got to her, and she relished
in it.

Unless she was on an early shift, Robin was still usually the first to wake in the mornings, making it
a point to brew a pot of tea and bring them each a cup first thing. As for sleeping arrangements, they
now took it in turns to occupy the middle of the bed, though Emma particularly loved the comfort of
being sandwiched in between these two beautiful people, naked or clothed.

“Sleep well, my beauties,” Robin whispered, kissing the top of Emma’s head before leaning over
and doing the same to Regina’s. “Tea’s on the side, don’t let it get cold!”
“Hmmph!” grunted Regina. “You’re up early. Where you going?”

“To the forest. John and Maria have some fallow deer about to birth. I promised Honnie and Robyn I would take them and I just got a text from Maria saying it’s happening. She’s downstairs with Roland now. John’s getting Robyn.”

“And you didn’t think to ask me if I wanted to come?” Even though she said the words, she had no wish to get up for at least a couple more hours.

“Gina, I mentioned it last week and you didn’t seem interested - but we’ll happily wait while you get up and dressed if you like?” he knew she would decline.

“No…you, you go enjoy yourselves. Take some pictures for me?” she groaned, eyes closing

“Of course. Now rest, I’ll see you later. Love you both…” He delivered another quick kiss to her temple. She smiled before turning to face Emma, wrapping her arms around her, pulling her closer before falling asleep. There they lay for another hour before Emma groaned, lifting an eyelid to see the teacup on her side table, almost certainly cold. The Saviour slowly sat herself up, yawning and scratching her head as she reached across with her other hand to pick up the cup. “Urrgh, cold! Guess I’d better make another one.” As she pulled the duvet off her legs, she spotted something which made her freeze.

“OH FUCK, NO!” she screamed, bringing Regina instantly wide awake.

“Emma, what is it?” her wife yelled, before following her wife’s eyes to see the dark red smear, still wet.

“FUCK! GINA, I'M LOSING IT! I'M LOSING HER! she bellowed, suddenly distraught and shaking.

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The first of the new babies arrive

Chapter Summary

A bit of a shorter chapter this time and I’m moving the plot on a bit. Emma gets a scare during her pregnancy, Mulan has a baby and Zelena wants to move on...

Chapter 37

“FUCK! GINA, I’M LOSING IT!! I’m losing it! I’m losing her!” she yelled, suddenly distraught and shaking.

“Emma, please calm my love! It may be nothing like that! It’s just a bit of spotting. Everything is probably ok!” The older woman did her best to stay calm but even she felt awful! “Let’s just be calm and get you to the hospital, ok? Here let me…” she twirled her fingers and the Saviour now wore fresh underwear with a liner. Emma, too traumatised to use magic herself, merely nodded her thanks and slowly stood, still shaking.

“Gina – I’m frightened! What if it’s -”

“Please don’t talk like that! I’m sure it’ll be alright. Let’s just get you to the doctor. I’ll dress us and poof us over there…”

“NO GINA! Don’t poof us! You know how it knocked you out last time you did that. Merlin specifically told us not to use that much magic when we’re pregnant. I can’t risk yours too! Please don’t Gina! Just phone someone and get them over here!” she begged.

“Ok. Just stay calm.” Within moments she was clad in loose clothes, before doing the same for Emma. She pulled up her speed dials on her phone, first trying Robin’s number. Straight to voicemail. Obviously, he was somewhere in the forest. The thought about calling Whale before finding Caroline’s number. She usually left it on and breathed a small sigh of relief when the trained paramedic, Robin’s cousin, answered. “Hello! Gina, how are you?”

“Emma’s bleeding Carrie! She not quite five months pregnant and she’s bleeding! We can’t use magic to get over there. What do I do?”

“Ok, Regina, just keep her calm and we’ll get to you! Have you contacted Robin?”

“Only his voicemail. He’s in the forest!”

“All right, look, I’m in Sherwood clinic right now. Professor Sage is downstairs, so I’ll run down to talk to him right now. We need to get her here or into Storybrooke Hospital for a scan, but either way, we will. Just tell Emma to lie still and I’ll call you in a couple of minutes. If Robin’s in the forest, I’ll get someone over to find him! I’ll be back shortly…”

The phone clicked, as Regina reassured her wife that help was on its way. Sure enough, within a minute the phone rang back. “Carrie? Thanks for being so quick!” her voice trembled.

“Regina? It’s Merlin. How’s Emma? Where is she?” she could tell from his wobbling voice he seemed to be moving.
“Frightened and in bed! MERLIN, HELP HER - PLEASE?”

“I’m on my way! Just walking out of the building with Carrie now. Having a magic-free clinic is all very well, until you need to leave it in a hurry! May I apparate straight into your house? I’ll bring her with me.”

“Of course – come straight in! I’ll see you downstairs.” She breathed in relief. “Emma, he’ll be with us shortly!” Surely enough, in less than a minute she felt a powerful magical pulse close by and stepped out just in time to see Merlin and Caroline fully apparate at the foot of the staircase. “Up here!” she yelled.

It took but a minute for the pair to assess the situation, looking at the bloodied bottom sheets and a white-faced Saviour. Merlin took her hand to calm her, massaging it with his thumb. “Emma, please listen. There’s only a small amount of blood. This isn’t uncommon. I think it’s just a bit of breakthrough bleeding but we’re going to get you on the scanner, just to be sure. I don’t want you using magic for this, so I’ll apparate you both in a moment. Regina, is there anything you would like to take? Anyone else in the house you need to tell?”

“Merlin – is my baby safe?” The normally feisty, fearless Saviour looked broken and scared. However, whatever the Sorcerer was doing with his thumb, was helping to calm her. “The truth – please?”

“I won’t lie to you. It’s a concern but let’s keep our fingers crossed!” Moments later, a gold flash from his eyes brought a full-size hospital gurney next to the bed. Another flash and Emma lay on it. A moment later they were engulfed in a large golden swirl, before apparating into a side room in Storybrooke Hospital. They rolled her swiftly to one of the ultrasound rooms, as Caroline swung into action, preparing the scanner and Emma, lifting clothing and applying gel. As Regina walked to be by her side, Emma clamped her hand. “Don’t leave!”

“Never,” she whispered back as the machine’s lights came to life, followed by a sound of the speaker switching on. Until now, Emma had been resigned about the course of the pregnancy, as she had all those years ago in prison expecting Henry. However, this had really jolted her out of her complacence. I could lose her! I could lose my baby girl! Tears started to pool in her eyes, a couple coming down her cheek. “Please, little one, please stay there! Stay with mummy!” she croaked, now unafraid to show how terrified she truly was.

As the paramedic’s gentle but sure hand silently coursed over her abdomen, a matter of seconds which to Emma felt like hours, the speaker roared into life, making blooping and swooshing noises. Was that good or bad? Merlin said nothing, studying the small screen with no expression on his face, just intense concentration.

“Professor, shall I prep the vaginal transducer?” Carrie asked, making the two women shudder. Something was seriously wrong!

“In a moment, perhaps. But first, just raise the frequency! It maybe we’re just not picking it up properly. I also don’t want to use magic at this stage, but I will if necessary,” Carrie turned a few dials before applying more gel and starting again. This time, within moments a new sound was heard amongst the rest. A fast, soft galloping. A heartbeat! The women noticed the relief on Carrie’s face but said nothing, as Merlin still had a very serious look on his face, studying the screen. “And… capture!” He instructed, as the image was frozen. He finally looked up. “Ladies, it appears all is well! The heartbeat is strong and there doesn’t seem to be any damage to the sac or anywhere else. Looks like a little breakthrough bleeding only!” Both women gasped in relief, tears from Emma.

“But Emma, I really must insist on bed rest for the next week, at least! No sheriff duties whatsoever!
You’ve had a big scare, young lady, and you’d be wise not to tempt fate!”

Normally she’d give hell to any man calling her ‘young lady’, but remembering the Sorcerer was nearly two millennia old, that makes anyone a baby compared to him. However, her wife answered for her. “You have MY word! I’ll make sure of it! Thank you – both of you!”

Moments later, they felt another strong wave of magic close by, instantly recognizing its signature before the figure became solid. “Robin!” yelled Emma.

“All is well, Robin!” said Merlin, “We just had a bit of a scare. Emma’s going to rest here for a little while, under observation, and hopefully you’ll have her home tonight. But I must stress the bed rest!”

“Are you ok?” he said moved in and wrapping an arm around her shoulder, bringing her head to his chest, holding it there and pressing a kiss to it. “Sorry I wasn’t here to help.”

“Don’t be daft, Rob, you took the kids off. In a way I’m glad. I wouldn’t want them to have seen me like this!”

Regina watched the scene between them, with a smile and a small tear of her own. She was now more certain than ever that her current and past loves, the three of them, would be together, hopefully forever. Merlin watched the scene, remembering his visions. “Robin, you remember I said was going to train you how to use your telepathy? And the mind-linking?”

“Of course. What of it?”

“If you are all agreeable, I can train all three of you to access a form of magic that allows all of you to communicate, but only with each other, telepathically. It might help in the months ahead.”

“You can do that?” asked Regina. “I thought that was only for you ‘Grade Ten Mages’?” she said with a hint of sarcasm.

“Not necessarily, provided you have magic already. You two won’t be able to mind scan like Robin, but the three of you would be able to talk directly to each other’s minds. It might have been useful today. It’s how I communicate with my own children when we’re apart.”

“I saw you do that in the pub!” said Emma, “Anna mentioned that your daughter is pregnant.”

Merlin beamed. “She is! Rosie’s about four months gone. She and Captain Jones are very happy. As am I!”

“Hook’s the father?” gasped Regina. Emma hadn’t told her about Anna’s news.

“Don’t refer to my future son-in-law like that, Regina! You take offence at being called the Evil Queen, because you have changed. Well so has Killian Jones. Time to grant him the respect Zeus felt he deserved!”

Emma watched him chastise her wife and intervened. “I’m pleased. For Rosie and for Killian! After everything he’s been through, he deserves a happy ending…”

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After a few day's of rest, the risk to Emma's pregnancy passed. Regina and Robin treated her with
kid gloves and soon she was back on her feet.

Another two weeks passed before Mulan’s waters broke in Granny’s Diner.

At eight months pregnant and unable to get comfortable, the former warrior had been restless, frustrated by her worsening mobility. She hated being inactive, and even found sitting to watch TV uncomfortable. So, waking early, she decided to take the short walk to the Diner as Philip and Aurora lay asleep.

Supping contentedly on her ginger tea and tea cakes while talking to Ruby, she suddenly felt a little giddy before a hot flush overtook her. A small twinge in her stomach gave her the first indication something was wrong. The second was the warm damp feeling on her seat. As she looked down, she realized, thanks to the fairly detailed pre-natal classes at the clinic, almost immediately what had happened. “Oh hell - Ruby!” she called the wolf as she served. “Ruby - help!”

Caroline Locksley had been on stand-by when the hospital received the call, racing to the Diner. “Well my dear,” she said as she examined the warrior in Ruby and Dorothy’s back room, “as you guessed already, your waters have broken, so I would expect him or her to make an appearance over the next 24 hours. Nothing to worry about though, you’re near enough to full term, but we will need to get you to hospital, just to be safe. We’ll go in my car. You best call your husband and wife.”

And so, in Storybrooke General, about ten hours later, Mulan was safely delivered of a baby girl with her two loves by her sides. It had been a textbook birth, despite being one month premature. As a result, mother and baby needed to stay for a couple of extra days in the refurbished Special Care Baby Unit, to build up her strength. The birth had been an emotional experience, and now the three proud parents passed the baby between them, all wanting a cuddle and none wanting to pass her over, although Philip now reluctantly did, gently draping her into Mulan’s waiting arms, with a kiss to both foreheads, so she could be nursed. The tiny head latched on to her with barely any difficulty.

“You know, the countless hours I watched Aurora nurse Pip, and now with doing the same for our precious love here, I’m reminded it’s one of the most beautiful sites I’ll ever witness…”

“Nice try Philip, but I still feel like a sweaty, overweight bag of yuck!” said Mulan.

“Don’t say that, Moo! He’s right, it is beautiful. I’m so proud of you,” said Aurora, leaning over to press her lips on the new mother’s. “Are you ok if I go and tell Pip? He’ll want to meet his new sister.”

“He’s outside? Yes, bring him in! And Phil, could you call Rubes and Robin? I want our new godparents to hold her before anyone else comes in. If Carrie says it’s ok, I want a shower to freshen up.”

Later that morning, Mulan sat up in bed, her proud spouses sitting either side. Ruby and Dorothy stood nearby, the wolf cradling the new born as Dorothy stroked her little puffy cheeks. “Rubes, I can’t believe this’ll be us soon. She’s utterly gorgeous! You three make truly lovely babies! Pip, are you pleased to be a big brother?” Dorothy asked the Philip Junior.

“You bet! My sissy is the best!”

“She’s certainly very beautiful!” said a deeper voice as someone entered the room.

“Robin! You took your time!” called Mulan, delighted to see her best friend. “Get over here and meet your goddaughter!”

“Sorry Moo, I just had to stop off and get something. Congratulations, the three of you! Here, Take
this…dad.” He pulled out two bottles of champagne and a card, handing them to the mayor. “And
well done, all of you!” he said, leaning over Mulan and dropping a kiss on her forehead. “Sounds
like you did a fantastic job. May I meet my new goddaughter?”

Ruby had already walked around the bed, offering the tiny baby girl into his arms. “Oh my!” he said,
his voice a little croaky. As if on demand, the premature baby opened her eyes as she heard the
deeper voice. “Hello, gorgeous girl – I’m your new god-daddy and you are simply enchanting! Let’s
see - you’ve got one mum’s beautiful almond eyes and your other mum’s lovely cheeks and head
shape. Thank goodness you look nothing like your dad!”

That earned a laugh from the new mothers and an “Oi!” from Philip Senior. “I’ll have you know
she’s got my beautiful chubby thighs, thank you very much!”

“I stand corrected,” said Robin. “She’s rather wonderful – can I take her home with me?” he teased.

“Only when she next screams – she’s got a fine pair of lungs!” added Mulan, looking across from
Robin to the other women. “After Pip, we wanted you three to be the first to see her. Thank you for
agreeing to be her godparents…”

“We’re honoured,” said Dorothy as Robin passed the baby back. “Dot and I were wondering if you
three would do the same thing for us when ours arrives? Sorry Robin, I would ask you too, but we’d
already asked Snow and David. Two sets of godparents, maximum. Although I gather, you’re now
also a new godfather to Gideon?”

“We would be delighted,” said Aurora, beaming at the pair.

“Good choice!” said Robin. “And yes, Belle and Rumple asked me a few weeks ago. It seems we
have quite a few new babies coming down the production line!”

“Including Emma and Regina’s! That’s five children you’ll have in Storybrooke, Rob! Planning to
build a little army of your own soon?” Phillip joked.

“Yes, it’s my cunning plan! I’m launching a slow takeover of Storybrooke. Give me about another
twenty years and I’ll be ready!”

As they continued making small talk, Robin was suddenly seized by an overpowering feeling. A
magical wave. Someone shouting within. A young girl’s shout. “Daddy! Come quickly!” he
instantly recognised the voice before Robyn’s face materialized in his mind. “Help!” The other five
adults in the room saw him flinch before dropping to his knees, trying to listen to

Someone.

“Irritated at the boys’ laughter, he froze them where they stood, determined to find out what happened
later. “Robyn, it’s dad!” he yelled up. “Just a second!” He applied his magic and the five-year-old apparated straight into his arms. “Gotcha!” he said, cuddling her and pressing a kiss onto her cheek, “you’re safe now!”

“My arm, daddy, it hurts!” she said, wincing at the twisted limb.

“Don’t worry, I’ll take you to the clinic right now. What were you doing up there anyway?”

“They threw Sophie’s bag into the tree!” she said, pointed at the two frozen boys, both a few years older and one he recognised from Roland’s class. A young thug his son tended to avoid. “I was trying to get it back! It’s still stuck up there, daddy!” He looked up into branches and, sure enough, the brightly coloured schoolbag was nestled into branches, a good fifteen feet from the ground. “Did they? Well I’ll be dealing with them shortly.”

Robin quickly teleported the schoolbag out of the trees and onto the ground in front of the smaller, sobbing girl, before kneeling down to collect it and hand it over, making her smile. “Thank you, Robin Hood!” she beamed, apparently knowing who he was by his reputation. “You’re very welcome, my dear. Now you run along to your teacher. I need to take Robyn to hospital after I’ve had a word with these two…” he said, looking over at the two terrified boys. The girl looked at the pair. “I don’t like them. They bully me!”

“Is that right? Ok, Sophie, go to your teacher and tell them I’m taking Robyn to hospital.” The little girl collected her bag, dropped a small kiss on Robin’s cheek and ran off.

His smile disappeared completely as he rose, Robyn still in his arm, and turned to the two boys. “Now, what am I to do with you two? You know, I really hate bullies! Anyone who picks on someone smaller than them is pond life to me. You remember Albert Spencer? He was a bully…”

The grisly story of how, months earlier, Robin had pushed his sword under the chin of the former King George, driving it straight up and into his brain, killing him instantly, was known by all the boys in the village. Word had also spread of how he used the same method to despatch the Dark Fairy. So now, seeing the same man, killer of kings and evil fairies, looking at them in anger was absolutely terrifying. One boy started to weep. “Please Sir, we didn’t mean anything by it! We were just having a bit of fun!”

“Picking on little children is not fun! Throwing their bags up into the trees is not fun! Causing my daughter to get hurt is REALLY not fun! It’s cruel and nasty and makes me angry! And you really wouldn’t like me when I’m angry! What do you have to say for yourselves?”

“I’m sorry! Really, really sorry! Please, we didn’t mean it!” sobbed the biggest one, Patrick.

“Very well. You will go and apologise to that little girl today, if she will see you. You will beg forgiveness and if you do not, I will be calling on your parents. I would hate to have to take my sword out of its scabbard. Now go!” He unfroze them and the terrified pair raced towards the school. Turning now to his injured daughter. “Ok, Robyn, let’s take to the clinic and have that arm looked at, ok?”

“I want to be Margot, daddy!” That unexpected comment threw him!

“I’m sorry love; what do you mean?”

“My name. Robyn is your name too, but you had it first! I want everyone to call me Margot!”

“It’s a nice name. Any particular reason for Margot? It it from book or TV?”
“She was a famous ballet dancer. I was reading about her. I want to be like her!”

“Ok, well let’s talk to your mother about it. If you want to change your name properly, or just be called Margot, I’m sure we can do something about it. Now let’s see about that arm.” A moment later, the familiar swirl took them both off to Sherwood Clinic.

“So, Robyn, that locket your father gave you, turned out to save you?” asked Regina when she heard about the girl’s visit to the clinic and why her arm was now in a sling. The former queen heard about the bullying that caused it and promised herself to have words with Snow to keep a closer eye on the miscreants.

“Yes, I was stuck so I just held it, thought about daddy and asked him to help me! Then he was there! He took me to hospital and the doctor there put this on me,” she showed off her sling proudly. “Victor said I can take my sling off in two days’ time, but I mustn’t lift anything heavy for one week or get it wet! He also gave me a lollipop!” she gave a gummy grin.

“Did he? Well I… wait, Victor Whale? I thought he was in New York! What’s he doing back?”

“He came back for a long weekend, mainly to see Caroline,” said Robin. “He proposed to her last month and she said yes! I haven’t seen her to congratulate her yet, though. I gather that while he’s training, he’s going to travel back and forth quite a bit.”

“Good. I don’t want him taking away the best damn paramedic we have!”

Robyn, wearing the small sling around her arm and shoulder, sat quietly as her father and mother moved on to discussing her request. Emma and Regina sat close on the nearby couch. The former Wicked Witch seemed a quite different figure in front of the three magic practitioners. Her former arrogance and acerbic nature seemed to be replaced by something else.

“Well, she did mention to me that she wanted to change her name. She started ballet classes a few weeks ago with a couple of friends who also wanted to do it. She’s quite good, actually! She’s been watching a few videos about it too. She seems obsessed with Rudolf Nureyev and Margot Fonteyn…”

“Margot Fonteyn? That’s the name!” said Robin as he grabbed his phone to find details on her daughter’s heroine.

“I have no problem with it!” said Zelena. “I named her after you, but now you’re no longer dead, if you’re agreeable we can get a lawyer to do the paperwork. Basically, we have to ask a court’s permission and put it to a judge. It’s easier if she does it now than when she’s older. However, you may want to sign this first…”

Zelena pulled out a thick envelope, passing it to Robin. “It’s the legal stuff to have you legally recognised as Robyn’s father. That Chamberlain chap drew it up for me. Get a lawyer of your own to check it over, sign it and then it’s done.”

Robin was astonished, looking at the woman who, six years ago, had sexually assaulted him, disguised as Marian. “Thank you. I’ll get it done as soon as possible.” The redhead merely nodded, looking up at her sister who tilted her head toward the kitchen, indicating she wanted a word in private. The two stepped away on the excuse of carrying in more tea. The moment she entered the kitchen, Regina turned to face her, a suspicious look in her eye. “You seem very… accommodating about all this! Anything I should know?”

“Not really. Robyn’s father’s back, she wants him in her life, who am I to stop what’s right? Besides,
he’s also now got more magic than anyone else around here, so it’s not as though I could do anything about it even if I wanted to. It also means I could go on a break if I wanted to, knowing she’ll be looked after…”

“Ah ha - so that’s it! Ok, fess up sis, where you going? Don’t tell me you’re even considering Wonderland?”

“Don’t be so dramatic! I would never leave Robbie – dammit, Margot – for too long. No, it’s just I was hoping to take a little trip. Somewhere away from this godforsaken dump. Somewhere with no magic and nobody knows me as a green skinned witch with a dodgy past.”

“I know you Zee. You never do anything spontaneously. You’re planning something! So come on, out with it?”

“It’s not like that. I’ve been trying to make friends outside, in the real world. I’m on a few social media sites.”

“Dating sites? Is that it? There’s nothing wrong with that. How did you get on?”

“Pretty good. There’s a lot of dross out there, but a few decent ones too. I was hoping to go on a little trip to California before the end of the year. Just a couple of weeks. I originally thought about taking…Margot…but, well with her father here, he’s bound to suspect I won’t come back! So this kind of makes sense!”

“Sounds like a good idea. So you’re going on what, a few dates with guys? Or girls?” Word had already reached her of some of Zelena’s more recent liaisons, though the former witch didn’t know how much her sister knew.

“There’s about a dozen people I’d like to meet up with, plus a small friends group of men and women I’ve gotten to know. There’s one guy in particular, Chad, who is bloody hot! We’ve been talking and, he seems really nice on web calls but, who knows, he may be a disappointment when face-to-face? Either way, I want to try, and I’d have more luck dating out there than here, that’s for sure…”

“Well good luck with that. Do any of them know you have a daughter?”

“All of them do. It’s more of a friends site than a dating site. So, I’m not sure how this’ll work or if I get serious about Chad or anyone. One thing’s for sure, they can’t come back to Storybrooke now, can they? I guess I’ll have to figure it out later.”

“Well again, I wish you luck. Everyone deserves a fresh start, if they work for it…”
A Lovers' Tiff

Chapter Summary

Regina overreacts to a surprise by Robin, who goes off in a huff. Emma tries to repair the damage.

Chapter Notes

Hi all! Again, I'm so pleased some of you have stuck with me. I'm going to lighten it up a bit now before a couple of happy distraction chapters. Enjoy...

Chapter 38

Another two months passed; it was now late November; today, Henry was returning to Storybrooke from Harvard for the Thanksgiving recess. The Swan-Mills couple were now seven months pregnant without any further incidents. Robin had fully settled in to Mifflin Street and most of the town were now fully aware of his rather unusual relationship with the married couple.

Robyn, or Margot Locksley-Mills, as she was now known, had also moved into the mansion, temporarily sharing Honour’s bedroom, while Zelena took a three-week break to meet her online friends in San Francisco. On the edge of Storybrooke, Belle had moved into Rumple’s house, into a guest bedroom, as they had started to try and mend their relationship, telling themselves it was for the sake of Gideon.

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As he brought a tray with cups of tea into their bedroom, neither of his lovers was in a particularly good mood that morning. Though never a great morning person, Emma in particular, seemed even more grouchy than usual, as she lay on her back massaging her swollen abdomen. “I feel like a fucking beached whale - I was never this big with Henry! I get out of breath just going up and down the stairs and this little swine never keeps still! My hair’s greasy, and I keep getting spots. I’m hideous!”

“At least you don’t have to get up to pee every ten minutes!” moaned Regina "And even my boobs have started leaking! Thanks a lot for this, thief!” She glared at Robin. “You’re definitely getting the 'snip’ after this!”

“The snip? Shouldn’t we just cut his balls off and have done with it?” said the blonde, before turning to her wife. “And thank you, Gina, for not disagreeing when I said I was hideous!”

Robin tried desperately not to laugh as he listened to the pair bitch and moan. “My loves, neither of you look hideous, or ugly or any such thing! You’re beautiful, and it’ll all be worth it in just a couple of months!”

“Nice try, thief, but that’s bull and you know it! Wait, was that a grin? How dare you grin!” Emma
was now in full flow. “You try pushing a bowling ball out of your cooch and see if you like it?”

“If I did it would probably blow my cock off! Then you could call me Robina…”

“Oh, shut up!” Regina said, trying not to smile herself. “You’re not coming near us ever again with that thing, until you get a damn vasectomy!”

“Well, just so you know, I have spoken to my future cousin-in-law about just that very subject! He’s explained the process and it isn’t too complicated. So, if you’re both agreeable, I’ll be getting a vasectomy in the near future!”

That drew their attention. “You’d…you’d do that?” said Emma.

“Of course. You’ll each have given birth twice, we have Honour, Roland and I have Margot too. What with Henry, I can’t imagine you’ll want any more children after this, so, I’ll make the arrangements…”

Regina looked at Emma, concerned. “No, Robin! Please don’t do that just yet. I’m sorry we’re picking on you, but don’t go doing anything hasty! Let’s just see what happens in the months ahead…”

“All right, but seeing as you two are struggling with this, it’s a small price to pay…”

“We’re not struggling, we’re just pregnant!” grouched Emma. “Go read up on pregnancy hormones and stuff on the web and ignore most of what we just said. I’ll be fine when I get myself cleaned up…”

“How about I run you both a bath? I’ll go sort out the little ones with breakfast and you two take a soak?

“Gina and me in the bath right now, doesn’t leave much space for the water…”

“Hush you!” said Regina. “That sounds heavenly, Robin, but we don’t have time to lounge. Henry’s due here later and I need to organize food for the weekend. Thanksgiving dinners don’t just happen by accident!”

“All in hand, love! I meant it to be a surprise. We’ve organized a Thanksgiving lunch at the Earl, for all the family. Maria and Carrie are organizing the food, so you just have to turn up and enjoy. Do you think I want you sweating over a hot stove, trying to organize lunch for everyone, when you’re seven months pregnant? No chance.”

“What about Emma’s parents? And Neal? They’re expected here too! You had no right to take that decision without consulting me! Consulting us. Henry wants lunch with his family!” Regina seemed to be genuinely annoyed.

Robin was stung. He thought he was doing something nice, but clearly hadn’t expected that reaction. Emma saw the hurt look on his face. “Well I think it’s a lovely idea, Gina! He’s right, why should you cook for everyone, when you don’t have to? You’ll just get hot, flustered and…”

“And I LIKE IT! I like doing it, ok! He had no right…” Even as the words left her, Regina knew she was being petty, but just couldn’t stop herself. “I can manage! I don’t want to spend all day in the forest with a bunch of smelly strangers. I probably won’t even like the food! What do they even know about cooking…”

Now Emma was annoyed. “Now you’re being stupid! You like it well enough. Or is it you just
always have to be in charge? Always act like the queen with her adoring subjects!”

“How dare you?” it was rare these days for Emma to speak like that to her wife. “I’ve never acted like that! This is my home! My rules, and I say what we do! You’ll just have to cancel them!” but the blonde cut her off.

“‘My’ home? ‘My’ rules?” Forgive me, I thought it was ‘our’ home? Clearly, I’ve been mistaken…”

“You know what I mean!” she rasped back.

“No, I don’t! Just what do you mean, Regina? Rob is doing something really nice for us, and you become shitty about it! Just because he didn’t tell you? It was supposed to be a surprise, dammit, a nice surprise! Why don’t you just fucking well grow up?”

Both women sat, seething and avoiding looking at each other. Robin was amazed how quickly things had flared up. He sighed loudly but he was still too irritated himself.

“Very well. I’ll tell them we’re going to cancel.” Then he stopped to think. “No, on second thoughts, fuck it! I’m going! And so are Roland and Honour! You do whatever you want! I was looking forward to my first ever Thanksgiving with all of my family. Those ‘smelly strangers’ as you put it, include my sister and my cousin!”

“Do what you want, thief…” Regina growled, still glowering at him.

“Well, I’d love to come Robin!” said Emma, glaring at her wife. “Unlike this spiteful cow, I think it’s a lovely idea and I could do with a change! I’m the size of a fucking horse and don’t want to spend the day ferrying food and drink around for everybody. So thank you Robin…I accept!” Emma was more hurt by the ‘my home, my rules’ comment than Regina’s surly attitude. Nonetheless the brunette wasn’t done.

“For god’s sake Emma, you’re overreacting! Think of Henry! He’s come home especially for this…”

“I’m overreacting?” fumed Emma, “do you even hear yourself?”

“Henry already knows,” seethed Robin. “It was partly his idea…”

Regina glared. “He knows?”

“He wants both sets of grandparents to join us, including Belle, now that she and Rumple are trying to get back together. And Caroline and Maria. And no doubt Carrie would like to bring Victor Whale along too, as they’re engaged. I just – look, you know what? Just forget it! Do whatever the hell you want, Regina! You usually do…”

The former outlaw stormed out of the room, leaving a silence until they heard the front door slam loudly enough to break its hinges. Now the next silence between the two women seemed to last forever. Finally, Emma lifted herself off the bed and headed to the bathroom, still clearly angry as she turned to her wife. “Nice one, Regina! Way to go, fucking up a perfectly nice day for everyone! I’m going to freshen up, then I’m going out. You’ll be fine now, won’t you? In ‘your’ house!”

Regina wasn’t good at climbing down from any argument, even when she was clearly in the wrong. She said nothing for the next half hour, watching Emma silently emerge from the bathroom, dressing as quickly as she could and heading out without another word. Then it was her turn to slam the front door as she left.
A few minutes later she rose, showering quietly before heading downstairs. “Hello?” she called but it was clear everyone was out. As she walked into the silent kitchen, she saw a short note, clearly written by Robin:

*The children are with me*

Regina had been angry. But she had now calmed, and was starting to slowly realise what she’d done. Robin was usually the last of them to give in to anger, but merely by his tone as he left, and his terse note, she knew she’d absolutely enraged him. He was furious, and she knew from bitter experience in the Underworld that it took a lot longer for him to calm, than her. Less than an hour ago, he’d brought tea to their room. She and Emma had both been hormonal and made snide remarks. Yet he’d been nothing but reassuring, flattering even, but they’d still bitten his head off. Then he’d told them he’d arranged a holiday lunch to make their lives easier. And instead of thanking him, she’d been an absolute bitch. Not Emma, just her! Emma was right, she had fucked it up completely! Her and her big stupid mouth had pissed off the kindest, most loving man she’d ever known. And to make matters worse, she’d even made Emma angry! Added to which, since Robin had left, his unborn child had been moving constantly, almost in anger, making her stomach lurch and a feeling of nausea overwhelm her.

Now tears finally started to flow. Initial sobs, which grew and grew until she wept uncontrollably. She knew hormones were partly responsible for her absurd behaviour but once again, she’d gone too far! She had to make amends, but how?

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After leaving the house, Emma, still annoyed by Regina’s poor behaviour, decided to find Robin. She knew him well enough to know he was furious and, although Regina may have been the one at fault, she’d also treated him poorly that morning and wanted to rectify things. Ever since her early bleed two months ago, she knew better than to tempt fate by apparating anywhere, instead choosing to take the yellow bug into town. Honour and Roland had broken up from school the day before, so she assumed he’d either gone to the diner (it was still only nine o’clock) or Sherwood. A quick call to Ruby confirmed they weren’t having breakfast, so she drove to the edge of the forest, walking the last half mile into Sherwood village.

Entering the Earl of Locksley, Emma was surprised to find Roland sitting at a nearby table, playing a board game with Tuck. Walking closer, she saw what he was playing.

“Hi Rollie – hey, I didn’t know you knew how to play chess?”

“Hi ma!” he said, knocking over one of the friar’s knights with his bishop. “You never asked.”

“Bugger’s too damn good, if you ask me!” said the frustrated man, “he’s almost had me queen away!”

She smiled down at the dimple-cheeked young man, who was changing so rapidly and now started to look more like Marian as his face slimmed down. “Now I know you can play, you and I have definitely gotta have a game soon! You seen your dad anywhere?”

At that, the boy’s expression changed dramatically. “Yeah. He’s in a filthy mood though! Not sure where he’s gone but Honnie’s out the back with Maria.”

“Ok, thanks. I’ll pop back a little later. We’ll have lunch together, yeah?” She left him and went outside in search of Honour and Robin’s sister. As she turned toward the lake, Little John appeared from beside a hay bale. “Hey Emma, how you doing?” he said, wrapping an arm around her to bring...
her into a gentle side hug, being mindful of her large bulge. “You’re lookin’ grand, my girl! Only a couple more months!”

“Don’t remind me - it can’t happen fast enough. John, have you seen Robin?”

“Hmm. I’d best avoid him for the moment, if I were you! It’s not often he loses his temper, but whatever’s happened this morning has really got to him. Last time I saw him like that, he beat seven bells of shit out of three of Nottingham’s men! And that was before he had magic! Just leave him be, Emma. He’ll calm down, given time.”

“I know what caused it! Please John, where is he?”

“Far end of the lake. But don’t say I didn’t warn ye!”

It took a good ten minutes for Emma to follow the path around the edge of the lake magically created by Merlin. She eventually spotted him, a good few hundred feet away, before she approached. He seemed to doing something with explosives? Getting closer, she saw that he was lifting large rocks magically, hurling them high into the air effortlessly, before firing some sort of fireballs at them as they flew! The noise of the exploding rocks could be heard echoing all around. As fragments flew closer to her, she yelled out, “Hey, watch it!”

“What – Emma?” he said, looking up for the first time. “What are you doing here?”

“Trying to apologise - and stop you doing something stupid because of us!”

“Just leave me be - I’m not good company at the moment,” he said, as a boulder that must have been at least half a ton was flicked high into the air, followed by a piercing yellow beam from his eyes that blew it to smithereens with an almighty crack.

Fuck - no hands! How did he even do that?”

“Let me be the judge of that! Look, Robin, I’m sorry Gina and I were spikey this morning. I didn’t mean any of it. I’m just tired, grouchy and feeling useless! Gina may have had other issues and, to be honest, I’m also pissed off with her. It’s the pregnancy, but it’ll pass! Please Rob, please stop? Your little peanut in here,” she said, massaging her lower abdomen, “has been twirling around like a bloody cheerleader since this morning. I really need you to calm her down…”

He walked slowly over the rocks towards her, realizing as he drew close, just how tired she looked. Her eyes had dark rings underneath and her pallor was definitely a little greyer. He placed his hands on her shoulders, pulling her in to a gentle hug. “I’m sorry.”

“What have you got to be sorry about? We were horrible to you!”

“For storming off. For making arrangements, without discussing them with you both. For assuming you’d be ok with my family joining us for Thanksgiving. For getting you pregnant…”

“Hey, don’t you dare be sorry for that one! This baby may have come as a shock, but I was even more terrified when I thought I’d lost her! I want this baby, Robin! Our daughter! And Regina’s! And I know she wants them both too! As for the party, well, you meant it as a surprise and I want to get to know your sister and Carrie properly. It’s just that we’re both so used to being strong and independent, especially Regina. She is so not used to not being in charge!”

He silently nodded, dropping to his knees in front of her, before placing two gentle hands, which had moments earlier been blasting fireballs, on either side of her swollen belly, bringing his lips closer. “Hey you in there? Yes, you my pretty! Sorry papa was being a bit noisy just now, but you really
need to settle down for me, because you’re making your mamma feel poorly! Can you do that for me, poppet?” he followed up by sending calming waves of thought through his hands and into the Saviour’s body, drawing on memories from Merlin’s super-fast induction. Even Emma felt the wave of warmth spread through her, her mind now visualising a beach and sunshine. Her little unborn daughter settled almost immediately.

"Wow! That was odd. Were you thinking about a sunny beach?"

"Yes, I thought it would calm her. Did you see it too?" Robin was surprised as it had been the first time he’d tried that particular spell of Merlin’s.

“Yeah! and she’s stopped! That’s a really neat trick - you so need to show me how to do that one, and fairly quick!”

“Perhaps Merlin can help too,” he said getting up off his knees to take her hands.

She looked into his beautiful eyes. The eyes she had fallen in love with. “So am I forgiven then – for waking up as a bitch?”

“Nothing to forgive,” he said, wrapping his arms around her again and pressing his lips to hers. She opened them immediately to welcome him. Nothing too heated, no tongues, just warm, comforting and desperately needed after this morning. “Let’s head back.”

“Yeah, you’ve like destroyed half a quarry this morning! I missed breakfast and you know that, for me, that’s unheard of! Another reason your daughter may be unhappy!”

“Well we’d better fix that. Come on,” he took Emma’s arm and led her back, “I need to talk to Carrie and Maria…”

“Did you cancel the Thanksgiving lunch?”

“Not bloody likely! I’m looking forward to that. I’m sorry Emma, but I’m not having the day fucked up by just one person, even if it is Regina! The children are really looking forward to it, and so is Henry. If you don’t want to come…I’ll understand.”

“No…I told you I want to come! Robin, I love my wife, but she needs to learn everything doesn’t just revolve around her. I think she’ll come around. At least I hope so!”

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The Mansion

“Yes, thank you Clive. If you could send the draft documents and copy deeds around for us to countersign, I’ll have them back to you later this week. Thank you…and give my love to Felicity? The two of you should really come over for lunch soon! Goodbye…” She hung up the phone on her Notary and Storybrooke Council Chairman, feeling she’d taken a good first step in fixing one of her problems. Now she needed to sort things out with Robin.

She searched the speed-dial number for the next call. “Hi Regina!” answered Lady Caroline Locksley, “nice to hear from you. How are you?”

“Hello Carrie. I’m ok, thanks, but could be better.” Robin’s sister had an innate ability to make her open up more than most. “Look, I’m sorry for the short notice but I really need to speak to you fairly
soon. Are you available? I’ll come over to you if necessary…”

“Well I’d hoped to see you at the dinner on Thursday! But Rob called and told me you and Emma weren’t coming, but he was. He sounded angry and didn’t want to talk! Is something wrong?”

“Frankly, yes. And it’s my fault. Can we meet?”

---

Caroline came over about half an hour later. Just before she arrived, Regina checked her texts for any message from either of her lovers. None. So, she sent a short text to each of them:

**Regina:** Robin, please call me!

Then one to her wife:

**Regina:** Emma, I’m sorry! Where are you? Please call…

She didn’t expect any quick reply, but she got one back from her wife:

**Emma:** With Robin. Leave us be. We’ll talk later…

Caroline was more than surprised when Regina opened the front door before she even used the knocker. Seeing the usually upright former mayor standing there, red-eyed and looking desperate, she dropped her bag and pulled the woman into her arms. The hug was welcomed, Regina sinking her face into the other’s shoulder to sob. “Regina, what is it? What’s happened?”

“I screwed up, that’s what. Robin was lovely, but I was a bitch! And I even managed to make Emma angry. I’m a horrible person, Carrie!”

“Don’t be silly, you’re nothing of the sort! Sounds more like a lovers’ tiff to me. Now tell me what happened, and don’t leave out any of the important bits?”

Regina explained everything. The more she talked, the more she realized how irrational she’d been. “Regina, why’s it so important you host a meal? You’re heavily pregnant and standing for too long in a hot kitchen is going to be very uncomfortable! I don’t understand why you would put yourself through all that, if there’s a perfectly good offer elsewhere?” She held Regina’s hand, not judging her, but just trying to understand. Regina looked into her eyes, smiling as she saw the resemblance to Robin and his sister.

“I guess I felt I was losing control. I can’t use my magic fully while I’m like this, and I’ve always hated feeling weak! I’m having to rely on everyone and that makes me uncomfortable. I’m so used to being in charge that it’s hard to break the habits of a lifetime. After being queen, being mayor was a step down for me. Now I’m nothing, just a…a housewife! A big, fat pregnant housewife. If I can’t be in charge of my own town now, at least being in charge of the home, of meals and events, just helps me feel I have ‘control’ of something!”

Caroline chuckled softly, taking her hands in her own. “Ooh, where to start? Right, well first things first, madam! You are most certainly not fat. You’re carrying that baby beautifully and if I was gay and you weren’t married, you’d definitely be at the top of my hit list!” Regina gave her a reluctant smile. “Second, you are a hell of a lot more than a ‘housewife’. You are a mother! And a rather brilliant one at that! Whatever career any woman chooses, what could be more important than bringing a new life into the world and nurturing it into a human being? Everything else pales into insignificance compared to that. I hope and pray I haven’t left it too late to have my own child one day. And when and if I do, I hope to model myself on you! So, stop putting yourself down. As for
being ‘in charge’, well you now have not one, but two adults who love and adore you and just want to help you. I can’t speak for Emma, as I hardly know her; but I know Robin. He may be angry now, but he’ll calm down, in his own time. Best let him be. Remember, he’s dealt with strong-minded women before…”

“You mean Marian?”

“Yes. She could be fiery too, you know? Very loyal, loving and caring but she could be feisty. In some ways, you remind me of her - she was no shrinking violet! Beautiful brown eyes, olive skin and dark hair - it seems Robin certainly has a ‘type’!”

“You mean awkward, stroppy brunettes!” she almost giggled.

“I mean independent-minded, intelligent women! You know, in a different world, you would have liked her…”

“I only know what she looked and sounded like. It turned out to be Zelena in disguise…”

“I heard about that! You know Robin’s seeing Doctor Hooper to deal with his anger issues over Zelena? He felt if he didn’t, he’d probably kill her.” It was obvious from Regina’s expression she wasn't aware.

“That explains how he was able to face her recently. I just thought he was calming down for Robyn’s – I mean Margot’s, sake.”

“Well he was raped, Regina! That’s not something anyone, a man or a woman, gets over quickly…”

“We Mills women have been nothing but a pain to his family! I’m amazed he puts up with me?”

“Because he’s completely in love with you, Regina! That’s why he cares so much. Anyway, let’s talk about this Thanksgiving, shall we? Now, Maria and I are preparing a Locksley dinner, partly at the request of your son, so I want you and Emma to come, eat, rest and be entertained and spoiled. No arguments, madam! In return, you three can host it next year, while Maria and I will look after your lovely babies. Now what do you say to that?”

They exchanged a grin before Regina went back in for a hug, wrapping her arms around the taller woman. “I say thank you very much, Miss Locksley, I would love to come. But allow me to do something? If I’m not being allowed to cook, perhaps I can make dessert? I make the best apple turnover you’ll ever taste!”

“Ah. Sounds delightful, but we were intending to surprise Robin with his mother’s old signature dish. We call it Locksley Pie, but it’s a pudding. Hot apple pie covered in pastry and caramel! It’s Maria’s tour-de-force now!”

“Sounds delicious. So, what’s for main? I’m assuming there’ll be turkey? It is Thanksgiving after all.”

“Roast turkeys AND goose! Traditional Locksley fare. Perhaps you could help us with the preparation - but no heavy-lifting, agreed?”

“Agreed. Thank you, Carrie, I’m looking forward to it.”

“Maria will too. She’s been over here over three months now and she feels she hardly knows you! We three can have a lovely gossip and bitch in the kitchen - she’s rather hilarious, you know?”
“Sounds just what I need! Yes, I have meant to reach out to Maria but with one thing and another we haven’t found the time. I know Honour and Roland love her to bits! I’ve missed having close women friends – I married the last one, you know?”

“So, I gather. Emma - beautiful, athletic leggy blonde, I understand? I need to get to know her too…”

“You did say you were straight, didn’t you?” she glared, trying to hide the grin.

“Quite sure. I have my very own brain surgeon fiancé, too. But if I ever change teams…” she giggled.

“I think we could only ever handle one Locksley at a time!”

---

Carrie left the house an hour later, after having tea and discussing arrangements for the holiday dinner. Regina felt so much better for opening up to her, missing her as soon as she left. Now she needed to fix things. She picked up her phone and sent another text to Robin:

Regina: I know you’re still angry with me. I’m sorry and I know you don’t want to talk to me right now. I’ve spent some time talking to Caroline about the Thanksgiving dinner, so perhaps you could talk to her? Please ignore everything I said, I was just being a bitch, as usual! I love you! xxx

Then one to Emma:

Regina: Emma, please talk to me! I love you! Xxx 😢

This time, she followed it with a sad-faced, teary emoticon. Emma always used those. After pacing around waiting for an answer from either of them, her phone beeped with an incoming message:

Emma: Still annoyed, though food has made me feel better. We’ll talk later, but I still love you too!

Regina smiled, though noticed the lack of kisses or emoticons. A few seconds later, another one came in:

Emma: If you’re trying to reach Robin, don’t bother. He kind of melted his phone…

She gulped, knowing she was probably the cause of his anger. A minute later, yet another message:

Emma: And whatever you decide to do, I’m going to Thanksgiving here! I found out what’s on the menu. I’m not missing that!

That brought a small chuckle from the brunette. Food – the way to Emma’s heart!

Regina: I’m coming too. Don’t tell them, but I’ve never eaten goose. Mother said it was for servants. I’m going to be helping in the kitchen, though under supervision so I don’t overdo it. Carrie wants to get to know you, and I want to get to know Maria.

Emma: She’s as funny as hell, and a very dirty sense of humour. She’s here now with John and the boys. I’d love you to come over, but best wait for
Robin and Emma finally came home around six in the evening, bringing Honour and Roland back with them. Emma had told him the gist of her texts with Regina, that she was wanting to apologise for her behaviour, and was now going to be coming with them to the Thanksgiving feast. “Go easy on her, Rob! You know she didn’t mean it…”

Robin had now calmed enough, helped by a couple of pints at the pub. As the four trooped in, Roland and Honour raced ahead, moving to hug her. “Mummy! Why didn’t you come?” said Honour. “It was fun! Aunty Maria taught me ‘blind man’s bluff’!”

“Sounds lovely, Now go easy there, darlings! Don’t squeeze too hard. I’ve missed you both.”

Emma stepped inside, followed by Robin. Regina gulped a little, remembering what she had to do. “Now why don’t you two go and wash. Dinner will be at seven. I need to have a word with your mamma and daddy. Off you go…” As they dutifully obeyed, Regina stood to address them. Robin saw the awkward look on her face.

“Gina, I…”

“No Robin, please don’t say anything…yet! There’s something I need to say first.”

She stepped closer to them, looking up to ensure they weren’t being overheard by the children. “Emma, Robin, my behaviour was atrocious this morning! I want to apologise. I was spiteful, bitchy and neither of you deserved it. I want to make amends.” She saw Emma about to say something, “No Emma – please wait?”

“Firstly, Robin, I was completely horrible to you, even though you were being lovely and kind to me. I felt I was losing control so, as usual, I lashed out. I called your family ‘strangers’—”

“Smelly strangers, actually!” he corrected, seeing her wince.

“Even more unforgivable! Your family are lovely, and they most certainly do not smell! I was just being bitchy and again, I'm so sorry! I know you’re still angry, but I want to give you something by way of a further apology.” She picked up a small gift-wrapped box from the sideboard. “Here…” she said, placing it in his hands before turning to her wife. “Emma, in a way, I was even worse to you! I called this ‘my house’ and implied we had to follow ‘my rules’. That was also unforgivable. So, I would like you to have this!” she handed a heavy envelope of documents to her. “You’re my wife. What’s mine is yours. We are equals, and I want you to read through and sign what’s inside.”

“What is it?”

“A change of ownership for the deeds to this house. Our house. I asked Colin to set up a new family trust, which will take ownership of it. You and I will own it fifty-fifty until the children each reach twenty-one, then we can decide, together, how we add them to it. I’ll try never again to refer to ‘my house’! Please forgive me?”

The blonde moved to hug her, careful to move their swollen bellies to the sides as she put her hand under her chin, bringing up her mouth up to kiss her. “You’re forgiven! Thank you. I’ll also put my
rental house into the same trust too. What’s mine is also yours, Regina!” The brunette beamed up at her and the women kissed again, the morning’s events now forgiven. Robin smiled as he watched the married couple reconnect.

Now lifting the package, he eased the wrapping off, to find the gift was a brand-new mobile phone. And a very good one, at that! He looked up to see them looking directly at him, while still in each other’s arms.

“I gather your other one got destroyed this morning? Thought you could do with a replacement!”

He smiled at her, realizing Emma had probably told her what had happened in his rage. “Yes, I didn’t know they melted so easily…”

“They do - especially when you ‘laser’ them with your eyes! How do you even do that?” asked Emma. The women separated, Regina now stepping in front of Robin.

“Your family are wonderful! I’ve only known Caroline a matter of months, yet I regard her as one of my closest friends. I’m also going to try to get to know your sister. Emma has already. John helped me so much when you were gone, and he and the men have been like brothers to me. I love them all. Please forgive me, Robin?”

He didn’t answer, just pulled her in gently, wrapping his muscular arms around her. He followed up with a kiss that quickly developed into a full-on, open-mouthed affair. She almost purred in relief. Emma looked on in satisfaction, knowing the morning’s incident had been finally put behind them. As they unsealed lips, he whispered, “All forgiven.”

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Henry arrived home that evening, after the long trip from New York. His mothers and step-siblings welcoming him in embraces and hugs. Emma couldn’t help noticing how he seemed to be avoiding contact with Robin, for some reason. He’d been very welcoming to the young man, even hugging him when he arrived. Was there a problem? I thought Henry liked him? Last time he was here he even suggested we marry him. What’s wrong? She made a mental note to tackle him about it later.

Robin had also noticed Henry’s awkwardness towards him, putting it down to his appearance from a shed with an unknown girl, both looking dishevelled and embarrassed, at Roland’s football game two months ago. Was that it? Was Henry doing something behind Violet’s back? Robin decided to say nothing, waiting until the boy was alone.

Emma was the first to get to him though, heading into the young man’s bedroom minutes after he’d dropped off his enormous rucksack on the bed. Henry had just stripped off his sweater and jeans, to change before he heard the door click behind him. Flicking his head back, he saw his mother enter, placing a silencing spell across the door, then stepping back momentarily as a result of the dizzying effect producing magic now had on her. “Wow, so not used to that!” she groaned.

“Ma, what are you doing? I’m getting changed!”

“Sorry, kid – I mean Hen! I need a word.”

“Can’t it wait? I almost had my pants off!”

“I’m your mum - it’s nothing I haven’t seen before! Anyway, what’s going on between you and Robin?” Emma always had a habit of coming straight out with whatever was on her mind. “Why are you avoiding him?”
“Ma, there’s nothing going on! Just…just leave me to get changed…”

“Superpower, Henry! I know when you’re lying, remember? Come on, spill! What’s he done?”

Henry was starting to lose his temper. “He’s ‘done’ nothing! And anyway, I don’t want to talk about it. You may have forgotten but I’m no longer a child, ma, so I’m not going to ‘spill’, or talk about it…or anything. Now please leave me to change!”

Emma knew he was hiding something, but decided not to push it. “Ok,” she said, getting up, “but you know I’ll find out in the end.”

And she did find out! The following morning, she woke earlier than usual, in desperate need of a pee, to find the bathroom door locked as Regina, in similar need, got in before her. So, she stepped out onto the landing to use the guest bathroom, when she heard deeper, male voices below. Assuming it could only be Henry and Robin, she tiptoed down the stairs to listen. It seemed Henry had just walked in there.

“I’ve just made a pot of tea Henry. Like a cup?” she heard Robin offer.

“Nah, not really drinking tea. Black coffee’s my thing these days! I’ll just make some instant.”

“Your mothers aren’t drinking caffeine at the moment, though after the births, they’ll probably need the hard stuff just to stay awake! I know I will…”

“Yeah, I remember with Honnie! Still, the pregnancies seem to be going smoothly. Any problems?”

“Just the usual stuff. They’re both more tired and irritable, but since Emma had that scare, they’ve been taking things easier. But you know them – they both hate being inactive. Still, only a couple of months to go…”

“Yeah. Then all hell breaks loose, right?” he chuckled quietly. “Four kids in one house! Kinda glad I’ll only be here part-time. Are you dreading it?”

“Quite the reverse, actually - I can’t wait! I love children and we have not one, but two rather brilliant mothers here. I’m sure we’ll cope just fine.” The two men stopped to slurp their drinks.

Henry knew he had to clear the air with Robin, especially after one of his mothers had already noticed last night’s behaviour. “So…Robin…about that football match! About what you saw…” he looked a little sheepish before he continued. “You didn’t tell my mums then?”

Emma’s ears bristled. What didn’t he tell us?

“Didn’t tell them what, exactly?” asked Robin, waiting for the boy to open up.

Henry looked at him, wondering just what he knew. “About me and Jess…”

“Jess? The young blonde girl at the match? What’s to tell?”

He nodded. “Me coming out of a tent with her, with someone who isn’t Violet? I know you saw us!”

So that’s it! Thought Emma, listening just outside. The little sod’s been two-timing Violet!

“That’s your business, Henry. Although it looked suspicious, I don’t assume anything. I may regard you as a son, but you’re also an adult, and you make your own decisions, good or bad. I just hope you don’t hurt anyone as a result. If you want to talk about it, I’m here. If you don’t, you don’t.”
Somehow, that made it so much easier for Henry to get something off his chest. “Well, it was sort of how it looked. Jess and I hooked up…”

“Does Violet know? Are the pair of you still together?”

“Yes…and no. She doesn’t know about Jess specifically, but Vi and I decided not to be exclusive. She’s also been with other people recently, too. It was sort of her idea. Vi thinks she’s too young to tie herself to one person at the moment. She said I could either accept it or…we split.” He didn’t seem too happy as he explained it.

“And how do you feel about that? Do you also want to ‘play the field’ with other people?”

“Honestly, I’m not sure! I’ve had some fun at university, but…well, now I’ve done it, just having sex for the sake of doing it isn’t quite my thing. I’ve enjoyed it, but I can’t help feeling it’s a bit…basic. It was great with Vi before she wanted something else, but now? I dunno…I guess I’m missing something.”

“It sounds to me as though your feelings for Violet were stronger than her feelings were for you. You may have been starting to fall for her. That’s always painful, if it’s not reciprocated.”

“Sounds like you’ve been there yourself?” Henry probed.

“I have. I’d had relationships long before Marian, Roland’s mother, but nothing like as serious. I’ve had feelings for others which were not returned, and that always hurts. While sex may be extremely pleasant, when you combine it with mutual love, there really is no comparison! You need to figure out what you really want in a relationship. But never mislead whoever you’re with!”

“I guess. Vi definitely wants something different to me. We’re still friends, but she’s ‘experimenting’. Boys…and girls, basically.”

“Then you need to decide what that means to you. If you’re comfortable with it, then there’s no problem. If you’re not happy, you need to tell her, change, or move on…”

Henry took another gulp at the coffee. “I guess. Thanks for keeping it to yourself, though. It’s nice having another guy around. I love my mums dearly, but when I see my friends’ dads, it just reminds me how I never got any proper time with my own…”

“Yes, Neal was pretty special. He pretended he wasn’t, but he was sharp. Mulan, Philip and Aurora got to know him too. Remember what Merlin said? That he’s still is a hero? You know, you remind me of him. I’ll never be able to replace your dad Henry, but if there’s anything you want to know, or just need someone to talk to, I’m here.” He patted the younger man’s shoulder.

“Thanks. And for what it’s worth, I think you’ll be a brilliant dad to the babies. You know, a couple of months ago I even told my mums you three should be married!”

Robin chuckled, though Emma, still listening intently outside and touched by the affection the two men had for each other, leaned closer to listen to Robin’s response.

“Well, your mums are already married! So sometimes, I feel like I’m an intruder. If it were left to me Henry, I’d ask them both to marry me as soon as possible! You know, back in my realm, and over here until recently, they used to use horrible names for children born out of wedlock. But that’s not the reason I’d ask them. It’s taken me a while to realise it, but I am truly in love with both of your mothers. Is that wrong? To love an already married couple? I don’t know the answer, but I want them to be truly happy. Even if I can’t be part of it.”
Henry grinned. “So, if my mums did what Phil and Rory did to Mulan, and asked you to marry them, you wouldn’t refuse?”

“That’s most unlikely Henry. They’re happy…”

“You didn’t answer my question.”

“Because that’s between me, Emma and Regina. All I can tell is I love them both. Equally.”

Emma’s heart warmed at that, and the child in her womb seemed to sense something too. She almost apparated back to the bedroom, anxious not to be caught spying on them. But remembering Merlin’s warning, she instead crept silently back up the stairs, praying they wouldn’t creak. She finally made it back to the bedroom unobserved, opening the door to find Regina getting up from the bed.

“Morning darling! You woke early?” said the brunette, slipping a robe on.

“Yeah. I needed to pee, and you were in there already.”

“Bad, isn’t it? This one keeps pushing down on my bladder. I feel like I spend half my time on the loo. I’m running myself a bath with those gels Carrie recommended. Care to join me, Mrs. Swan-Mills?”

Never one to pass an opportunity to see Regina naked, or share a bath, she beamed. “Sounds perfect, Mrs. Swan-Mills. We only got a quick dip yesterday, and I could do with a decent soak,” she said, taking Regina’s hand, walking together to the edge of the slipper bath. Even after two years of marriage, Emma still got a thrill when they stripped together for a bath, trying not to stare at her wife’s voluptuous curves, her breasts now enhanced by the pregnancy. Each groaned in bliss as, in turn the warm waters enveloped them. They moved to opposite ends of the bath, interlocking their legs for room.

“Is Robin downstairs, or has he gone out?” asked Regina, stretching across to collect a sponge, dip it in the foam and massage Emma’s legs. Before their pregnancy, she used to lie in there with her back resting on Emma’s chest. Now their bulges simply wouldn’t allow it.

“He’s in the kitchen with Henry. He’ll probably be up here soon with tea. But there’s something I need to ask you, concerning Robin, before he gets here…”
Chapter Summary

Belle has moved back into Rumple's house, to help take care of Gideon. What does that mean for their relationship?

Chapter Notes

A little segue now, before Thanksgiving (yes, I know I'm late). I wanted to put down a little marker for events taking place towards the end of this story. Somebody VM'd me to say that the story may be a bit too long for some to pick up on searches. So I may end it at an earlier point to follow on with another story. But I've a little way to go yet.

All critiques always appreciated. Provided they're not nasty...

Chapter 39

It had been over three months since Rumpelstiltskin, with Robin and Merlin’s help, had rescued Gideon from the clutches of the Black Fairy. Raising the baby in the back of the antiques shop had proved to be impractical, so they transferred to the much larger Gold House, within two weeks of his arrival.

Although they were now estranged, Rumple had no wish to deprive Gideon of his mother’s warmth and love. He could see just how much Belle adored their son and the baby was definitely more comforted in her arms. And now, watching her sitting in the large nursing chair, feeding him his bottle, his mind cast back to happier times, when they were still both in love. He still loved her so very much even now, but knowing the nature of his darkness, the Dark One’s presence ingrained into his very bones, he knew she’d never fully understand the control that malevolent force had on him, or their mutual, symbiotic need.

And that was one of the reasons, coupled with her actions in losing their child, that he had finally released her from their marriage.

Since Gideon’s safe return, Belle had come over daily to help and be with her son, allowing Rumple to continue to have a working life. Several times, during Gideon’s more unsettled nights, she’d stayed over in the guest bedroom, helping with midnight feeds and allowing Rumple some semblance of sleep. They’d shared dinner together and drinks. And now, a mutual understanding had grown between them and just over two weeks ago, Rumple had offered a place once again in his home. As he’d explained:

“Belle, I’ve no wish to keep you and our son apart. You’re welcome to live here once again, if you so wish. Or divide your time between here and the library. There are no expectations on my part, and you are still free to come and go as you please. I think it would be in Gideon’s interests too.”

“Really? I’d love nothing more! You’re sure? Do you have any ‘conditions’?” she still felt nervous
around him, more so after the split, but there was a certain rapprochement between them now.

“Only the ones we discussed when I brought him back. You’re free to live your life as you wish, with whomsoever you wish, with the exception of the witch, of course! If you are intending to maintain ANY form of relationship with her, physical or otherwise, my offer is withdrawn…”

Belle cringed, embarrassed that he already knew too much about her various…dalliances. “Rumple, I’m not having a ‘relationship’ with Zelena! I’m not even sure how you got to know about what happened, but what we had was purely…”

“Physical? Just sex? I’m fully aware of what it was, Belle! And I know that ginger bitch is incapable of normal human emotions other than self-gratification. You think you know her? That she’s changed, like her sister? I can assure you she hasn’t. I regard her as a clear and present danger to my son, and I will have her nowhere near.”

Over the last few weeks, she had become even more mortified that he knew, in detail, her recent history. Her lonely nights, her over-reliance on alcohol, her relationships, including Will and Ariel. However, since Gideon’s arrival and that first night back, he never spoke of it again. It had led to a gradual defrosting of the relationship between them. And now, as she stood and winded her son, she saw the deep, intense stare he was giving her.

“Rumple. I need to tell you something. Yesterday, I asked to meet Merlin. I had some questions… about you.”

“Go on…questions about me, you say?”

“Well, not about you, more about the Dark One specifically. I wanted to understand. Understand why you do what you do!”

“You wanted to know whether the darkness can ever be removed? Whether I can change?”

“Partly, yes. I’ve known you a long time but sometimes it feels I don’t know you at all! I wasn’t trying to judge. Heavens, I’ve done enough of that in the past! I just want to understand what drives the Dark One. What is his objective? His reasoning?”

Rumple looked calmly at her, raising his whisky glass to his lips. “And did the Sorcerer enlighten you?”

“In a way, yes. I certainly learned a few things.”

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The Earl of Locksley – earlier that day

“Belle, the Dark One isn’t a spell and it’s a lot more than a curse. It’s an entity, neither alive, nor dead. An embodiment of pure evil. It has a character and knowledge. Vast amounts of gained knowledge beyond your comprehension. It cannot be killed or removed merely by true love!”

“So how can we remove it from Rumple? Surely when it left him and latched on to Emma Swan? I remember you saying…”

“Emma herself wanted it removed from her, but even she clung on to it. It was only the battle against Killian Jones, and its transfer to Excalibur that brought her back. She had nothing to do with its release. The moment Killian was killed, Rumpelstiltskin took advantage by transferring all the combined forces back to him. Belle, if he hadn’t, the darkness would have transferred to someone
else. Someone less experienced in handling it. In a way, Rumple saved many lives that day by his actions!

“And regained his Dark One powers? Sounds pretty selfish to me, Merlin! He at last had a chance…”

“Belle, the Dark One will exist long after you. It is a necessary counterpart to the light. In the thousands of years it has existed, the vast majority of its hosts have created mayhem, murdered and destroyed countless lives. Only one person, so far, has been able to tame it sufficiently to reduce its threat.

“Rumple?” she sighed. The Sorcerer nodded. “But I would hardly call that taming it!”

“Compared to the others, he has done remarkably. Though there will always be some regression…”

“Is Gideon in any sort of danger from being around him? Not Rumple, but the Dark One within him?”

“While his father is the Dark One’s host? None whatsoever. Unless someone else controls the dagger.”

“And everybody else? Is Rumple a danger to them?”

“No, provided they don’t ask for favours or deals, without expecting some form of payment in return. The Dark One is the deal maker providing the magic, not Rumple.”

“So everything stays the same? He can’t move on? Improve?”

“By what measure do you mean ‘improve’? By your own standards? By those of the Heroes? I think you all place an unrealistic measure on him, by ignoring the fact his burden is so great. However, with the right motivation he can show compassion, something no Dark One’s host has been able to do before.”

“Motivation? What sort of motivation?”


“Me? Well, if you hadn’t heard, he kicked me out! We’re no longer together.”

“Yes, I had heard. And the business with the dagger and Snow White recently was poor judgment on your part, Belle. Holding his dagger is a bit like gripping his windpipe. It’s painful, debilitating and humiliating. You used it to force him over the town line once, and later to do your bidding. It would be very hard for him to truly trust you after that. Love you, yes, but trust you? Difficult.”

Belle was horrified. “How come you know all this?”

“I’m the Sorcerer, Belle. Unfortunately, for me, I see a lot. Often, too much!”

“So you think I should give him another chance? Despite everything?”

The old sage looked at her, intensely. “Has he actually asked you to give him another chance? Or is it what you are hoping for?”

“I’m not sure. He said he’s forgiven me for losing Gideon. But I’m not so sure. He still seems hurt.”

“Understandable. Did you ever actually apologise to him for using his own dagger against him?
“No - but he’d gone too far! He was putting others at risk!”

“Yet you knew the affect it would have on him?” Merlin didn’t seem very sympathetic to her dilemma. “The control of the dagger over him is absolute, Belle. You know that Zelena tortured and raped him when she had that control? She caged him like an animal, even refusing to let him attend to his own son’s funeral. That’s how powerful the dagger is! If he were commanded to kill you by someone holding it, he would be unable to refuse…”

Her eyes bulged. *Raped?* She suddenly felt quite sick. “I… I didn’t know that!” she hung her head low.

“You know, Zelena has never apologised for her actions. The very same woman who caused Baelfire’s death, who chained Rumple underground and abused him. The woman who disguised herself as Maid Marian just to take Robin and break Regina, before going on to rape him? Belle, I know you think Zelena Mills has changed. In some ways, she has, but that’s mainly due to the fact she lost her magic. But she still has a long way to go. Be extremely careful in any dealings you have with that woman!”

_The way he’d said it, Belle felt sure he already knew she’d previously slept with the witch. On multiple occasions._

“I’ll bear that in mind,” was all she could manage, standing to leave. Belle wasn’t exactly sure why she’d asked to speak to Merlin, probably the only person whose magic was at least as powerful as the Dark One’s. But his words made her realise that she did at least share some responsibility for recent events. Certainly Gideon’s kidnapping. However, she hadn’t realised just how profoundly handling his dagger had affected him.

_One thing was certain. She would never again go anywhere near Zelena again!_

“Belle, I know some of your future, and while I can give you no details, I can tell you that happier times await both of you. I think it’s time to follow your heart and instincts, rather than the wishes of others. I think it still holds love. Be open and honest with him about all things, especially about your feelings and actions since you separated. Don’t hold back, because he already has the power to recognise avoidance. Try to listen to him more and react less.”

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Belle told Rumple what Merlin had said. And about her fears. Her loneliness since they separated. How she had tried to drown her sorrows in booze. In meaningless sex by one-night stands. She didn’t leave anything out. Even her briefly contemplating taking her own life. Rumple sat quietly and took it all in. Inside his heart broke for his former love. “I basically assumed my life was over! After I lost Gideon. And you. I’m not proud of what I did, Rumple! I clung on to Will, but I knew the moment he found out Anastasia was alive, whatever we had was over. Then Gilbert. I went off the rails and I’m not proud. Zelena was just sex. I used her, and she used me. We gave each other some sort of relief from the loneliness. I haven’t seen her…in that way…since you brought Gideon back.”

“Belle, I never wanted that for you. Despite what you may think, I do love you and I had hoped you would eventually find happiness elsewhere. I knew about your various…’encounters’, though it is no longer any business of mine, so apart from… her… I do not judge you. In fact, when the mermaid stayed with you, I thought there was a chance for you to…properly move on. To someone more worthy of you.”

She sighed sadly, lowering her sleeping son gently into his crib. She felt awkward talking about this with him, but she felt it was finally due.
“Ariel met me in the Rabbit Hole. She was very low. She’d had a major row with her husband, Prince Erik. Something to do with Erik fighting with King Triton and Queen Athena. She came down on her parents’ side, and it grew from there. She was in a bad way and so was I. We comforted each other, then one thing led to another. She’s still married, so it shouldn’t have happened. I sort of hoped we could be something more. In a way, so did she but…well, she still felt guilty and finally decided she wanted to save her marriage. I don’t blame her. I suppose it did help me learn something about myself…”

“That you would ultimately prefer to be with a woman?”

“No. Well, possibly…I don’t know. I also had a few one-night stands with other girls. And men. But at the end of it all, I suppose I’m really just looking for something more. A relationship. Otherwise, it’s all a bit base, isn’t it? To be honest, I haven’t had that since…well, you.”

Rumple nodded, sadly. “Well, for the record, I think Ariel may well return here some time. My informants tell me she and the prince attempted reconciliation, though she told him about yourself. I gather he told her to leave. However, I understand. In fact, I feel the same. I’ve also had a few encounters of my own these last few years…”

“You? I don’t know why, but I never imagined…”

“Because I’m too old? Too grey? Too evil?” he raised an eyebrow in suspicion.

“No! It’s just that…well, I never imagined you needing anyone! You always seemed to be so…so independent. Not needing company.” Belle’s thoughts whirled as she realised he hadn’t been pining alone. He’s been with someone. More than someone? People. Women? She couldn’t help feeling a little annoyed. But why?

“I can still desire companionship, Belle! I’m not so cold and frigid that I cannot appreciate another…”

“I guess. Who? How many? Sorry, that was wrong of me…I shouldn’t have asked.”

“Well, you had the decency to open up to me, so it’s only fair. As you know, I travelled to New York on business, and Boston to meet with Henry. I had a few, how did you put it – one-night stands? Nothing serious. I was careful not to get involved with anyone in this town. Well, apart from Miss Carpenter at the Town Hall. And Katja, her assistant…”

“Hilary Carpenter? She’s gorgeous! Why would she want a one-night… And Katja? The Fridge from Finland? I’ve never even seen her smile! But she’s still stunning. Her legs seem as long as me! Hell, Rumple, I’m impressed! And a teensy bit jealous, to be honest, which I shouldn’t be! In fact, Ruby told me Katja plays for the other team…”

“She did, dearie!” Rumple smirked, devilishly. “But now she plays for both teams. As does Miss Carpenter…”

Belle tried to process the news. “What? Rumple, are you implying Katja and Caroline are together? That you had some sort of threesome?”

He smiled, seeing her surprised look. “Well, if it’s good enough for the queen and the outlaw? It was all consenting, I assure you…”

Belle’s jaw hung open in astonishment. This was a whole new side to him she’d never seen before!

“Rumple, you never fail to surprise me! And are you in any other sort of relationship now? Any
other Nordic blondes likely to come knocking?”

“Nobody. Like you, these are rather pleasant distractions, but nothing more. Anyway, never mind that. On to other things. I today received an invitation from my grandson to a Thanksgiving lunch on Thursday at the Earl of Locksley. I would normally decline, as I find time spent with the royals and the self-absorbed Swan-Mills women to be tedious beyond measure. However, Henry is rather insistent I join him. He organised things along with Locksley, so it should be bearable. Would you like to come with me?”

“ME? You’re asking me to join you...at a family event?”

“I am. Belle, whatever we are to each other now, we are Gideon’s parents. As I said earlier, I still love you. I want your happiness, even if it cannot be with me.”

“Rumple…Despite everything that’s happened, I do still love you too! I know, perhaps even more so after my talk with Merlin, that I share a fair amount of responsibility for what happened. Not only that, perhaps he’s helped me understand you a little more. I want your happiness too, you know? Though perhaps don’t bring too many tall Nordic goddesses home, yeah? As I’m a little lump, I can get awfully jealous sometimes.”

Rumple grinned. “Belle, none of them can hold a candle to you! You are, and remain, the Beauty to my Beast!”

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Thanksgiving Day

Chapter Summary

A special day for our favourite trio...

Two days later - Thanksgiving Day

Regina arrived in Sherwood early, leaving everyone else to come later with Robin and Emma. As she walked through the small forest village that hadn’t even existed eight months ago, she stopped, looking in awe at the ever-changing scene. The clinic, fairly modest in proportion on the outside, yet huge on the inside, was bathed in soft morning sunlight as a small group milled around outside. There appeared to be a few more houses then there’d been only a month ago, when she last walked here, plus a small ceremonial fountain and pond. Finally, she reached the Earl of Locksley Inn, named after her lover, at the insistence of the people themselves.

She chuckled to herself, remembering how Robin truly hated the title, or even being referred to as nobility. Yet in this little village, he was venerated above all others. So very different to herself. She’d married into monarchy, and in her past had used her magic to induce fear to command respect. Yet Robin, without any magic whatsoever, had merely used leadership, bravery and kindness to gain the love of these people. And now, as she and Emma prepared for what they agreed two days ago, she looked up at the timbered beams of the large coaching inn, wondering whether she would ever be truly worthy of him. Emma clearly was, but her?

Stepping inside, she saw Alan-a-Dale, wiping down the counter tops, lifting his head and smiling when he saw her. “Oh, hi Regina - they’re in the kitchen! I’ve been told it’s women-only territory today, and, in Maria’s own words, all us men-folk are to ‘sod off, if you would be most kind!’ So, I’ll leave you to it!”

Regina chuckled. “Well I’d best get in there then! See you later, Alan…” she said, walking around the back of the pub counter and through the large kitchen swing door. Looking inside for the first time, she was surprised to see the high-tech, steel surfaces and shiny appliances. It looked like something from a cookery programme and Regina loved it. At one end stood Maria and Caroline Locksley, deep in conversation with Lavinia Whitehand. Caroline spotted the brunette and instantly turned, walking over to her. “Gina - lovely to see you!” said the tall blonde, placing her hands on Regina’s shoulders and kissing her cheek. “You’re early. Fancy a Buck’s Fizz?”

“Alcohol at this time of the morning? I am pregnant, Carrie!”

“Non-alcoholic!” yelled Livvy from nearby. “We don’t touch the hard stuff till after noon. Well, Carrie and I don’t. Can’t speak for Maria though…” she cackled.

“Oi! My reputation as an alcy is completely undeserved! Can’t go letting myself get trollied, with my big brother coming now, can I? He’d say I’m letting the side down!”

“Trollied?” asked Regina.

“She means inebriated! You have to excuse my cousin, Gina,” said Carrie, still giggling, “she’s picked up far too much British slang in her time away! I’ll translate as we go…” this earning a gentle
slap on the arm from Maria, who moved across to place a kiss on Regina’s cheek.

“That’s quite enough from you, Noble Cuz!” said the younger Locksley. “I’ll have you know mine’s proper English! The language of Shakespeare, Keats and Wordsworth. Not that forest slang version you speak these days!” she grinned as she said it, and it was clear to Regina, as she saw Maria link arms with Caroline, that the two cousins were very close. “See what I have to put up, Gina?” said Carrie.

“Hey, don’t get me involved in your family squabble!” she chuckled. “I’ve already got one little Locksley at home whose an argumentative so-and-so, and his father’s no better. I’m not coming between two more of you!”

“Wise choice,” agreed Maria. “So, how are you feeling, Regina? You’re looking beautifully parturient, by the way…” she said, straight faced and enjoying the slightly confused look on her cousin. “That means ‘about to have a baby’ Carrie! English, you know?”

Regina now laughed aloud. “Thank you…I think. Maria Locksley, you’re as bad as your brother!”

“How dare you!” she said, grinning and not in the least bit offended. “How could you compare me to Robin? The old boy’s far worse!” she was enjoying the banter.

“Hey, that ‘old boy’ happens to be the father of my children! And this one too!” she said, proudly rubbing her swollen belly. “And Emma’s!”

“Yeah, I’m surprised he still has the energy!” said Maria, smirking cheekily.

“More than enough energy, thank you,” she said before deciding she was going to shock her. “Your brother is not only a truly excellent lover, but…” she couldn’t wait to see the look on her face! “…the fact he’s also hung like a donkey is an added bonus!”

The ever-elegant Caroline almost sprayed her drink over the pair as she collapsed into helpless laughter. Maria, on the other hand, had her eyes almost bulging out of her head.

“Oh, my, God! I cannot believe you just said that! I really wish you hadn’t just said that!” She brought her hands to her mouth, aghast. “That’s my brother you’re talking about! I’ll never be able to look him in the face ever again!”

“Well you started it, madam - making derogatory remarks about my...our man!” She gave an evil grin. “Now you two, to business. Tell me how you want me to help you?”

For the next two hours, Regina and the women worked smoothly around the kitchen, chopping and preparing everything. Carrie made sure Regina sat on a stool regularly, and the happy banter between them all flowed, becoming more rude and risqué as they continued. They compared notes on various characters in Storybrooke and Sherwood, cackling as various bitchy comments were made. Regina hadn’t had so much fun in ages and she felt like she was in the company of two very naughty sisters. Maria seemed to have a wealth of stories and rude jokes and the brunette marvelled at the similarities between her and Robin.

A little later, as the two enormous roasts lay in their separate ovens, Maria proposed a toast to Regina. “To new friends! Gina, once you and Emma have had those babies, you are so coming out on a girls’ nights with us! Rob can do the child minding!”

“To new friends,” Regina nodded as they all clinked glasses. “Definitely. Emma and I will have carried them nine months, so it’ll be high time for him to do the heavy lifting!”
Robin and Emma showed up at the inn at midday as agreed. Expecting to be seated in the dining area, she was more than surprised to be led upstairs to a very ornate dining room overlooking the lawns at the front. It was delightful and looked even more ornate than the bedroom she’d conceived in seven months ago. On the long oval table there were place settings already marked. Robin’s name was at one end and Maria’s at the opposite. Emma counted around seventeen guest settings.

“I thought you said it was just family and none of the men were coming, Robin?” As she walked around, she read the small name cards. To Robin’s left was Regina, placed next to Emma. Going around she saw the names to her left. Henry, Violet, Victor, Caroline, Rumplestiltskin, Belle, David, Snow, Neal, Maria’s Guest, Maria, Roland, Honour and finally Margot.

“I did. John’s being very secretive about where he’s going. Will, Tuck and the boys are all doing something. I discussed it with Maria, though she’s being bit coy about who her ‘guest’ is! Carrie’s now engaged to Victor and Henry asked us to include all the grandparents.”

“Thanks for including my mum and dad. I appreciate it, considering how they reacted…” She leaned up to peck him on the lips.

“They were just trying to protect you, Emma. And Snow has apologized to me, on several occasions.”

Half an hour later, nearly everyone arrived, and Regina walked in to greet them, kissing Robin and Emma’s cheeks before meeting the rest of the guests. Carrie whispered something to Robin, who followed her into the kitchen. “Rob, can you help carry the birds up there? The trays are quite heavy. Regina offered, but I don’t want her carrying anything like this in her condition.”

“No problem.” He focused his mind and the two large cooked roasts appeared, on their silver trays, on the top of a long side serving table. He smiled as he heard the excited gasps and applause from upstairs. The large roast goose and roast turkey looked magnificent, as they were swiftly followed by bowls and trays of all manner of vegetables and salads, leaving a spread truly fit for royalty.

Snow and David looked on in astonishment at the groaning food table, the silverware, bone china plates and crystal glasses. “This is astonishing! Did you do all this, Regina?” she asked the woman who normally took charge of these things.

“Nothing to do with me this time! This was all Carrie and Maria’s work, so you have them to thank. I merely chopped a few vegetables!”

“She did a lot more than that, Mrs. Nolan!” said Carrie. “Your daughter-in-law was also most excellent company. We’ll have to hire her again!” she said, smiling at Regina.

“Well, dearies,” said Rumple, admiring the spread. “As you’ve gone to all this trouble…” He waved his hands with a flourish, and a smaller laid table appeared, to be covered with ice buckets, glasses and bottles of champagne, wine, beers and soft drinks. Belle smiled across at her husband as Maria walked over to him. “Champagne magic? I’m definitely staying close to you two!” she winked at Belle, before giving Rumple a small kiss on the cheek, making the Dark One almost blush. The others laughed.

Maria, Robin and Carrie took charge of serving the meats, passing plates across and inviting everyone to help themselves. There was more than enough for everyone. Normally Snow, Regina or David were called upon to make a short speech before a formal meal. However, when Snow nudged her husband to start, he declined. “No, I think this time, it should be our host, the Earl of Locksley himself, who should make a speech. It’s his pub, after all!” Various cheers of agreement rang around the table. So, Robin decided to just stand up and take the plunge:
“Well, ladies and gentlemen, I may have provided the facilities, but I assure you these ladies did all the work!” there were various harrumphs and cheers at that. “But I guess I would like to say a few words. As you know, I was brought back here, by Zeus, just over eight months ago. Since then, I’ve been reunited with my three wonderful children, even if they are five years older!” he winked at Margot, sitting silently. Her mother was still in San Francisco with her new boyfriend over the holiday, so the young redhead had moved into Mifflin Street a week earlier. She loved it and had no problem with her mum being away.

“I’ve also been reunited with my dear cousin and my little sister, both of whom I thought I’d lost forever…” there was definitely a little emotional hitch in his voice as he looked at Maria and Caroline, their eyes also reddening. “If you’ve already met Maria…I must apologise!” Various chuckles went around the table, as she poked her tongue out at her brother. “She is a Locksley, after all…” he winked at her.

“And I’m sure you all know our lovely cousin Caroline here, by now. So I would like to propose a toast to their engagement!” The group all raised their glasses, clinking and cheering at the pair. Victor felt a little uncomfortable, not used to being shown approval by this group.

As the pair received good wishes from all around, the large room door opened as Maria’s mystery guest appeared. “Sorry I’m late!” he said, in a deep British accent.

Charles Sage, Merlin’s son, stood before them, feeling slightly awkward. “I had to say hi to Dad and Annabelle first. We don’t really do Thanksgiving, so they’re doing it with Blue and the girls!” Although Charles still seemed slightly nervous as he moved closer, Robin, Regina, Emma and Rumple all felt an enormous pull of very strong magic, a mixture of dark and light, that seemed to emanate from the man. “Thank you for inviting me!”

“Well you’re having your first one with me! You lucky boy!” joked Maria, firmly patting the seat next to her and giving him a peck on the cheek as he sat down. Realising there was something possibly going on between them, most of the women in the room felt a twinge of envy towards Robin’s sister. Charles Sage was an incredibly handsome man! And even Snow white couldn’t resist giving him a flirty smile and wink, unnoticed by David.

“You’re very welcome, Charlie!” said Robin, “I’m pleased you could join us. Now, where was I? Oh yes; I’m delighted to see Rumple and Belle with us, especially with my handsome godson over there! Without Rumple’s support, Sherwood wouldn’t even exist, so we have much to thank him for! So, please raise a glass to my good friends, Rumple, Belle and Gideon!” Although Emma and Regina gave each other a quizzical look, Everyone around the table, including Honour and Robyn, raised a glass to toast them.

Rumple gave an embarrassed smile, not used to being praised without an ulterior motive. He raised a silent toast and nod to the archer as he continued. “Snow, David, I’m delighted you could join us with Neal. He’s quite the handsome devil these days. Neal, I understand your magic came in too, this week?”

Neal Nolan, usually a shy child, smiled up at Robin. "Yeah, It did - look!” Emma’s seven-year-old brother twirled his fingers, making Honour’s little blue unicorn doll, resting by her plate, come magically to life. It reared silently on its hind legs, neighed silently and disappeared into a puff of smoke, to be replaced by the same doll it had been before he started. Emma laughed loudly. “Nice one, bro!” she approved, though Snow gave her son a warning glance.

“No magic, or unicorns, at the table please, Neal!” his mother gently chided.

Robin continued to work round the table, giving his thanks to all for coming to his first ever
Thanksgiving. ‘Well that’s enough from me. Let’s eat!” That brought the biggest cheer as they all tucked in. Conversation then flowed easily for the next hour as they feasted.

All agreed the lunch was delicious, and both Emma and Regina went back for more. “I’ve never had goose before!” whispered Regina to Robin, “my mother always said it was ‘something for the peasants, not royalty’. Personally, I thought that was delicious; so much moister and succulent than turkey!”

“Goose was my dad’s favourite too,” said Robin, “though, for me, it was always my mum’s apple pie. It was just perfection. Sadly, the recipe died with her…” Regina smiled at him, knowing that Carrie had something rather special planned. Sure enough, when the time came, Carrie gave her a knowing look, nodding and leaning over to whisper something to Rumple. The Dark One nodded, appearing to ask a question, then grinned.

Moments later, all the dirty plates and glasses on the table disapparated, earning a loud “Ooh!” from Honour, as the Dark One twirled his fingers, giving a small giggle, which made Margot chuckle. “Hands away from the table, please dearies!” Rumple instructed, before a clean tablecloth appeared, followed by smaller plates and pudding bowls. Another whisper between him and Caroline and a very large three-foot in diameter pie appeared in the centre, followed by three large yellow jugs and a large pot of ice-cream.

“Cor – Ice cream -brilliant!” yelled Neal. Robin looked closer. The pie appeared to be pastry covered and on top, a thick coat of…caramel!

“Carrie, surely that’s not…not…Locksley Pie?” he gasped.

“Uh-huh!” said the tall blonde woman, smugly. “Your mother gave me the recipe. Mind you, I had to beg her for it!”

“Locksley Pie?” called Maria. “Why didn’t you say? For god’s sake stop talking and start serving!”

Caroline chuckled, getting up and starting to slice it. “You’ll get yours soon enough, Maria Locksley! But no seconds for you, or Robin, till everybody’s had their firsts! I remember you two with this – you were like little pigs at a trough!” That earned a laugh from everyone else and wry, pink faces from the Locksley siblings as Victor appeared at her side, helping by bowling out the ice cream to the children, while she carefully worked her way through the famed ‘pie’. As she did, the smells of baked apple, nutmeg, caramel and something else worked its way across the nostrils of the adults, who all decided they wanted some. The yellow jugs appeared to be custard, generous helpings of which were scooped onto each bowl.

As Regina took her bowl, enjoying the aroma, she looked down at the thick apple under the caramel and pastry. “It just seems to be apple pie with caramel on top? What’s all the fuss about?” she was interrupted by the blonde to her left.

“Hmmmm! Jeezuz H. Christ! That’s so lovely! Gina, you so gotta try this!” moaned Emma. The noises she made sounded almost sexual. “Or just give me yours if you don’t want it!” Honour giggled at the silly behaviour of her blonde mother as she snuffled her ice cream.

“Behave, you!” said Regina, before trying it for herself. The smooth nutmeg and caramel that floated over her tongue was simply divine, and she had to admit she couldn’t remember the last time she tasted a dessert anything like as good. “Carrie, this is absolutely heaven!” she heard groans of agreement from all around the table, even from Rumpelstiltskin. “You just have to give me the recipe!”
“Sorry Regina, no can do. It’s a family state secret! Only people bearing the Locksley name can know it. Their mum’s strict orders!” she said, pointing at the two siblings who were already standing, heading to give themselves a second helping. Emma had already got up too. “Hey, I’m feeding for two! I have priority!” she said, trying to use her doe eyes on Caroline.

“That’s true! And Emma, you are carrying a Locksley after all, so I guess you have priority!” she chuckled. “Regina, would you like seconds too?” In truth, there was plenty to go around, Caroline having made plenty knowing how piggish Robin and Maria would be over the famed dish. Nonetheless, she was delighted at just how much everyone seemed to adore her pie. Emma scooped a second large slice and a mass of custard. “I want to have babies with this pie!” she groaned to Maria, earning an “Emma - behave!” from her mother and a “best cool the custard down first – could hurt!” from Maria, making her fall about laughing.

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That evening, as Robin settled Honour and Margot in bed with a story, Emma and Regina lay back on the sofa, both completely exhausted. The Thanksgiving lunch had been an enormous success. After lunch, Robin had persuaded most of the adults to join him on a walk in the forest to wear off the three slices of pie he’d worked his way through. Much as Emma loved the idea, the huge meal and the pregnancy weight had made her too lethargic. Plus, some of the children were fading, and Gideon was getting restless. Rumple took it on himself to use magic to clear up the kitchen and put everything away. So, once the former Outlaw returned with the adults in tow, everyone decided to head home. Hugs and kisses were exchanged, and everyone left happy and sated after what everyone regarded as a brilliant day.

“Gina, I’m never eating again.” Complained Emma, messaging her swollen stomach. “Why didn’t you stop me going for that third slice?”

“Because you, Emma Swan-Mills, are old enough to know better! Don’t blame me if your gluttony has no bounds! I didn’t eat half what you had, and I’m completely loaded. Carrie is an extremely good cook.” she smiled, contended. “Fun wasn’t it?”

“Definitely. I like Maria, she’s bloody hilarious! Filthy sense of humour, mind…”

Regina grinned. “Yes. She reminds me of her brother!”

“What? Robin’s never that rude!”

“Oh, but he can be. I remember once listening when he and the men were talking around a campfire. He’s also a surprisingly good mimic to! He does impressions. He got Gold’s annoying giggle completely. And your strut…”

“What? I do not strut! And how come I’m the last to know he does impressions? Has he been taking the piss out of me behind my back?”

Regina guffawed. “Not at all! He does little impressions of all of us, though he usually has quite a few drinks inside him before he does anything. Remember, he’s hardly been drinking while we’ve been pregnant. He said it wasn’t fair for him to, when we couldn’t. I know as a fact he does an impression of me! My voice, too…”

“Really? I’ve got to see that! Still, before he comes back downstairs, you remember what we talked about? Are you still sure you want to do this?”

Regina’s face became serious. “I am. But the question is…are you? I know it was your idea, but we
both need to be fully committed. I won’t do it if you won’t! So, are you absolutely sure you want this?”

The blonde leaned across to take her hand. “I am! I’ve hardly thought about anything else these last two days. I’m a little nervous. What if he says no?”

“That’s highly unlikely. Even more so, bearing in mind what you overheard him saying to Henry. But that’s also the reason it needs to be just between the three of us. In case anyone has doubts…”

“So, we do it soon, as we agreed? Or do we wait until after the babies? Personally, I don’t like the uncertainty and, to be honest, I get a bit wound up when people like Annabelle Sage come on to him!”

That surprised Regina. Annoyance at anyone showing affection to Robin? “She doesn’t really, she just flirts with everyone! Emma, you know Robin isn’t that kind of man. I’m surprised at you – that’s the sort of comment I would’ve made! Robin would never lead us along - it’s not in his nature. He’s a very attractive man, so some women are always going to flirt with him. I remember feeling annoyed when I first saw Carrie with him, before I realized she was his cousin. But I trust him implicitly. The question is, do you?”

“I do. It’s probably just the hormones talking. Making me feel a bit insecure…” she edged across the sofa to wrap an arm around Regina, who moved into her automatically. With the size of them both now, even simply standing up was becoming more arduous. “I understand. I’m sure Robin will be fine…”

“Fine about what?” said a voice from the hallway, as Roland stepped in. “You talking about my dad?”

The pair looked up at him and Regina still couldn’t believe how much he’d grown. With his wild, dark hair and beautiful rich brown eyes, he looked so much like Marian, or as much as they could remember her. But the grin, those adorable dimples and his manner were all Robin. She glared at him, just trying to hide a smile. “How long have you been listening in, young man?”

“Oh, just a minute. I couldn’t hear much but, what’s happening? What’s wrong with dad?”

Regina sighed loudly. They had agreed that Roland should be the first to know. He was his son, after all. Emma decided to lead. “Sit down please, Roland.” The young man stiffened. It was rare that Emma used his full name.

“We’ve been meaning to talk to you; well, to ask you something! It’s important, but I first need to know you can keep a secret.”

“Me? I’m not your mum you know! Of course I can. Is it about dad?” The reference to Emma’s mother was clearly influenced by Regina’s bedtime stories.

“Roland, you’re growing up fast. And I know you’ve only had your dad back a few months. Well, since he moved in here, everyone’s been really happy, yeah?”

“It’s been brilliant. Sometimes I still can’t believe he’s back for good. He is though, isn’t he? He’s not going to be moving out or anything daft? I couldn’t take that, and I know Honnie couldn’t.”

“He’s here for good, Roland,” said Regina, moving to pat the boy’s knee. “Do you seriously think I could let the man who died to save me, leave here? No chance. I’ll chain him to the front door if I have too…” That brought a big grin from the boy. “But Emma and I want to change what he means to us all. As you know, Emma and I are both expecting your siblings in a few weeks. We know
Emma’s carrying your sister, and we don’t want to know what mine will be yet but, either way, you’ll have either two sisters or a brother and sister, soon. Now your father and Emma have got much closer over the last few months, so we thought…”

But Roland interrupted her. “That you want to ask dad to marry you!” he almost shouted. “Like Rory and Phil did to Mulan!”

Emma’s sighed. Bright kid! No pulling the wool over his eyes! “And what do you think about that, Ro?”

“Are you kidding me? I think it would be brilliant! Henry would then really be my brother! Yes, do it!”

Regina chuckled. “Thank you for your words of encouragement, Roland, and I’ll take that as you giving your permission. But we haven’t spoken to your father yet! There’s no guarantee he will say yes…”

“Don’t be daft! He’d love to marry both of you. Can’t you tell from all the goo-goo eyes he keeps making? He’s like a puppy around you two. Just think, we’ll be a real, proper family at last!”

That last comment stung them, Emma feeling it was undeserved. After Robin’s death and getting the boy back, Emma and Regina had tried so hard to include him, even more so once Honour was born. “I thought we were a family already?” said Emma. Roland could see the hurt in her eyes.

“Yeah. Sorry ma, I didn’t mean it like that! My mouth just ran away with me, as usual. I just meant…well…I hardly remember my birth mum. Then, when I thought she came back it was your bloody sister – no offence mum, but I will always hate her, no matter what you say! Then dad got killed, and I had nobody. You came to get me, but I still had no dad. Now finally, I get a dad and two mums! That’s brilliant. Some people might stop calling me a little bastard now!”

Regina was aghast. “WHO called you that? Roland, who would dare call you that horrible name?”

“You’d be surprised. Also since I’ve been living here, we get called all sorts of other stuff because you’re two women. I won’t tell you what, because it’d just upset you, like it did me. But it happens, and I can handle it.”

“You shouldn’t have to!” said Emma, clearly annoyed. She’d already experienced homophobia since she got together with Regina. There were a number of formerly civil people in Storybrooke, who now seemed to cut her dead. Some wouldn’t even look at her, and she wasn't sure whether it was due to her being married to another woman. “Roland, what makes you think we’d make things worse? We could have stopped it! How come you trust Henry or Doctor Hopper, but not me or your mother?” Regina felt stung by his lack of faith.

“Because you have magic! You would have gone in all angry and threatening and everybody would have been scared. You would have felt better, but what then? Once you’d gone, it would have got worse because they’re frightened of you! Henry told me how to handle it and it’s a lot better now. Archie said he’d deal with it through Doctor Grimes, without mentioning me.”

“Does your father know about this?”

That made Roland smirk. “No chance. I thought about telling him after he iced Mr. Spencer! When dad rescued Margot from that tree, the two boys who did it nearly pooped themselves when he got angry! But that won’t help me when everyone’s gone home, so I’ll handle it…”

“I still say you should have told us!” said Emma. “We can always speak to their parents…”
But the boy wasn't to be moved. “No. I’ll handle it. But I do want you to marry dad. Honnie would love it! So when are you going to ask him? I know as a fact he won’t ask you, cos you’re already married!”

Regina chuckled. “It’s silly, but it is more common for a man to ask a woman to marry him, but you’re right, we are the married couple, after all. I thought we might do it tomorrow night, after we’ve spoken to Henry. He should know too, although I know he would be happy about it.”

“Yeah, he talked to me about it.” That surprised the pair. “He thinks it would be cool too. He really likes dad, though he also told me he wouldn’t like to be called Henry Locksley-Swan-Mills. Said it was a mouthful, and he’d preferred to be just Henry Locksley, like me! We’d be brothers!”

“He said that? I know he didn’t want to become ‘Swan-Mills’ but why ‘Locksley’? Why not just stay as ‘Mills’?”

“He said something about it being useful when he goes to other realms. Something about travelling for a while. He also wants to go to England, like I did, and on to Avalon and some other places after university...”

Regina and Emma gave each other an uncomfortable stare. They knew Henry had itchy feet and the day would come when he wanted to travel and see the world. *It seems that day was fast approaching!*

“So, when are you going to ask dad to marry you?” said the boy, as keen as mustard. “I could get Honnie and Margot out of your hair tomorrow night. As it’s Friday, John and the guys are having a barbeque, so we could stay with them. I’ll tell Henry and we’ll be out of your way…”

“Woah kid, hold on!” said Emma, worried they were being rushed into this.

“He’s right, Emma. We could have dinner here and do it tomorrow night. If you’re ready for this?”

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The following morning, Regina asked Robin whether he could forego the evening barbeque with the men in favour of a quiet evening in with them. He was happy to oblige, though surprised to learn that Henry would collect Honour, Roland and Margot and take them to the forest with him and Violet.

“Well I must admit, a quiet evening in with just the two of you would be lovely. I’d be happy to cook, or I could bring back a take-away?”

“Chinese!” yelled Emma, “No offence Rob, but you’re cooking isn’t up to Gina’s standard, and neither of us fancy doing anything in the kitchen!” So it was agreed, and after a day supervising more building in Sherwood, that evening Robin brought home two large bags of take away from Mrs. Choi.

As he walked through the door with the hot food, he was pleasantly surprised to see both women entering the hallway in elegant dresses, both silk and knee length, but one in black and one in white. They were clearly designed for maternity. Soft, flowing and flattering their pregnancy curves beautifully. He marvelled at the fact that, even when over seven months pregnant, both Emma and Regina looked utterly stunning, especially when they stood together.

“You both look absolutely wonderful! If I’d known, I would have dressed a little more suitably myself. Perhaps you could give me a couple of minutes to freshen up and change?”

“No time for that,” said Emma, “I’m starving! Let’s just get it on the table and eat!”
Robin laughed at her urgency. He decided instead to use his magic, transforming his forest shirt, jeans and casual gear into a tailored two-piece dark navy suit with crisp white shirt and bow tie, remembering to apply a little cologne underneath. *It wasn’t a shower, but it was quick.*

“Hmm, lovely!” said Regina, rising on her toes and pulling Robin down for a kiss. “I always love you in a suit!” she breathed, “...and out of it!” making him stiffen as he felt her soft curves pressed against him. As she turned away to the dining table, where Emma had already laid the boxes out, she heard him whisper, “tease!”

Half an hour later, all three were comfortably replete from the dinner. Although delightful company, Robin couldn’t help noticing both women seemed to be on edge most of the evening. Something was clearly bothering them but knowing he wouldn’t get any answer if he just asked straight out, he decided to wait, changing the subject.

“God, that’s two enormous meals in two days - I’m getting big! I think I’m looking more pregnant than you two!” That earned polite smiles from both women, who still didn’t say anything. He watched Emma digging her thumbnail into her index finger, the usual sign she was stressed. Regina seemed to watch her, waiting for her to say something while dragging her teeth on her lower lip, her own sign of stress. He decided now was as good a time as ever.

“Well Miladies, something is clearly wrong and you’re both troubled this evening! Are you going to tell me now? Or do I have to guess?”

The women stayed silent, Emma looking at Regina to say something until, finding the silence no longer bearable, “It’s nothing, Rob. It’s just been a long day…” earning a glare from the brunette.

“Well, whilst I don’t have your superpower for this sort of thing, Emma, I know a lie when I hear one. There obviously is something. Would you rather I not be here at the moment? Perhaps you need to be alone…”

“NO!” both women replied simultaneously, looking at each other. Regina decided to lead. “Robin… sorry…yes, we do have something we want to say to you!” she slowly rose from the chair, moving across towards the sofa. “Emma perhaps we should be doing this together?”

The way she said it, and the nervousness on her face, made Robin shudder.

Well I wasn’t expecting that!

He nodded silently, noticing how nervous they seemed, before closing his eyes. He heard a small shuffling noise, followed by the gently clunk of a knee being bent, as he waited patiently. “Ok Robin, you can open them now!” said Emma.

He opened them, to find Regina and Emma kneeling side-by-side, each with their right leg raised, as though preparing to exercise, Emma’s right hand coiled into Regina’s left, looking up at him.

“Robin, sorry we’ve been a bit…quiet…this evening. There’s nothing wrong. We’re just both a bit…anxious! The last seven and a half months since you came back from the dead have been the most…astonishing…months of my life! After you died. No, after you gave your life to save Regina’s, she and I reached the lowest point of our lives. The word depression doesn’t even begin to cover it! But slowly, Gina and I came to rely on each other. We became close and our friendship eventually turned to love, and finally, marriage. I love Regina with all my heart Robin, and I never imagined having those feelings for anyone else. When you came back, I felt threatened, despite all
the reassurances you gave me about my marriage. But you did get between Regina and me, but not in the way I could ever have imagined! What started off as sex, for me, turned into something so much deeper. You’ve now given me another child and after that pregnancy scare, I’m desperate to bring her into the world. Our world. And then, as usual, it took me forever to realise it! When you came back from the Dark Realm, rescuing all those children, and I thought you’d died, that’s when I knew it - that I had fallen in love with Regina’s true love, Robin Hood! I love you, Robin of Locksley. I love you and want you, and Regina, to be a part of my life. Forever!” Emma’s voice wobbled with nerves. Her wife held her hand, taking over.

“Robin, you already know my feelings. I loved you long before you died! Henry taught me how to love, but you taught me how to be loved! You even gave me Honour. Me, the Evil Queen, who took a potion to make herself barren! Merlin told me only true love could reverse that! I tried to kill myself before I knew the gift you bestowed on me. How shameful is that? Emma was the only one who could pull me back from the brink and I fell in love with her. Robin, I have no doubt that Emma is also my true love! Me, Regina Mills, besotted and totally in love with both a saviour and a thief! There is nothing I wouldn’t do for either of you. Like Emma, I also love you, Robin, and I want you to be part of my life, our lives, forever!”

As she said it, her right hand revealed a small box, which he hadn’t noticed till now. She flicked it open to reveal a ring. A simple but wide gold band with a deep blue sapphire set deep into it. Elegant, but not ostentatious. Just like him. She gently eased the ring from its mounting, offering it to him.

“Robin, Emma and I have been married nearly three years. We’ve agreed, and we want to open up our marriage. To you! We want you to be our husband. Robin, will you marry us?”

Emma looked up into his deep blue eyes and saw a single tear slowly start to roll down his right cheek. He dropped down to his knees in front of the pair, rolling his eyes when his knee loudly clicked, before taking their unlinked hands in his own.

“I’ve truly fallen in love with both of you, so deeply. I would love nothing more than to be joined in marriage with you, forever. I will!”

Emma sighed loudly in relief, even though she’d been pretty sure he’d say yes. He rolled his long arms around the pair of them, as they curled into him. He leaned his head to face Emma’s, whispering “I love you,” before latching his lips onto hers in a brief, open kiss. Pulling back with a smile, he then whispered to same to Regina before giving her the same kiss. She then pulled back, twisting her head to capture Emma’s lips with her own.

“We need to figure out a way to do this more smoothly, like the Briars have,” said Robin, earning a snigger from his new fiancées.

“Perhaps,” said Regina, “I love the idea of practicing, though...” The three spent the next couple of minutes kissing cheeks and lips, each holding the other two close. They even played with all three of them trying to connect their lips, even tongues, together at the same time, before giggling and realizing it wasn’t too easy. “I guess that’s why Rory, Phil and Mulan have that funny ‘I kiss your lips while she kisses my cheek’ thing all worked out.” Emma whispered into their mouths.

“We’ll get there,” whispered Robin. “We’ve all the time in the world!”

That night, Robin, Emma and Regina, looking forward to a rare lie-in the following morning, took their time to make love in the most unhurried and relaxed manner. Prior to that, he’d shared a warm, soapy bath, Emma lying against Robin’s chest, after which they dried, and he took the time to slowly massage them both. Wary of harming their babies or accidentally inducing them early, he’d suggested
they both use him by them going on top, one on either end, and setting their own pace. Although he
sometimes found breathing a little difficult, the sheer joy of hearing them come, Regina impaling
herself on his cock and Emma on his mouth, made it all worthwhile. Somehow, he managed to hold
off his own release until after they had switched ends and repeated. He couldn’t see what his fiancées
were doing to each other, only listening to their loving whispers and moans as they achieved their
orgasms. But if it was anything like what affect they were having on him, it was all worth it. There
wasn't a happier man in all the realms!
Chapter Summary

So Emma, Robin and Regina are going to be wed! Now there's the little matter of telling people...
It seems Little John has been hiding something and there's a royal visitor in town!

Chapter 41

The following morning, the trio lay in bed together, still naked, the two women either side of Robin, their heads resting on their new fiancé’s chest as his arms wrapped around their shoulders. “This has to be the best way to wake up!” he moaned. He’d started off on the left side last night, but once again for no apparent reason he found himself in the middle. Odd, considering both Emma and Regina, heavily pregnant, found moving around difficult.

“Couldn’t agree more,” groaned Emma, snuggling in tighter. “Might as well enjoy it while we can, cos when these little buggers get out, we’ll be handling four children! Lying-in will only be a memory for quite some time to come…”

“Not too long, I hope. I’m pretty sure your mother will want to take them off our hands as soon as she can. We also have Maria, Carrie and even Henry. He’s already proven himself to be a wonderful big brother.” Regina smiled silently, her mind elsewhere. “Penny for your thoughts, love?” he asked.

“Hmm? Sorry, I was thinking about the wedding. Imagining Henry in a morning suit…”

“Planning ahead?” he grinned. “I was thinking about that myself. As you’re already married, shouldn’t I be the one walking down the aisle to you two? My daughters throwing petals down in front of me as I walk to my future wives…” he said, tongue-in-cheek.

“Nice try,” said Emma. “But I for one want to wear a proper white wedding dress, with a train, and walk down this time! Gina and I married at short notice, in a rather unromantic New York registry office. It was lovely, but very last-minute!”

“Last minute? Who attended?”

“Henry was there, but Ro and Honnie stayed back with John.” She smiled. “Still a lovely day after, though!”

“So only him and no more family? Snow must have had a blue fit!”

“She did,” said Regina, sniggering. “She thought w’d deliberately snubbed her. She blamed me of course! She wasn't keen on us being together in the first place, even though we were living together. I’m the filthy pervert who magically ensnared her daughter. David was fine about it, but it took a long time for her to come around. We just didn’t want a fuss! We’d both been through so much, we just wanted a simple service…”

“I saw the pictures downstairs. You both still looked lovely, though. So, do you want something simple this time? Something quick over the next few weeks? You’re already married, mind, so I’ll be
happy with whatever you both decide. I just want to be your husband…"

Emma kissed his chest. “Well I’ve never had a full white wedding. I thought Aurora, Mulan and Philip’s on the Jolly was beautiful. I’ve never really been a girly-girl, and before I moved in with Gina, I was rarely out of jeans, shirts and jackets. This one…” she said nodding towards Regina, “changed me.”

Robin kissed her forehead. “I think it’s rather lovely how you’ve both grown into each other. You do look rather delectable in some of Gina’s dresses, and she looks rather chic in your tops. Your red leather looked good on her the other day.”

“One of the best things about being a female couple - twice the wardrobe!” said Regina, a devilish glint in her eye. She kissed his cheek, her hand now roaming down his chest and towards his thighs. “You know sometimes - Emma and I - we even used to swap panties in the diner, after we’ve met for lunch!” That earned a surprised look from Robin and a roll of the eyes from her wife.

“Stop that. We so do not…” Emma said, nuzzling his other cheek. “Ignore her. She’s just trying to get you excited.”

“Unfortunately,” said Robin feeling a familiar twinge below. “It’s working!”

Emma giggled, also lowering her hand between his legs. “The more I think about it, I kinda like the idea of a traditional white wedding dress. More feminine and classic than sexy, as I’m a bit too old to do sexy…”

“Don’t be silly!” admonished Regina with a gentle slap on her hand, before joining it on Robin’s member. “You’re the sexiest woman I know! We’ll wear white together! Last time I wore a full wedding dress, I didn’t even want to marry the King, though I was forced to. I can’t remember much about it.”

“Well I have to agree with Gina. I’m certain you’ll both look stunning. The pair of you would even look beautiful in garbage sacks and coconuts…”

Emma sniggered as together, they massaged his swelling together, “That would save money, certainly.”

“So, when do we want to get married? Next few weeks? Best not too close to your due dates…”

“Not a chance in hell!” said Regina. “Robin, I don’t want to walk down the aisle to you looking like a marquee! We need to have these babies and lose some weight first!”

“Fair enough. So, who do we tell first? Do you want Snow and David to know yet?”

“That’ll certainly save us the bother of notifying the whole town!” That earned a returned slap on the hand from Emma. “I think we need to tell the children first. Roland already knows we were planning to propose…” Robin looked up, surprised.

“Yeah, your kid’s got wolf ears! You sure he isn’t Ruby’s?” said Emma.

“Quite sure, though he’s certainly acquired an annoying knack of finding out thing’s he isn’t meant to!”

“Well he knows about this, so he’s probably tipped off Henry already. Either way, we should meet the four of them this morning to tell them the news. After that, we should tell Emma’s parents. Do we all agree?”
“Well, that’s that settled then,” said Robin. “However, that brings me to an even more urgent problem. I’m currently lying in a lovely warm bed, with no clothes on, with two equally naked fiancées massaging my penis. So I have a difficult choice. Do I go down and make some tea…or do I just go down?”

“Oh! Well…I guess I’m not that thirsty…” said Regina, impressed how quickly he’d stiffened.

Emma giggled before whispering in his ear. “Oh, and Robin? About that panty-swapping thing? Gina and I only do that in her office. Far less likely to be caught…”

“Well that is extremely naughty of you! Misuse of public facilities, and all that. I think you both need to be punished!” he growled, now hard as a rock below.

“Hmm. I guess you could be right. Well, me first!” said Emma, squeezing him a little tighter.

An hour and a half later, Regina and her fiancées walked into Granny’s for brunch. Robin was surprised to find Alan-a-Dale and Will with Honour, Margot and Roland, instead of John. The children happily slurping milkshakes. “Alan, not that it’s not lovely to see you but – where’s John?”

“Not exactly sure. He looked after Roland and the girls last night but a couple of hours ago he said he needed to dash off to see someone first thing. He’s not saying who, but the babes are fine.”

Before Robin even had the chance to say a word, Ruby silently appeared by his side, sporting an odd smirk while silently taking his left hand in her own, messaging his new ring with her thumb and looking at him as though she was about to ask an awkward question. Regina and Emma both saw the exchange, and Robin whispered. “Too soon, Ruby…I need to speak to the children first!” Her face broke into a brilliant smile, as she nodded, stepping away to allow them some privacy, winking at Emma as she went back behind the counter.

“Guys, we need to have a little chat as we have something to tell you.” said Regina, looking at a smirking Roland who’d already spotted the ring. “Perhaps we should go somewhere quieter? Has anyone seen Henry?”

“Here, mum!” said the young man, who had walked across the room unnoticed. Where the hell did he appear from? thought Emma. Though spotting her son exchange a grin with Roland, who was still holding his cellphone, she guessed.

“Go into our lounge, guys!” called Ruby from the counter. Christ, can you never get privacy in this place? Emma smiled back at the wolf, who seemed to know exactly what was going on, just like Robin’s son.

As Robin nodded his thanks, they went into the warm, cosy lounge and Robin smiled with pride as he watched all of them troop in. Regina first, followed by Henry, Roland, Honour and Margot, with Emma and himself bringing up the rear. Seven of us. Seven! Soon it’ll be nine! One big family…

They settled on the sofa and chairs, Emma and Regina standing in the middle, with Robin to Emma’s side. Henry had already spotted Robin’s new ring. “Ok guys,” the former sheriff kicked off, “I suspect some of you already know what this is about, so let’s just say it for the girls. Honnie, Rob… Margot, last night Regina and I asked your dad if he would marry us. Both of us. And I’m pleased to say, he said yes!”

Everyone stayed silent for a moment, till Margot figured out what had just been said. “So…if you both marry my daddy, you’ll be my step-mummies?”
Regina always knew Zelena and Robin’s daughter was sharp. “Yes, my poppet, in a way, but your mummy, my sister, will always be your birth mummy! Your Aunty Emma and I though, will also become your step-mummies, as well as your aunties.” This seemed to please Margot, who smiled, standing up and wrapping her arms around Regina’s legs.

“As the news was quietly absorbed by the pair of girls, Honour piped up, with a huge grin on her face. “So, you’re going to have a big wedding? A real, proper one, with dresses and everything! And I can be a bridesmaid again!” Honour jumped off the chair, heading to her father who had now dropped down on his knees to hug her as she opened her arms for him to pick her up.

“Marge, you’ll have three mums, just like me!” said Roland, “though my birth mum’s in heaven…”

The young dimpled-cheeked, wild-haired boy merely shrugged. “Well…I hate dressing up, but I guess…it’s not often you get to see your own parents get married…certainly not three of them! But of course I will. Whatever you want…”

“Thank you. And you, Henry?” she noticed her eldest boy hadn’t said a word. Hadn’t commented in any way since learning his married mothers were definitely going to be entering a polyamorous relationship with the other children’s father. He didn’t answer, just looking at the three of them in turn, his silence inducing a feeling of alarm in both women, Emma particularly. Oh shit! Does he not want this?

“Henry?” asked Robin, his voice low and soft, “Do you have a problem with me marrying your mothers?”

Henry looked up, now realising everyone’s eyes were on him. He saw the anxiety on his mothers’ faces. “What…wait…no! It’s not that…”

“No…Robin, it’s not that either! It’s fine…I can handle the poly bit. It’s getting a little less unusual in the city too, though out there it’s not legal…yet. No, it’s just…my dad. It made me think about him and everything. I just hardly got to know him.” He swallowed, trying to put a check on his emotions. “It’s just…here’s Ro and Margot talking about three mums, and I never ever got to spend any real time with my dad.” He choked slightly, moving to wipe an early tear from running down his face and feeling slightly embarrassed at being seen. Regina felt dreadful for him, but knew if she rushed to cuddle him, being a grown man, he’d probably feel even worse. Robin stepped closer, putting a large hand on his shoulder.

“Henry, we’ve spoken about this before. I know what it’s like to lose a father, although I was a little older when I lost mine! As I grew up, I often wished he was around to help me, to advise me. You know, I spent some time with Neal, back in the Enchanted Forest. So did Mulan. He was a rather remarkable man, unassuming and humble, but he knew an awful lot more than he let on! He saved many lives when he was much younger, and you heard what Merlin said? He’s now doing the same thing with souls in other underworlds. He had his father’s intelligence without a doubt, and I see a lot of him in you! He would have been very proud to see what you’ve become…”
He patted his shoulder, as Henry wiped another tear quickly before it ran down his cheek. “I’ll never be able to replace Neal as a father, Henry, nor would I even attempt to! It would be insulting to him and you, as he was unique. But I hope I can be a little support, someone to talk to, if you ever feel you need it.” He slid an arm around Henry’s back as the younger man tried desperately to control his emotions, burying his head into Robin’s shoulder to stifle a sob.

Emma watched their brief exchange and felt wretched. The last time she’d spoken to Neal was in her dream nearly six years ago, as they headed to the Underworld across the Styx. When he tried to prevent her going. It was only his death that made her finally admit to herself, that she had still been in love with him. But as usual, she said nothing and it was too late. Now, seeing how after six years, his loss still affected her son, his son, Emma finally began to understand why he gave her such a hard time for missing the anniversary of his death and how hurt he was over how quickly she had been able to move on. A son needs his father. Hell, I know I do! Yet, here again, was Robin, able to at least provide some sort of comfort. A father figure when he couldn’t have a father!

“Thanks,” muttered the young man, pulling back from him with a short sniffle, aware everyone was watching him. Regina was desperate for an answer.

“Henry, are you still alright about this? It must all be so strange for you, also seeing your mother and I both getting pregnant. Robin moving in. Now we tell you we’re getting married. Three people getting married! Talk to me, please?”

“It’s ok mum, really! Yes, it’s a bit odd but, well frankly I was a bit more embarrassed when you and ma got together! No offence but, everyone here just assumed you were straight. They didn’t realise you were both gay until you came out…”

“Bi,” Regina and Emma corrected simultaneously, before looking at each other.

“Whatever,” he smirked. “Either way, I don’t have a problem with you two and Robin being hitched. It’s just…going to take a bit of getting used to! Three people getting married? It’s a little bit weird but…it worked for Phil, Rory and Mulan and they seem happy enough. So…it’s weird but…then, so’s Storybrooke!”

A few minutes later, the family trooped out into the diner, to be greeted by Ruby beaming at them. At a nearby table, in their usual position for a Saturday brunch, sat Snow, David and Neal. Snow smiled up at Emma when she saw her daughter emerge from the back room. Oh well. Now or never!

“Emma? Regina? What were you doing back there?” asked Snow, surprised to see her daughter and wife’s entire family step out, with Robin. The Swan-Mills women shared a look, Regina nodded for her wife to lead.

“Hi Mum. Erm, best stay sitting down! We’ve got something to tell you.” However, before she had a chance, Honour stepped in front of her with a ridiculously large grin.

“I’m gonna be a bridesmaid, Grandma! An I’m gonna be Honour Locksley, just like daddy and Rollie!

“Emma?” breathed a stunned Snow White.

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After that encounter with the princess, sure enough, word of the Locksley-Swan-Mills engagement spread like wildfire, all thanks to Snow White and her unerring inability to keep a secret. After Leroy got word, it spread to the fairies, to the dwarves and villagers. Within a few hours, everyone knew
about the proposed marriage between the former Evil Queen, the Saviour and the Outlaw. Most people accepted it, and anyone who knew them closely enough realized something like this was likely to happen.

On arriving in Sherwood later that day, the men and the villagers came out to warmly greet their leader and his future wives. Regina herself was surprised by the sheer warmth from people she knew only by sight and she blushed as compliments were paid. Caroline came out from the surgery to wrap her cousin in a warm hug, kissing his cheek. “Congratulations Robin - I’m so pleased for you!” As he thanked and enveloped her, he heard a screech from someone running out of the inn.

“Yes! I knew it! Congrats, Big Bro – that’s bloody brilliant!” Maria raced over to him. Carrie stepped back out of the way, turning to Emma and Regina to embrace the latter in a gentler hug. Meanwhile, Maria ran up to and jumped straight up and into her brothers arms, wrapping her arms around his neck and her legs around his waist, almost knocking him over. “Fantastic news, Rob! I knew it! Now then…” she stepped down from him and gave her cousin a look, eyebrow raised. “This bit is important! Who asked who?”

Regina and Emma seemed surprised by the question, but Robin merely laughed, knowing his little sister was constantly betting with people. ‘Regina and Emma asked me, together, if you must know…”

“Yes! You owe me fifty quid, Carrie!” she said in triumph. “She said you would go down on one knee, do the romantic stuff and ask them to marry you. But I said you were a boring old fart, and wouldn’t do that to a married couple! You’d just wait until they asked you. And they did! Fifty quid, Carrie – I wiiiiiin!”

Robin started laughing, as did Roland and Honour, finding their dad being called an ‘old fart’ hilarious.

“You were so sure we’d get engaged, that you bet on us?” said Emma, not sure how to react.

Caroline now took her in for a gentle hug, mindful of the baby bulge. “Of course. It was obvious Robin had fallen in love with you, as well as Regina. I recognised the signs. It was only a matter of time...”

“Ooh, nice rock!” said Maria, now examining Robin’s ring finger. “Did you get them one, too?”

“I regret I haven’t yet. They only asked me yesterday evening and we told the children this morning. This came to me as quite a surprise. I haven’t had a chance to reciprocate yet…”

“Not necessary,” said Emma, laughing. “We asked him, so we needed to ‘put a ring on it’! We’re modern girls Maria. Mind you, I’m surprised some of you guessed we’d do it!”

“Just Maria and I,” said Caroline. “Oh, and Little John, of course…”

“John guessed? Where is he?” asked Regina. “As everyone here seems to know about us, I’m surprised he isn’t the first one down to greet us.”

“Oh,” said Will. “I’m not sure he does know, actually. He’s been a little busy ‘entertaining’ a special guest! He’s currently up in the Royal Suite an’ we didn’t want to disturb him…”

Robin and Regina looked at each other, confused. It wasn’t like John to have one-night stands, and as far as they knew he didn’t have a special someone, although he was always the soul of discretion. She saw Robin begin to smirk, which told her he thought he knew who the guest might be. “I suggest we leave him then, until he’s ready to join us. Will, has anyone arrived here through a portal
over the last day or so, by any chance?”

“Oddly enough, yes!” the younger thief grinned. “Merlin did bring someone here yesterday.”

“Good. Hopefully we’ll see him soon, so we can share our good news. Now then, it’s Saturday so we’ve arranged a massage at the clinic for Emma and Regina. I’m going to archery practice. You three – who wants to join me?” he asked his children.

“Not just yet, papa! I’m going to go swim with Joseph and the guys…” the mop-haired boy winked, running off towards the water, hearing his dad yell. “Not too deep, Roland! Stay away from the jetty!” Will stepped forward. “Don’t fret, Rob. I’ll keep an eye on him. Gilbert’s over there with a couple of the lads anyway.”

Two hours later, the family reassembled inside the village pub. Robin ordered teas and milkshakes, as the women joined him, both yawning. “Jeez, I’m completely shattered!” groaned Emma, “Odd, considering I’ve just spent an hour and a half lying down.” Regina sat down beside her, resting her head on Emma’s shoulder as she too tried to fight her drowsiness. “I agree…Chloe’s too good at that. I can hardly keep my eyes open!”

“A good, strong cup of tea will sort you out.” Said Robin, placing another order.

“Tea? That’s your bloody answer for everything, Rob?” sighed Emma between the yawns. “Personally, once I get this young lady out of me…” she said, massaging her swollen belly, “I’ll be back on coffee and scotch!”

“Tea is the miracle cure, Em. It just…” his mind was completely distracted when he saw Little John, now walking down the staircase arm-in-arm with a familiar face.

“Elsa?” said Emma, seeing her old friend for the first time in six years. “Elsa!” she yelled across the bar.

The Queen of Arendelle looked down towards the direction of the yell. “Emma? Emma…is that you?”

Both tall blondes stepped rapidly towards each other, meeting in the centre of the room. Elsa was about to go in for a tight hug when she saw Emma’s belly. “Wow! Look at you?” she said taking her hands. “You look so…”

“Fat? Whale-like?” Emma grinned back. “Like I’m over eight months pregnant?”

“Blooming! I was about to say blooming! Your skin, Emma, it’s fabulous. I’m so happy for you!” she wrapped her arms around the other’s shoulders, a little more tenderly to avoid squeezing too hard. “I can’t believe my best friend’s going to have a baby!” she placed a kiss on her cheek.

That made Emma giggle, placing a kiss of her own. “And I’m not the only one! You remember Regina?” she said, taking her hand and looking towards the brunette. When Elsa had last met Regina, over six years ago, Emma had been trying to get Regina’s trust back, after accidentally bringing Robin Hood’s wife back from the past.

“Yes, of course. Regina, it’s lovely to meet you again!” Unlike Emma, the Queen of Arendelle and former Queen of the Enchanted Forest stepped forward to face each other, each giving the other a small curtsy, before laughing at each other’s old customs, and shaking hands.

“John has told me a little of what I’ve missed. I gather the pair of you are now married?” Then her eyes looked down in surprise to find Regina was also sporting a similar bump to Emma’s. “Oh my!
You’re…you’re pregnant too?” Elsa looked rather confused.

“We are. And before you ask the next question, the man responsible for both of us being in this condition is actually standing right here!” she said, pointing at the former outlaw. “Elsa, I’m not sure whether you’ve met Robin of Locksley?”

Elsa looked up into his deep blue eyes, almost shyly, as her cheeks blushing like a young girl addressing a rock star. “Only briefly, though I’ve heard so much about you from John! About King George and the Black Fairy! Robin, I’m honoured to finally meet you!”

“No, your majesty, the honour is mine!” He replied, politely, before bowing his head slightly, then lifting her hand to kiss the back of it.

“Oh please, none of that. Just call me Elsa! Your fame has spread far and wide, Robin. So, in addition to everything else I’ve heard, you’re also fathering Regina and Emma’s children? How very…unusual! I understand you’re also father to another girl? The Wicked Witch’s? Or is that just a rumour…”

“That is a long story for another day,” said Robin, glaring at John for his indiscretion. “However, you should know that Emma and Regina have just done me the honour of asking me to become their husband!”


“Don’t you dare go there, John!” said Regina, smirking at the man. “We’ve had this conversation already. Maria won the bet!”

“Dammit Rob! You just cost me fifty quid! I said you were gonna ask them!”

“Well you shouldn’t go gambling then, should you, you silly sod!” said Robin, earning a laugh from all gathered.

“So, Elsa. You and Little John?” said Emma, trying to change the topic and taking the queen’s hand again. “Something you like to tell us?”

Although strictly speaking, it was true that Emma had never had sex with another woman before Regina, there had been more than a strong attraction between Emma and Elsa. Of similar age and a traumatic upbringing, the pair had bonded when she’d arrived in Storybrooke to find her sister. Both unsure of their magical powers, the pair became close during Elsa’s attempt to find Anna. Unknown to anyone else, including Regina, one evening before they’d finally managed to banish the Ice Queen, the pair had hugged in an attempt to console each other. The hug had turned to a kiss on the cheeks, before moving quickly onto lips. It had happened so fast, yet each woman had savoured the moment, their mouths opening to invite the other in, and for just a few minutes they’d held each other tightly, their tongues ploughing each other’s mouths greedily. Emma was pretty sure that, if Killian hadn’t rapped on the door outside in a misguided attempt to rescue them, things would have escalated rapidly. It was her first real kiss with another girl, and it had remained in her fantasies frequently during the following years. Emma knew it was one of the reasons she was able to take the lead in kissing Regina that first time, three years ago. And now, once again, the beautiful monarch was standing in front of her.

Elsa blushed, knowing they’d spotted her coming down the stairs with Little John. Her gentle giant had already told her he would never say anything about them, unless she agreed. It was her choice whether to admit or deny. Seeing the group around them, Robin with a quizzical eye at his friend, she decided now was time.
“John and I are together. I think I’ve managed to persuade him…” she said, her voice unsure, almost meek.

John’s manner changed almost immediately, as though a dam had burst. He wrapped his large arm around her back, bending down to kiss her forehead. She tilted back to catch his lips in a quick, chaste kiss. “She never needed to persuade me of anything! I just could never imagine such a beautiful woman as Elsa would ever consider me, a lowly former thief, worthy of anything. Still don’t know what the hell she sees in me!” They grinned at each other, obviously smitten, to all present.

Robin beamed at them. “Well…queens are sometimes odd like that, John! Princesses too! I speak from experience…” before the giant could give an equally caustic response, Robin wrapped a hand around his head, pulling him down and placing a quick kiss on the top of it. “But I’m delighted for you, my friend…for both of you!”

“Thanks Rob.” John looked almost guilty, as though he was preparing himself to give bad news. “Thing is, Elsa will be going back to Arendelle next week. And I thought…this time I’d go with her!”

Robin smiled sadly at his best friend. Little John had been through so much with him. After breaking him free from King John’s cell all those years ago, the pair had gone on to share so many adventures. They’d been together through heists, jailings, break-ins. John had helped him through Marian’s death, the loss of his mother, sister and family. Supporting him in raising Roland and now even Regina after his temporary death. They’d cleaved together to build a band of honourable men who would fight to help the poor against the overwhelming power of the mighty. The great man had been shoulder-to-shoulder with him through so much and now it broke Robin’s heart to know he may lose the closest friend he’d ever had. Nonetheless, he knew the chance of real love was there for him.

“I’m happy for you, mate - though I had hoped you would be around for my wedding! I needed a big clod like you to be my Best Man…” A lump formed in his throat.

“I’d never pass up something like that, you daft pillock! Course I’ll be there for ye! Merlin’s got that portal thingy sorted and said you should know how to work it! He said you got the Dark One’s wand or something. Just name the date you’re getting hitched and me an Elsa’ll be there…”

The men hugged, slapping each other’s backs in that weird aggressive way men do when they don’t want to be seen to be weepy. As Robin stepped back, Regina immediately took his place, picking up John’s large hands with tears in her eyes. “John, I’m not really going to lose you, am I? You’re my big brother. I couldn’t bear for you to be away for too long…” she stared into his twinkling eyes.

“Don’t you worry about that, Regina,” said Elsa, watching the pair. “I’ll see to it he’s back here regularly. Merlin said with Robin’s magic, travelling between Arendelle and here should be simple. There’s no reason why you should be separated for long.”

Emma was concerned. “What was that about ‘the Dark One’s Wand’? Robin, have you stolen something from Gold?”

“Definitely not!” he laughed. “I don’t have a death wish. Rumple gave me a portal wand, as a gift for helping him rescue Gideon. It’s supposed to create portals and some other things, though I still need to ask Merlin to teach me how to use it.”

“The sooner the better,” Regina sighed, trying to wrap her arms around John. “I need my baby to regularly see its godfather,” she said as the man beamed down at her. “Gina, I’d be honoured!” he said, placing a kiss on the top of her head. She turned to Elsa. “And of course, it means that, if you
and John are going to be together, I would like you to consider being its godmother?”

Elsa was taken aback but smiled warmly. “Well, we’re taking it slowly. I need to know John will be happy in Arendelle, and the people have yet to meet him. Personally, I want to marry but I know John doesn’t like the thought of being a king! But yes, I would be delighted and honoured to be a godmother to your little one!”

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The group broke up a little while later. Regina, to see Caroline in the clinic; Robin, to talk amongst the men and finally, Emma, to sit down for a chat with her old royal friend. The first time for six years. She felt a little embarrassed, remembering how the pair of them had kissed in that room at the Dark One’s house. But she could see the coy look on the others face too.

“So…Els, I thought you were heading for Agrabah with Killian? Merlin said you saw him…”

“I did - And it was lovely to see Tinker Bell too. She told me all about Killian’s death. And Robin’s murder; about Zeus and them both coming back with magic. Five years! That must have been a shock?”

“Tell me about it? I remember his face when I had to tell him I’d married Regina! And Robin? They’re true loves, so it was never going to be easy. He left within a week; said he couldn’t live around me now. So you’ve probably seen more of him than me…” Elsa couldn’t help but notice the sad look on her face, so leaned across and held her hand.

“Yes, but you’re happy now, right? You with your beautiful queen and your handsome outlaw? And your baby…”

“Yeah, I am,” she said, massaging the bump. “Though I feel so guilty about Killian. Being dead for five years, but it was only three weeks to him! I grieved him for a long time. But he never got the chance to grieve himself…”

“Maybe not, but he’s definitely over it now. He and Rosalind make quite a pair. You know she’s pregnant, right?”

“Yes, but you’re happy now, right? You with your beautiful queen and your handsome outlaw? And your baby…”

“Yeah, Merlin told me after that funny ‘mind thing’ he did with his family. It was a shock to hear, but…well, I’m pregnant too, right? So, it’s only fair he also gets to move on. We may be with other people but…I don’t think I’ll ever be really ‘over’ Killian Jones. I hope he’s happy.”

“He is. He said something similar about you, when he found out you were pregnant.”

“Killian knows?” said Emma alarmed.

“Well, Merlin told Rosie. They didn’t mention that Regina was pregnant too. That’s why I was so surprised! He also didn’t say it was both Robin’s but, perhaps that was deliberate to spare his feelings. Anyway, tell me more about you and Regina? I’ll be honest, I wasn’t surprised when I heard that you two had married…”

“That’s annoying! Some other people, Robin included, seemed to have predicted we’d get together. It’s not as though we gave any signals…”

“Oh come on, Emma, you’re kidding me, right? When I was last here, Regina hated you for bringing back Robin’s dead wife. But even then, I saw all the sexual tension between you! Damn, girl! Besides, I knew you also had a thing for the ladies…”
“That is completely untrue! Until her, I’d never even been with another woman. Well…not properly.”

“Well you and I came pretty close! If Killian had walked in an hour later, I don’t think Regina would have been your ‘first’, do you?”

“That was different.” Emma’s cheeks were now bright red. “You and I just…made out; but what about you? Was I…your first kiss? You been with anyone else since? Before John?”

“You were certainly my first, Emma, and you must admit it was a bit more than a kiss! And yes, I have been with a couple of people. You have to be very discreet when you’re a queen - people talk!”

“Hmm. Men or women?”

“One of each, actually. The woman was someone who worked in the palace. I think I wanted to find out whether I was actually a lesbian, or not. The guy was a soldier in the Royal Guard. Neither of them were anything more than comfort. Then John came along. And well, I think I'm probably bisexual, not that it matters now. He’s the sweetest, kindest guy I ever met. I want him!”

“Same as me and Gina then! And Mulan and Rory. There’s more of us around than I realized. So, what about you and Little John?” he leaned toward her clumsily, her voice no more than a whisper. “He’s a big lad. Is he as big in other ways?” she flicked her eyebrows suggestively. It took Elsa a moment to realise what the other woman was referring to.

“Emma, really! Behave!” she giggled, cheeks flushing. “He is well proportioned in all areas, thank you very much! I’m very happy.”

“Lucky girl – I’m happy for you! So it’s love, then?”

“I’ve never felt this way for anyone else before, Emma. I can truly say I am in love with that man, though what they’ll say when the Court meets him I can’t imagine. That’s why he’s worried. He says he truly loves me, but he doesn’t want to do anything to harm my position as queen. He’s far too damn honourable for a former thief. I blame your boyfriend for that!”

“My fiancé, actually! And yes, I do find Rob’s bloody honour a bit of a pain in the ass sometimes. You know he died sacrificing himself to save Regina’s life, right? Damn too noble for the likes of me…” The pair laughed.

“So, you’ve now got a gorgeous wife and shortly, a handsome husband. How does that even work?”

“What do you mean? In life generally?” she raised a brow at the queen, “or do you mean the bedroom?”

“Well, you asked me, so let’s start there – is it good?” she gave a lascivious smirk.

“It’s really good!” she whispered. “Quite a few morning’s, I can hardly walk, and I’m not referring to being pregnant! That good enough for you?”

“Ok, too much information!” the queen giggled, “Perhaps John and I could find a significant other of our own one day! But I’ve never heard of three of you going and getting married! Pretty sure that’s against the law in Arendelle…” she raised her brow.

“Then you should change the law,” said Emma, smugly. “It’s called a polyamorous relationship here. We’re not the first ones either. You remember Princess Aurora and Prince Philip? Well they
married Fa Mulan a few months ago and she’s just had a little girl too. They’re now Aurora, Philip
and Mulan Briar. They took Rory’s family name…”

“Wait, Prince Philip and Princess Aurora of the Enchanted Forest? He’s a distant cousin of mine.
And they’re with the warrior? How funny - you must introduce me to them while we’re here!”

“Of course,” Emma winced when a pain ran over her lower back. “That is, once this little bugger lets
me walk properly! My back’s been killing me these last few days. How long are you here for?”

“That kind of depends on you and Regina! John’s coming back with me, but I know he doesn’t want
to leave until you’ve both safely delivered, even more so now she asked him to be a godfather…”

“You too - I heard Gina ask you to be a godmother to hers! Guess that’ll make us sort of family. All
the more reason to stick around…”

“I’d like that.” The two women smiled softly at each other, both wondering what would have
happened, had Killian Jones not burst in on them several minutes later than he did!

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A Little Trip to Storybrooke Hospital

Chapter Summary

Emma's baby isn't waiting for anyone! Nor, for that matter, is Regina's...

Chapter 42

Another month passed, and Emma and Regina were now under two weeks from their due dates. Emma had just received word from her mother that Dorothy Lucas had gone into labour, her waters breaking whilst having lunch in the Earl of Locksley. So, due her obvious discomfort walking, she drove the short distance to Sherwood Clinic to offer support to her friends. Waddling slowly in to the maternity unit waiting room, she found Snow already waiting.

“Hi mum,” she said as the princess rose to hug her daughter. “What’s happening? Has she had it yet?”

“Not yet, sweetie. Ruby came out half an hour ago. She’s back in there with Carrie Locksley, so it should be fairly soon.” Snow paced, waiting for news of her old friend. As they settled, a nurse came out walking swiftly to a nearby room, from where, a moment later, a serious faced Merlin, or Professor Sage when in his medical role, emerged and the two stepped briskly back into the maternity room. *Something's wrong!*

A minute later, a nurse Emma recognised came out the same doors. “Chloë?” called Emma. “Everything all right with Dorothy? I just saw Merlin dash in there…”

“Oh, hi Emma! It’s OK, just there were a few complications; so Caroline wanted a senior gynaecologist in there! It’s all good. She’s just given birth a couple of minutes ago. Mother and baby are both doing well.”

“She’s had it?” gasped Snow. “Boy or girl?”

“A beautiful baby boy. Lovely blue eyes. Good size too. Sorry, but I need to dash…” she made her apologies and trotted off. Two minutes later, a tired-looking Ruby came through the doors. “Snow, Emma!”

Snow jumped up and positively smothered her best friend and new mother, in a hug. “Ruby, congratulations! I’m so pleased. You have a son?” The princess then continued to bombard Ruby with questions about the labour, making Emma feel sorry for the woman. “Whoa, hold up mum! Give the poor girl a chance. Can’t you see she’s shattered?”

“Don’t worry about it, Emma,” said Ruby through a tired smile. “I’ve known your mum a long time, and she’s just concerned for us. One of many reasons why I love her. They’re just cleaning up Dot now, so I’ll check to see if she’s ready for visitors yet and come back.”

It was a good half hour later, when Snow and Emma were invited into a small side room, where Dorothy now lay propped up, nursing her newborn. “Dorothy, oh he’s utterly gorgeous!” sniffed Snow as she saw him open his eyes to the sound. “And those eyes - such a beautiful blue! And his cheeks - I just want to nibble on them!” she continued to coo, making Dorothy chuckle. “Snow,
“I would love nothing more,” she said, taking the tiny bundle from his mother and whispering sweet nothings and nonsense to him, while stroking his cheek. Emma watched her mother petting him, wondering whether she’d received this kind of attention the day she was born. *Before her father put her in a that wardrobe. She must have done!* Then she thought of Henry and how she couldn’t even look at him, knowing they’d have to be parted. Finally, as her hands rested on her swollen abdomen, she thought of how, in a couple of weeks, she was going to be a mother all over again. *This time, I’ll do it right, my darling girl! This time I’m going to try to give you everything Henry never got from me. The hugs, the kisses, the stories. This time, I’ll get it right, I promise!* As her mind continued to drift, she heard a voice interrupting her thoughts.

“Emma? Emma! Goodness me, she’s away with the fairies today!” said Snow, trying to get her attention.

“Um…what? Sorry, I was miles away. Suffering from baby brain, I guess. Sorry mum, what did you say?”

As the other women laughed, Ruby said softly, “she asked you whether you wanted to hold him. You might as well get a bit of practice now. You’ll be doing it soon enough yourself.” Emma nodded, stepping forward to carefully receive the baby in her arms. “Hello there, little one! I’m Auntie Emma. You’re a handsome fella aren’t you? I hope you’ll want to play with my little girl when you meet her, as I think she’ll like you?” She cuddled the tiny body and leaned down to kiss his head, savouring that baby smell she now found intoxicating. As her head drew back, the baby’s piercing blue eyes opened to look straight at her. An expression crossed his tiny face which seemed vaguely familiar. *He reminded her of someone, but she wasn’t sure who.* “He’s gorgeous, Dorothy! I’m so pleased for you…”

“Thanks, Emma. Snow, have you told David yet? I’d love Nathaniel to meet at least one of his godfathers today. I know Victor won’t be back from New York till the weekend.”

“I texted him when I came over, but he doesn’t know he has a godson yet. I’ll call him in a moment as I’m sure he’ll want to come. Wait - ‘Nathaniel’?”

“Yes. Nathaniel, or Nat for short, after a favourite cousin of Dot’s.” We thought it sounded cool,” said Ruby.

“I like it! Hi Nathaniel, I’m your new god-mummy Snow, and I am going to spoil you rotten!” said the princess as she rubbed her nose against the baby’s. “Ooh, I can’t wait. I’ve got a gorgeous new godson; and very soon a new granddaughter, and then who knows what Regina’s will be! What with Mulan’s little girl Li, there’s going to be new babies galore in Storybrooke. So much new life. It’s wonderful!”

A few minutes later, after finally pulling Snow away to allow his mothers a chance to rest, the pair stepped out into the maternity reception area. As they did, Emma spotted Dorothy’s maternity nurse. “Chloë, can I have a word about the birthing arrangements for Regina and me?”

“Sure, just give me a moment while I finish something. Wait here a sec.”

As Emma stood by the desk waiting for the woman’s return, her eyes skimmed across some papers on the desk in front. It was a blue formal-looking document for birth registration. She read the name at the top:

*Nathaniel Killian Gale Lucas*
She froze. Killian? Why would they name him Killian? Was it just a friend thing? He never seemed particularly close to Ruby, and she was pretty sure he’d never even met Dorothy before he died. It was a very unusual name, so why him? That’s when she realized why she thought little Nathaniel’s eyes and brow seemed so familiar! Killian - could he have been the donor? She doubted Dorothy would be unfaithful, as the wolf seemed as delighted as her to be pregnant.

“Mum – do you know anything about Dorothy’s pregnancy? Was it by an anonymous sperm donor?”

“I think so, my love, but I can’t be certain. I know Professor Sage helped them, and magic was involved, though…” Snow remembered her conversation with Blue about ‘magical babies’, when she thought Regina and Emma might have conceived together. Her own embarrassing behaviour, after, when she thought Regina had been unfaithful.

“Her own embarrassing behaviour, after, when she thought Regina had been unfaithful. ‘I now know there’s no such thing as babies being born without a seed. Why?’

“Oh…nothing. Just wondering.”

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Only two days later, Emma woke feeling decidedly odd. The child in her womb was pushing ever harder down by the day, and she was starting to feel nauseous every time it tried to turn inside her. While she couldn’t wait to greet her new daughter as quickly as possible, she also couldn’t wait for the day she could work to get her usual athletic trim figure back. She’d almost planned, to the day, when she could safely go running again. “Calm down in there, my lovely. Every time you turn, mummy feels quite sick! Sorry your dad’s not around to calm you down….” Standing at the sink to take a glass of water, that’s when she felt it. Feeling a sudden ‘pop’ from within, she looked down to feel a warm rush from between her legs. Her waters had broken!

“Shit!” she muttered, knowing full well what was happening, and the rehearsed procedure. “Gina!” she yelled down the stairs. As she moved to call again from the landing, she felt familiar magic close by, turning to see, amongst the swirl, somebody apparate. “Robin, what are you doing back?”

“Sounds odd, but I kind of felt you calling me? Like something was wrong. What’s happened?”

“I think my water’s just broke. I never felt any contractions, but the amount of liquid on the bathroom floor! Sorry, I’ve made a bit of a mess in there…”

“Don’t worry about that, I’ll sort it out later. Let’s just get you to the hospital. Where’s Gina?”

“In the kitchen, I think. She was going to make some tea. Rob, I know we rehearsed all this, but I’m still…a bit nervous!”

“Oh fuuuuucking hell!” Emma winced, buckling as she stood. “Poof us – I don’t know how quick this’ll go!”

“GINA!!” yelled Robin, getting a panicked response from the brunette down below. “WE NEED TO GET TO THE HOSPITAL! The equally heavily pregnant woman appeared at the bottom of the staircase, white faced and with a fearful look in her eyes. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to shout, but we need to get Emma to the hospital quick. Her waters have gone and I…” That’s when he noticed the older
woman’s expression. “Gina? Are you ok?”

“I think I just had a contraction of my own, in the kitchen!” she called up. “Help?”

This was ridiculous! They couldn’t both be having contractions at the same time - could they? Bloody hell, how do you prepare for something like this? Shit.

Robin tried his best to stay calm for them. “Ok, let’s get you both to the hospital. Once we get you into the hands of the nurses, I’ll poof back here and deal with Honour and Roland, then come straight back. Hold on…” with a twirl of his hand, the large bag of items Regina had prepared for the birth and kept under the stairs, now appeared in his hand. He then apparated Regina from the bottom of the stairs, next to them on the landing. Emma quickly took her wife’s hands in her own for mutual support. “It’s OK, Gina, we’re going to be OK! We prepared for this, right? So, when you’re ready, Rob, let’s go…”

A moment later, Robin apparated all three of them to an agreed, empty room, close to the maternity unit. The room Merlin suggested, so nobody would get a shock when they appeared, risking dropping a baby or worse. He opened the door leading out to maternity reception, where Lavinia Whitehand sat. “Robin? I didn’t see you there…” then she spotted Regina and Emma walking close behind. “Oh! Which one needs help?” she said, standing immediately.

“Both of them, Livvy - help please?” urged the archer. “We think they’ve both had contractions around the same time. It looks like Emma’s water’s broke…”

“Right then – Emma, let’s get you onto a gurney, and get you seeing someone as soon as possible. How many contractions have you had and how far apart?” She took the Saviour’s arm, leading her through, after having pressed a button for assistance.

“Just the one. But that was only after they broke - that’s OK, right?” she said nervously. Another nurse appeared from the maternity unit, taking Emma’s other arm. “That’s not unusual. Now come with me, and let’s get you on to a trolley.” She said calmly, leaving Livvy free to go back to Regina, who was holding tightly on to Robin.

“Now Regina, same question for you. How many contractions?”

“One - same time as Emma’s. But deal with her first, as my water’s haven’t broken!”

“Don’t worry, we’ll deal with both of you just fine. Emma’s in good hands - Patricia is one of our best midwives. Now let me take you through, too; I have instructions from Professor Sage that, as magic’s involved with your own babies, I’m supposed to let him know so he can be on call. I trust you’re all right with that?” Regina looked at Robin, who nodded in agreement. “It makes sense, Gina. Merlin is supposed to be one of the world’s top gynaecologists, and you do both deserve the best,” he said with a dimpled grin.

Having completed administration, Regina and Robin walked steadily in to Emma’s delivery room, and she was hugely relieved to see them. Emma was now half sitting, half lying, on a special maternity gurney, a bed-seat for birthing, wearing a patient gown and with monitors attached to on her wrist, heart and abdomen, amid various bleeping and whooshing noises. “Gina, Rob! Come here!”

Robin felt a moment of panic, seeing all the wires attached to her. “Pat – what’s happening? Is she OK?”

“She’s stable, Robin. We’re just monitoring the baby’s heartbeats and her blood pressure, to see how
things are progressing. Her waters definitely broke and it seems she had her first contraction about twenty minutes ago, just before you got here, so the next one is imminent.”

Regina went to Emma’s side, kissing her brow and taking her hand. “Robin, I’m staying with Emma. You need to get back to Roland and Honour. We left them in the house, alone!” Emma also looked worried at the reminder.

“All in hand, my loves! Henry and I already had this covered. He’s at home with them right now. Maria and John are already on their way, in case they need anything. We won’t call Emma’s parents, until you ask us to as we didn’t want Snow panicking. If we’re still here tonight, John will stay over. Everything’s taken care of and I’m not leaving…”

“Henry already knows? He’s done all that?” gasped Regina. “How? We’ve only been here a few minutes and you’ve been with me the whole time!”

Robin pulled his cell phone out. “Texting. Your son’s bright – you two did a great job raising him! We planned several eventualities, and he gave them all operation names, like he used to. So, I just sent him a text, ‘Operation Royal Cygnets’, and he swung into action!”

Emma chuckled, “sounds like Henry!” She looked with love at her wife, squeezing her hand. It was a moment later when the second contraction hit. Hard. “Jeezuz wept!” she winced, hearing the bleeping noises suddenly become louder and faster. “This fucking hurts!”

Nurse Pat stepped over, after studying the monitors. “Emma, I just need you to breathe through it! Let's time how long it lasts, and that should help us work out how long your labour will be. Breath deeply with me now…” As the nurse loudly breathed for her to copy, Emma also heard the soft galloping noise from the baby monitor increase. “Pat - the baby! It’s faster! Really fast. Is she supposed to do that?” she was starting to panic, squeezing her wife’s hand tightly as she breathed through the pain. “Is she going to be OK?”

“Emma, she’s reacting to your own faster heartbeat. We really need you trying to calm now. Yes, the baby’s heartbeat is faster, but it’s ok. Just, come on…breathe with me. This is important. Low steady breaths now…”

Regina kissed the back of the blonde’s hand in support as the contraction finished. The breathing helped Emma’s heart beat slow a little but the baby’s was still racing! As the women breathed slowly together, Lavinia popped her head around the door. “All ok in here?” As she waited for a response, she also heard the noise from the monitor. “Hmm. I’m sure it’ll be fine but probably time I called the Professor anyway!” That received anxious nods of agreement from the trio. Regina felt her own belly twitch violently and held her free hand against it. Robin saw the anxious looks all around and decided to try something. He walked around to Emma’s free side, hitching himself on the edge of the chair to place his hands on either side of her abdomen, before speaking.

“Hey, young lady - this is your papa!” he said in a deliberately low, calming tone as he bent closer to her stomach. “Now we really need you to calm down in there until your mummy’s ready for you to come out properly! You have a lovely big family here waiting to meet you, but it’s a bit early right now, so we need you to be calm and just relax, just like your mum is trying to do, right now. You’ve got two of them you know? Two incredibly brave, powerful mummies who love you even before they’ve met you. I’m not a clever as them, but I am a lot better at staying calm. And I am so looking forward to meeting you, my kitten! So, could you do that for us? Perhaps stay still for a little bit longer?” he continued in a similar vain for a couple of minutes, professing his love to an unborn baby that had absolutely no idea what was going on. However, for some reason, it worked, and the baby’s heart monitor went noticeably slower, earning a smile from the nurse and Emma, who rolled her eyes.
“All right, smart ass, how’d you know that would even work?” She nonetheless smiled, putting a
hand behind his head, pulling him down to kiss him.

“Well…it works for her mother!” he winked, before dropping a kiss on her nose. Regina watched
them, fascinated by the love that had developed between her two loves. As her mind wandered, two
new visitors walked into the room.

“Ah, the Locksley-Swan-Mills trio, all together I see! Excellent. So, Patricia, what’s the situation?”
said Merlin as he stepped in, closely followed by Caroline Locksley. The midwife gave them an
update on Emma’s two contractions as the Sorcerer moved quickly across to the patient, floating his
hands across the blonde’s swollen abdomen. Emma felt the warmth of his magic flowing under her
skin. Had anyone else done that, she’d be terrified, but there was something incredibly calming about
the silver-bearded man that put her at ease. “Well, all seems to be in order Emma, though it’s clear
your baby’s a little distressed right now. Regina, what about you? Lavinia tells me you also had a
contraction before you came in? How long ago?”

“About the same time as Emma. I’ve had nothing since, but when she had another just now, this
baby seems to have gone a little crazy too! It’s almost like it’s following her…” she looked at Regina
and could see their concern that she hadn’t told them. She knew Emma was the priority after all!

“How very interesting. May I examine you too?” Regina nodded, getting ready to undress before
Merlin stopped her. “No, don’t worry, there’s no need for you to undress just yet. I just want to scan
you…” With that, he moved across to roam his hands above Regina’s clothed belly, as he had done
with Emma. Closing his eyes, he gave a one-sided smirk, before keeping his right hand above
Regina but leaning to float his left hand above Emma’s belly once more. The smirk became a smile as,
while keeping his eyes closed, Merlin gave his opinion.

“They’re aware of each other, and know the other is close by! Their magic seems to be reaching out
to communicate, but obviously they don’t know how. At least not yet! These two will clearly be
close in the years to come. Not surprising, as they share Robin’s DNA.”

“So, they both have magic for sure?” asked Emma.

“Oh, most definitely. Very powerful magic too! Not surprising really, considering the True Love
element…”

“That explains Robin and Regina’s baby. She’s always been his True Love. But it doesn’t explain
mine…”

“Emma, I’m surprised at you! Surely, you do realise, that you, Regina and Robin combined have a
true love element all of your own? The three of you have created a child together, as you have with
the child Regina is carrying. I can already tell from the signature she is giving off; the child you’re
carrying has Regina’s DNA inside her, not just Robin’s! I’m sure the same applies to Regina’s child.
It is a part of you, too.”

“That’s impossible!” she yelled in frustration. “I may be no biology expert, but even I know it takes
one egg and one sperm to make a baby!”

“Pat, Livvie – would you mind leaving us for a moment?” Merlin asked the nurses. “I need to
discuss something a little confidential.” Both women and Caroline nodded without question, stepping
outside, leaving those remaining, puzzled.

“I thought it best to avoid any added awkwardness or embarrassment for you all.” Urging Robin to
come closer, he continued. “So, I need to ask a couple of intimate questions. When the babies were
conceived, were all three of you together?” That drew slightly embarrassed looks from them, all silently nodding. “And, I’m sorry to make you feel awkward, but did Robin alternate his penetration between you both in a very small space of time? Within seconds?”

All three were stunned by being asked such an intimate question, Regina nodding for them. “Well, to explain it simply, Robin somehow transferred your magical DNA between you both, along with his own, during intercourse. Normally it wouldn’t matter, but in this instance, all three of you possess powerful magic. That, combined with your true love, has created two babies with three genetic parents. Quite remarkable really!”

Regina gasped. “You’re seriously saying that I’m Emma’s baby’s mother? And she’s mine?”

“I am. They’re both true genetic siblings, with powerful magic from a true love union between you three!”

Emma’s worried face turned in to a full-blown beaming smile. “Gina, you’ve made two more babies!”

“I have - all thanks to you…” Regina chuckled, leaning across to place a good solid kiss on her wife’s lips. “And a certain thief we know!”

“Glad to be of service, mi’ladies.” He grinned, watching the pair.

“Ok, let’s get this show on the road,” said Merlin. “Emma, it looks like you’re due another contraction in fifteen minutes or so. Patricia tells me your waters have broken, your cervix has already started dilation, and from the length of your contractions I guess you’re going to be delivering anything between ten and twenty hours from now. But, your magic may speed that up. Regina, I think you had a sympathy contraction and may be at least a day or two behind Emma. But let’s see how we go. The important thing to remember is that you’re in excellent hands with Patricia and Lavinia, and I’ll be on call if needed. Any questions?”

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A good twelve hours later, in the early evening, Emma’s contractions shortened to five minutes apart and she was well on her way. She’d urged Regina to go rest, but she refused to leave. Emma was now sitting in the birthing chair, legs in stirrups, feeling tired, sore and very irritated.

“I swear Locksley, once this is over, you come at me with that thing again without getting a vasectomy, and I’ll cut your bollocks off!” she growled.

He knew she was frightened, so ignoring her threats, he merely continued holding her hand and placed a kiss on her forehead. “Sorry to be the cause of your pain my love, but I promise it will be worth it! You’ll soon be holding our precious babe in your arms, even if I do have to forego your favours. And once again, as I promised earlier, I’m more than willing to have a vasectomy, though preferably at the hands of a suitably trained doctor, not you with a couple of bricks....”

Regina smiled at the squabbling pair as she lay on the small bed they’d provided. That’s when a contraction of her own kicked in. “Ooof!” she winced, as the pressure in her pelvis kicked in. The dull ache in her back had been bad but this was something very different. Livvy quickly stepped in front of her, establishing that her own labour had finally started. Robin momentarily panicked, feeling helpless at the sight of both of his loves now doubled in pain.

“That looks like the real thing this time,” said Lavinia, “Regina, we need to get you up to another room and hooked up to the machines. Have you...”
"I’m not leaving Emma!” she yelled, taking Robin’s hand in her free one.

“Livvy, is there any reason why they can’t give birth in the same room?” he asked, trying to remain calm for all of them.

Patricia nodded, “I’ll see what we can do. The machines are quite heavy and there’s always the chance we need to do a C-section, but, well, let’s see what Professor Sage suggests....”

She stepped out of the room and in less than a minute, Merlin re appeared back with them. “Well, under these unusual circumstances...” He closed his eyes to picture the machines and contents situated in a nearby room, which now apparated in the corner. A second birthing bed then appeared close by.

“Now Regina, let Lavinia get you sorted out, so we find out what stage you’re at. Emma’s baby is close, so Pat, why don’t we get Regina changed, put the beds together facing opposite ways, but with the upper ends close? Then Emma and Regina can support and even hold onto each other while we all get to work.” The medics agreed, moving Regina carefully onto the new birthing bed, just as Emma’s next contraction hit.

“OOOWWW!” she bellowed. Regina leaned across to take her hand and flinched as the Saviour squeezed it, along with Robin’s on her left. Livvy strapped the monitors onto Regina and switched the machines on.

“Ok Emma, you’re fully dilated. Now I need you to be very brave as the baby’s going to be with us very shortly. Now remember, don’t push until we’re ready...” said Patricia, her voice now lower and full of calming authority. They saw the look of abject fear on the blonde’s sweat-soaked face, her hair lying flat and sodden.

“She’s the bravest woman I’ve ever known!” said Regina, dropping a kiss on the back of her hand. “Come on Emma, I’m with you! Robin’s with you! You can do this...”

“We love you, Emma,” added Robin, “swear at me and squeeze my hand as tight as you want, my love.”

“Oh...oh...oh....MOTHERFUUUUUUUUUCCCCCKKKKK!!!” she screamed as the pain tore through her.

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The Next Generation arrives

Chapter Summary

The big day finally arrives. The babies are a' coming!

Chapter 43

“Why can’t we go to the hospital yet, Henny?” asked Honour as she sat on her big brother’s lap. “I want to see the babies! Can we go soon?” she pouted. Honour adored Henry and whenever he came back from university, she always tried to monopolize him ahead of her mothers. As she sat with her head against his broad chest, Henry told her stories from the story book of their lives.

“You’ll see them soon enough, Honnie! You know, it takes a long time for a baby to come, and you’d just get really, really bored waiting all day. Your papa will let us know when they’re ready. Then I promise, we’ll get you there as soon as we can. I want to meet them too…”

Can you appallate us there, so we get there quick, with your magic?”

Henry chuckled. “You mean ‘apparate’! Yes, I will, though our mums told us we must be careful where I send us, so we don’t frighten anybody. There are nurses carrying babies - we don’t want to drop them now, do we?”

The girl grinned and snuggled in to her brother. “Henny, I don’t want you to go back to Harvid! I want you to stay. Mummy and mama get upset and cry when you go away. Granma gets sad too.” Henry placed the book down and pulled her in a little tighter. “You know Honnie, when the babies come, everyone’s going to be too busy to be sad. They’re going to have to spend lots of time looking after them and you’ll need to help them. You’ll be their big sister and they’ll need you to protect them too. Think you can do that?” Before she could even respond, Henry heard his phone chirrup as a text arrived. He lifted it to read.

Robin:    First baby cygnet safely arrived - Swan and daughter are doing well!

Henry smiled. “Honour, you have a baby sister! I think we should go tell Rollie and Margot, don’t you?”

At the hospital, Emma cradled her new-born as it lay against her chest. Patricia was busy down below, removing the placenta and cleaning up the new mother. Regina, herself only minutes from her next contraction, gazed at the tiny wonder as Emma, under Livvy’s calm direction, attempted her first feed. The tiny tot latched on almost immediately, clearly starving. “Ooh, someone’s hungry!” said Robin, smiling at the beautiful scene before him. “Clearly takes after her mother!” jested Regina, earning a soft slap on her arm from her wife as they lay side by side, but facing opposite directions.

“She’s utterly perfect, Emma!” breathed Robin with a tear in his eye. “Merlin must be right - she looks like the pair of you…” Regina looked closer at the tiny face latched on to her mother’s nipple. Robin’s dimples were clearly there, as was his brow. The pale skin, nose and chin were definitely
Emma’s. But the shape of dark blue eyes and dark, almost black, hair? Could what Merlin said be true? Could this perfect little bundle of joy really be the product of all three of them?

Emma smiled lovingly down. “Gina, do you want to hold her?”

“There’s nothing I want more, but best leave it till after the next contraction. I don’t want to squeeze her. However, I know her dad is simply desperate for his first cuddle!” she said, looking at her true love, his eyes showing he was already completely smitten.

Emma grinned up at him. “I think this little girl needs a snuggle from her daddy,” she said, raising her as Robin tenderly lifted the tiny bundle from his mother and into his own arms, folding the small blanket around her. “Oh my! You are a beautiful little thing, aren’t you? Just like your mothers. I’m your papa, and I’m going to love you forever! You’re a very lucky girl because you have not one, but two amazing, magical mummies. And a big sister and two even bigger brothers! You’re going to be surrounded by so much love…”

He carried on chatting away, while Emma and Regina exchanged a grin. The man was clearly besotted - this girl really was going to have him wrapped around her little finger! He continued. “Now young lady, a couple of house rules. First, you must always remember to do what your mummies and dad tell you to do, cos your mummies they can be a bit scary otherwise.” That drew a raised eyebrow from both. “For example, your blonde mummy here, in just the last hour, has threatened to castrate, disembowel and do all sort of horrible things to your lovely daddy! Can you imagine?” that caused both women, and the nurses, to laugh loudly.

“Second, no boyfriends till you’re at least forty! My old heart couldn’t take that…”

“You’ve got no chance there, Rob!” said Lavinia, still chuckling. “I mean, look at her! You’ll be shovelling them off your doorstep! Now, sorry to ruin the moment but, may I have her? I need to weigh and check her over.” Reluctantly he handed her over, stepping back to Emma’s side as Patricia was now checking over Regina. “Emma, love, you cannot imagine how happy you’ve made us. You were very brave back then. Well done.” He leaned down to kiss the blonde’s lips.

“Rob, my breath must stink!” she replied, though grateful for the kiss. “Who cares?” he replied, pressing his lips down for a second one. “Oh, so you agree that my breath stinks!” He merely rolled his eyes.

That’s when Regina’s next contraction hit. “Ooooooohhh!” she groaned, instantly alerting Emma and Robin, who nimbly stepped around the beds to be at her side, taking her hand. “Here Gina, take my hand. You can also threaten me all you want.” As she continued to breathe heavily, she groaned. “I will, but without all the profanities my wife seems to love…” that earned a chuckle from the rest of them. Emma smiled, “We’ll see…”

Roughly two hours later, Henry was playing a board game with Margot and Honour when the text came in:

Robin: Second baby, a royal cygnet, safely delivered – You have two more beautiful sisters! Could you bring the rest of the family over? Your mothers are desperate to see you all! Could you let everyone else know?

“Henry, come on, it’s your go!” said Margot at her distracted cousin as she handed him the dice, seeing his face break out into a huge grin. “What is it?”
“Sorry Mar, we’ll have to finish this later. You have two new little sisters to meet!” that brought a loud cheer from the two girls, and a ‘yes!’ from Roland, putting together a model airplane at the nearby table. “I knew it!” Henry texted his reply:

Henry:  Congratulations…Dad! Operation Royal Cygnets complete. Give them my love and we’ll be over shortly. I’ll let everyone know as agreed…

Robin read the text, smiling. “Henry sends his love and they’ll be over soon. He’s going to tell his grandparents. I’m sure Snow will tell everyone else…”

“No doubt about it!” groaned Regina. “And no doubt she’ll be over here five minutes after he tells her?”

Emma and Regina lay side by side on the top sheets of Merlin’s magically-produced larger hospital bed, each with a baby in their arms. Regina held Emma’s birth-child against her breast and stared into the beautiful dark blue eyes. Emma held Regina’s, allowing the tiny mouth to attempt to suckle on her. Merlin smiled at the happy scene. “I’m so very pleased for you all. Robin, I guess you could never have imagined this?”

“Never in a million years. While I love the idea of it, are you sure about this three-parent thing? That they genetically belong to all of us?”

“Absolutely. I can sense their magical signatures. Can’t you? Anyway, even without the magic, look at your baby in Emma’s arms right now - the girl that Regina just gave birth too. She has Emma’s blonde hair but dark blue eyes which will turn brown, just like Regina’s. She has your face shape and hairline, Robin. And now look at the tot here in Regina’s arms. Emma gave birth to her, but she has Regina’s dark hair…”

“Her eyes are dark blue, but mine are…”

“Brown. And this baby’s eyes will also turn brown, I assure you. It’s quite normal. They’re both exceedingly beautiful and I can assure you they’re the product of you all. Do you have names for them yet?”

“We do,” said Emma, “but we wanted to wait until the children know before we announce anything. We certainly won’t be doing that Lion King announcement thing that my parents are so keen on!”

“I look forward to it. Regina, Patricia told me all about Emma’s birthing. I’m pleased to hear she didn’t have anything unforeseen or need any stitching or aftercare. How about you? Do we need to have a consultation?”

She understood why he was asking – he is a gynaecologist after all!

“All went as planned, thank you Professor!” Though she couldn’t help resist adding, with a smug smile on her face, “I gave birth with all the dignity of a queen…”

“Hmm. A very sweary, screamey, potty-mouthed queen!” added Robin, earning a fierce glare from Regina and a loud cackle from Emma, who added “What? It’s true! Gina, you called him all the names under the sun!”

“I did not!” she defended. “I may have been a little bit stressed, but I don’t remember anything else…”
“Well Milady, I seem to recall something along the lines of ‘It’s alright for you, thief! You’re not trying to push a bowling ball out of a twat designed for a tennis ball!’” said Robin, impersonating Regina’s voice perfectly, “Quickly followed by ‘If Emma doesn’t sort you first, I’ll gonna ram a nine-inch stiletto through your bollocks if you so much as come near me again! God help you!’”

That earned a roar of laughter from all the others present, including Merlin, and an embarrassed red face from Regina! He carried on: “Though I was very impressed by the sheer variety of profanities aimed at my good self! Some of them were positively Shakespearean! I’ll need to check with Henry on some of the meanings…”

Seeing the laughter of everyone, even she Regina into a smile, before childishly poking her tongue out at him, followed by “Well…you deserved it! You got us in to this!”

He looked down at their new babies, now thankfully sleeping in their mothers’ arms. “Perhaps, my lady, though it takes three to tango. And seeing the results, I don’t regret it for a moment!”

“Nor do I!” said Emma, smiling down at Regina’s new born. “Nor me…” whispered Regina, looking down to her own.

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“MUMMY! MAMA!” yelled Honour as she bundled into the room, stopping only when she saw both mothers quickly move a finger to their lips in unison. “Sshhh! They’re asleep!” Regina whispered loudly, before quickly adding, “Come up here my love, we’ve missed you all…” Roland silently came up behind his sister, lifting her up to gently place her on the side of the bed. “Hi mum,” he said before placing a kiss on her forehead.

“Hello, my not-so-little-these-days knight! Have you and Honour been alright? I’ve missed you…” she said drowsily, the day now catching up with her.

“Fine, we’ve been playing at home, waiting to come over,” he said looking at the small dark-haired baby. “She looks just like you. And dad. So, what’s her name?”

“Funnily enough, Emma gave birth to this one! Roland, I’d like you to meet Hope Anastasia…” Regina turned the cutie to face her brother and sister.

“Anastasia – after my grandma, dad’s mum?” asked Roland. “But wait, this one’s Emma’s?” he studied the baby’s dark hair and hazel green eyes. “But…but she looks just like you!”

Regina chuckled. “Yes, it’s hard to explain, but I gave birth to that little beauty over there…” She nodded her head in the direction of the little blonde Emma was holding. Roland saw the slightly lighter skinned, fair haired new born. “She’s different from Hope, more like you mum, but you can still see that they’re sisters…”

“And we’ve named this little one Faith Eva,” added Emma. “After my grandmother. She may be blonde like me, but she’s got your mum’s eyes, don’t you think? They said her eyes will turn brown.” Honour was silent throughout, her mouth hanging open in awe as she gently stroked Hope’s cheek. “Hope and Faith? They’re so beautiful, mama! May I hold one of them?”

“In a moment my love. Let Emma and I sit up and you can take our places. Perhaps daddy could help us – when he stops taking pictures?”

They’d hardly noticed Robin silently taking endless snaps with his phone, of the first meeting of all
five of his children. Margot however, didn’t seem so delighted, looking positively sad. “Margot - you ok? Something wrong?” asked her father, pocketing the phone to lift her into his arms. “I’m ok, daddy…I just wish you were all my family. Honnie has two sisters and two big brothers now, but I’ve just got mum and she doesn’t even want to be here…”

All three parents were shocked, Regina almost tearful. “Now you listen here, missy – I regard you as my daughter too!” said Regina. “I may not have given birth to you, but I didn’t give birth to Henry, Roland or Hope either. But I love them, and I love you! These are your sisters and brother, just as much as they are Honour’s! All of you are your daddy’s children, and we all love you and cherish you equally…”

“Yeah, Marg,” said Roland, using her nickname. “You know I had a mum of my own before Regina and Emma, don’t you? Her name was Marian. But she died, just like Henry’s dad. But you’re definitely my sister…” The mothers listened to the eleven-year-old with tears in their eyes. The wild-haired dimple-cheeked young scallywag was always so good with his little sisters. Even Zelena had been surprised, though dreaded Roland finding out about Marian’s death. At that moment, Henry walked in the door with an odd grin on his face.

“What on earth took you so long, young man, that could have prevented you from meeting your new little sisters?” chided Emma, with raised eyebrows from Regina.

“Sorry mums, I was just distracted by Abby, one of the nurses here. She asked me to…” then he saw the looks from both women. “Well, it doesn’t matter right now. So, you going to introduce me?” he smirked.

“Another nurse, Hen?” she gave her wife a knowing look. We are definitely having words about his love life!

Robin saw the blush and changed the subject for the young man’s sake. “Henry, now you’re here, I’d like a picture of all of you together.” He gently plopped Margo down on the bed between the women. “I don’t think your mums need anyone on their laps just yet as they’re still recovering, so could you move close to their sides and pick up Honour? Roland, on the other side please?” He issued instructions to organise the first ever whole family group.

“Robin, Emma and I look dreadful! Can’t we just leave it until later?” sighed Regina.

“You could never look dreadful, either of you! Besides, you can use your magic again now, can’t you.”

Robin apparated his proper camera into his hands then proceeded to spend the next few minutes firing off many pictures of the new babies with their mothers and siblings. “Ok Rob, please can we stop now? They’re going to need feeding again soon and I could do with something…”

“Sorry, you’re right. Guys, let’s leave your mums to rest now, ok? With a bit of luck, they’ll all be home tonight.” However, he was interrupted by Patricia poking her head around the door. “Ooh, aren’t there a lot of you! Emma, Regina, I have Mr. and Mrs. Nolan outside in the waiting room, when you’re ready to see them?”

Regina groaned loudly. “I told you! Didn’t I tell you? The moment Henry gave her the news…well, I guess we won’t have to let anybody know about Hope and Faith. The Storybrooke broadcasting system has arrived…”

“Oh stop!” admonished Emma. “She just loves us, that’s all. Guys, I would love you all to stay but me and your mum are very shattered from having these babies. We need some rest so…Henry,
would you mind?"

The children trooped out behind Henry and into the waiting room. “Hi grandma!” The princess beamed as soon as she saw her tall grandson. “Henry - I didn’t know you were back!” she pulled him into a tight hug, before spotting the rest of them. “Hi children! How’re you all? How are your mums? I can’t wait to see your sisters!” she fizzed. “Can I pop in now?” she may have asked, but she charged into the room regardless.

The next hour was spent with Snow and David fussing and cooing over their new granddaughters. Snow was delighted one had been given her mother’s name but expressed concern when told the babies shared all three of their parents’ DNA. “Is that ok – I mean it won’t cause any health problems in the future?”

“Not according to Merlin. If anything, it makes them even stronger. It’s a bit weird to grasp, but basically, although Gina gave birth to Faith over there,” she said nodding toward the crib, “a quarter of her genes are mine! Same goes for Hope with Gina.”

“I don’t care – they’re just perfect,” whispered David, already besotted with them as he now held Hope in his arms. Emma smiled up at her father. *Strong, silent and so protective, I would love to have known him when I was a baby.* “Hope Anastasia Swan-Mills, I’m your grandpa. It’s lovely to meet you…”

“Actually dad – we decided to call her Locksley. Faith too…” she smiled at Regina, who merely nodded. The only one more surprised was Robin.

“What? I’m sorry, I don’t understand. Why would you…”

“Emma and I discussed it recently, Robin,” said Regina, grinning at her true love. “Roland wanted to stay with your name after we married, Honour asked to change her name to yours, and ‘Locksley-Swan-Mills’ is a hell of a mouthful, don’t you think?” Emma chuckled when the former thief’s jaw dropped in surprise.

“Oh, and one more thing, Rob. Gina and I decided we’ll take your name too when we marry next year. So, it seems my ‘Lady Locksley’ dream will come true after all!” His eyes reddened at the news, feeling slightly choked and his lip trembling.

“All of you want this? My name? I...i just don’t know what to say! I can’t believe it. You’d do that...for me?”

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Killian and Rosie need an emergency stop. Rumple gives his grandson a gift and Rumple plans for a vacation.

Still with me? If you are then I really appreciate it. There's a couple of side stories in this chapter which will definitely affect the end of the tale. There's about ten chapters still to go...Enjoy!

The Jolly Roger – somewhere between Agrabah and Mischaven

It was a balmy day on the ocean. While the ship made good speed, its Captain’s mind was elsewhere. Rosalind’s pregnancy had taken a turn for the worst and she knew something was seriously wrong!

They were at least another week’s sailing to Agrabah, when she felt something was wrong. There had been no movement in her belly and her gut told her she needed help, fast. The choppy waters didn’t help, and her anxiety grew and grew. What the fuck do I do in the middle of an ocean?

“Killian, I need to speak to my dad!”

Killian had watched her do this quite a few times over the last few months. Every couple of weeks, he’d watch her as she sat silently, bolt upright and eyes closed, to mentally reach out to her father and siblings. She would often go silent for a good hour, before she came out of it, to tell him news of her family. One of Rosie’s later telepathic session updates had been a shock, when she told him that Emma was pregnant. However a later update that Regina was pregnant too was even more so. Both of them? Magical babies? Where will it all end?

Surprised though he was, that news had helped him move on. Emma was now his past. However, the news that Dorothy Lucas had just given birth lightened his mood considerably. I have a son! Nathaniel Killian! He felt so proud to have helped them and Rosie hadn’t been in the least bit disturbed by the news, knowing that their own relationship was solid. Whilst there was no way he would interfere in the raising of the child, he nonetheless wanted to see him, hopefully before he’s grown.

Finally, Rosie came out of her trance, to stare at him with a frightened expression. “We need to get back to my dad, Killy! He said he’s concerned about my baby and I may need some proper medical attention. He said he can get to me by a portal, or even use it to get me back to a hospital, but I need to get on to dry land as he can’t do it over water. Killian…I’m scared!”

He moved quickly to gather her in his arms. “Ok my love, but you know yourself we’re a good month sailing to Storybrooke! Or New York. Agrabah is the nearest land, and it’s a day’s sailing from here. But don’t worry, I’ll get us back one way or another!”
The moment the ship berthed in Agrabah Harbour, Rosie communicated telepathically with her father. Within the hour, the Great Sorcerer had opened a portal outside the palace, stepping through it with Annabelle accompanying him with plenty of medical supplies. As Rosalind fell crying into her father’s arms, Killian explained their current predicament to their hosts, Queen Jasmine and Prince Aladdin. The young queen and her true love, former genie and husband, had restored the city to its good fortune over the last few years. They went on to produce a young son and daughter, although their happiness was recently dented by the death of her father, the Sultan. Jasmine offered her husband the kingship but the former thief felt it was not right to accept such a role, so she instead granted him the title of prince. It was a truly happy marriage.

“Killian, do take Rosalind up to the royal suite, where you’ll have more space and privacy. Merlin, is there anything you need from us? We do have physicians and nurses available.” The queen was desperate to help.

“A midwife or nurse on hand, in case she needs a physical examination, would be most helpful, your Majesty. As her father, it’s best I not do that part. However, I intend to try something with magic first…”

“Of course. We’ll give you whatever you need!” She smiled at the former pirate. “Agrabah still owes a great debt of gratitude to you, Captain Jones, for helping us overthrow Jafar. We’re at your service!”

They settled Rosie onto a bed, while her father checked her abdomen using his magic to scan her. “Well my darling, you were right to let me know as soon as possible! I thought at first it may have been ectopic, but clearly not as somehow it seemed to have righted itself. However, the baby is weak and distressed, so I’ll see if I can’t give it a little helping hand…”

“Please, dad, anything. Please save my baby!” she begged. Merlin slowly closed his eyes as he carefully placed his hands either side of her bulge. Rosalind immediately felt warmth invading her entire body. She lay perfectly still, praying they hadn’t left it too late. Killian and Anna stood silently close by, also praying for success. After a few tense minutes, he withdrew them to scan again.

“There now. The heartbeat seems a bit stronger! I sense some magic in there too. I think this little fighter is going to surprise us all. Now, for safety’s sake, I suggest you rest here a few days. If the problems continue, I’d like to transport you through the portal to Storybrooke or Sherwood.”

“I’ll stay with her!” said Annabelle. “We need a catch up. That is, if Killian doesn’t mind?”

“Of course not, love! I know you all mind read, but Rosie’s still missed her family terribly.”

Over dinner that evening with the royal couple, the group caught up with all the gossip from Storybrooke and Sherwood. Anna and Merlin told them about the former King George trying to take over Sherwood, and the Merry Men’s subsequent storming of the clinic. Killian had been offshore at the time and although he knew the basics, gasped when he heard how Emma and Regina had almost been killed. He and Emma may no longer be together, but it chilled him to think his former love was in mortal danger again. He was pleased to hear the gory details of how Robin had swiftly despatched the tyrant with his sword. *That bastard had it coming to him!* The Sorcerer also told them about his trip with Robin and Rumpelstiltskin to rescue his son and again, the ending of the Black Fairy by the same former outlaw. “He’s getting better with that sword!”

Anna told them all about Mulan giving birth to their daughter, Li, followed a month later by Dorothy Lucas with her own son. Killian’s eyes widened in wonder. “And is the boy healthy?” he enquired,
not sure how much Anna knew of his conception. Merlin, who knew all of it, simply stating with a smirk. “He is an extremely handsome fellow. Quite ‘dashing’ you might say!”

Rosie squeezed her fiancé’s hand. “Anna, Killian is Dorothy and Ruby’s donor. He helped them before we were together, so Nathaniel is his son. We should go see him soon, Killian! I really don’t mind. They’re a lovely couple, after all…”

Anna then dropped the bombshell. “Oh and Rosie, you remember Emma and Regina, the other gay couple? Well, as I mentioned, they were both pregnant and they’ve asked Robin to marry them both in a polyamorous marriage, like Mulan’s.”

Jasmine and Aladdin gasped in surprise and Killian almost choked on his rum, splurting it out before being seized by a coughing fit. Once he recovered, he croaked. “WHAT? They’re marrying Robin? Both of them?”

Anna wasn’t fully aware of Killian and Emma’s history. “Yes, well they have just given birth to his daughters…”

“YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME?” Killian wasn’t sure whether to feel… upset?
Betrayed? How could his friend do this to him? He realised he was being stupid. She had moved on. Hadn’t he? That’s when he saw the look on Rosie’s face. She seemed hurt by his overreaction. He grabbed her hand. “I’m sorry love, I didn’t mean to react like that! It’s just a bit of a shock. I was in the Underworld for three weeks, to come back and find my girlfriend had married another woman. Next thing I hear is that the pair of them are pregnant by my best mate! It’s more than a surprise…”

“I understand.” Rosie nodded sympathetically. “You still must have some residual feelings for Emma, considering how it all ended…”

“No, love, not those kinds of feelings! I accepted it was all over between me and Emma before I even met you! What you and I have is permanent and lasting. I love you Rosie! Regardless of you carrying our child.”

Merlin smiled at the pair, his vast wisdom of two thousand years and many children recognising a good match for his daughter. “That’s good to know, Captain. I do believe my daughter is in good hands. I trust one day soon you’ll be putting your relationship on a more formal footing?” he said, an eyebrow raised.

“Dad! That’s unfair! You can’t ask him that! Whatever happens, that’s something between Killian and me…”

Before Merlin could respond, Killian squeezed her hand. “It’s ok, love. Your father’s right - he’s just thinking of your welfare! But I’m a traditionalist and wanted to do this right. So perhaps now is the time even if he and I aren’t alone. Professor, you already know I’m very much in love with Rosalind, again regardless she’s carrying my child. I should very much like to ask for her hand in marriage but would prefer to do so having already received her father’s blessing. So, Merlin, you probably know of all my former sins. Do you willingly give it?”

As Jasmine, Aladdin and Rosalind held their breath, the Sorcerer stared intensely into the eyes of the Captain.

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One month later – Gold’s antiques shop

“Grandpa, it’s wonderful and really kind of you, but I’m not sure I can take this. It’s too much!”
“Nonsense, my boy. You’re twenty-one now, and you need your independence. The flat belonged to your father anyway. As for the money, well it’s hardly important to me. Take it, invest it and live your life with my blessing. You may use it in whatever way you wish, though I hope you use part of it to travel and see the world.”

Henry stared at the bank statement in disbelief. It appeared his grandfather had deposited $500,000 dollars into an account registered with a New York bank in his name, handing him the bank card, passwords and access details. His mothers had been more than generous with funds, financing his education. But this was significantly more. “Grandpa, I know you’ll think I’m weird but…I’ll accept this on one condition!”

“Condition, Henry? If I didn’t know you better, I would guess you were trying to make a deal?”

He smiled down at his grandfather, The Dark One. The man feared by so many. “I am! Grandpa, once I graduate next year, I want to travel. I want to spend at least a year seeing so many places that I’ve read about. I want to do Europe, Asia, South America. I want to see things before I write about them…”

“I envy you your freedom Henry but, what’s that got to do with any deal?”

“I haven’t told my mums yet, but because I’m majoring in English and History, subject to my final results I’m being considered for a Rhodes Scholarship after I graduate. Grandpa, do you know what I’m talking about?”

“Indeed, I do, my boy,” gasped the Dark One. “Rhodes scholarships are given by Oxford University in England for international students to study there. It’s very prestigious and a significant award. I’m sure you’ll excel in…”

“I want you there! Or at least, if I get it and before I go there, I want to spend some time with you, travelling. For at least a month. I want to explore new places, and I want to do it with the only link I have to my dad! Grandpa, you’re more knowledgeable about the world than anyone I’ve ever known. Please. Will you come?”

Rumple was truly stunned. Nobody, not even Belle, had ever wanted him to spend real time with them. The warmth and love he felt for his grandson now almost moved him to tears. Though he refused to show it.

“Henry, I now have Gideon to consider.” And what about Belle? Though he still wasn’t sure how permanent they would be! However, he could never refuse this time with his grandson. Possibly the last chance he would ever have.

‘Belle could come too, if you want her along. Please say you’ll come?

“I will, my boy. I would be delighted. What do you have in mind?”

“England first, so I get to know the culture if I’m going to live there. Scotland, as your grandparents came from there. Scandinavia, France, Switzerland. I want to take you on a road show. Perhaps we could take Gideon?”

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The Swan-Mills family sat around the largest table in the diner, as Henry told them his short term and post-graduate plans. Snow and David had offered to take the now three-month-old girls, so they could have their breakfast in peace, and the pair were now pushing Hope and Faith around the park, and on to a picnic.
“You’re doing WHAT?” yelled Emma, incredulous when her son told them of his plans.

“Henry, no! What on earth were you thinking? You actually asked Gold?” added Regina.

Henry listened to them sound off, as he knew they would, when he told them about the trip. He knew the last month had been stressful for them and Robin, *but seriously? Did they really have to revert back to treating him like a kid? “Mums, please don’t be like this! I want to travel, and I’m going!”*

“DON’T take that tone with us, young man! You may be at Harvard now, but you’re still - ”

“Still a twenty-one-year-old, LEGALLY INDEPENDENT MAN, unless you’d forgotten?” trying to stop his growing anger. “I’m legally responsible for myself now! So, I AM going to travel in Europe and I AM going to take my grandfather! Mums, much as I love you, this is not open for discussion…”

He may have been technically right, but Emma was still furious and hated when he fought against them. “Henry – may I remind you who is *paying* for your high-class education? Your car, your allowance…” she fumed as her wife also angrily glared at their young son.

“Yeah, about that. I’m grateful for everything, but now I’m of age, you can cancel all the payments. I’ve been given quite a large endowment by Grandpa Gold. I was going to use a tiny bit of it to treat him. I was planning to travel across Europe anyway, but I wanted to take him along with me…”

“You’re saying you don’t need us anymore…” said Regina. “Now you no longer have need of my…our money?”

Robin visibly winced at that, as he sat quietly watching them, knowing *that* was just the wrong thing to say to her son right now! “No Regina, Henry didn’t mean anything like that, and you know it.” He tried to calm her, before Emma joined in with her wife.

“Perhaps he *did* mean that!” said Emma. Henry stood up immediately, red faced and now angry.

“I can’t believe you just said that! You two are fucking unbelievable! I’m doing you a favour, showing you don’t need to support me anymore, and yet you just slam it back in my face! I didn’t do this to spite you, I did it because I want to treat my grandpa, the only living link I have to my dad! Remember him, Em-ma? Neal, the guy who gave his life to save everyone else? Do you even remember when he died? The date?”

Emma saw real venom in his eyes as she thought back. *Oh shit? The anniversary was yesterday - just like last year, when Killian returned-I’ve forgotten three years in a row!*

“Henry…stop yelling! I’m sorry, but you still…” it didn’t matter what she said - he was already on a roll. The rest of the table shocked, Honour almost frightened!

“But that doesn’t count though, does it? Because HE was the wrong side of the family! Tell me… Emma…when was the last time you went to dad’s grave? When was the last time you even remembered the day he died? I’ll tell you – four years ago! God forbid if we’d forgotten one of the bloody royal family! You’d expect paid mourners in the streets, wouldn’t you? But my dad? Nothing! Well, he’s just the token guy who got you pregnant!”

Regina sat stunned at the angry outburst, with Emma about to yell. But she knew he was beyond reason, as he continued his rant.

“Well I do remember him! He was my dad and I MISS HIM!” Emma stood to place a hand on his
shoulder to calm him, but he angrily swatted her off. “No. Don’t touch me! You know what…oh, to hell with you. Both of you! I’m going on this fucking trip, I’m taking him whether you like it or not and that’s the end of it! And IF I get accepted, I’m doing my postgrad in England! Then I’m going to travel. Far away from here!”

He turned swiftly away, grabbing his keys before striding over to the front door of the diner, opening and slamming it hard behind him, cracking one of the panes. The rest of the diners sat back astonished, having never heard Storybrooke’s favourite son completely lose it before.

The rest of the family sitting and standing in silence, broken by quiet sobbing from Honour. “Why’s Henry so angry, papa?”

Robin lifted her onto his lap as the stunned women stayed silent. “Henry’s upset, because his daddy died far too early, and he thinks everyone else has forgotten all about him, and what a great man he was. But he’s all grown up now, and needs people to know that he can’t be told what to do any more…”

Emma glared at him, knowing the last comment was aimed at her and Regina. “He’s a grown-up now, Honnie, and needs to make his own mark in the world. Your mothers just love him, and want to care for him. Don’t worry, he won’t be angry for too long…”

“I don’t like seeing Henry angry. Can you take me to his daddy’s grave, papa? I want to see it.”

“Of course I can, sweetheart. I could do with a walk. I need some fresh air. Perhaps after you and Roland finish your breakfast…” It was then he noticed Roland had already left the table and was now standing close to another group of diners, blatantly flirting with one of the girls, who appeared to be around his age.

Emma continued simmering quietly before finally saying, almost to herself. “Why does he always think I don’t care? I do – at least I did. It’s just…he died! I moved on! Just like I had to with Killian! Why does he think I don’t care? Do I have to mourn him the rest of my life?”

“He said it himself, Emma,” said Robin, softly. “You forgot the anniversary of his death three years running. It’s still clearly a very sore point. You may have moved on, but it doesn’t mean Henry has! Sorry to raise an awkward subject but…how long after his death did you start dating Killian?”

“What’s that got to do with anything? I dunno…maybe a couple of weeks. It’s not as though Neal and I were still together! He didn’t even know him until we went to New York. Henry always thought he was dead.”

“And why did he think that, Emma? Why would he think his father was dead?” Robin persisted.

Emma groaned, remembering what she’d told Henry all those years ago. How his father, a fire officer, had died a hero, saving lives. Remembering her shame at having been so dishonest. “Because I lied to him. I told him he’d died in a fire. He finally met Neal by accident, when he was twelve. He lost him during the second curse and finally, when he was thirteen…” the last words almost a whisper, finally realising the torment in her son’s heart.

“So, in his mind, he feels you deliberately kept his father from him. He got so little time with him before he died, it’s no wonder he feels his loss more…” Robin stared at the blonde in sympathy, his eyes dropping to Regina. It was only then he noticed the tears streaming down her cheeks. “Regina?”

“He said ‘to hell with you. Both of you!’” said Regina. “That he’s going to go far away, to get away
from us. We’ve lost him, Emma. We’ve lost our son!”

“I’ll go talk to him, Gina, after we’ve both had a chance to cool down.” Emma didn’t sound too sure herself.

“With respect, ladies, Henry’s your son and I won’t interfere, but I strongly suggest you not do that! I think it’ll make matters worse. How about I go and talk to him later? I’m not involved, after all…”

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And so, an hour later, as Robin walked with Honour and Roland to the grave of Henry’s father, he saw the young man sitting on the ground next to the headstone. On the way, Robin had been telling them stories of the man, Rumple’s son. He told of Neal’s bravery and help in Henry’s rescue in Neverland. And of his death, ultimately at the hands of the witch. Then he noticed the simple, small granite stone marking the plot, which read simply:

*Beloved Son*

*Neal Cassidy*

It seemed such a small comment on a life. *Four words to describe the resting place of a hero?* He glanced across to another headstone, larger and more ornate.

*Graham Humbert*

*Sheriff of Storybrooke*

*Born 14th December 1981– Died 6th March 2013*

He looked at the dash between the dates. Thirty-one years. The dash representing an entire life. Just a dash.

He stepped slowly in front of him. “Henry, would you like to change your father’s headstone? For words doesn’t seem right, somehow. Perhaps give him something more *fitting* for a hero?” The Author looked up at him, noticing him for the first time. “Um…yeah, I guess…”

Noticing a style of an older grave nearby, Robin focused his magic. The small stone seemed to double in size almost immediately, though the face was completely blank. “What would you like to say about him, Henry?”

“Well…he was my dad. He was loved, and he died for all of us. I wouldn’t be here otherwise. I can’t remember his birth day, or even how old he was. At least a hundred I think, because of the magic. But he was my dad!” he repeated.

“Well…he was my dad. He was loved, and he died for all of us. I wouldn’t be here otherwise. I can’t remember his birth day, or even how old he was. At least a hundred I think, because of the magic. But he was my dad!” he repeated.

“Very well, how about this?” with a small twirl of his fingers, inlaid lettering, in gothic script, appeared on the stone, surrounded by tracery:

‘Baelfire’

*Neal Cassidy*

*Beloved Father, Son & True Hero*
Henry gasped at the new stone, before looking at the archer. “Perfect. Thanks.” He said, resting a hand on the new stone. “Apart from me and grandpa, you’re the first person to visit it for a year or two now. And you two!” he smiled at Robin’s children.

“I’ve been telling Roland and Honour what I remember about him. As I told you before, I never knew Neal for long, but I know how painful it is to lose a parent. The pain slowly goes but the memory always stays with you.” The men exchanged an understanding look. Henry used his own magic to cover the grave in fresh flowers, before standing up.

“You think I should go back and apologise to my mums, don’t you?” he finally said, sighing.

“Not unless you mean it! You lost your temper, and that’s understandable. But they’re just being a little over-protective. They love you but underneath it all, hate the thought of any one of their children no longer relying on them. It’s difficult for both of them; they didn’t have much love in their lives till you came along.”

Henry snickered, “well, it’s not like they don’t have it now. There’s four kids at home, thanks to you! Five if you count Margot. You’re a big family now, and I’m sort of an...an outsider.” As the words left his mouth, he regretted them, knowing he sounded petulant.

“Henry, you’re an intelligent young man. I’m sure you don’t really believe that! When you’re away at Harvard, Emma and Regina constantly talk about you. About your life and your plans, their fears that you no longer need them. They miss you terribly - you’re their first born! Those two regard you as their saviour, and I understand why. For a long time they grew up with no love, then you came along. You becoming an independent man is as difficult for them as it is for you, but you should never doubt their love!” he let Henry mull over his words.

“Anyway, on to happier things. I personally think you travelling to Europe is a great idea! I wish I could come with you...”

“Difficult...now you’ve got about forty-eight kids,” he sarked, though smiling. “You’d need your own plane if you carried on...”

“Five children, to be precise. And Rollie here will be a man himself soon enough!” he brought a hand down on the boy’s shoulder. “Perhaps I’ll act the same when he and your sisters leave us, which they will eventually.” Roland had said nothing throughout, silently observing.

“So, you don’t think you’ll have any more?” Henry said, half-joking. “Create your own football team?”

Robin chuckled. “If you’d have heard your mothers yelling at me in that delivery room, you’d know the answer to that! I’ve lived amongst soldiers, outlaws and thieves, but I’d never heard such a wide range of profanities, swearing and threats! No, I think we have more than enough. Each one of them is a blessing. Including you.”

"I hardly think so, not considering how I've treated them recently..." Henry blushed.

“Henry, that’s not the reason you’re leaving, is it? To get away from all the commotion back home? You don’t really feel that you’re no longer part of this family, do you? I would hate to think that I
was in some way the cause of that…"

“No…it’s absolutely not, Robin! In fact, I like you being there for my mums. You calm them down and you’re the nearest thing I’ve had to a dad since…well, ever. I’ve known you longer than I knew my real dad. It’s just that I need to live a little! Harvard’s been great, and I’ve met loads of really interesting people, but I’ve never really travelled. I just want some adventures of my own, you know? And as for grandpa Gold, you guys don’t know him like I do! He’s not as old as Merlin, but he’s been around centuries. He knows so much, and he’s really rather cool! I want to spend some proper time with him. Both my mums hate him but whenever they’re in trouble, who do they all turn to? Rumpelstiltskin. He’s always being asked for favours and deals, yet once everyone’s got what they want, they shun him. Even when Gideon got taken, everyone sided will Belle against him, even though she was the stupid one who handed him to Blue! It’s just not fair!”

“I’m inclined to agree. I certainly saw a very different side to Rumple when we went to the Dark Realm. One day I’ll tell you all about it, but we spent some time talking and it’s clear he’s continuing to fight that huge force controlling him. Perhaps the vacation will do him some good. Will he be taking Belle and Gideon?”

“Not sure about Belle. They’re together again and trying to make it work, but the influence she used to have over him is definitely gone. It was bad enough when she used his dagger against him to force him over the town line but giving their son to Blue was probably the last straw! I think she stays with him to be closer to Gideon, but who knows? Maybe in future…”

“Well Henry, what I do know is that you are the only one around who has any influence on him. Perhaps you could suggest he takes Belle with you? Better to have his own mother along. It’s leave Rumple to spend more time with you. You’ll also get to perhaps know your uncle better and without the stress and, who knows? Perhaps it’ll help Belle and him to see each other in a different light!”

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“So, you’re going to go travelling with Henry? That’s a surprise. What brought this on?”

“Henry asked me. I made a deal, of sorts, with him. Besides, now he’s put the idea in my head, I started to investigate places to visit. I intend to visit Scotland, where some of my forebears lived. Henry wants to cover England, so we may split up for a little while. Then we visit Scandinavia. I intend to take a month or so…”

Belle was astonished. In the year’s she’d known him, he never once indicated a wish to travel. That was her thing! “A whole month? But what about Gideon? He’s going to miss you…”

“I don’t see why - he’s coming too.”

“What? You’re taking my baby away from me for a whole month? How are you going to manage? Rumple, how could you?” Belle was horrified. Their relationship was getting slowly better by the week, even though there was still a lack of real trust between them. What was he thinking? She couldn’t be parted from Gideon that long!

“I think you mean our son, Belle! I was going to ask you to join us, after all, you always said you wanted to travel so here is your chance. If you prefer not to, Amanda said she would travel with us to help care for him. We’ll manage either way.”

“You didn’t think to ask me beforehand? You didn’t think he could be left with me?”

“I trust you with him completely. I trust you to love and care for him, but you are still in thrall to the
blue gnat and those ridiculous heroes. I told you I wasn’t going to be parted from Gideon ever again, and I meant it! However, I’m happy for us to continue work on repairing our own relationship; and perhaps leaving this town for a while will help. You’re welcome to join us, but I will not be leaving Gideon behind.”

Belle glowered but could still see his point. After all, it was her fault Gideon had been kidnapped in the first place. Would it be so bad, leaving Storybrooke for a while? She and Rumple were amicable enough, though they hadn’t been intimate since before the kidnap. Her influence over him had waned as he no longer trusted her with his dagger. It was true that Snow and the fairies had continually pressed her to move away from him, but she was going nowhere without her son!

"I also understand that the mermaid is currently on her way to Storybrooke. Her split with the prince appears to be permanent. She's likely to be heading here as I believe you're the only close friend she has here. If you wish to invite her along, I have no problem with that. Money is not an issue and she could also act as a babysitter from time to time, leaving us free to explore as and when..."

Belle was astonished, knowing that the Dark One already knew about her and Ariel. Their brief past. "You'd do that? Knowing what you know?"

"Why not? As I said Belle, you are free to live your own life. She has been one of the more calming influences on it so far. I think her presence would do you good."

Was he trying to set her up? Test her in some way? But why? Well, he was offering her a month-long sightseeing trip so, why not?

“Well, it looks like we’re going to Europe then!”
Chapter Summary

The daily grind of bringing up young children is taking its toll! Merlin and Archie offer some answers.

Henry and Rumple plan for their trip and Belle receives a very welcome visitor...

Chapter Notes

This chapter is more explicit towards the end, so I hope you're not shocked too easily. Remember, I'm new to this!

Chapter 45

The first three months after Hope and Faith were born, their three parents were run ragged. They’d expected to be kept busy, but the lack of sleep, coupled with Honour and Margot still needing their love and attention, drained them all. Maria was the one who came up with their final solution. As they sat over breakfast and multiple coffees to keep them aware, Robin’s sister looked at the drained trio.

“Listen, you guys. You all look completely shagged out! You’ve got two new babies, a six and a seven-year-old and you’ll never manage without some decent sleep. Why don’t you let me and Carrie help? Why don’t you move into the suite you’ve got at the Locksley and let two or three of us feed the babies in shifts?”

“Good idea,” said Robin’s cousin. “Emma, Regina, you can both express your milk for night time feeds, get some proper sleep and me, Maria and Sophie can take turns for part of the night each. Another couple of months and they’ll be on solid foods anyway. Makes good sense and you get to stay awake during the day!”

It wasn’t difficult to persuade them. The mothers had been light sleepers since the births and, although feeling guilty for troubling Robin’s sister, their first night having more than four hours uninterrupted sleep, decided it. The first night Regina woke up panicking, now not used to hearing an early morning yell from Hope, which would inevitably set off Faith. Stumbling into their nursery, anxiety quickly turned to relief when she saw Maria Locksley, Hope safely snuggled in her arms, as she sat in the nursing chair, with a bottle, now half full. The dark blonde looked at the former mayor with a tired smile. “She’s ok!” she whispered. “I heard her grumbling a little, but once I got this in her, she was fine! Go get yourself off to bed, Regina, you’re on the next shift…”

She smiled down at Robin’s sister, who always displayed the same calm kindness as her big brother. “I love you, Maria Locksley! You have no idea what this means to me,” she whispered back, before bending over and pressing a quick kiss on top of the woman’s head in appreciation before heading back to bed.
As another three months passed, some semblance of normality slowly resumed to the Swan-Mills and Locksley household. At the six-month anniversary of the girls’ births, Emma, now increasingly conscious of the fact she hadn’t reduced her weight and figure to her athletic, pre-pregnancy levels, became obsessed with exercising. Daily runs, crunches, planking and all manner of regimes were endured daily until, during a morning jog, she slipped on wet grass in the forest and badly sprained her ankle. Help had arrived eventually, and she now lay on a gurney in Sherwood Clinic, with Robin and Regina at her sides. Caroline had been on duty that morning and had just completed an X-ray of the badly swollen left foot.

“Well the good news is nothing’s fractured, just badly sprained. The swelling should start to go down in a day or two, but I’d recommend not putting weight on it and definitely no jogging on it for at least a couple of weeks.”

“Two weeks? I can’t be laid up that long! Carrie, isn’t there something you could just give me to numb the pain once the swelling goes down?” she moaned.

“What’s the rush?” said Regina. “You’ve been running like crazy and you spend hours in the gym. What’s wrong?”

“I just hate being like this,” she moved her hands across her stomach, treating the residual curve of her belly as though it was a disgusting mountain. “It’s six months now. I just want to get rid of all this excess blubber - it’s horrible. I feel like a freak!”

“Emma, you’re being ridiculous,” her wife snickered, “you look absolutely fine! I’m carrying a bit of excess too and you look slimmer than me!” Robin quietly watched their interaction, feeling there was more to this.

“Yeah, but you’re more curvy than me. A bit of extra fat looks good on you…” The moment the words left her mouth, Emma knew she’d said the wrong thing as Regina’s sympathetic look turned to an icy scowl. “Thanks!”

The blonde winced. “Gina – you know I didn’t mean it like that! I’m just not…not…” he eyes began to tear up and both her wife and boyfriend recognised her walls going up too. Robin looked across to his cousin. “Carrie, would you mind leaving us for a couple of minutes?” His cousin nodded, seeing the tension and left the room.

Robin hitched himself on the edge of the stretcher, taking the blonde’s hand in his own, his thumb massaging her knuckles. “Emma, what’s really bothering you, my love? It can’t be the weight, because you’ve lost most of it already. We both think you’re beautiful; you know that! So, what is it?”

“Beautiful! Like I believe that! You two haven’t even been near me for ages. You know how long it’s been we all had sex? Seven months! Seven bloody months - so, don’t tell me you think I’m beautiful…” she almost growled the last part, looking away from him and trying to avoid her wife’s stare.

“Emma, you can’t seriously believe I don’t still find you beautiful?” said Regina, astonished. “We haven’t been intimate since we gave birth because I’m so damn tired! Not because I’m not attracted to you - I don’t feel attractive myself right now! I thought you just weren’t interested., and besides, I’m not altogether comfortable about how I am right now…down below!”

“Emma,” added Robin, seeing how upset they were, “I know I’m just the man in this, and my body
hasn’t gone through the sort of changes you have, but I think it sounds like something Marian suffered from after having Roland. I think, from Merlin’s memories, it’s post-natal depression. I swear, to me, neither of you have lost your beauty. You’re just exhausted from all the changes we’ve been through. As for sex, Emma, I thought neither of you wanted to because you weren’t ‘ready’! I would never put pressure on you but, whenever the two of you decide you are, I’m definitely ready and waiting!” He leaned down, placing a kiss on the blonde’s lips, quickly wiping a tear from her cheek.

“I’m sorry…I didn’t mean to take it out on you. I just feel so useless at the moment,” sniffed Emma, “We all said we were going to be completely honest with each other. I guess we’re still learning?”

“How about we talk to Archie. Together,” suggested Robin. “I’ve been seeing him these past few months about my anger management towards…Zelena. Gina, you two became close friends with him after I died, so how about we get him over to dinner? He may have some ideas…”

Days later, over dinner, the three sat with the Storybrooke psychiatrist. Archie had a unique ability to get his patients opening up about all manner of things. Half of the town seemed to have used him and Regina knew he harboured more divulged secrets than even the Dark One. They now sat, nursing drinks, on the two sofas, one with Emma’s ankle, still in a light bandage, propped up on Regina’s lap as they talked. The conversation had drifted to so many subjects, some very intimate, but Archie was never embarrassed or judgmental.

“So, you’ve asked me for my opinion. Well from what you’ve told me, Emma badly misses work. The Sheriff’s Department gives her satisfaction and a sense of worth. Emma, perhaps you should consider reapplying for your old job or another role there? I think Hank Morgan would probably welcome you back. Regina, you said you don’t miss being mayor but perhaps you need a part-time role? Your former paramedic interest is certainly one to explore, though I’m sure an intelligent woman like yourself would easily find a suitable vocation. How about managing the new Sherwood Riding School and stables? Your equine knowledge is vast and now David’s time is stretched he would welcome it.” The brunette silently nodded.

“Now as for your intimacy. What you’ve been experiencing is quite common and Robin was right. It does sound like a mild form of depression, quite common in the months following birth. Regina, you worried about your physical capability for intimacy right now. So I suggest you talk to one of the gynae team about pelvic floor exercises and possibly internal weights.”

Regina was more than surprised he knew about such things. “Often, the problem is more in your own self-confidence for intimacy, rather than any physical change. And Robin? Then there’s your role. I admit I’ve never advised someone with two partners before, but you admitted you were nervous about putting any sort of pressure on either of them regarding intimacy. Yet this concern, this love, has been interpreted by them in thinking you were no longer interested, or in Emma’s case that she was unattractive. When in truth, from what you have told me, you were more than keen just didn’t want to force the issue. Well perhaps it’s time for you to take a lead there! Either Emma or Regina can decline, should they wish, but at least they’ll both feel cherished. But they key thing is to keep talking to each other, openly and honestly.”

“Thanks Archie, we’ll bear that in mind. I think I’m also worried about getting one or both of them pregnant again. They’ve both gone through such an exhausting time I don’t think I could bear doing that to them again! Even with Henry away most of the time we still have five children in the house! Emma and Regina both thought they were protected but Merlin said my magic overrode it!”

“Then talk to Merlin. After two thousand years I’m sure he has a magical answer to contraception. You know, I have great hopes for you three. I think you already make a terrific ‘thruple’!”
“So it’s really over? You and Prince Eric?” Belle had just listened to her friend’s sad tale.

“Yes. We basically drifted apart. And my father didn’t help. Both our families were putting pressure on us for children and Eric didn’t see any rush. Then they got into an argument because the Siren’s took down one of his ships. He lost several of his best friends, and lost his temper at dad. Dad threatened him if he ever took to the sea again. You know my dad, Triton, right? Then he told me to decide whose side I’m on and to make him see sense. I gave Eric an earful and left to stay with my sisters. After I got back, Eric told me I had to choose. Him or dad.”

“That’s when you came to stay with me, right?” Belle took her hand in her own, in an attempt to comfort her.

“Yeah. When I went back to him, we talked. I told him I came back here and stayed with you. I don’t know why but eventually I told him about us, as we’d always promised to tell each other the truth. What surprised me was that he wasn’t upset. In fact, he admitted he had also been with someone while I was away. Princess Emilia. I never liked her and thought she was a bit snooty. So we talked and agreed we weren’t the same as we were. He agreed we were better apart. It was emotional, but we still want to remain friends. But, basically, that’s it! We’re over…”

“I’m so sorry! Still, thank goodness you didn’t have children. That would have been difficult!”

“Yes, I guess so. Though dad’s pleased and so are my sisters. I think that’s what really annoyed me! They never helped. So I got angry with them, saying they helped the marriage break down, and said I wasn’t staying…”

“Oh Ariel, your family too? I know what it’s like to fall out with your father. I’m so sorry!” She moved across to sit next to her friend and very briefly, former lover, wrapping an arm around her back. “So what’s your plan? Where will you go?”

“I have no idea. I guess I’ll drift around for a while. I don’t want to see them right now, and I find I now prefer the company of humans anyway. So…who knows?” She wrested a hand on her shoulder, accepting Belle’s comfort. Belle remembered her conversations with Rumple about the mermaid.

“You know, Rumple knew…about us.”

“Us? What…you mean when we were…together? You told him?” The mermaid was horrified.

“No, I didn’t tell him. But he knew. Everything! It’s his magic, I guess. He knew about everything I’ve done since we separated. He agreed that my life was now my own and I could do what I want, with whoever I want. And so could he. As you know, after we separated, I was lonely and depressed. I had a couple of short-term relationships but Ariel, you were the first girl I’d ever been with…intimately. I knew you needed to go back to Eric but, after you left, I went off the rails. I needed to explore my sexuality so, I had a few one-night stands.”

Ariel collected Belle’s hands in her own. “With other women?”

Belle nodded. “And a couple of guys too. None of it was serious but…I guess I learned something about myself.”

“I did the same after I split with Eric. Just the once, mind. I guess I’m the same as you. A bit confused. But Belle, I have to admit that, although you and I were only together a week or so, what we had was…for me…more than just sex! I’m sorry if that makes you feel awkward…”
Belle pulled her even closer as they sat bunched up on the sofa. “No…it doesn’t! I’m glad you felt something because, I did too!”

The mermaid’s eyes glistened. “Really? You’re not just saying that to make me feel better?”

“Really!” the brown-haired beauty whispered, blue eyes now laser-ing on hazel ones. Both women knew exactly what was about to happen and didn’t stop it. It happened almost in slow motion, Belle acting first. She pressed her mouth gently down on the redhead’s, both sets of soft, cushioned lips immediately opening up. It was warm and tender and needed. Within seconds Belle felt a warm, wet tongue invade her mouth and she welcomed it, swirling and slowly coiling her own around it. A satisfying ‘mmmh’ heard from within. When they gradually separated, a little breathless, Ariel whispered. “God, I missed you…”

“And I missed you, Ariel, so very much! But I need to tell you something about me and Rumple.”

“You’re together again?” The mermaid looked almost heartbroken.

“No, not exactly. But we are living together. He refuses to allow Gideon to stay anywhere but in his own home. He’s terrified of losing him again and I must admit, my actions haven’t helped. So I moved back in with him. It’s amicable. We’re still married but separated, and he knows about us. What we had. Oddly enough, he seems to approve. Said you’re a vast improvement on the others…”

“Approve? Of you and me? I can’t believe it! It doesn’t sound like the Dark One to me!”

“He’s changed, Ariel. Having Gideon back seems to have changed him. I can’t really explain it. He’s given me a few conditions regarding our son but has said I’m still free to live my own life. He’s drawn up and offered to sign divorce papers as and when I wish. I still care for him Ariel, even if we’re no longer…together.”

“So where does that leave us? What would he do?”

“Strangely enough, he seems to be almost encouraging me to be with you. He said of all the people I’ve…seen…you were the most trustworthy to be around Gideon. Next month, he and Henry are taking a month-long trip around Britain and Europe. It was Henry’s idea, though Rumple said he wouldn’t leave Gideon behind. So he’s asked me to join them. He even suggested you would be welcome to join us on Henry’s trip…”

“I still can’t believe it! He knows you and I slept together, and still suggested we both go on a trip with them?”

“Yes. As I said, he and I aren’t together like that anymore. He said he wants me to be happy!”

“And do you still feel anything for him? What happens if you decide you want more with him? What if he forgives you for Gideon’s kidnapping and wants you back? Where would that leave me?”

“Why don’t you talk to him? I’ll organise it and take Gideon out for a little while. Talk to him and make up your own mind. Personally, I would love it if you could join us. I’ve never really travelled before and I’ll admit to being a bit nervous about it. Ariel, I have to admit I have feelings for you! Please consider it?”

The redhead beamed back at her. “Belle, I definitely have feelings for you! Let’s talk to Rumple before we decide what to do.” The mermaid moved forward to capture the beauty’s full lips in another kiss. Slow, sensuous and definitely heated. As they separated, she breathed into her mouth. “How much time till they’re back?”
“At least two hours.” Belle replied, as the pair rose to their feet, still holding hands. They pulled into a tight embrace, both heads tilting right to capture lips again. ‘More than enough time…”

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Robin, Regina and Emma, gathered in a corner of the Sherwood pub, talked with Professor Sage about their contraception issue. “So I spoke to Victor about a vasectomy. He said it was straightforward.”

“It is, Robin, but in your case, I would strongly urge you NOT to have it done! A vasectomy is very hard to reverse, and your future will almost certainly require you to be able to sire more young!”

“But we’ve more than enough kids, Merlin!” said Emma. “Unlike you, we’re all getting older, too! I love Hope and Faith dearly, but the thought of having any more…”

“I understand, Emma. However, there is another way! I’ve several powerful spells I can teach the three of you that’ll work better than any other form of contraception. They can be cast to last up to ten years at a time, until well past your menopause. It is much better than anything invasive.”

The blonde’s superpower went into overdrive. “I believe you…but there’s something you’re not telling us!”

Merlin sighed. “Well, you’re right. It’s something you’ll find out in due course anyway. The fact is, Zeus gave Robin his powers for a reason! The higher the powers, the bigger the challenge to come. He’ll face challenges far greater than the Black Fairy, and he has been equipped accordingly. I cannot be sure, but I have reason to believe Robin may have become an immortal…”

The little group went silent as the implications seemed to hit each of them.

Robin was the first to speak, seeming sullen. “So if you’re right, that means I have to experience my loves here, dying before me? And eventually my children, and my children’s children, while I carry on living? That’s horrible.”

“Robin, I’ve lived for just over two thousand years. In that time I’ve married forty six women and sired one hundred and sixty four children, including the four you’ve met. If I had had a vasectomy, I would have been a very lonely man indeed and many of my loves would never have been born…”

“But I don’t want to live forever!” he yelled. “I want to grow old with Emma and Regina. I don’t want to outlive them all. That’s a curse, not a blessing! I want to end up in paradise with my family, not down here forever!”

The two women instantly placed hands on him in an attempt to comfort.

“I’m afraid, Robin, that is one of the great burdens placed upon you, as a result of returning you from death! There is always a price for powers such as ours. However, you should know that I regularly see ALL of my family, my wives, parents, children and loved ones that have passed! It is complex to explain, but I believe you will have it better explained to you by someone far more powerful than me…”

“More powerful than you!” gasped Regina. “Is there someone like that? Who on Earth?”

“Zeus!” said Merlin calmly. “I believe he will grace Robin with his presence in due course…”

“Merlin,” said Emma, “You said Robin could meet us all…once we’ve passed. So he could see me and Regina…and Marian too? How is that going to work? Sounds like a world of pain to me…”
Merlin merely grinned. “Emma, it isn’t quite like that. You remember at the convent, when we taught Robin how to split himself into multiple people? How Robin’s chauffeur spoke to you separately, and without assistance from the man who took you on that date months ago? Well imagine that skill being available to everyone who has passed? Imagine yourself able to meet with your parents, children and former loves all individually and at the same time. There is no jealousy, no envy, because everyone has as much time as they need with whomsoever they wish. So once you and Regina have passed over, she will be able to spend all her time with you, and her father, and Daniel, and Henry, and anyone else, all simultaneously. As will you!”

“But Robin doesn’t get that? That hardly sounds fair.”

“He will get that and a life down here, if Zeus allows. Part of me, for example, spent some time last week with my latest deceased wife, Anna and Rosie’s mother, while also being down here. It’s difficult to explain but it works. But for that reason, Robin should never get himself a vasectomy or sterilisation. There are better solutions, spells which I will teach you right now…”

“Great. Could you also teach the three of us to communicate with each other telepathically?” asked Robin.

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Rumple had become surprisingly adept at using the tablet for web calls. He loved the modern technology and embraced it, doing research on places to visit and stay during their month-long trip to Europe. His planning was meticulous. Now he needed to discuss his plans with his grandson.

“Hi grandpa!” Henry’s face came into view on the small screen. “What’s happening?”

“Hello, my boy! Well, I’ve been doing research on my forebears. Obviously, my immediate relations are long dead but I’ve been discovering where many of them came from and are buried. There is also a centre of magic in an area north of Aberdeen in Scotland. So I would like to visit the area early on. Perhaps after we leave Oxford. It’ll be good to start there first.”

“Sounds great. I’ll be coming up for the weekend break, so we can plan out and book the hotels…”

“I’ll organise and pay for that, dearie, once we’ve agreed where. You focus on your studies.”

“No, grandpa, I said I wanted to treat you! I want to pay for this! You’ve already given me plenty…”

“Coin is of no interest for me, Henry. I spin gold, remember? I may not get another chance of a long break with my grandson for quite some time, so indulge me a little…” he winked at the young man.

Henry grinned. “Well, ok, let’s argue the toss when I get back! Did you find out if Belle is going to come along? As you insisted we take Gideon with us, we’ll need help, otherwise we won’t get so much time for ourselves…”

“All in hand, my boy! In fact, Belle will possibly be accompanied by a friend, who I believe can also be trusted around my son.”

“Belle’s bringing someone?” Henry wasn’t sure how to feel about that, thinking the trip would have been a chance for the married couple to repair some of their trust in each other. “Who?”

“She’s staying at the library flat. You remember Ariel, the mermaid?”

“Ariel? I thought she was living in another realm with Prince Eric…”
“No longer, dearie. She arrived in Storybrooke earlier today. She and Belle are…close.”

“Well, the more the merrier, I guess. I’m really looking forward to it grandpa!”

“As am I, my boy. As am I…”

---

“Oh fuck! So…so good! Harder Belle…push harder!” the mermaid yelled.

*Only a quarter of an hour ago, the two women had raced up to Belle’s bedroom, hand-in-hand, a sense of urgency overwhelming them. They hadn’t wasted time removing clothes as they wrestled each other onto the bed amid a flurry of frenetic kisses. As they hugged tightly, lips joined, hands urgently found their way under skirts, sliding into panties as they masturbated each other side-by-side, bodies facing each other, fingers finding each other’s most sensitive spots as within a matter of minutes Ariel reached her peak, swiftly followed by Belle.*

As their breathing calmed, Belle gave her lover a sly grin as she withdrew her fingers from between Ariel’s legs, bringing them up to her mouth to slowly suck on them. Ariel giggled coquettishly and decided to emulate her, removing her own fingers to suck on them too as Belle continued to do so. “Hmm – taste of librarian! Rather delicious…”

“I agree,” whispered Belle, lustily. “Mermaid tastes pretty good too. Need more though…” The librarian sat up, still fully clothed, to turn, putting her hands under Ariel’s skirt to swiftly pull down and remove the former mermaid’s panties, moving closer to drop a kiss on her thigh. Ariel giggled at the touch, before twisting herself to pull down and remove Belle’s own underwear, before easing her thighs apart. They now lay on their sides, knowing exactly what the other was about to do. Each raising her left leg to interlock around the back of the other’s for more comfort and allow more access, the women simultaneously raised each other’s skirt, to attack the other’s core with lips, tongue and fingers, both equally desperate to bring a climax to their lover.

Like the first, it took a matter of minutes before, glistening with sweat, they came, almost together, with fingers inside and mouths clamped onto clits. Ariel couldn’t stop herself from squealing. The pair pulled away to lay on their backs, recovering their breath.

Ariel sat up this time, to drop and deliver a kiss to Belle’s lips. “Time for one more? There’s something I’d like to try…”

“Only if it means I don’t have to get up!”

“Fortunately for you – it doesn’t. Let me do the work…” The redhead moved back between her thighs, chuckling slightly as she lifted Belle’s right leg up and onto her shoulder, before sliding her left leg under it then lifting her own right over the other’s left. It took Belle but a moment to realise what she was about to do. So she pulled down a pillow from behind her, raising her hips to place it under her bottom. Hoisting both skirts up further, Ariel pulled herself in tight, stopping to use the fingers of one hand to gently part both hers and Belle’s labia, before firmly attaching her now soaking pussy on to Belle’s own and grinding herself in.

“Oooooh!” Belle groaned. “Oh fuck! So…so good! Harder…push harder!” It was tricky trying to get the connection, both now trying to work each other to get the two clits rubbing against each other. “No Belle, you stay still! We’re moving too much. Let me…”

When she did manage to get the buds to line up and graze against each other, it felt just wonderful, like an electric charge running through them. Belle, now fully engaged again, lifted her upper body
to grasp Ariel's arms, pulling each other ever tighter in as they sought another release. "Oh god, Belle...ooh that's good...don't stop...I...I love you!" She screamed.

They were so engrossed in each other, the pair hardly noticed the bedroom door swing open.

"Belle, I was calling you downstairs. I didn't know you were back! I - OH, SORRY! I DIDN'T REALISE YOU HAD COMPANY!"
Return of the Pirate

Chapter Summary

Rumple's reaction to finding Belle and Ariel together is surprising. Regina, Emma and Robin return from magic lessons and someone familiar returns to Storybrooke...

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the slower update but university coursework before year-end had to take priority!

This chapter is primarily focused on the Ariel/Belle/Rumple dilemma before moving forward to their trip. However, I also wanting to bring on some of the other characters' relationships in too, before getting back to the central trio.

Hope I haven't made it too confusing and again, I always welcome comments and constructive criticisms. I only filter the comments because you occasionally get the ship-obsessed nutters who leave bile and hate. To those who have gone on to ff.com to leave me personal messages about this story, I will continue to answer them, when appropriate and time allowing...

Chapter 46

Belle, relishing the sheer ecstasy of Ariel’s clit now massaging her own, knew her third orgasm in such a short time, was close. Very close. Just a bit more pressure! She raised her back from the bed, reaching out to grasp the other woman’s arms, locking on and pulling them even tighter together, feeling their most intimate feminine parts now mashing together in a wet, slippery kiss. As they ground together, she closed her eyes, in bliss to savour the moment.

"God, Belle! Oooh, that's good...don't stop...I...I love you!" the mermaid growled. They were so engrossed, the pair hardly heard the bedroom door swing open.

Rumple had decided to head back to the gothic mansion early. He’d seen the coffee cups lying, half full, on the table, a small case and bags lying around. Having just walked in from meeting with a newly returned Jeffersen, Gideon had started waking up, beginning to cry as hunger had kicked in. “Oh, my boy, could you hang on a wee second before I feed ye? Your fathers in need of a quick pee!”

Seeing Belle’s house keys on the side, he stepped to the staircase and called up. “Belle, you up there? The boy’s hungry and in need of his bottle but I need to pee first! Would you mind?” His call was met with silence.

“No answer. Dammit!” he muttered. Clearly she hadn’t heard him. So, cuddling the child into the crook of his left arm, he walked up the stairs toward the upstairs bathroom, where a small baby changing mat lay. “Sorry lad, but Dark One or not, nature calls. You’ll have to lay there for a
moment, till I’m finished…”

Gideon seems to settle for the moment, glad for the comfortable sling of his father’s arm. However, as he approached the bathroom, Rumple noticed the light on in Belle’s room. Perhaps she’s asleep. He gently opened the door to check she was ok. As he walked in, he spoke softly so not to alarm her.

"Belle? I was calling you from downstairs! I didn't know you were back! Gideon…I…”

It was then he noticed the sight before him. Belle was laying on her back, fully clothed, with another woman sitting close and facing her. It took a moment to interpret the scene. The two women appeared to almost be joined, seemingly by the crotch, with Belle’s legs wrapped around the other. He saw the closed eyelids and look of ecstasy from his former lover morph instantly into one of absolute horror as her eyes opened to his voice.

“Belle? OH GOD, I’M SORRY! I DIDN’T REALISE YOU HAD COMPANY!” he instantly turned to head out the room.

Belle was utterly mortified, rigid with shock at Rumple seeing her virtually mid-orgasm with Ariel. The other woman similarly froze in fear, looking over her shoulder at the voice, terrified and desperate to cover her dignity. Belle sat up immediately, lowering her skirt and pulling Ariel by the shoulders to wrap herself into her, to avoid either of them being seen in their current state. She had never been so embarrassed in her entire life! She was about to shout for him to leave when she saw he had already done so, clearly as embarrassed as her!

Rumple fled to the bathroom, lowering the baby to the changing mat on the floor whilst turning to stand and relieve himself in the toilet. Once finished, he washed his hands, collected his son and stepped out, walking down to the kitchen for a bottle.

“Oh hell! That was soooo embarrassing!” groaned Belle as she separated from her lover.

“I think I heard them go to the bathroom and downstairs. What are we going to do, Belle? What’s he going to do to me? To you?”

The librarian couldn’t formulate a response. “I’m not sure! He said I could be with whoever I wanted from now on. But I never imagined him actually seeing me having sex with someone! That’s got to hurt!”

“Well at least we both had almost all our clothes on! You did say he knew about us, right?”

Belle nodded. “He did, but this is awkward. I still don’t think I can face him right now!”

---

The trio trooped back up to the Royal Suite of the Earl of Locksley, following their impromptu lessons with the Sorcerer. Merlin had taken time to teach them a particular aspect of fairy magic.

“I see what you mean about Merlin,” said Regina to her fiancé, “His teaching methods are rather unique! He just held my hands and the spells seemed to just flood into me - I’ve never experienced anything like it.”

“Yeah,” agreed Emma, “That ‘telepathic conversation’ thing’s so clever! He said we need to practice. Still, isn’t it fantastic! We can all talk to each other, wherever we are…”

“It’s ok for you two! Hardest bit for me, is avoiding intruding into your minds; just focusing on to the
conversations between us instead!” said Robin, taking his jacket off.

There was a soft knock on the door. Emma answered it, to be greeted by Robin’s sister, who stepped in, winking at the Saviour. “Hi, you three!” said Maria. “Your girls are both asleep next door, and the babes went down just over half an hour ago on your other side. Roland’s still downstairs playing poker with the guys but I’ve told him he need to up to bed no later than nine. Even if it is a Friday!”

“He’s playing poker?” said his father. “Damn, that’s bloody Gilbert’s doing! I’ll have a word…”

“Don’t be daft, Rob! There’s no money, only matchsticks involved, and besides, Livvy is with them.”

Robin harrumphed. “That doesn’t fill me with confidence. Gil and Livvy are the biggest card sharps around! Never bet money against them! They’ll do that trick where they make it look like they’re useless right up until you increase the stake, then boom! They’ve got you!”

“I’ll second that!” said Emma, “The man damn cleared me out of a week’s wages last year, when I was convinced my hand was unbeatable! I remember it well. I had a Full House, and he had an Ace Flush! I would have pulled out earlier, but he was panicking, so I thought I was a cert!”

“And was Lavinia, by any chance, standing there panicking, and yelling at him? Having seen his hand and telling him to stop being an idiot?” asked the archer, more than familiar with his friends’ techniques.

“Yeah, she was! Hold on a minute - was I set up? By both of them?”

“Sort of. You were lulled into over confidence in your hand and to keep going! Simple fact, Gilbert Whitehand never panics, is no idiot, and one of the sharpest knife throwers in the team. Livvy’s pretty much the same! I’ve seen them fleece dukes and princes before…”

“Well, sod it! I want a rematch!” said the slightly irritated blonde. Robin wrapped an arm around her.

“Well how about you and I use our new skills we acquired earlier today, to teach them both a lesson? If they can pass messages to each other, so can we!”

Emma grinned, knowing what he was planning. “You, Mr. Locksley, are a very bad man!”

He pulled her softly into him, folding his arms around her shoulders before delivering a full kiss to her lips. “Yep. And that’s just another reason why you love me, Saviour!” Emma exchanged a lusty look with him, which was, unfortunately, instantly picked up by Maria, who felt a little embarrassed at the show before her.

“Okaaaay! Horny couple alert!” she joked. “So this is where I go! I’m signing off now and Chloë is on call next door, if they wake up, till three tomorrow morning. Tuck said he’ll cover from then, so that should give you guys a decent night’s sleep! We don’t expect to see any of you till at least eight tomorrow morning. Got it?”

“Thanks, Sis!” said Robin, moving in to hug his sister. “I owe you…”

As he stepped back, Emma immediately took his place, grasping her future sister-in-law in an even tighter hug. “And I appreciate it even more than he does! Maria, thanks. You’ve no idea what a decent night’s sleep means to me and Regina! You’re my very own Saviour…” Much as Regina and Caroline had become close friends, Emma and Maria had also bonded since her arrival nearly a year ago.
“It’s only a bit of baby-minding, sis-to be!” The younger Locksley giggled, but enjoyed the hug regardless, before whispering into Emma’s ear. “Mind you, I saw the look on his face - I don’t think you’re going to be getting much ‘sleep’ tonight!”

Emma blushed, though pressed a kiss on the other woman’s forehead. “Good night, Maria!”

As Maria turned to head to the door, Regina stepped out of the adjoining bathroom, now in a sheer purple silk nightdress that did little to hide her curves. “Hey, young Locksley? Are you leaving without saying good bye?”

Seeing her, Maria leaned close to Emma’s ear, whispering again. “You definitely aren’t getting much sleep tonight!” she chuckled, stepped back from Emma, before walking up to Regina to deliver a quick peck to the brunette’s cheek and an accompanying hug. “G’night, lovebirds!” Before walking swiftly out of the room.

“What was that all about?” asked a confused Regina.

A few minutes later, after checking in to see the girls asleep in their beds in the adjoining room, he stepped back into their own room and bathroom to prepare for bed. Seeing Emma and Regina, both now in nightdresses, standing side by side, facing their mirrors and finishing their night time cleansing routines, always seemed to do wonders for his soul. Even though he’d been jealous of Emma on his return, he’d come to accept that the two women really were a natural fit for each other. The simple domesticity of their home lives, so different to their extraordinary public personas, confirmed everything he already knew about these two magnificent women. His future wives.

Emma caught him staring. “Something wrong?”

“Nothing whatsoever!” he replied. “I was just enjoying the view…”

The blonde smirked back, seeing the lustful look. “Hmm, well perhaps I’ll be lovelier in a few months when I lose this weight!” She moved away from her basin, towards the corner bidet.

‘Don’t be silly! You’re perfect, which is why Gina and I love you. Now, one of you finished at the sink?’

A few minutes later, Emma appeared back in the bedroom, to find Robin and Regina lying at either side of the huge bed. “Your turn in the middle,” said Regina. She and Robin exchanged a look.

Emma clambered over her to get under the sheets in the middle. As she settled between them, she looked up at Robin. “You’ve been staring at lot at me this evening, Locksley! Something wrong?”

“Nothing’s wrong, milady, I’m just concerned that you seriously thought earlier today, that Gina and I didn’t regard you as still sexy or beautiful? These last months I’ve been nervous about making a move on you, thinking you weren’t ready until you told us. But I clearly misinterpreted.” He pulled her onto his front, Emma instantly feeling his bone-hard, sizeable erection against her stomach. He positively growled his next words. “So I’m going to fix that. I’m about to prove to you that you’re so, so, wrong! We are not only very much in love with you but still find you the hottest blonde on the planet. So I’m about to ravish you, Emma Swan-Mills. Your wife is probably also going to ravish you. Then I'm going to ravish her. I’m going to have you screaming our names and forgetting your own! I’m going to fuck…” he never managed to finish the sentence when Emma rammed her lips against his in a heated kiss. Regina, already turned on by the pair of them, pressed herself into Emma’s back, sandwiching her between them. “And when he’s finished with you, you’ve got me to face!” she whispered.
It was well over an hour before Belle stepped silently down the stairs into the living room, dreading what was to come. Not sure what she was about to face, she asked Ariel to stay in her room for the moment. *Was he going to be angry? Will he throw me out? Will he stop me seeing Gideon?* The last thought worried her most.

“Come in Belle! There’s coffee in the pot and a cake on the table…” he sounded oddly calm, which just made her even more anxious. She crept gingerly into the large dining room, to find Rumple sitting in the nursing chair, a sleeping six-month-old in his arms, with a small used baby dish and spoon next to him. He looked up to her, his face betraying no emotion. Yet.

“Our boy has just started weaning. It appears he now has a taste for mashed up shepherd’s pie! According to Miss Locksley, it should help him sleep through the night.”

*That wasn’t the first reaction she was expecting!* “Oh! Well…that’s good news. I thought he might be ready in a couple more months, but that’s good, right?” she said, nervously.

“Yes. Indeed. His brother left the breast around the same time. He went back to sleep much more contented…”

She stepped closer to the pair, her heart drawn instantly to the sight of her son’s face resting into Rumple’s chest. “He seems happy. Would you like me to change him?”

“No need. He was dry half an hour ago. Perhaps once he wakes.”

“Oh, ok,” she hovered anxiously over them. “Then may I hold him?”

“Of course. Here…” He stood up slowly, careful not to wake the tot, before passing him across for her to gather in her arms. “Sit yourself down with him, and I’ll cut you a slice of cake. It’s coffee and walnut, apparently.”

“You said Miss Locksley. Was that Robin’s sister Maria or his cousin, Caroline?” She was pleased to move the conversation on from the obvious issue to come.

“Maria. The young lady is a veterinary surgeon, but seems to have a lot of experience with children too. Apparently, she did lots of child-minding to help pay her way through university. Rather delightful company, I thought, and surprisingly intelligent. Pretty too!”

*Belle felt decidedly uncomfortable hearing her husband sing the other woman’s praises.* “Well yes, I had heard she was very good company. Like her brother, I guess.”

“Yes. I thought as Gideon’s godfather is due over tomorrow, I might ask her to join us for lunch.”

“Robin’s over here tomorrow? Why? I mean…not like it’s any of my business…”

“I’m updating my will to take account of Gideon. And Henry. Robin’s agreed to be a guardian, alongside Jeffersen, in the event of my, or our, deaths.”

“And you didn’t think to ask my opinion? Rumple, he’s my son too!” *Ooh, the arrogance of the man!*

“He is. And in the event of my death, for whatever reason, you would automatically be his guardian. However, I believe, *given recent events*, he needs additional guardians with equal rights, to ensure his welfare…”
“What recent events? Rumple, what the hell could possess you not to consult me first? I’m his mother!”

“Your recent romantic escapades and choices, for one. Your willingness to sleep with a wide variety of men and woman, of many hues. Belle, I do not want my son growing up in that sort of environment! Yes, I want you to be happy, but with the notable exception of the lady upstairs, your choices have been poor! In the event of my death, I cannot have the risk of my son coming under the influence of the witch or whoever you next choose to shack up with, to alleviate your itch!”

“How dare you? I’m not even with Zelena! How dare you dictate how I live my life after you’re gone!” Belle was trying desperately hard not to yell and wake her son.

“I can when it comes to him! I’ve already told you. You can go live your life. You can fuck all the nuns at the convent for all I care! But you will not do it in the proximity of Gideon! Personally I hope either you settle down with someone sensible, or even leave and get this out of your system. Belle, in the event of my death, Gideon will be a target! He has magic inside him and someone, some day, will take advantage, possibly even kill him. I can’t take that risk. I chose Locksley and Jeffer sen because they are the only balanced practitioners of magic that could protect him! And before you mention Regina Mills or the Saviour, might I remind you how well they looked after young Roland immediately after his father’s death? Or the fact the psychotic queen’s vile sister was allowed to live with them? Or the fact her naïve wife allowed her son, my grandson, to go to the Underworld with them, at great peril, to retrieve that diseased pirate? The woman who blackmailed me into joining them! No Belle, those women are not fit to protect Gideon! The Hatter has the ability to realm-jump out of danger and the outlaw is proven to put the needs of others ahead of himself!”

Belle seethed, trying to control her fury. She could understand his logic but his dismissal of her judgment rankled her enormously. “I’m not stupid Rumple! I can protect my son!” she said it, but she knew that in truth, defending him against the powers they’d previously faced would be nigh on impossible. Except if she got Gideon far away.

“And look how that worked out last time! You handed him to the blue moth once and he was kidnapped within hours! No Belle, there are still possibly former agents of the Black Fairy out there that would seek revenge! If I am no longer alive, I cannot risk that…”

Belle tried to collate her thoughts. However as she coddled her son, Rumple moved to the table to cut a piece of cake for each of them, as though their conversation had never happened. A moment’s magic, and a fresh coffee pot appeared. However she wasn’t expecting what happened next!

“Come in, dearie? I know you’ve been hiding around the corner listening! You might as well join us!”

The door creaked open as Ariel slowly crept nervously into the room, looking awkward at being caught eavesdropping.

“Ashell, hello again, Ariel, do please come in and sit yourself down. Would you like a piece of coffee and walnut cake? Some coffee perhaps?”

Ariel was astonished. She’d hear their raised voices just now, and went down to listen, worried that Belle might be in danger. She’d stood outside the door listening these last few minutes, her mind ablaze with what she’d just learned. And now, here was the unduly-calm husband, of the woman she had been caught having sex with, only an hour ago, offering her coffee and cake!

“Erm…yes, thank you!” she mumbled.
“Good. I’ll cut you a slice. You must be rather famished after your...exertions. I’m sorry to have walked in on the two of you, dearie. I assumed Belle was alone, and i needed her to mind Gideon! Still...never mind!”

Ariel looked across at Belle, who was obviously equally nervous, and could see the same hint of fear in the brunette’s eyes. She was clearly as astonished as her. Belle had to say something to ease the tension, if at all possible! “Rumple. Aren’t you going to react to what you saw? Get angry? Smash things? Threaten me?”

“For what, dearie?” he looked at her too calmly. She waited for him to explode in some way.

“For seeing Ariel and I...together!” she almost whispered the words. Ariel waited for the reaction.

“Oh, you mean the two of you having sex? Why would I? I already knew you and miss Tritonsdottir had had a physical relationship recently, when she stayed with you at the library. I admit I was somewhat shocked to walk in on you both in flagrante, as it were. Somewhat embarrassed, and again I apologise for disturbing you...”

“But you’re not angry?” said Ariel. “I’d imagined you would want to kill me or something?”

“And why would you think that, dearie? My wife and I are currently estranged, or separated, as I’m sure she’s already told you. She lives here to be close to our son. Belle is free to make her own decisions now on how, and who she spends her time with. And so am I. You’re the best of the bunch, so far, my dear. Especially compared to some of the waifs and strays she’s brought home. Especially the Witch!” his voice went notably lower, almost in disgust, at the last two words.

“Rumple!” Belle growled, annoyed her personal life was being commented on in front of her!

“The Wicked Witch? You slept with Zelena?” Even the mermaid knew of the witch. Her face looked more disgusted than Rumple’s!

“I was in a bad space - very bad! Ariel, it was nothing...” Belle defended herself, but she could see the look of horror on the redhead’s face. ‘You’re the first person since...Rumple...I’ve had any real feelings for!”

“How could you, Belle? I understand you wanting to explore your sexuality. Fine. I did too, after all! But her? She’s vile, Belle! And stupidly dangerous! She’s killed so many people I knew...”

Including Baelfire, thought Rumple, who said nothing, just fascinated by their conversation as he now seemed to be oblivious to them.

“Ariel, she meant nothing! I was lonely. She was lonely. We just...used each other. Please!”

“Actually, I believe that is true!” added the Dark One, who couldn’t resist a poke. “After you left, she was somewhat depressed. I believe you were the first woman Belle had ever been with...intimately. So it seemed to have fired up her curiosity, to see whether see was a full-blown lesbian, or not!”

“Rumple! I am not a ‘full-blown lesbian’ as you indelicately put it! And I don’t happen to think Ariel is either! It’s just...I have feelings for her! Yes, I was curious after she left to try again with Prince Eric. But...I also had some relationships with men too, ok! I was very, very lonely! I’m not proud of what I did, but with Ariel it felt...real!” she looked up at the mermaid, whose eyes looked slightly tearful. Rumple saw the exchange.

“Well, let just me say that if you wish for Miss Tritonsdottir to stay here with you, in whatever
capacity, I have no issue with that. It’s your life, Belle. Ariel, I have already said my piece and I believe you are a more trustworthy person to be around my son. If you two decide to put your relationship on a more…formal basis, you have my blessing to live here with her.”

The two women looked at him, both open-mouthed in astonishment and not believing what he'd just said.

“Now, on to another subject. If Belle hasn’t made you aware already, my grandson and I will be taking a vacation, some four to five weeks, away in Europe. I intend to take Gideon with us and, for that reason, I believe Belle would like to come. Ariel, I had intended to take a child minder with us to allow me some free time with Henry. However, if you are willing, you are more than welcome to join us on the trip. I will be funding it, although Henry wished to contribute. Your accommodation, food and travel will be provided for. Perhaps it could be a chance for you and Belle to get to know each other properly, away from prying eyes…”

“Rumple, you seem to be actually wanting Ariel and I to be together! I don't get it. Why are you even doing this?” his wife asked, although her unspoken words were more like Have you already given up on you and me ever being together again?

“You know the answer already. I am, and likely to be for a very long time to come, The Dark One. I am cursed, Belle, and your attempts to change me have come to nothing, and they can only ever come to nothing! The force that controls me, through the dagger, is more powerful than you could ever imagine and compels me to live long after you’ve both died and will, on occasion, take control, despite my resistance. I am still very much in love with you, my darling girl, but I want to see you happy! Even if it cannot be with me. So, if you can find that happiness in the arms of Triton’s daughter here, then I welcome it.”

Ariel listened to him, tears in her eyes. He was giving his wife to her to gain her happy ending. It was beautiful but so, so sad. The poor man! - cursed and controlled with no hope of an end!

“Mr. Gold, I don’t know what to say. Is there really no way you can break free of the darkness? Will it be easier for you in a land with no magic? Does it follow you?

“It’s in my bones, dearie! It can never leave me until someone kills me with the dagger. Then they will consume the darkness instead and I will go on to the perpetual punishment that no doubt awaits me…”

“That’s horrible! Is there something I can do? Could ask my father or mother for help? They are demi-gods after all…”

He was touched by the concerned look in her eyes. “To remove my darkness? Nothing. Your mother, Athena, actually owes me from a deal, so it is best if I do not see them as my darkness may enforce repayment. But you can help me with a small part of the guilt I feel. Do you actually love Belle?”

She wasn’t expecting that! “Well, we haven’t actually started dating yet but yes, I have very strong feelings for her.” She can’t believe she was telling her own husband this! Belle looked up in surprise at the frank admission.

“And you, Belle? Do you love Ariel?”

Ignoring the overwhelming guilt she felt at making this - was it a confession? - in front of her husband. “It’s all so new for both of us but…I think I do too…” Both women started teary-eyed at each other, nervous for their future.
Same Evening – Storybrooke Harbour

The Jolly Roger slipped smoothly and silently into the largest berth of the harbour on the evening tide. It was a warm July evening and there was still plenty of light to see. Killian and Rosalind had been away from the town for only fifteen months and it seemed nothing had changed, although for the two of them, much had.

As the ropes were cast, he was pleased to see his old former boatswain, Mr. Smee, grab them, tying them to the dockside. Waiting for him on the quayside, were also Rosalind’s father and sister Annabelle, standing close to another dark blonde woman he didn’t recognise. The gangplank was lowered, and they stepped off the ship.

“Daddy!” yelled Rosie as she stepped down to hug him. “I’ve missed you so much!”

Merlin wrapped her into his arms, kissing her forehead. “And I you, my darling.”

Killian stepped more cautiously from the ship, cradling his most precious cargo in his arms. “Merlin, may I introduce you to your grandson, Liam Merlin Jones?” He proudly displayed his pink-cheeked, three-month-old son to the Sorcerer.

Merlin gazed down in wonder at Rosie’s child. “Hello, my beautiful one! Killian, I’ve experienced this moment so many times, but each is always unique! My, he really is a handsome devil, isn't he? He looks like you, Rosie!”

“But he’s got his father’s eyes, dad. Look!” said Rosie as the tiny tot slowly opened his eyes to them. Piercing, pale blue stared straight at him. “Good evening, young man! I’m delighted to meet you!” breathed the wizard. “I’m your grandfather. You have some aunts and an uncle more than keen to meet you!”

“Well you won’t do it from over there. Here…” said Killian, placing the tiny bundle into his arms. As Merlin slowly scooped him in, Annabelle came alongside. “Ooh daddy, isn’t he just gorgeous?” said the baby’s aunt. ‘Hello there Liam! I’m your Aunty Annabelle. I’m your mummy’s much, much, much younger, prettier sister!”

“Ok, here she goes again…” said Rosie, smiling and silently pulling her sister into a hug. “At least I’ve got an excuse for putting a bit of weight on the hips now. What’s yours?” she chuckled, before seeing someone standing close by. “Oh, hello! I’m sorry, have we met? You seem somewhat familiar…”

The dark blonde smiled back. “No we haven’t. You must be Rosalind, right? I’m a friend of Anna’s...”

“My best friend actually!” said the blonde doctor. “Rosie, this is Maria Locksley. She’s Robin’s sister!”

“Oh - that explains it!” said the young mother, relaxing and smiling back at her. “You have a look of your brother!”

“I’m not sure whether I should be taking that as a compliment or be offended?” she chuckled.

“A compliment, I assure you!” said Rosie, shaking her hand. “Your brother’s a very handsome man!”
“As is your baby’s father. Your partner? Killian, isn’t it? He’s hot!” she winked back.

“Hey, hands off, lassie!” she joked. My husband, actually – we married just before the birth. And don’t go telling him he’s hot! It may be true, but he’s already far too smug, as it is!” she giggled, looking lovingly back at Killian as he hugged his own friends.

“Rosie, you don’t have to worry about Maria going after him.” Said Anna, taking her sister’s arm again. “She’s dating our little brother!”


“Don’t exaggerate, Anna!” her friend rebuked. “We’ve only been on three dates. But – it’s nice!”

“Ignore her! I know as a fact, that our Baby Bro is completely smitten with this one!”

“Well about damn time!” said Rosie. “He needs to settle down! You may be just the thing…”

“Well, Jones family!” announced Merlin, corraling them. “I told Reul you were both arriving. There are rooms made up for you when you’re ready. We can go there and settle the baby now, if you wish…”

"Er…dad. I know he hasn’t asked yet, but I think Killian would like to go to Ruby’s Diner first, if that’s ok?”

“Hmm? Oh, yes, of course, I almost forgot. You’ll be wanting to meet young Nathaniel, no doubt?” ---
Chapter Summary

Killian finally meets his older son, and Emma has a falling out with her parents.

Chapter Notes

Still there? If you are, thank you for reading. The pace is changing a little now but we'll pick up with our glorious trio(s) again very soon... And there's a big wedding to come!

Chapter 47

It had been a very long day at the diner. Takings were up, but the recent departure of Lizzy, one of their best waitresses, and Emily, had just added to the heavy workload of the two proprietors. Mike, their wizard of a chef, stepped out from the kitchen after a twelve-hour shift and looked fit for bed.

“Ok girls, you sure you’ve got everything covered?” said the exhausted man, breathing in the cooler air. He was a marvel in the kitchen and, following recent staff changes, had thought nothing of extending his hours to cover the shortfall, even though he had a wife and two kids back home.

“Yeah, Mike. We’ve only got half an hour before closing. You get yourself off now. Steffi’s going to be mad at you being late home yet again. Go give her a kiss from me and apologise for us, would you?” Dorothy felt truly dreadful for once again wrecking her chef’s home life due to their staffing problems.

“Don’t be silly, she’s fine Dot. You’ll get sorted out with some more people soon. Anyway, she and I were thinking. You two haven’t had a decent day off in a while. Why don’t you let Steff and I take care of Nathaniel for a day or two next week and you clear off for a break? You need it, and the girls love him. You know he’ll be in safe hands!”

“You serious? You’d do that?” said Ruby, overhearing the conversation and joining the pair as he pulled a coffee from the percolator. “He’s teething, you know? That’s why we’re so wrecked. He’s messing up our sleep something rotten!”

“Yeah. Been there, done that! You try it with twins! Go on, it’ll be fine. Next Thursday morning would be good. Come pick him up Friday afternoon. You’ve got cover so we can manage here…”

Dorothy beamed at the thought of a first decent night’s sleep since his birth, seven months ago. “You, Michael Fowler, are a godsend!” she wrapped her arms around him and delivered a loud kiss to his cheek. He returned it by tilting her head to give her a brotherly peck on the forehead. The moment she stepped back, Ruby did exactly the same to him. “Thanks Mike! I think we’d have been sunk without you…”

As the man said his goodbyes, He opened the door to be met by a small group coming in. Oh shit, customers!
“Sorry, we’re getting ready to close!” Ruby yelled across. “If you want food, we…” she stopped the moment until she recognised the new arrivals. “Killian? Rosie?”

Dorothy beamed with delight at the new arrivals. Especially the man who gave them their son. “What on earth are you two doing back?” She stepped forward, instantly taking the former pirate into her arms in a warm hug.

“Hi Dorothy!” said Killian, drawing his arms around her and placing a kiss on her cheek. “It’s nice to be back.”

It was only then Ruby saw Rosalind coming up behind him with a baby in her arms. “Rosie! How wonderful to see you! Anna said you two had got married, but I haven’t seen her for a while. I had no idea you were pregnant!” The two Lucas women instantly crowded around the younger mother to look at her baby.

“Oh my goodness – he’s a stunner! How old?” asked Dorothy. “And can I hold him?”

“Three months! Please do! He weighs a ton, mind…” She passed the baby across. As Dorothy cradled him in, Ruby drew close to see the tiny bundle. As they did, he finally opened his eyes at their voices.

“Oh my! He’s beautiful! He’s got your eyes, Kil!” said Ruby. “He looks like Nat!”

“Really?” said Rosie. “We’d love to meet his big brother - when he wakes up, of course!”

“Stay the night?” said the wolf. “You can see him first thing! I’d love to see what they make of each other.”

“We’d love to, but dad’s got a little gathering for us with Reul and the fairies tonight. So there’ll be no shortage of babysitters there! Let’s come over in the morning…”

---

When Merlin had taught the Swan-Mills and Locksley trio the new contraceptive and reversal spells, he had deliberately added something extra. The spell, easily reversible, would last for twenty years, more than enough time for both women to reach their menopause. After which, they would have no need for contraception. However, what he didn’t tell them was that he had also given them a little ‘boost’. A small but highly effective spell that would significantly improve and increase their libidos, coupled with a feel-good shot of magic.

So now, after a solid three-hour lovemaking session, Emma, Regina and Robin lay side-by-side-by-side, completely exhausted, yet satisfied. A thin layer of sweat across all three of them. “That was utterly, utterly…” groaned Emma, hardly able to finish a sentence, let alone stand.

“I know, right?” agreed Regina. “If Merlin’s spell doesn’t work, we’re definitely both pregnant again!”

“I ruddy hope not!” said Robin, still panting. “That’d be eight kids between us! In that case, I would definitely cut my own balls off before you got your hands on them!”

“Three hours without stopping! Three hours! Rob, what the hell did Merlin just do to us?”

“Whatever it was – I’m not complaining! That was without doubt, the best sex I have ever experienced! Emma, I hope that’s the last I hear about you thinking we don’t find you just perfect in bed! And Regina? I hope that’s the last I hear about you thinking you have a problem…below
“Not after you spending so much time with your head down there! It felt like you were having a banquet and I was the main course!” she giggled.

“Was that a complaint? A good thing, or a bad thing?” he asked, anxious they may have both felt uncomfortable.

“Good!” said Emma and Regina simultaneously, before giggling again at their joint reply.

“That said, I could really do with a shower right now, but I don’t think I have the strength to drag myself in there. Anyone mind if I forego, for once, till the morning?” asked Emma.

“Well, if you mean do I mind sleeping in a bed with the loving aromas of my two fiancées on me, having just spent half the night making love? Then not at all. Gina?”

“No argument here! We shower tomorrow. Let’s get some shut eye and tomorrow, we need to plan the wedding. Your mother, Bridezilla, keeps reminding me we’ve done nothing about it so far…”

“Well, I’m in your hands, ladies. What say you get Snow over in the morning and get started? I’m sure she would be thrilled to help.”

“Hmm. Better if she minded some of the kids. I don’t really want her faffing about. But, I still want a proper wedding dress!” added Emma. “Gina, how about we go to New York together to get sorted out? Robin could take care of the girls…”

“Good idea,” agreed Robin. “Why don’t you have a long weekend. Go Friday morning, get back Monday night. You haven’t had a break together, just the two of you, since I moved in here! Go on, it’ll do you good…”

“That…is one of the many reasons I fell in love with you, thief!” said Regina, leaning up to place an open-mouthed kiss on his lips, before pulling back and licking her own lips. “Hmm. You still taste of Emma!”

Hearing that, Emma herself leaned up to also deliver him a kiss. “No…he definitely tastes of you, babe!”

Robin just grinned. “I taste of you both. I don’t care – I’m just happy!” before wrapping his arms around his naked loves, drawing them to him. They were all soundly asleep within minutes.

Neither Belle, Ariel or even Rumple, slept well that night. As Rumple lay wide awake, his ever-present Dark One spirit, in the form of the imp, was, as usual, tormenting him.

“What the hell were you thinking, spinner? Ye all but gave her away to the mermaid! Ye could have had her back, man! Where’s the sense, eh? All ye needed to do was take her heart! You know how this works. Take it, squeeze it, order it and they will follow! Belle, the mermaid, anyone! Ye could have it all!”

Normally, Rumple was used to ignoring the endless taunts, jibes and threats of his inner darkness, which always appeared in the form of his own ghost, invisible to everyone else. This time, he couldn’t resist reacting:

“I’m not doing that to Belle! I’m not going to control her!”
“You’re ridiculous, man! Ye could have the lot! Even those two frigid dykes at the town hall ye defrosted! You are the Dark One! You have my powers! You’ve done it before - use them!”

“Not on them! She deserves better…”

“Then you’re a fool! A waste of space. You’re in here blubbing while she’s in there with her new ‘lady love’, makin’ the beast with two backs! Doesn’t that bother you, you spineless wimp? The mermaid’s in there with her right now, probably a fingerin’ and a fiddlin’…”

“Shut up! leave me, you foul demon!” he curled into himself on the bed. But the malevolent force that had remained glued to him for centuries, just carried on:

“That was a shock earlier, wasn’t it?” he cackled. “Seeing your girl with her on that bed! Slamming into each other like a pair of rabbits! Well it seems when the Buck’s away, the Doe’s do play! Still, this town is full of man-hating dykes anyway, so she’ll move on and open her legs to some other fair maiden, no doubt…”

“BE GONE!” he screamed back, even though he knew the voice and image was coming from inside him. It had been a very long time since the darkness had got under his skin so much, and he knew he was losing it!

“Shame. Belle was such an improvement over that first icy sow ye married! Perhaps she’ll go back and fuck the witch again, after all? She…”

But Rumple reacted without further warning, spinning on his bed to launch a large fireball straight at the voice. Obviously, it passed straight through the demon, exploding against the wall to char the paintwork. He instantly cursed the pointless stupidity of his reaction.

“Temper, temper now Dark One! Ye know, killing the Witch would be quite straightforward really! Just borrow Belle’s heart, send her over there with a decent knife, get her to seduce her, then tell her to slit the bitch’s throat in her sleep! Easy! You’ve gone soft, man…”

Rumple hadn’t looked at the tormenting imp directly for many years. However, as he looked at the damaged wall, he saw his demon looked somehow …different? Like a slightly lighter grey in pallor. His serpent eyes looked much more tired. Like he was…suffering? Tired? Knowing how easily he invaded his thoughts he decided to roll to his other side, curling into himself into a foetal position in an impossible attempt to sleep.

---

Belle had been sobbing quietly in the next room. For the last half hour, Ariel had been lying on top of the bed quietly, beside her, holding her gently while she wept. They’d heard the raised voices along the corridor.

“Who is he yelling at?” asked Ariel, confused by the seeming anger from next door.

“The darkness. Emma told me it’s like the imp version of him, all grey scales and evil eyes. It never leaves him, and it constantly torments him. Has done for centuries. It’s like a living, breathing entity. Merlin said you can’t kill it. Just suppress it.”

“Oh god, that poor man! There must be something we can do?”

Belle shook her head. “No. Merlin said he’s had better control over it than anyone else ever has, but it will always exist…till he dies.”
“What happens when we get to a land with no magic? Does it just…disappear?”

“I don’t think so. It’s in his soul. I guess it just disappears inside him until he comes back…”

“If I was him. If I had his wealth. I think I would just stay away for good! He’d suffer less. Why did he even come back to this place?

_Belle knew the answer. Me_!

---

The following morning, Emma and Regina met for coffee at the Diner, inviting Snow and David to join them, primarily to let them know the news that the wedding date had been set and to discuss how they were going to arrange things.

“So you’re booking the rooftop at the Town Hall for October, and going to New York this weekend to choose wedding dresses? You taking some of the older ones with you? Or meeting Harry there?” asked David.

“Perhaps. If he can make it. Although he’s coming home in two weeks anyway. Robin’s and Maria are looking after the babies. I’m wondering if you could take care of Honour and Margot for us?”

“Well I’m free, so I can, though not sure about your mother. Snow?” David looked across to his True Love.

Snow White had hardly said a word since the couple had announced their plans for the weekend. Snow, normally enthusiastic, a picture and symbol of hope to all, now seemed…sullen.

“Mum? You in there? Dad asked if you’re OK to look after the kids this weekend?”

“Hmm? What? Oh sorry, I was just thinking. Something about child-minding?” she didn’t quite seem ‘with it’?

Regina and Emma looked at each other, confused by her seemingly disinterested reaction. “Snow? anyone at home?” snarked Regina. “You don’t seem particularly happy about it! Your daughter finally gets a white wedding?”

“Oh yeah, sure! White wedding…dresses…nice,” she said, with no enthusiasm in her voice whatsoever. “Yes, we’ll mind the children…as usual. Sorry, could you excuse me? David, could you mind picking up Neal from Kathryn’s later?” The former princess stood up, exchanged an odd resigned look with her husband, turned and walked out.

“Mum!” Emma yelled, but she didn’t answer. “What the hell was that about?” said Regina

David picked up his coffee and sipped it slowly, a little sigh heard after the first sip.

“Dad? What’s going on? I thought she’d be pleased! What’s wrong with _her_?”

“Isn’t it obvious?” he said, as though talking to a moron.

“Why don’t you enlighten us?” asked Regina, a little caustically.

“Regina. Would you mind giving me a moment alone with my daughter?”

That surprised her. She and Emma shared everything! Oh well, she’ll find out in due course. “Sure.
I’ll go and talk to Archie over there. Give you a ‘father-daughter’ moment!” she couldn’t help the tone, standing to leave the table.

Emma slid on the bench closer to him, her voice lower. “So, what’s wrong with mum? What is it?”

“Emma, can you imagine what it would be like, having given birth to Hope, to find when she’s all grown up, that she never visits you, unless she wants something. Doesn’t keep in touch, expects you to call her, never the other way around. Doesn’t spend any real time with her own mother and one day, she comes back to tell you she’s gotten married! Then, when she has a baby, she only invites you around when it suits her, or to ask you to do some child minding. Later, when she tells you she’s going to have another wedding here, in your town, she doesn’t ask for your help, advice or support. Just child-minding. How would you feel about that, Emma?”

His words were delivered so calmly, it took her breath away. Nonetheless, she was being criticised. So Emma did what she always did. She lashed out.

“Well, it’s not like I had a fine example of parenting, did I? You put me in that fucking wardrobe from day one and sent me away! I was twenty-eight before I even met her! And she always hated Regina! Do you even wonder why I’m so independent? I had no choice. I never had a mother to go to!” she yelled, mood having changed in an instant.

Her father looked straight back, no anger but onlu sadness in his eyes. “But you’ve had one for the past eleven years, Emma. And we’ve been through this so many times. You HAD to go in that wardrobe, otherwise you’d be dead!!”

“Bullshit! We could have been together but you just gave me up!” her reasoning was now gone.

“I see we’ll never convince you otherwise!” said David, witheringly. “I’d best be going…” he stood up to leave. She was astonished. He seemed too tired to fight back.

“Well forget about the babysitting! We’ll find someone else to look after them!” She instantly regretted the words the moment they left her mouth.

Charming looked at her sadly, before turning around and heading to the door. He stopped, turning and say something final, but thought better of it. He walked out instead.

“What the hell was that all about?” said Regina, now returning to their table having heard the shouting.

“Nothing!” said Emma, too irritated to speak. Unfortunately a voice from the counter did!

“You’re a fucking idiot, Emma!” said Ruby, clearly angry.

“Ruby?”

“I said you’re a idiot! Have you ever seen your father’s chest, Emma? I have! There’s still a fucking great scar close to his heart, from when he got speared through by one of her guards!” she said, pointing at Regina. “Snow and I battled to save his life! We thought we’d lost him. Your father took on THREE of the royal guards single-handed, with you in one arm, and a sword in the order. Just so he could get you away from there!” The wolf was fuming. “Their orders were to kill you - so don’t you dare say it was bullshit! If David hadn’t done that, you would DEFINITELY BE DEAD! NO EMMA SWAN! NO HENRY! NO FUCKING WEDDING TO PLAN!”

Emma was shocked at the sheer anger flowing from her friend. “Ruby – this has nothing to do with you!”
“It has - because I was there! You’ve just treated your father like shit, and I won’t hear you talk to him like that! Not after everything he’s done. Just…get out! I don’t want to see you in here right now. Just go!”

“Mrs. Lucas! You’re being hysterical!” said Regina, intervening.

“Really? Tell me, Regina, you may not be evil any more, but does Emma have any idea how many babies and children you and your guards murdered, as a result of you not getting what you wanted? No, probably not! Without David ‘s sacrifice, she wouldn’t even be alive! Just…just take her and get out!”

Regina hadn’t been spoken to like that in one hell of a long time! *In earlier days, she would have incinerated the bitch in an instant. But now?* She just stood, open mouthed in shock at the venom before her, before she felt a tug on her arm. ‘Gina…please, let’s just go!”

Silently nodding, she held the blonde’s hand, before disapparating them both to the first place she could think of. Moments later they appeared at the dockside, seeing as the breeze of the ocean always seemed to calm her. As Emma felt the cool fresh air on her face, she opened her eyes to see a *sight she definitely wasn’t expecting!*

“Gina -is that…?”

“The Jolly Roger? Yes, it would appear so…”

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A few minutes after Emma and Regina left, calm soon returned to the diner. Ruby had explained to Dorothy what had happened a little earlier, as her shouting had been heard throughout the building. Assuring their customers that all was well, Dorothy went about cleaning one of the tables. As he did, the small bell tinkled on the door as new customers arrived.

“Rosie, Killian! Hi! Get a decent sleep last night?”

“Rosalind Jones walked in, carrying a large baby bag and looking a little exhausted. As did Killian, coming up closely behind her with a baby in his arms. “As well as could be expected, I guess, when you’ve got this one attacking your boobs for a snack half the night!” the weary mother replied.

“I swear Dot, she’s talking about the baby – not me!” added Killian, making the women chuckle and earning a light slap from his love.

“Oh shut up, you!” snorted Rosie. “I wish you could grow a pair to ease the load…”

“I know that feeling too well!” Dorothy sympathised. “Our little mite used to bite me! Thank god he’s now on solid food! Don’t worry, it won’t be long…”

“Hey, why don’t you both come in the back and have breakfast there? You’ll get to rest up on a sofa and I’ll bring the drinks. Then I’ll go bring Nat down to meet his father…”

“Sounds wonderful! I may fall asleep again, mind.”

“That’ll be no bad thing. We’ve three mothers here, remember? Let us help…”

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The next hour was an emotional one for all four of them. Killian got to finally meet the son he’s
helped Dorothy and Ruby create, for the first time, and the Captain was overawed and smitten by the tiny bundle. “You know something? His eyes remind me of my older brother Liam!” he breathed, “You’re an incredibly lucky man, young Nathaniel! I lost my own too early, but you’ve got not one but two wonderful mothers here to love and cherish you all your days. Just always love them back. And always know, should you ever need it, that this worthless dog of a father will come running. Gladly, in fact.”

Ruby and Rosie sat side-by-side, listening and both misty-eyed. “There’s nothing worthless about you, Kill,” breathed Ruby. “You’ve given Dot and me the most precious gift ever! We’ll always be in your debt. And Rosie’s, for allowing this to happen!” Rosie smiled back, picking up her hand up to squeeze it. They took pictures of the two baby boys, side-by-side, in Killian’s arms, in his mothers’ arms, even in Rosie’s. And then everyone together as a group. The two couples had become an odd family, with an unspoken bond now made between the four adults now, linked by their sons’ father.

After a night of broken sleep, Rosie started to fade. Seeing her sinking comfortably into the sofa, Dorothy gathered a small throw, placing it around the woman as she finally succumbed to sleep. She whispered to the other two. “Listen, why not let her sleep here a while? I can take care of her if she wakes up. And Rubes, why don’t you and Killian both take Nat and Liam out for a walk in the park? They could both fit in the pram and could do with the fresh air. I’ll give you a call when Rosie wakes up. Besides Susie and Nick have the front of house covered anyway!” The pair agreed, gathering the two boys for their first outing together.

And that’s how Ruby and Killian found themselves happily pushing the pram around the edge of Storybrooke Park’s lake. Conversation never stopped and Ruby had spent the time filling him in all the details of their friends and associates over the last year. About Mulan’s baby, the changes her husband, Mayor Philip, had brought and the new people in town. They were interrupted when Leroy and his new wife, Nova, walked by, with two young boys, aged no younger than three of four, in tow. Killian shook hands with both.

Killian had never seen the usually miserable dwarf look so happy. “Congratulations, the pair of you!” said the former pirate. “Ruby tells me you recently wed! The children…?”

“We adopted them when Robin and Mr. Gold brought back from the Black Fairy’s Realm. She’d kidnapped these two years ago, but sadly their parents had long perished since. So Leroy and I decided to give them a home…”

“Well good for you! There’s been too many people around here that grew up without the love of good parents. I wish there were more as charitable as you two!” he meant it and was genuinely impressed. As the couple viewed and talked about the tiny boys in the pram, Ruby spotted Snow sitting quietly, hunched and alone, at a nearby park bench. Bidding farewell to the little family, they walked closer to her.

“How? You ok?” As the princess looked up, her recent tears obvious. “Snow…what’s the matter?”

“Oh – Rubes! Sorry, you caught me by surprise. It’s…it’s nothing! I’m fine!”

“Snow, you’re my best friend and we’ve known each other for years. Clearly there’s something wrong! Look…Killian, could you take the babies off while we have a little chat?”

Before Killian could agree, Snow’s eyes lit up as she quickly brushed off another tear. “What… Killian? Boys?”

‘Um…yeah, we’re taking Natty and his bro…Killian’s baby, for some fresh air. Kill, would you mind…?’
“No, Killian, please! It’s lovely to see you again. You have a son too? May I see?” The crop haired woman jumped up to gaze inside the baby carriage. As she did so, both babies, happily snuggled together, open their eyes at her voice. The matching pale blue told her so much…about the donor! Killian watched her eyes intensely, knowing she was making the connection.

She couldn’t help herself “Oh Killian, he’s beautiful! So handsome. And his eyes! So much like Nathaniel’s!” Ruby knew her tone was asking her the obvious, unsaid question that would no doubt follow.

“Yes Snow, Nathaniel is Killian’s.” Best lance the boil now, I guess! thought the wolf.

“You’re…you’re their sperm donor?”

“Killian’s a lot more than a sperm donor, Snow! He’s Natty’s father. He helped us.”

“Well that’s lovely but…aren’t you married now? I did hear something about you and one of Merlin’s daughters. Does she know?”

Again, wanting to defend him and before he could even say a word, Ruby stepped in. “Rosie not only knew, but gave Dorothy and I her blessing! She’s a wonderful woman, Snow! Killian is his father, and we won’t keep either of them out of Nat’s life. Just the opposite, in fact!” she leaned over and gave Killian’s hand a squeeze in thanks.

“That’s wonderful. Killian, you’re a very special man to do that. Any mother would be proud to have you as their son-in-law.” Her mind clearly going back to his time as Emma’s love. A very different time.

“Thank you, Snow.” He said, feeling awkward. “However, I think you and Ruby needed a few minutes alone…”

As he left with the baby carriage, Ruby sat, pulling her best friend down next to her, and pulling an arm around her shoulder. “Now…no buts…talk!”

It took but a minute for the tears to finally flow as Snow confessed what she had been feeling. “It’s though she never wants me near, Ruby! Like I’m only good for babysitting and family gatherings! She never calls me unless I call her, and I feel like I’m invisible. Ever since she and Regina got together, I feel I’ve been shut out! Henry keeps in touch…but not his own mother//.”

“Oh Snow! I’m so sorry. I thought it might be something like that! I heard her talking to David earlier on. I listened in. Sorry, a bad habit of mine but wolf hearing, right? She asked what was wrong with you. Davis told her what he thought was the problem, but she just shouted back at him. She said something snide and insulted him, and I’m afraid I lost it! I just flipped and kind of kicked her out the diner. So I guess at some point I need to apologise to her…”

“She insulted David? But they’re so close! What did she say?”

“It was about when David had to put her in the wardrobe to save her! He said he had to but she called it bullshit. Sorry Snow, but you know I love David nearly as much as you do. I wasn’t going to allow her to dismiss what he did…”

Snow loved her children dearly, but she couldn’t bear anyone disrespecting her man. Not after everything he’d done for all of them. “She actually said that?”

Ruby nodded, pulling her in tighter. But a hint of the old steel entered the princess. “Rubes, it was me who insisted we put her in that cupboard? David didn’t want to. Odd, isn’t it, that she winds up
marring the very woman who spent most of my life trying to kill me, and who we both know would have killed her on sight! David tried to stop me removing Maleficent’s egg, but I coerced him. You know, Emma can curse, swear and shout at me all she wants! Heaven knows, Regina’s done it herself enough times! But I won’t have her doing that to David!”

She sat for a moment, considering her options. “Perhaps this time I won’t go crawling back asking her forgiveness - like I always do. Perhaps this time, I won’t put up with Regina’s endless stupid little tantrums and barbs! This time, I think I’ll just wait. Until Emma makes the first move…”

“You do whatever you think right, Snow! You’re my best mate and I’ve your back you on this. Personally, I don’t want to apologise, until I know she’s apologised to you…”

“You might have a long wait there, Ruby! But thanks. You’re my best friend too…” she kissed the wolf’s cheek.

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Earlier that morning, Belle had come downstairs, exhausted from a sleepless night, to find no sign of Rumple. Or Gideon. As she walked into the kitchen, everything appeared to be spotless. She looked for a note, something he would often leave in the past, when he often disappeared before she rose. But this time, nothing.

_Why would he even bother telling me? It's not like we're together, is it? He let me go…_ 

Ariel appeared a few minutes later, wrapped in one of Belle’s dressing gowns. She’d had a pretty bad night herself as Belle spent most of the night sobbing into her shoulder. “Something wrong?”

“I’m not sure…”

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After discovering the Jolly Roger moored in the harbour, with a small group working around it on the quayside, Emma and Regina had quickly established that neither Killian nor his crew were on board. Questioning some of the workers at the dockside, they discovered that the ship had arrived last night, bringing a large cargo of all manner of merchandise from Agrabah, and that their captain was not intending to reload and sail for at least a week. Emma wasn’t sure how she felt about facing him again, so she was slightly relieved he wasn’t there in person.

“So. Are you going to tell me what happened in the diner? Why were you shouting at David? He seemed fairly calm to me. And what was it you said about them looking after the children next weekend?”

“It’s not important, Gina. It’s just…dad said something about us not including mum in the wedding. That I only call her when I want something! I guess I got a bit angry…”

“Enough for the wolf to snap your head off? Seems a bit extreme…”

“It’s the way he said it! Like I was being selfish and not involving her. I guess I snapped, and called something he said ‘bullshit’. He didn’t answer, he just shrugged off…”

“Well, they’ll no doubt come running back with an olive branch when they’re read. I wouldn’t worry about it.”

It was an hour later when Emma received the text:
Mum: Your father's taking me away. We leave on Thursday for a couple of weeks.

That was unusually abrupt for her. Emma guessed her dad had already spoken to his wife. There were no emoticons, no kisses, no symbols, no loving words. So, she assumed her mother was just being petty, so she responded accordingly.

Emma: That's short notice! Where? What brought that on?

It took a few minutes for the reply to come, which really took her by surprise:

Mum: New York. He felt I needed it. Emma, I can put up with your shit most of the time. Regina’s spitefulness, too. You may cut me out of your life, but I won’t have your father’s sacrifice insulted! You WILL apologise to him!

It was so matter of fact, so unlike her mother, that it shook Emma more than she would admit. “Wow,” was all she could manage. Emma had fallen out with her parents several times over the last ten years, but usually she was the one getting angry. It had never come from her mother.

‘What the hell did you say to David that brought that on?’ said Regina, looking over her shoulder and reading the text.

“I said nothing! He just…said I was shutting mum out of the wedding and stuff like that.”

“Well, thank goodness you did! Your mother can be a pain in the neck. She’d have taken over the whole day if we let her! But that can’t be all of it. what was that about an insult? What did you actually say to him?”

Emma was now starting to feel uncomfortable. “I really don’t want to talk about it right now! Perhaps later…” as she brushed her off, she remembered Ruby’s words:

“Have you ever seen David’s chest, Emma? I have! There’s still a fucking great scar close to his heart, from when he got speared through by one of her guards!”

“We thought we’d lost him...”

If David hadn’t done that, you would definitely be dead...No Emma Swan...No Henry...!

Then she thought about Snow. Her father’s words about cutting her out. He’d never raised his voice once, which had made her even more uncomfortable. Was she being fair? Was she just using them when she needed them? Her mind ran through recent events. Her wedding to Regina almost two years ago. Remembering the look on her mother’s face when she told her they’d already married in New York, without warning. When a few months ago, she told her they were going to be marrying Robin. She’d never once asked her for help, for advice. Just…looking after their children. Now, she realised that her father may have had a point.

“Emma…just leave them be. Your father’s said something stupid and he’s probably overprotecting her, as usual. Let them stew for a week or so, and they’ll be back, apologising and desperate to have the children! So let’s just get on and plan the wedding!”

Emma nodded without saying a word. Sensing, uncomfortably, that something might have permanently shifted in her relationship with her parents.
A Change of clothes leads to romance...

Chapter Summary

Rumple takes Gideon for a short break without telling Belle. Henry introduces him to an interesting lady and Emma, with Robin's prompting, knows she needs to make things right with her parents...

Chapter 48

“Henry, my boy! Take your uncle off me, would you? I’ve got a case downstairs and a taxi driver waiting.”

“Sure, grandpa! Hand him over...” Henry took Gideon’s car seat from Rumple. “Blimey, he’s put the weight on, hasn’t he? It’s only six weeks since I last saw him! Has he got a brick in that diaper?”

“Aye, but not in the way you’re thinking! Perhaps his nephew could change him?” he grinned, before popping out the room and down the stairs to pay the driver. Rumple had left his car and own luggage at the Boston hotel he’d booked earlier that morning, before taking a taxi to his grandson’s residence.

“Hi, Gid! Remember me?” said the muscular twenty-one-year old, placing the portable car seat down on the table and lifting the ten-month-old from it. “I’m Henry! And you’re…phew, as smelly as hell! Oh well, I’ve had to do it for my sister so…here goes!” he rummaged in the side bag to collect the little changing map, diaper and wipes. As he was doing so, a voice came from the front door.

“Henry? What are you…ooh! Who’s this?” said the young brunette. “You been keeping secrets, Mr. Mills?”

‘Hi Sofia! Hardly. This is Gideon. He’s my uncle. His dad’s paying his taxi downstairs…”

“Uncle? That’s some age gap, Henry! Mind you…he is seriously cute!” she watched in admiration, as Henry expertly removed the wet diaper, cleaned and wiped him and replaced with a clean, dry one, all in the space of less than a minute. “I see you’ve done this before!”

“Yeah, my sister, Honour. And, as I told you the other day, my mums had two more babies only seven months ago! Practice, I guess…”

“I remember you saying. You do seem to have some odd things going on in your family, Henry!”

He chuckled. “Yeah, you could say that. Here, do you want to hold him? He’s getting seriously heavy!”

“Yeah. I love babies. Come here, Uncle Neal!” Sofia collected the smiling baby into her arms. It was only a minute later that Rumple walked back into the room, surprised to see his son now being carried by a stranger. “Er…who are you?”

“Grandpa, I’d like you to meet Sofie! She’s a good…friend of mine and staying in the next rooms along. Are you two…alone on this trip?”
“We are, Henry. I needed a break, and thought a weekend in the city, some of it hopefully with my grandson, would be just the thing! I have some business to attend to with my lawyer in Boston as well.”

“So you’re Henry’s grandpa? It’s a pleasure to meet you, sir. You’ve a very handsome son here. When Henry said his grandfather, I imagined someone…older.”

He could tell by her eyes darting between the two of them that she was confused. “Henry’s father, Bae…Neal, was my first son. By my first marriage. Sadly, he’s no longer with us. Gideon here is my child by my second wife…”

“Oh, that explains it - you look far too young!” she flattered him. Looking at his bespoke suit, she could see he was clearly a man of wealth. “Are you staying local? With a baby, I’ll guess you’ll need some space?”

“A hotel in downtown Boston. We’re only here a couple of days. But Henry, I was hoping to use some of the time to plan our trip?”

“Of course, grandpa. The earlier the better. How about you have dinner with me tonight? There’s a pretty good Bohemian restaurant near here with sofas and stuff so Gideon will be fine. Unless you’ve got plans?”

“No, my boy, that would be perfect. Unless, you have other plans?” he looked across at the young woman, who seemed to be a bit disappointed. Clearly she was keen on his grandson and perhaps had plans for them. “Perhaps young Sofia here would like to join us?”

“Well…I wouldn’t want to be in the way.”

“Nonsense, dearie. Any friend of Henry’s is always welcome!”

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“Ariel, have you seen my phone? I haven’t seen it since yesterday and I’m wondering if Rumple’s left me a message or something? I’m worried. It’s not like him to just take Gideon and go! I should have heard something by now…”

Various thoughts swam through her, the main one being, Has he taken him for good? After all, we’re no longer together!

“Where did you last use it?” said the former mermaid, as her hand slipped around and down the sides of the sofas, scanning the room for the missing phone.

“Yesterday. Just before you came over. I had it in the back of…” then she realised where she could have left it. She went upstairs, followed close behind by the redhead, into her bedroom. As Belle looked under, Ariel slid her hand around the edge of the mattress, before finding it between the mattress and the footboard. “Here, I got it! Must have fallen out of your skirt pocket when we…” she smirked back at the beauty, remembering what they had been up to.

“Yeah. Thanks!” she looked back at her, their cheeks pinking at the memory, as she turned the phone on.

“I don’t regret it, Belle! I hope you don’t either?” Ariel looked at her anxiously.

“Of course not. I told you I was free; I just wish Rumple hadn’t caught us…like that! God, I was so embarrassed!”
“Me too! I just couldn’t believe he was so calm about it!” Just then, Belle phone went off, alerting her to a series of new texts. She frowned, opening them:

Rumple:  
Belle, sorry to give no warning, but I decided to take Gideon with me on a short trip to Boston. We’ll be gone three or four days. He’s quite safe and it’s not like you’ll be alone. I’ll call later.

Rumple:  
My call went to voicemail. I’m still driving. Speak to you later.

Rumple:  

Rumple:  
You appear to have disappeared. Perhaps with your new friend. Call me.

Rumple:  
Still not answering, I see? I trust you are having a good time? Please call me!

Rumple:  
Still no word back? Perhaps if you were to extract yourself from your girlfriend’s thighs…

Then finally, the last one:

Rumple:  
I’ve checked in to the Bostonian. I only mention this because I have our son aboard and you may wish to know his whereabouts.

Belle groaned at the texts, though stopped worrying about her son for a moment, knowing he was in the best of hands. However, she still felt angry at having her estranged husband just take him off like that, without warning. “He could have bloody well told me he was going! He is my son too!

“Well, at least Gideon is safe,” Ariel assured her as she looked at the texts over her shoulder. “And you’ll have him back in a couple of days.” She pulled her arms around her, holding onto her elbows from behind and pulling Belle’s back onto her front. “Besides, you’ve have some free time on your hands now, don’t you?”

Belle’s scowl slowly morphed into a smile as she turned in her new lover’s arms to face her, resting her hands on her shoulders while Ariel’s moved around her waist. “And what are you suggesting we do with that time, Miss Tritonsdottir?” her eyebrow raised suggestively.

“Well…research for one thing!”

“Research? Into what precisely?” Belle lifted her face up to place a light kiss on the other woman’s lips.

“Into whether we can both orgasm in the position we were in, when we were so rudely interrupted yesterday!”

‘Hmm, well…I would hate to stand in the way of research…” she replied, as Ariel drove their mouths together in a heated kiss.

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“Dammit!” said Emma, putting the phone down. “I was sure Ashley could do it! But Sean’s taking her off for the weekend.”
“Problem?” asked Robin. “What’s going on?”

“Gina and our shopping weekend in New York! It’s not going on, to be precise! No one’s able to babysit Margot and Honour. You’ll have both Hope and Faith, so you’re going to be pretty well maxed out anyway. All the usual suspects are unavailable this weekend…”

“Really? What about your mum and dad? I spoke to David first thing this morning. Didn’t look like he was up to much this weekend?”

“No, not them!” she said with a bit too much force, instantly making him suspicious. “They’re… going to be away!” she said, slightly defensive.

“Well how about Ruby and Dorothy. They love them to bits! Couldn’t they help?”

“Hmm. Best not! We’re not exactly on good terms right now…”

“I’m sorry, what? Emma, what’s going on?”

She sighed loudly. “It’s nothing. It’s just – I had a bit of a falling about. With dad…about mum.”

“Oh. What about? You’ve started, so you might as well tell me everything…”

So she did. She told him about her father’s comments. About her just using her mother when she felt like it. About her reacting to him and saying she’d had no parental example for twenty-eight years. About how she snapped at him and then, once he’d left, how Ruby jumped on her, telling her to leave…

“When was the last time you went over there, or invited Snow out, without Regina?”

“Last week, when I dropped the girls off. What’s that got to do with this?”

“And when you weren’t asking her to babysit?” he ignored the question. When did you last go around there? Again, without Regina or the children?”

“I – um, I can’t remember.” her voice a little less confident now.

“When was the last time you called her for a chat? Again, without wanting something?” his tone not accusing, just…surgical. Emma didn’t answer, just raising her eyes and looking a little awkward.

“When was the last time you took her a card, asked her out for a drink or told her you love her? Like she and David do to you, all the time…”

She stayed silent as it dawned on her that what her father had said may have had some truth in it! Since she and Regina married, she had distanced herself from her parents, her mother in particular. “Perhaps I could try a little harder…” she whispered.

“Perhaps.” He agreed. “Perhaps you could make it up to her, by giving her what every mother wants for her daughter?”

Which is? Inform me o’ wise one! O’ expert on feminine logic! What is it that every mother wants?” she raised a brow.

“The chance to arrange, or take an active part in, her daughter’s wedding! Let her be involved, to organise and take some of it off your hands. She shouldn’t have to ask, you should be asking her? You seem to forget Emma, that your mother is a remarkable woman and extremely capable of organising things and people when the need arises. I’m seriously surprised you never asked her
already! Why did you let it get to this?”

“Because I can handle it myself. Because Regina doesn’t want her involved too much. Because…”

“Emma, I love Regina as much as you do! She’s an incredible woman, but even I know she has an irrational contempt for your mother’s opinions on virtually everything, just because of who she is! Sadly, it sometimes translates into pettiness and stupid comments which are quite childish. And I say that as a true love!”

“I’d love to hear you say that to her face!”

“I have done, actually! Regina couldn’t possibly deny it. Those two have a weird past. A kind of love/hate relationship. It must be very hard to ever fully trust someone who’s spent half their life trying to kill you. And before you say she’s not that woman anymore, don’t you think I know that? I, for example, could never trust her sister as far as I can spit, no matter how she’s changed. Tell me, did Snow even know you were going to marry Regina in New York?”

Her silence spoke volumes. “How did she, or David, react when you told them you’d married?”

It took a few moments, remembering their faces at the time, before she could speak. “I’ve been a bitch, haven’t I?” she croaked.

“Quite possibly. Do you actually want to have a relationship with your mother and father?”

“That’s a bloody stupid question! Of course I do!” her tone hardened. He ignored it.

“And do you love them? Do you love your mother and father?”

“Of course I fucking well do! Robin, that’s hurtful!” she almost snarled the words at him. Again, he carried on, regardless.

“And do you think you can have their love automatically, without them getting something back from you? Or do they have to do all the work?”

Emma stood, clearly annoyed, glaring at him, before walking towards the door, grabbing her keys. As she opened the large door she stopped, almost about to leave, before stopping, dropping her shoulders, and sighing. Turning quickly, she marched back to a now standing Robin, before going right in front of him, grabbing the lapels of his jacket and planting a loud, angry kiss on his lips, her hands now moving either side of his head as she worked harder into it, before pulling away.

“Thanks! I needed to hear that!” followed by another angry kiss. “I love you, Robin Locksley!”

His face broke into a warm smile. “I love you too, Emma Swan-Mills. Now go and tell your mother the same thing!”

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“So Belle’s moved back into your mansion, so you can both look after Gideon…but you’re still not back together?” They sat at the dinner table, comfortably replete, watching Sofia kneeling a short distance away, entertaining Gideon with a play toy.

“Aye, that’s the sum of it. And Ariel’s currently staying with us. She and Belle have become close. I mentioned they’ll both be coming with us to the UK?”

“You did. When you said they’ve become close, do you mean close? Are they…?”
“Aye lad. They share her room.” *And her bed, and her body,* he thought, uncharitably.

“In your house? And you’re all right about that? Grandpa…”

“We’re separated, Henry. I’m perfectly fine. I just wish to see her happy, in whatever form that takes.”

“Well perhaps we’ve a chance of finding someone for you too? Boston’s a busy place. Lots of interesting women here, without so much…baggage or history.”

“Well who knows? At least here I don’t have a raging demon whispering in my ear constantly. That’s a welcome relief. Frankly, my boy, I see our forthcoming trip as my chance to broaden my horizons. I may be interested in looking to live elsewhere on a more…permanent basis.”

“Leave Storybrooke? You can’t be serious?” the young scholar could hardly believe his ears. “You created the place! It’s yours even more than mums!”

“And it could be perfectly fine without me. Henry, you’ll be travelling soon and you’ll settle somewhere, though I think it unlikely to be a backwater in Maine. My Baelfire has long gone and I vow to keep Gideon close. There’s nothing for me back there. I have wealth so it’s an option…”

“But your business? The properties. And if you stay away, won’t you age and eventually…die!”

“Yes lad, eventually. As all normal people should in the end. I’ve lived centuries but I’m not sure I want to live forever. It’s one of the reasons I want to see Belle happy and settled. A mother for Gideon.”

“I didn’t even know she was into women!”

“Well, love is love. Anyway never mind all that. Tell me about your thoughts on the trip? You said you wanted to travel to England first?”

“Yeah. I need to see Oxford and talk to some people there about the induction. So from there we could go to Stratford-Upon-Avon, Shakespeare’s birthplace. And London of course, then York and head north…”

“I checked York too. There’s a hidden magical settlement near there. A small hidden town slightly bigger than Storybrooke. You have a great-great-grandmother who lived there. I may have distant relatives, so I’ll break from you for a few days if you decide to do something else…”

“Yes, that’s fine grandpa. Well after, I’d like to travel to Scotland. Edinburgh mainly, then the Highlands…”

Henry spent the next few minutes outlining his travel plans. Rumple outlines his own ideas and soon they came up with the outline for the trip. “Excellent,” said the invigorated Dark One, “I’ll start booking the tickets. Passports have been obtained, so we’ll leave next month!”

“That’s great. So, I’m fairly free this weekend. How about I show you the sights?”

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It was another hour before Belle, having shared a leisurely bath and changed, finally called Rumple back. She’d been furious with him earlier, for having taken Gideon away without asking her to join them. Would he have even bothered asking? However, she knew raising her temper at him could be counterproductive; so she stayed her hand, knowing a calmer approach would probably work better:
“So, when did you decide to drive to Boston? It would have been nice to be consulted?”

“First thing this morning. About four o’clock. I didn’t sleep. When Gideon woke up an hour later, it seemed the best time to take advantage of the traffic. I did leave you a good few messages, but it seems you were…occupied. Or slept in.”

“Rumple, I couldn’t find my phone! I had no idea you’d even left the town. I only found it this afternoon…”

“And you chose not to call me till this evening?”

“Rumple! I was just…angry, ok? I didn’t want to face you in that mood. I’ve calmed down now. What were you doing in Boston?”

“Seeing my lawyer and broker. Plus planning the trip with my grandson.”

“You’ve seen Henry? Where? What did you do? Did you speak to Emma or Regina beforehand?” Immediately she said it, she knew that was a stupid question!

“Why on earth would I do that? Henry’s a grown man and I have no wish to deal with them. Gideon’s had a fine afternoon, and evening, with his nephew and a nice young lady friend. We’re just outside a museum now, and our boy is being pushed around quite contented.”

As they carried on with his call, Henry and Sofia, pushing Gideon in his baby carriage, were also discussing an interesting topic. “So, your grandpa! He’s quite a cool guy, yeah? I loved that little history lesson he gave us. Quite a character!”

“The coolest! He’s seen so much, Sofi. That’s why I want to spend some time with him. He’s the only link to my dad now.” He could hardly tell her he was the Dark One now, could he? Or that he’s at least two hundred and fifty years old. Nope. Just that he was an ‘interesting’ guy.

“He dresses quite formal for here though, right? I mean, I love the designer suits and the black shirt and tie. Quite natty! Although, perhaps a bit serious? Especially for a tour around Europe…”

That got Henry’s little grey cells turning. “Well, I guess he could do with a change of style. Especially with a baby in tow. Sofi, you mustn’t say anything to him about this, right? But his, sort of, ex-wife seems to have just come out. He’s alone at the moment and I’d love it if you could help, so he can go out to make some new, possibly lady, friends. Or just someone nice around here, or even when we go away. Perhaps he could do with a change of wardrobe?”

“Are you asking me to give your grandpa some sort of makeover, Henry?”

“Well, it’s more your sort of area of expertise than mine, right? Your mum owns that clothes chain, after all! You’re going to be running it one day. She must know what a middle-aged businessman should be wearing when he’s not being a middle-aged businessman, right? He’s wealthy enough to afford it, so if she appeals to his pride…”

“If you put it to her that way, she’ll think you’re incredibly sexist and patronising. But having met him, yeah, I think she’d enjoy the challenge! But I’ve got a better idea. It’s not my mum but my gran that actually owns the business. She loves daft challenges like that and, as Granpapa Weiss passed away some years ago, I think she’d enjoy meeting him. That accent of his would definitely work on her! You get talking to him and I’ll give her a call…”

That evening, Henry’s grandfather had been much easier to persuade than expected. Sofia’s grandmother had also been put in the picture. In return for a lovely dinner with her favourite
“Mrs. Weiss, it’s a pleasure to make your acquaintance,” said Rumple, nodding and kissing the back of her hand. “I’m Henr’s grandfather. Please call me Angus!”

“Oh, then please just call me Gabrielle, or Gabby! It’s lovely to meet you too, Angus! Sofia tells me you have a little boy with you?” she twinkled.

“Indeed. Gideon. He’s just over eight months old now. Two of your charming granddaughter’s friends are babysitting him around the corner. Henry and I are keeping tabs with our phones…” he smiled. For a woman seemingly in her early fifties she was in remarkably good shape. Clearly an intelligent, outgoing type. Rumple gave her a small flirty smile which brought a small grin from the woman. “Gabriella Weiss? Forgive me, I’m not from this city but, I’ve seen that name somewhere else?”

She beamed back at him. “Oh that! Probably on one of the shop fronts, or perhaps on one of the billboards.” she brushed it off.

“Grandma, stop selling yourself short,” rebuked Sofia. “Mr. Gold, please forgive her, she always does this! Gabriella Weiss is a fashion chain, with about thirty stores on the East Coast. Granny built it and owns it!”

“Does she, now?” said Rumple, clearly impressed. Looking at her, he could see she was a lady of some wealth and success. “Well congratulations to you, Gabrielle. It’s always lovely to meet intelligent and clearly refined company, especially in the business world!”

‘Oh stop that. I got my lucky break early. After my divorce, I went back to my maiden name. We’re Swiss, you know? From the settlement, I started it with my two daughters, Giulia and Greta. Giulia is Sofia’s mother. Greta sadly passed away five years ago.” Her joyful expression faded at the memory. Seeing it, Rumple instantly stepped forward, taking her hand in both of his and stroking the back gently.

“I’m sorry to hear that. I do understand how you feel! My first boy, Henry’s father, Neal, was killed seven years ago. You may heal, but you never forget, do you?”

She looked at him, a tear ready to fall. “That’s so true, Angus. I’m sorry to hear about your son, too. We appear to have something in common.” The pair stared intensely at each other. “But there is always hope. But your wife…”

“Milah, my first wife and Neal’s mother, died many years ago. Some years later I married someone else. Gideon’s mother. But we are now estranged…”

“Oh! So you are now…technically…single again?” Her spirits raised at the interest of this kindly man. He seemed very well dressed, his suits clearly bespoke. And his gentle Scottish burr was just lovely.

“I am. My second wife is involved in Gideon’s upbringing. She still lives with me, though she has someone in her life now. It’s all amicable and I wish her well…”

“How very mature and sensible of you! Angus, I think I’m going to enjoy this evening!” she led the group into dinner.
The four of them would go on to have an excellent dinner and drinks. Henry went to pay the bill quietly at the front desk, as his grandpa David had previously taught him; only to find that Rumple had beaten him to it, putting his own credit card behind the bar and making a substantial deposit. Henry smiled back at the older pair, who had never stopped talking since they arrived. He felt a gentle hand on his shoulder.

“They seem to be getting on very well, don’t they?” said Sofia, nuzzling his ear. “Who’d have thought it. Your grandpa and my granny?”

The following day, everything was taken out of Henry and Sofia’s hands. His grandfather had called Gabriella. They’d met at one of her stores. She suggested some additional clothes for him for his trip, arranged for two of her best staff to fuss over Gideon, once she’d finished fussing over him herself, while persuading Rumple to take about eight different, more casual but nonetheless designer, travel outfits and accessories. Nobody seemed to be ringing up any bills, and when Rumple brought out his charge card, he was told firmly to put it away.

“This is on me, Angus! For your lovely company last night. No refusal. My shop, my rules!”

“Well in that case. If you insist, then I insist on buying you dinner, Gabbie!” he flirted, really enjoying time spent with this bright, mature lady.

That evening, after Henry insisted he and Sofia babysit, Rumple took Gabriella out for a splendid evening, taking in a cocktail bar and a fine seafood restaurant, before he escorted her home. She’d insisted on inviting him in for coffee. Neither of them had done this for quite some time, but before long they finally kissed. The following kisses slowly became more heated, and within an hour the pair eventually wound up in the master bedroom of her chic twelfth-floor apartment. With moonlight shining through the large windows, they didn’t have sex, they made love. It was soft, gentle and oh, so needed for both of them!

“Angus, that was wonderful!” Gabriella breathed later, as she lay with her cheek on his chest. “It’s been quite some time!”

“For me too. About five years…” Apart from his brief fling with the ladies in the town hall, but now was not the time… “Gabbie, you’ve no idea how much I’ve enjoyed being in the company of such a beautiful, intelligent and mature lady. I think you’ve given me a new lease of life, along with the makeover!” All of that was completely true!

“Thank you. Angus, we both know we’re a bit too long-in-the-tooth to be star-crossed lovers. You have your life and I have mine. But I hope we’ll be friends forever? And if you’re ever inclined to do this again, provided neither of us is otherwise attached, you should know that I’ll always be most willing!”

“As will I, dearie. Friends forever, in whatever form. I think Henry’s generation has a term for it. Friends with Benefits? A little crude for my taste but it encompasses it rather well, don’t you think? I hope you find the love you deserve. I eventually found it in my sons. I love my wife, but we became estranged after something happened five years ago. She appears to have found her love in the arms of another woman. But I’ll always be in your life, and you in mine. You’re very special to me, Gabbie!”

“But your wife. Belle, wasn’t it? You said she’d moved back in with you for the sake of Gideon? That must be difficult…?”

“Not really. Gideon still needs his mother. I do love her, but I’m not in love with her.” Even now, he wasn’t sure that wasn’t still true.
“Well I’m pleased you’re both sensible enough to put his interests above your own! Now, I know you need to get back to the hotel but…perhaps we can enjoy each other for a little while longer?”

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As the evening sunlight slowly faded over the farm and surrounding trees, Snow stood at her kitchen window watching David, in the distance with Fluffy, their treasured and loyal sheepdog, rounding up the fractious thirty or so lambs into get into the barn.

“Fluffy! What a ruddy stupid name for a sheepdog!” she giggled to herself, knowing it was Neal’s choice. Her seven-year-old was upstairs finishing his homework and this evening she was looking forward to planning their two week’s vacation in New York and Boston, where they were planning to meet up with their grandson. Now the former princess and rightful Queen of the Enchanted Forest stood, watching her True Love, finishing his day.

Their decision to retire had been a good one. David still carried out his Deputy Sheriff role two day a week and Snow her part-time teaching role at Storybrooke School, but now they had plenty of time to spend with their son as he grew. Only one thing was missing. Time with her daughter. Having lost Emma on the day of her birth, it had been twenty-eight years since they were reunited, by which time she was a strong, confident young woman, already with a child of her own.

Holding on to Emma had always been difficult and it took a long time for them to gain her trust. Snow’s wrong decision many years earlier to steal Maleficent’s egg only denting it further. Emma’s brief spell as the Dark One, leading to the ultimate death of Killian Jones, had changed her markedly. As they cared for their depressed daughter, she saw the lights dim in the eyes of the once fearsome and beautiful young woman. Killian’s death led to her alcoholism and own near-death, before the combined efforts of friends, doctors and yes, as always, Archie Hopper, slowly brought her back to them. Seeing her move in with Regina as they helped each other cope with their losses, had been a very big surprise. That the two women would go on to fall in love, an even bigger one. Snow now regretted her own reaction to the news, only remembering the fierce former queen who had murdered her father and spent years trying to kill her, murdering so many of the friends and allies in the process.

However, David had taken a far more liberal and lenient view of the relationship between their daughter and Snow’s stepmother, seeing the benefit and recovery it brought to his own child. As Emma and Regina grew ever closer, Snow felt she was slowly kept further and further back from Emma’s life. A life she’d risked all to protect. Only one thing mattered to Snow as much as her children, and that was the constant love and devotion of her darling David. The man who had stuck with her through thick and thin, woke her from a curse, gave his own heart up for her to get back to Emma, put up with all her nonsense with understanding and tenderness, put his life on the line so often and cherished her throughout. Her warrior. Her lover. Her True Love.

That’s why it had been a bitter blow to hear how Emma had dismissed him earlier. At least according to Ruby’s version of events. David had said nothing, refusing to even talk about it. However, his suggestion of taking her away for two weeks was a welcome relief.

As her mind drifted, she was brought up suddenly, almost dropping her cup, at the sight of a white cloud appearing in front of David in the distance. As the mist drifted, it left a woman standing in front of him. Emma! She could only watch from the window. Too far away to hear.

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“Dad?” said Emma, her lip trembling.
He looked up in surprise, several of the lambs having taken flight, scared by the mist. Fluffy went off to round them back up. “Emma! What are you doing here?” David saw the red eyes of his daughter, who had clearly been crying.

“Dad…I’m so sorry!” her voice shook with nerves as she stood waiting for his reaction. He didn’t hesitate, just rushed over to envelope her in his arms. She almost fell into him in relief, the tears starting to come. “I’m so, so sorry!” she mumbled some other words, but they were indecipherable.

Snow watched from the window, guessing what was being said, with a few tears of her own now starting to fall.

“Mum, what’s wrong?” said a worried voice beside her. “Why are you crying?”

“They’re happy tears, Neal. Nothing to worry about!” assured his mother, not taking her eyes off the scene outside.

“I’ve been such a selfish bitch!” sniffled Emma, as her father wiped her tears with his hands, his other holding her to him. “Ruby was right!”

“Ruby? What’s it got to do with Ruby?”

“She…she gave me a bollocking!” definitely one of Robin’s terms! “After you left. She said I was a fucking idiot. And she’s right!” she sobbed again, pushing her head back into his chest. “She said she saw you nearly die…to save me!”

Now David understood. “Oh, that! Yes, well, you are my little girl.” God, how he wished she still was!

“You’d have done the same for Henry…” he said, dismissively.

“Can I see?” she asked. “The mark it left? She said you’ve still got it!” she looked earnestly at him. “Please dad, let me see?”

“What’s he doing, mum?” asked Neal, as they saw his father opening up his shirt in front of his daughter, to show his chest to her. Snow smiled.

“Something that perhaps he should have done many years ago.” She watched as Emma appeared to trace her hand over the large scar that still remained, over forty years later. “He’s showing Emma just how much he loved…loves her!”

Ten minutes later, Emma appeared at the kitchen door, her nerves back once again. Her mother said nothing, merely looking at her with interest.

“Mum? Mummy! Can you forgive me?” she breathed.

Snow smiled, slowly opening her arms. “Always! Come here!” Emma jumped in, just as she had done with her father earlier. The two women hugged tightly, as though their lives depended on it. “Always!”

Many tears were spilled and many apologies received from Emma, after which she stood before her, emotionally drained.

“Come to New York with me, mum? Come and help me find my wedding dress! Come and help me plan for my wedding?”

“Hmm, perhaps. Though you have a wife now, Emma! Go and talk to her. I know Regina has always had a problem with being around me, and she has her own ideas.”
Emma silently nodded. “I will, but I still want you there! I’m sorry I haven’t said it much but…I do love you mum!”

“That’s all any mother really wants to hear, my love!” she pulled her in for another cuddle, looking at a smiling David over her shoulder. "And I love you too, sweetheart!"
Rumple returns after his weekend break. There's a growing rapprochement between him and Ariel as she settles in with Belle. Someone becomes nosey about things that no longer concern her. An argument gets out of hand and Ariel comes to realise something about Belle's feelings for Rumple.

Chapter 49

It was early Monday morning, just after six, when Rumple's limousine drew up in the driveway. It had been a long journey back and fortunately, Gideon had slept soundly in the back. Leaving his bags in the trunk, he opened the back door, unbuckling and lifting the car seat out, before walking across the front drive to the large colonial house.

With his magical powers returned on crossing the town border, he apparated from outside to inside the building, settling in the dimly lit kitchen.

"Shit!" yelled Belle, startled by his sudden appearance. She had just been in the middle of making two coffees. The noise waking Gideon, who started to grumble.

"Sorry Rumple - you just surprised me!" As he put the car seat down, she went over to give him a brief hug and a kiss on the cheek before kneeling down to extract her son.

"Hello Giddy! It's mamma! I missed you so much! Did you have a lovely time with your papa in Boston? Did you meet Henry?" she gathered him into her arms before standing.

"We had a very good time and Henry is in remarkably fine fettle. I almost didn't want to leave." With a flick of his wrist, his case, Gideon's bag and various boxes appeared. Properly looking at her for the first time, he saw she was wearing a slightly crumpled but rather alluring deep red satin chemise, clearly new, which showed off her curves to perfection. Also clear from the way it rested on her that she wasn't wearing any panties. The sight made him groan internally, remembering what lay beneath.

Belle saw his stare. "Something wrong?"

Realising he'd been caught ogling her, "Hmm? Oh, no, nothing! I just thought you looked rather nice his morning..."

As she realised where he'd been staring, she blushed. "Oh this? I've had it for ages." They both knew it was a lie, but more importantly, she knew that he knew it was a lie!

"So I see. And is Ariel still asleep?" He saw the two empty coffee mugs by the sink.

"Er...I think she's waking up. That's why I was taking up some coffee. Would you like some?"

Although tempted to decline, having her a little longer in front of him was more than appealing. "You know - I will. It was a long drive. You take Gideon back and perhaps change him. I'm sure he's missed your company. I'll make the coffees. How does Ariel take hers?"
"Ok. White with one sugar. Like me."

"Well you go up. I'll bring them to you..."

A few minutes later, Rumple knocked gently before walking into their old bedroom. "May I come in?"

He stepped in with the tray, to find Gideon on the bed, lying happily on his back, with a towel but no daiper, giggling as Ariel was leaning over him, brushing their noses together and making silly gurgling noises. She looked up to see Rumple bearing drinks, setting them on a nearby table. "Oh, thank you!" she said. "I'm parched. Gideon's in a lovely mood, Mr. Gold. He's been laughing and giggling. I think he finds my nose a bit funny, cos he won't stop grabbing it. He's so utterly gorgeous - I could just eat you all up!" she said to the baby, her face all scrunched up like his.

As he looked at the former mermaid's face, he couldn't help but notice she was wearing an almost identical silk chemise to Belle's, albeit a different colour. Pale blue. His eyes drifted to her torso and he saw how well she wore it, as it draped over her hips, slightly narrower than Belle's. He hardly noticed his wife kneeling close by. "Good. After that long journey, I'm a little surprised. Though you best call me Rumple, or Angus. 'Mr. Gold' is a bit formal if you're living here."

As he handed them their drinks, both Belle and Ariel knelt up to take them. "I'd best sit back! Don't want to splash him with hot coffee..." Rumple looked at the pair, now kneeling side-by-side in front of his son. Each woman was rather beautiful in her own right, but together, they were quite a picture in their matching nightwear.

"That's a lovely colour on you, dearie. Eggshell blue, is it not? You two been shopping over the weekend?"

Belle looked across, realising Rumple had already spotted how similar, apart from colour, Ariel's nightwear was to her own. Identical in fact. Why did I tell him I've had it for ages?

"Thank you, Rumple. Yes, Belle and I went shopping at Kathryn's new lingerie store. It opened at the weekend. Bit pricey for me, though."

"They suit you both very well. Heavenly twins, as it were..." After the glib remark, he couldn't help but feel a hardening in his trousers at the sight of them. God, I can't let them see that!, he thought. "Excuse me a moment..." he left for the bathroom.

Unfortunately for him, Belle had seen precisely that! A familiar bulge as he'd turned around, his face pinking. Interesting? she thought, allowing herself a small smirk.

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Two hours later, Rumple had showered, shaved and driven to open the shop to prepare for his rent collection. Belle was not due into the library with Gideon till noon, so set about a brief tidy up of the infant's room. Spotting some small boxes and papers lying on top of the baby basket which Rumple had brought back from Boston, she collected them, taking them downstairs to put them on his study desk. All the while, Ariel stayed with Gideon, having fed and changed him.

Laying the papers down on the old gnarled walnut desk, her eyes caught another couple of small boxes, their lids on but previously opened. Her curiosity got the better of her and she decided to see what he'd bought. Opening one elegantly styled shiny black and silver cardboard box, she was surprised to see what looked like a pale cream, silk long-sleeve polo neck sweater. It was obviously expensive, judging by the soft feel of the fabric. It was the colour he'd chosen that most surprised
her! The vast majority of Rumple's wardrobe had always consisted of black or dark blue shirts, ties and suits. That was his trademark, reinforcing his Dark One image. However, this was very different. As her fingers roamed across the fabric, she saw there were two more, similar sweaters, one a pale blue and another flesh coloured. Now even more curious, she started to look through and open more, previously opened boxes, avoiding the sealed ones. In one she found two pairs of, seemingly designer, jeans. In another, various pale and dark leather belts. Another contained cotton casual shirts in various colours and the largest, a beautiful soft leather jacket.

The jacket was clearly very expensive, judging by the calf leather, and it smelt just wonderful. Like a brand new car. On the top lay an envelope, with the words 'Angus, with my love and thanks...' handwritten in beautiful script. Clearly written by a woman. Thankfully, Belle found that the envelope hadn't been sealed, just left on top. Ashamed of her own nosiness, she nonetheless pulled out the contents to reveal a letter:

    My Darling Angus.

    I just wanted to give you a little something extra for your wonderful company this weekend. I had a lovely time with you and Henry. And Gideon, of course!

    It does seem as if my young Sofia is rather smitten with Henry, doesn't it? Still, I can't say I blame her! Your grandson is a delightful young man and I hope they find something together, although they must have their time in the sun before they settle, so we'll see, won't we?

    Thank you for making a middle aged woman feel an awful lot younger this weekend. Thank you for trusting me with helping put together your new wardrobe, for that delightful dinner and two of the most lovely nights in years. You've proved to me that there's still life in the old dog yet and you clearly still have the energy of a man thirty years younger! You've left me with feelings I haven't felt in many a year! Young Gideon has big boots to fill...

    Do take care and enjoy your European journey, you lovely man. I'll email you the recommended Swiss chalets as I promised. Meanwhile, have a wonderful time and I do hope it won't be too long till you come to visit again.

    With my fondest love,

    Gabbie xxx

Belle gasped. Lovely nights? Energy of a man thirty years younger? That was more than a letter from someone he'd just taken out for dinner! She brought the paper to her nose, smelling the lavender scent. She looked to the unopened, larger boxes. Some six more of them! Then she noticed, for the first name, the silver printed name on the envelope. And the boxes. Gabriella Weiss. Gabbie!

Some bitch has got her paws in my...my...my what? My husband? A lump formed in Belle's throat as she realised Rumple had taken a lover. And It looked like a lot more than a one-night stand. She felt like her legs were going to give way. She knew they were apart. Hell, he'd let her go, after all! She'd taken lovers. So how could she object to him doing the same? "Because they don't know him like I do! Does this 'Gabbie' even know who he really is?" she growled to herself, feeling bile in her throat. She felt as though she had been...betrayed. But that was stupid because he was no longer hers. This is what she wanted...right?
As her mind whirled, her face went into her hand as tears formed. Was that it? Was it really, truly, over? Was this what she wanted?

An hour later, Belle stepped into the diner, holding the door open for Ariel as she pushed the buggy inside. Her mind was still swimming at the implications of what she'd discovered that morning. It was only when she felt a hand on her shoulder that she snapped out of it. "Hmm, what? Oh...Ruby...hi!" she said, forcing an unconvincing smile.

"Well someone's away with the fairies!" chuckled the proprietor. "Someone looks like she could do with a drink! Haven't seen you for a while, Belle. Everything ok?"

"Er...yes. Ariel, what are you having?"

The former mermaid knew something was wrong with her. She'd been acting strange for the past couple of hours, though she wasn't saying what had disturbed her. "Hot chocolate for me, please. Belle, are you sure you're ok?" The brunette merely nodded, clearly not wanting to talk about it. As her eyes roamed the cafe, they came across a face she recognised at a back table. "Hey, isn't that Killian Jones? Belle, do you mind taking Giddy? I haven't spoken to him for ages..."

"Sure...go ahead," she said, her mind on autopilot. A moment later, she felt a warm hand on her shoulder. "My, he's grown fast, hasn't he?"

She looked over to see the smiling face of an old, trusted friend. "Mulan? Oh, hi! It's been ages..." she stood to hug her old friend and travelling companion. "How have you been?" Before spotting Mulan's wife over her shoulder. "Rory! Lovely to see you both. I was just popping in for drinks before I start work..."

Aurora was pushing their baby daughter, Li, in her buggy. "Hi Belle, lovely to see you too! Can't you join us for a couple of minutes? It's been too long since... Since she hid herself from everyone in the library, after Rumple threw her out?"

"Yes of course there's time! Oh goodness, look at you, Li! You are really turning into a stunning little princess, aren't you?" she cooed at the eight month old girl, sitting contented in her chair chewing on a teething ring. The tiny tot, smaller than most her age, looked so much like her warrior mother, her large almond-shaped brown eyes twinkling. Though Belle could still see Philip's face shape, mouth and jaw. Rather a beautiful combination. "How are you both?"

The three women chatted happily for the next fifteen minutes, though Rory and Mulan both saw something worrying their friend. "Belle, please don't take this the wrong way...but you don't seem to be yourself. Everything ok at home? Someone said you moved back into Rumple's place to be with Gideon?"

"Yes, it's fine. We're separated but it seems to be working out ok. Ariel's staying with us at the moment... perhaps too early to mention their...relationship?"

"I heard. Someone saw you both in Kathryn's new shop...buying naughty lingerie?" Rory smirked.

"God, can't anyone mind their own fucking business in this town! "Well...yes. Some presents. She's got some lovely things in there!" God, this could be awkward!

"Definitely! Mu bought something...special...for me too," Aurora giggled, leaning across and pecking her wife on the lips. "Very special!"
Seeing the two of them together like that, she glanced across at Ariel, now down on her knees talking to Killian's baby, in front of his chatting parents. Without thinking, she asked, "Does Philip mind?"

"Mind what?" asked Aurora. "Me buying our wife sexy underwear? I hardly think so. He's our husband, after all. Why should he mind? He gets the benefit, too!" she smirked, though Mulan glared at her.

"Oh sorry, I didn't mean to offend. I just...sorry, never mind."

"Say it, Belle. What did you want to ask?" Mulan persisted.

"Oh it's nothing. I just wondered. When you do something nice for Rory, or she buys you something special. Does he feel left out? Is there any jealousy?"

"Not jealousy exactly. Envy sometimes. Like when I come back from work late to find Rory and Phil sitting watching TV all cuddled up, perhaps a little. Then I just jump in the middle!" she winked at Aurora.

"Or when I come back to find Phil and Mu having a bath together, without waiting for me!" her brow went up as she looked at the warrior.

"You soaked the whole room when you jumped in!" Mulan cackled. "There was foam everywhere!" both women laughed at the memory. Belle smiled at them.

"And Philip? He doesn't ever feel left out? Two women against one, poor defenceless man?" she said it, guessing the answer.

Mulan and Aurora both chuckled at that. "Occasionally. But half the time, he says seeing us together just turns him on! He's a horny little bugger!" said Mulan. "But seriously, we've moved well past that. We both love him as much as he loves us. It just works..."

"Why do you ask, Belle? Looking for a little 'poly' arrangement of your own?" asked Aurora, having spotted her looking across at Ariel several times. "You know, I think we may have helped give a little nudge to Emma, Robin and Regina coming together, after all! According to Phil, they've booked the Town Hall roof for a wedding!"

"Really!" she smiled, saying no more.

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"Emma, you can't be serious? Why on earth did you ask for your mother to come with us?" Regina scowled at her.

"Because she's my mother! Gina, I want her to be part of this! She missed out last time..."

"And a good thing too! She'll ruin everything by wanting to take over! She always does!"

"Gina, please..."

"It'll be twee. No doubt she'll want us being serenaded by the bloody dwarves! She wouldn't know taste if it bit her!"

"Gina, you're not helping..."

"And bridal dresses? She'd have us looking like bloody meringues..."
"WILL YOU FUCKING WELL SHUT UP?" Emma roared in her face, having now lost it. "I've listened to this shit constantly! Yes, you hate my mother, I get it! But at least she's not some fucking murdering psycho bitch like yours!"

'SHE KILLED MY MOTHER!' Regina screamed back, both now almost spitting in each others faces in fury.

"WHO KILLED HER MOTHER! Or is it different for your family? Psycho nut job Cora gets to murder HER, but that's different, I suppose!

"SHE KILLED DANIEL!" The brunette was too angry to let this go, even though she knew that wasn't completely true.

"NO, CORA KILLED DANIEL! I SAW IT IN THE DREAM-CATCHER! YOUR EVIL-SHIT MOTHER KILLED DANIEL!"

The slap came hard and fast, surprising Emma by its ferocity. She stood, mortified, looking at the other woman. A moment later, Regina, her hand stinging, realised what she had just done. She had slapped Emma! She had slapped her own wife! Horror dawned on her. "Emma! I...I'm..."

But it was too late. The Saviour, an angry red mark now starting to appear on her cheek, glared angrily at her before raising her hand. Her familiar mist engulfed her and she was gone, leaving a heartbroken former queen knowing she had gone too far. Way too far!

---

Rumple was sitting at his desk at home, when the expected web call came in. "Evening my boy! How was the examination?"

"Hi grandpa! The general paper was fine. I think I got through it ok, but the medieval poetry one was fairly horrible. All opinions and interpretations but it should be fine. How about you?"

"Excellent. I have the flights booked. We'll land in London early, so it'll give us time to recover. I've emailed you the details."

"Ok thanks." Henry the spotted the man's clothes. "Hey, like the shirt, by the way! Silk? Looks expensive. One of Gabriella's?"

"Aye lad. I bought quite a few things with her. She gave me the full 'personal shopper' service. Rather good of her to spend the time, considering she owns the place!"

"I think she's got a little thing for you gramps! I'm glad you got on well with her. Sofia said she already asked to make sure you got home safely..."

"She's a true lady, Henry. It was a very pleasant experience." Especially in bed later - though he had no intention of telling the boy that!

Over the next twenty minutes of their call, his eyes scanned the boxes of clothes, noticing there was something decidedly odd about them. They'd been opened since I've left! Saying his good nights to Henry and finally ending the call, he stood and looked at the carefully arranged tower of Gabriella Weiss boxes. His curiosity aroused, he rolled his hand across the dream catcher that hung by the windows, casting his spell on it to show what had happened in the room for the last ten hours. Since he'd left.

Fast forwarding, like a DVD player, It didn't take him long to see Belle enter the room, leaving a
small pile of boxes on the desk. He saw how her curiosity had got the better of her. How she took the lids off several of the boxes to gaze and feel his new clothes. How she stroked the leather jacket, picking up the letter from Gabbie. The way she studied it, slid the letter out from inside and started to read. She looked surprised. Shocked even! *I'll bet you were, my dear Belle! he smiled.*

Later that evening, Gideon had become fractious, not wanting to settle. Belle had fed and cuddled him, but he was still bellowing. His wife had been in an odd mood all evening. Quiet. Sullen. "Let me take him, dearie!" said the Dark One, lifting him onto his chest, patting his back in an attempt to settle. "I'll take him up."

Twenty minutes later, Gideon was still crying. Knowing he was also teething, Rumple had applied ointment but to no avail. Even he was getting frustrated. "For heaven's sake, my boy, you need to sleep!" he begged.

"May I help?" came a voice from the doorway. "I could try and calm him if you'd let me?" He turned to find Ariel, looking concerned.

"By all means, dearie? Anything you think might help!" he breathed, exasperated between the screens. The redhead nodded, collecting the angry red faced tot from his arms. Ariel rested him against her chest. As she held the boy's head, she started singing gently. For a few seconds he persisted before slowly, very slowly, calming to listen to the mermaid's song. In less than a minute, Gideon had ceased all tears, looking silently at her. She continued her gentle song, moving him towards his cot, to lay him down.

Rumple stood transfixed. The mermaid had a truly beautiful voice. Soft. Melodic. Soothing. It seemed to calm him as much as his son. He watched silently as the boy's eyes closed into a gentle slumber. It had taken less than a couple of minutes, though Ariel carried on softly singing, just to be sure. He'd never heard the song before but it didn't matter. Her voice was just perfect. He hardly noticed the tear slide down his cheek as she slowly finished:

"*When's it's my turn, wouldn't I love, love to explore that world up above?*

*Out of the sea. Wish I could be. Part of your world..."

Gideon was sound asleep. She leaned over, placing a small kiss on his forehead, before slowly stepping back, turning to see the Dark One staring at her. "You have a wonderful gift there, young lady!" he whispered, a warm smile on his face.

"Thank you. My papa said something like that. Ursula stole it from me once, in exchange for my legs. I got it back eventually, thanks to a friend. It's a long story..."

"One I would love to hear about when you're ready to tell it. Thank you. For settling him. Come and join me for a drink downstairs?"

A little while later, having changed into a pair of his new pyjamas and dressing gown, Rumple poured himself a large scotch, as Ariel entered the room. As he looked over at her, he saw she was also in new clothing, a soft, sheer nightdress. Foregoing this morning's chemise for something more modest. Nonetheless he couldn't help but admire how well the silk draped over her slight frame. "Would you like to join me in a whisky, dearie?"

"Oh. Well I'm not sure I've had it before, but yes, please!"

She sat on a nearby armchair as he handed her the drink. "Nice dressing gown, by the way! I spotted
the new outfit you had on earlier. I'd never seen you in casual before. You looked very handsome. Quite expensive, I would imagine? Been on a spending spree?"

Rumple chuckled coyly, not used to having comments on his dress sense. "Why, thank you. Yes, something like that. Henry thought I needed a change. Something less 'demonic', according to him. He introduced me to some people who helped..."

"Some people, meaning top Boston fashion houses?" said Belle, walking in and having just caught the last part of the conversation. "May I?" she said, nodding towards the tantalus. "I think I need one!"

"Help yourself, dearie." He noticed she had also changed for an early night, and now wore her own, slightly shorter, sheer silk nightdress he'd never seen before.

"Well I think the colours knocked ten years off you! Whoever helped you has exquisite tastes!" said the mermaid, as a sip of the scotch warmed her throat, making her cough slightly.

"Well you'll appreciate ten years isn't much when you're three centuries old!" he chuckled. "Though thank you for the compliment!"

"No, I meant it! It's nice to see you in lighter clothes. Makes you look less..."

"Threatening? Evil? Demonic, to use Henry's word?"

"Severe! They make you look less severe," she continued. "And happier, you definitely look happier since you got back!"

Belle listened, surprised Ariel was being so full of praise for her husband.

"Aye, well I feel happier, dearie. I got to spend time with Baelfire's boy. Young Henry has so much energy, so many ideas. His company makes me feel...younger!" He noticed how Ariel had been doing all the talking; Belle mostly silent throughout. "Something wrong, Belle? You seem a bit...perturbed?"

"Me? Oh no, I'm fine! I guess I'm just a bit tired."

"Good. Come, sit with us. Talking of my clothing, it would appear that you two have also been having some more retail therapy in Miss Nolan's store? You both look beautiful, by the way. Very complementary. Much like this morning's." Belle perched herself on the arm of Ariel's armchair. "Your colours work well together. You do make a lovely couple."

Belle felt uncomfortable him talking about her and Ariel as a 'couple'. But what were they? "So tell me about your...wardrobe? Looks like a woman's touch! Anybody help?"

He knew her inquisitive mind wouldn't let it rest. Oh well here we go... "Well you'd know dearie. You did read her letter when you opened the box, after all!"

Belle choked slightly on her drink, coughing. Seeing his little smirk, she knew the game was up. "I'm sorry. I was just curious. I shouldn't have looked..."

"Sorry, am I missing something?" asked Ariel. "Has something happened?"

His grin broadened. "Nothing important. Your girlfriend just decided to look at something that didn't concern her!"
"I'm sorry, Rumple. I really am! I know I shouldn't have looked. It's just so unlike you to go shopping like that. I was curious to see what you'd bought, and then I saw the jacket and the letter. It was wrong of me. The clothes are lovely, by the way."

"You're forgiven. And thank you." he knew she couldn't leave it like that. He quietly took another sip of his scotch, waiting for the inevitable follow up.

"So, are you going to tell me about 'Gabriella', or were you just going to leave me in limbo!" God, Rumple, stop playing with me!

"Gabriella Weiss is a very special lady. A grandmother to one of Henry's friends. She helped me put together my new wardrobe..."

Ariel sat up. "Gabriella Weiss? Isn't that the name you were looking at on the computer, Belle?"

His wife winced at that! Game, set and match to Rumple, dearie! he thought, maintaining his smile. "She's become a dear friend."

"How dear?" the brunette asked, unable to stop herself. "I'm sorry, that's none of my business! I apologise. Again."

He rose slowly, taking his glass with him. "Not a problem. Well, I'll bid you two...lovebirds...good night. Sleep well..."

As he nodded and turned, Ariel couldn't help but notice the way Belle now stared at his back, a sad longing look on her face, as he left.

"You're still in love with him, aren't you?"
Not in front of the In-Laws

Chapter Summary

Regina finally has that talk with Snow and Rumple discovers something odd about the Dark One.

Chapter 50

It was a matter of minutes after Emma left, that Robin apparated into the living room. Moments before, working with Gilbert and Alan high up in the trees surrounding Sherwood, on the new forest roof walkway, his telepathic link with his fiancée had detected some sort of anger between them! As they weren’t trying to reach out to him directly, he only sensed their feelings. Rage.

“Gilbert, something’s not quite right at home! Could you finish off here on the ropes? And for god’s sake, don’t let anyone get up here or go on it, at the moment!”

His friend nodded, waving him off. Moments later, as the mist around him disappeared, the first thing Robin saw was Regina, crumpled up on the sofa, her knees to her chest. “Gina! What’s wrong? What’s happened?”

She didn’t answer, merely pulling herself tighter into a ball. She knew she was at fault, and couldn’t bear the thought of his reaction to her striking her own wife.

“Gina, talk to me?” It was clear she had been crying. “Tell me what’s happened?”

Robin knew her walls had gone up and it would take ages for them to come down again. So he opted for the quicker solution. “Gina, would you let me read your mind? Only the last hour of it? I promise…”

They’d talked about doing something like this once before, and she knew she could trust him not to pry further back than promised. So, still sobbing, she nodded silently. He pulled the curled-up woman sideways to his chest, before placing a palm on her brow. As he focused his mind, the last hour of the former queen’s life flooded across his own mind in a matter of seconds, Robin feeling grateful for the Sorcerer’s careful training in its use.

He saw how the row started. How Regina’s reaction to Emma’s wish to have her mother come with them to New York, had quickly escalated into a full-scale screaming match between the married couple. How in less than half a minute, they’d gone from irritation with each other, to annoyance, anger, then fury, culminating in Regina slapping Emma hard around the face. He winced at that particular vision.

“Gina, you’ve had a lovers’ tiff!”

She magicked herself more tissues, wiping her eyes. “Do you think I don’t know that? I just lost it! I lost control completely! Then I…I hit her Robin! I hit her!”

“I know, I saw. Just calm down first, then we’ll talk about it. I’m sure it’ll be fine. In the end…”

“But I need to go to her! I can’t just leave it like that!”
“Definitely not. She’ll still be angry. Let her calm down, before you do anything. However, you and I need to have a little chat!” a serious, slightly intimidating tone to his voice.

---

“She hit you, didn’t she?” David was furious. He held his daughter to his chest. When he’d opened the door to her five minutes ago, she just stood in shock, a red mark on her face. As he held her close, the tears finally came, after a while reducing to sobs. “Emma, tell me what happened?”

“She didn’t mean it. I provoked her…”

“She, that’s never an excuse and you know it! How many abused women have you and I met, who said the exact same thing? Always trying to excuse the inexcusable…”

“I’m not abused, dad! I screamed at her; she screamed at me. And then…” The sobbing resumed. He just held her tighter.

“What was it about? Where was Robin, when all this was going on? Was it about him?”

“No, it had nothing to do with Robin! We just had an argument which…got out of hand.”

“And then she raised her hand to you. I can see the mark, Emma. Tell me…”

---

At Mifflin Street, Robin made her a cup of coffee, which she took with trembling hands. Robin didn’t need to ask any more about the incident. He’d already seen it.

“You need to apologise, to…” but she didn’t let him finish.

“OF COURSE I NEED TO APOLOGISE! I KNOW THAT!” she yelled. “If she lets me!”

“Not to Emma. That can come later. To Snow! You need to finally end this. It’s gone on too long…”

“Robin, you don’t understand! There’s still bad blood. It was because of her, Daniel was killed!”

“Because an eight-year-old girl gave away a secret! That’s what children do, Gina! Roland, Henry, Honour. They all would, if they thought it helped their family stay together! Snow White was a child. Your mother was not! There was only one person who murdered Daniel and that was Cora! You need to accept that. And also the hard facts that Cora also killed Snow’s mother and YOU killed Snow’s father! Snow lost both parents, Regina, for whatever reason you want to give!. She's more the victim here, and you know it!”

She glared harshly at him without saying a word. She hated it, mainly because she knew it was true.

“I’m sorry to be so blunt, but I know for a fact that while your father is now in a better place, among all his family and loves who have moved on. But your mother is in a very different place! A place of suffering, for all eternity, for the crimes she committed, and lives taken. She never even repented or atoned for her crimes!”

“You sound like Merlin! He said something similar, months ago…”

“It’s not enough to regret the past, Gina! You have to make amends where you can. How can the gods give you a happy afterlife, if you don’t repent or atone for your first? And what better way to start, then apologising to, and asking forgiveness from, the very person who started your slip into darkness in the first place?”
Regina looked down, almost in shame, before sighing and nodding slowly. But he wasn’t finished. “Regina, I love you with all my life and soul, and you know that. I gave my life for you and I would readily do it again. But the constant sniping at Snow White. The endless sarcastic comments. The bitching. It is not a clever use of your wonderful wit but just petty, malicious and sometimes downright childish. It’s unworthy of you! Yes, she can be immensely irritating, but she doesn’t deserve that. It has to stop!”

Regina finally looked him in the eyes. Listening to his rebuke, she was reminded so much of her own father.

“And finally, you need to stop putting a wedge between Emma and her mother! Stop trying to keep them apart. She loves her, and needs to know she has her support. Especially when it comes to her marriage! Every mother wants to be part of her child’s wedding. Can you imagine how you would feel if one of our own girls kept you away from her own wedding arrangements? You would be devastated!”

“Enough Robin! I get it!”

---

“Mr. Gold, may I have a word?” asked Ariel, nervously hovering at his study door.

“I told you dear; just call me Rumple. Don’t stand on ceremony. Come in.” He saw the nervous look in her eyes. “Is there a problem?”

“I’m not sure. It’s about me living here. I know that after you two…split up, things were different. Belle moved into the library and she and I, well, you know.”

“I do, dearie. In modern parlance, I believe they would call it ‘finding yourself’. I’m aware she went off the rails somewhat, and found herself in…shall we say, dubious company. Though I thought you a vast improvement!”

“Erm, thank you. After you saved Gideon, you were very kind to let her come and live with him. I know you didn’t need to do that, and it’s definitely made her a lot happier...”

“Every child needs their mother. Though sadly, I wasn’t graced with such a benefit.”

“Nor me! As you know, my mother’s a goddess. Things were different for me too.”

“Ah yes. The beautiful Athena. You share a look, you know? A very wise woman. Quite fearsome though...”

“You’ve met her?” Ariel was astonished. Her mother was always reclusive around humans. “Indeed. She came to me asking for a particular favour, unknown to your father, many years ago. She made a deal and I have yet to request the settlement. But she seemed quite austere. Cold even. I could never imagine her as a loving mother...”

“True. My father was the one who really raised me and my sisters. We were never close...”

“And how does this concern Belle and yourself?” he asked, puzzled where the conversation was going.

“It doesn’t. I wanted to talk to you, about you and Belle. And me living here...”
“I’ve no issue with the pair of you, dearie. As I’ve already said, I want her to be happy, even if it cannot be with me. I will always love her though.”

“I know. And it’s obvious Belle still loves you, too. I saw the look on her face, when you mentioned that woman you met when you were with Henry. Gabbie, wasn’t it? I think she’s still in love with you, Rumple! And I don’t want to be in the way of that love. You have a son together.”

Rumple sighed. “Perhaps. But so much has passed between us. After we lost Gideon, I threw her out not because I don’t love her, but because I didn’t fully trust her. With Gideon’s safety. With the dagger.”

“And now? Do you trust her now? Because if you can find the way to do so, and be together, I wanted to let you know I also won’t stand in your way. I will step away, if need be. I may love her too Rumple, but like you, I want her to be happy!”

It was rare for him to be shown courtesy, let alone kindness. And he knew the mermaid was being sincere. “Well, you surprise me, dear. But I know Belle’s love for you is genuine. I see far too much for my own good. What started between you may have been curiosity about her orientation, but it has grown to be a lot more than mere sex, hasn’t it? She has been through a great deal of pain in the past. Much of it caused by my darkness. I think she’s beginning to understand that she cannot mould me into being a better person, in someone else’s image. I’m cursed, Ariel, and that cannot change. But you offer her another path. A path of light and happiness. Provided you love her and take care of the woman we both love, I would prefer you to be with her than not.”

A silence passed between them. “You know, I’ve heard so much about you. You’re a legend, even among the Merpeople! About your deals, you magic, your evil deeds. But for me, all I’ve seen is a man struggling with a force that controls him, that nobody seems to hear or understand! I think I realise what Belle saw in you and why she fell in love. There’s a good man in there trying to get out from under the darkness…”

Without saying another word, she bent over and kissed him on the cheek.

That simple act of affection brought a hitch to his breath. Nobody showed affection towards Rumpelstiltskin. Until Belle and more recently, Henry. He almost raised his hand to his cheek to feel the moist spot left, but just held himself back. “Thank…thank you, my dear. You have a nice day…”

---

Emma held tightly onto her mother as they sat on the sofa. Snow had been consoling her, whispering words of comfort. She couldn’t yet bring herself to tell them what had happened. Only that she and Regina had had a blazing row. And now as she closed her eyes, she realised just what a marvellous source of comfort her mother really was. She so often dismissed her hope speeches as mere platitudes, but now she finally began to understand.

As she felt the warmth of her mother’s chest as her head lay against it, she felt a voice inside, calling to her.

“Emma? Emma? Can you hear me? Darling, talk to me!” It was Robin, trying to reach her using their nascent telepathic link. “I need to know you’re OK! Where are you? I won’t come over, if you’re not ready. Please speak to me?”

Snow felt her daughter stiffen then sit up, eyes still closed. “Emma, are you all right? What is it?”

“Shush!” she interrupted, “I’m talking to Robin!” Snow and David exchanges a confused look.
“I’m here, Robin. At mum and dad’s farm. I’m OK! Something happened. Gina and I had a row…”

“I know. She let me read her mind. I saw what happened and that she slapped you. She feels terrible!”

“Me too. I’m angry and I don’t want to talk to her. Where are you?”

“At home. I somehow felt your row, and came back. We had a talk…”

“How is she now? We both said some horrible things. Robin…”

“Better, but still upset with how she reacted. She’s ashamed. Emma, before she sees you, she wants to see Snow. Well, she doesn’t want to, but I kind of insisted…”

“Insisted? Not trying to dominate my wife, are you, Locksley?” She smirked, eyes still closed.

“Well, you know she likes me to, on rare occasions. As do you, from time to time, I seem to recall!”

That brought a grin. As Snow and David watched their daughter’s face change expression several times, they looked to each other in astonishment, not quite understanding what was happening. Merely that she seemed a little happier than she had, minutes earlier.

“Don’t put thoughts like that in my head, Locksley. Now’s not the time! Come over. I want you here!”

“Ok, how about we do this…”

A minute later, after finishing their ‘link’, Emma opened her eyes to see her mother standing in front of her, open-mouthed. “OK. Sorry about that, mum. I was talking to Robin.”

“You can speak to each other with your minds? Without words?” David interrupted.

“Yeah. Cool, huh? Merlin taught us. Regina can do it with us too. Bit hard to explain, and it’s complicated, but the three of us can speak to each other, telepathically. Regina and I can’t read minds like Robin can, but we can talk and hear.”

“That’s amazing!” he gasped. “Emma, that’s…that’s…”

“True Love!” said Snow. “It could hardly be anything else…”

Emma blushed. “Yeah, well. I’m gonna head back home to be with him. The kids should be back soon. Regina is going to come over here and talk to the two of you; though mum mostly. Rob thinks that’s a conversation well overdue for the two of you…”

Snow knew this was going to be awkward. “Oh well, I guess it had to happen sooner or later.” She pulled her daughter into a hug, followed by David. She and Robin had agreed it best the two didn’t meet for the moment, so she left it for him to apparate them both at the same time. Within seconds, Emma’s pale grey mist swirled around her as she disappeared, to be replaced by the purple mist of Regina as she apparated in front of them, looking down and very uncomfortable.

“Hello Regina! I guess it’s time we had that talk?” said the former princess, now looking decidedly more confident than the former queen.

---

The moment she reappeared at the mansion, Robin pulled her into his arms. “My love!” he breathed,
lowering his lips onto hers, loving the feeling of her melting into him. “I missed you!”

“How is she? Really?” Emma needed the reassurance.

“She’s ashamed, Emma. And not just because she slapped you, but because of the things she said. We talked about Snow and Daniel. And Cora. She knows she’s been unfairly holding that against your mother for years. But you know Regina. She can hold a grudge for a lifetime!”

“I said some horrible things to her! About Cora…”

“All of which were painfully true! It’s just hard for her to hear them…”

“I still love her, Robin! Nothing’s changed. Except with mum…”

“Well now it’s time for her and Snow to put it to bed once and for all! She married her daughter. It needs to end for everybody’s sake. Let’s leave them to it now.”

“What about the kids? While all this has been going on, nobody’s been…”

“All taken care of. Faith and Hope are in the nursery with Pamela. Honour and Roland are being collected by Will and Alice. We’ve plenty of time before we head over there, and I’ve asked Regina not to come back until she’s cleared things up with Snow and David. And I don’t mean explaining, I mean apologising!”

They spent the last hour quietly talking, trying to move the conversation to anything other than their fight. They talked about the wedding. Henry’s trip. Her return to the Sheriff’s Department. Anything but what happened.

Finally, Emma kissed him on the lips. “Thanks, Robin - for making me go and see mum yesterday. Gina and I are so lucky to have you! I don’t know what we would have done without you, these last few days. I’m so grateful…” She stepped back, picking up the cups to take back to the kitchen.

His eyes darkened as he couldn’t help but stare at her delicious ass. “Hmm. How grateful… exactly?”

*Emma knew that look!* “Oh! Well…a spare couple of hours, you say?” Robin nodded back.

“Well come upstairs in five minutes, and I’ll show you just how grateful I can be!”

---

“She’s given you the way out, you blithering idiot!” growled the imp as Rumple tried to avoid looking at him. “Do you hear me? She’s said she’ll step away! You don’t even need to kill her! Just tell her you and your librarian want to be together and she’ll bugger off!”

As he tried to avoid the demon, his mind couldn’t help but go back to that beautiful song the mermaid had sung to his son last night. And before he could help himself, the vision of the two of them, kneeling side-by-side on the bed, in their suggestive nightwear, crept into his mind. *That’s all the demon needed.*

“Ah, so that’s it! Triton’s daughter is doing things to yer loins, isn’t she? Or perhaps you’re wanting both of them? Not so difficult, spinner. Take a heart and take control! You’ve done it many times before…”

Rumple had indeed controlled so many people before, but the idea of taking the hearts of either Belle
or Ariel just...sickened him. He looked up, ready to yell once again at his permanent tormentor. However, the moment he saw the imp, he gasped. Instead of the shiny dark-grey scales, the creature was even more pale than before he’d gone to Boston! An almost sickly pale-grey skin hung from its face! The usual belligerence and cockiness was there, but it looked to be almost...dying?

The beast had clearly picked up his thoughts, shrinking back with a nervousness Rumple had never witnessed before. He needed to think, but knew whatever thoughts he had would instantly be transmitted to the creature, who now said nothing. As though it’s vulnerability had been exposed. As a defiant final word, it almost screamed. “You’re running out of time, spinner! Take action, before I move to someone who can!”

---

After Robin and Daniel’s deaths, the next half-hour proved to be one of the most difficult of Regina’s life. For the first ten minutes, Regina had asked Snow to “please, just sit and listen.” She had gone on to tell the princess about the reasons behind her behaviour. About her up upbringing at the hands of her mother. About Cora’s quest for power. Then the deliberate staging of Snow White’s horse bolting by her mother, so Regina could be seen to rescue the girl. About how Snow’s leaking of her plans to run away with Daniel, led directly to Cora crushing his heart in the stable. About how she forced her daughter into marriage with a king so much older than her.

Snow already knew a lot of it, but the detail was much harder to listen to. Regina didn’t leave anything out. “I’m sorry Snow. It’s no excuse for my subsequent behaviour, and I know you don’t want to hear this, but you need to know that regardless, he was like as a father to you, Leopold raped and beat me, on numerous occasions. Of all the foul deeds I committed, I regret nearly all, but never of letting the genie kill your father! That bastard deserved it. He’s one of the reasons I took that potion, to make myself infertile. Not just to get back at him, but also my mother. I wished I was dead, and I even once tried to commit suicide. But Tinker Bell saved me.”

Snow listened in silence.

She went on to detail her descent into madness. How Rumpelstiltskin arrived on the scene to take advantage, showing her the magic she possessed and how to use it for control. How she used it trap the genie, later to become Sydney Glass, in the mirror to enable her to spy on everyone. How she trapped and banished Cora. How she pursued Snow to revenge Daniel’s death. Regina told them everything.

“But all those deaths? Regina, you and your soldiers murdered so many! Mothers, fathers, children—all to get revenge on a young girl who made a stupid mistake? Every one of them had the right to live just as much as any one of your own. It makes no sense! You merely banished Cora, the woman who actually murdered Daniel, but really murdered your own father, a good man, just to get revenge on me!”

“I know. There is no logic to it, only madness. And that is why I will burn in hell like my mother, for perpetuity, while my father and all the other innocents will live in paradise. That will be my ultimate punishment.”

“It doesn’t have to be!” said David, speaking for the first time. “I’ve spoken to Merlin. Anyone can be saved if they really repent and attempt to make reparations for their crimes. You can’t do anything for those whose lives have been destroyed, but you can do something for those left behind.”

The former queen silently nodded. “He said something similar to me. I was planning on doing something when I discovered I was carrying Faith. I have plans to try to fix this. It may not be enough but at least I’ll have tried.”
“Why are you telling me this now, Regina? Why aren’t you instead with Emma, apologising to her?”

“Because our row was about you! It got overheated and I – I slapped her! She’s with Robin now, but I needed to see you first. To apologise…before I go grovelling back to her.”

David left them, stopping only to rest a calming hand on Regina’s shoulder and kissing the top of her head. The next half hour was intense for both women as things that they should have talked through long ago were finally out in the open. Many tears were shed. Finally, before she left, Snow asked her about something.

“So, it seems Emma, you and Robin are now able to talk to each other telepathically? That’s quite astonishing. So intimate. You must have an amazing bond between the three of you?”

“Yes, we’re still learning how to do it properly. I have to open up my mind to them and let them in.” she closed her eyes, trying to now focus on Emma and Robin. Is was then, she felt an astonishing surge of energy, like a jolt of electricity powering through her. “Woah!” she gasped, jolting back in shock. “Shit!”

“Regina, What is it?” asked Snow, seeing her daughter-in-law curl up, pulling her knees up to her chest.

It took a moment for her to figure out what was happening. A wild jolt of energy, pulsing, down in her groin. It wasn’t painful….it was…was just like a… “Oh, god!” she groaned, realising she was sensing her wife right now. Emma was having some sort of…orgasm? Fucking hell, I think I’m having one with her!

“Regina, what’s happening?” yelled Snow, now standing, and clearly worried.

“Nothing! It’s Emma! I just…just need to go back! I’ll see you…” almost immediately a purple mist spun around her and she was gone.

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“Mr. Gold? I’m surprised to hear from you. How are you, this fine evening?” answered the Sorcerer into his phone. Professor Merlin Gold sat at his desk at the New York surgery. “How can I help?”

“Good evening, Professor. I’m sorry to call you at work, but I have a matter of some urgency to discuss with you. However I need to set up some time when we can discuss it. I need to be outside the Storybrooke border to make the call. Walls have ears, you know?”

Merlin recognised the issue almost immediately. “Perhaps at seven this evening, after surgery?”

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Later that evening, Rumple drove to the edge of town, driving a few hundred feet or so beyond the town line. He parked and called the Sorcerer. “Good evening, again, Rumple. What seems to be the problem?”

“I thought it best we talk outside the magical borders of the town. It’s about the Dark One.”

“Well you’d know more about that particular subject than me. Has something happened?”

“I’m not sure, though it seems he knows nothing of ant time I spend outside a magical realm. That’s why I made the call here. It’s like he has been put into some sort of suspension. However, the last
couple of times he’s tormented me, he appears to be…weakened. His colour is disappearing, appearing much lighter grey. He seems more agitated than usual. Having him on me for the best part of three centuries, this is a first. I know the force cannot die, but I wonder whether it can be neutralised?”

The Sorcerer considered. “Well, I’d only ever known Nimue in magical lands, so I cannot be sure. The colour’s pale, you say? It could be your absence from magic, though it sounds more like an act of true love has occurred.

“True love? I don’t understand?”

“I’m surprised you haven’t realised by now. Every unplanned, unsolicited act of love for another, or kindness, is like a blow to the Dark One. It survives on pain, anguish, guilt and suffering. Replace it with acts of love and the creature is weakened. I don’t believe it can be killed but perhaps, being away from its magical source it could be encouraged to leave the host body…”

“To some other poor bastard, no doubt!”

“Or perhaps to another place? If it detects magic, it could make its way there…if there was no other option? I recall you said, when we last met, you were planning a trip with your grandson?”

“Indeed I am. In two weeks’ time. We’re away for a month.”

“Then perhaps we should be preparing a welcoming committee for the Dark One on your return? Would I have your permission to do so? Obviously, I cannot inform you of the details.”

“Please do whatever you think necessary. I have already prepared a forgetting potion covering for the last hour, as he’ll know about this the moment I step back over the line.”

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“Well come upstairs in five minutes, and I’ll show you just how grateful I can be!” whispered Emma, coquettishly.

Robin had now been living with the Swan-Mills women for just over a year, and his love for Emma, and hers for him, had become stronger and stronger ever since. Before his death, the pair had barely had a decent conversation alone. But now, she was as much a part of him as Regina. Their contradictions, their compatibility, their contrasts, merely made him love them both, even more. And now, seeing Emma's lustful look, his feelings boiled rapidly, as usual.

“Don’t think I can wait that long!” he growled, latching his lips to hers in a heated kiss, and feeling her chuckling into his mouth. Without any hesitation, one of her hands left his side, to slide down his waist, around the front and into his trousers, to firmly grasp a hardening bulge through his boxers. Robin moaned at the contact.

“Hmm,” she breathed. “Well, it would be a shame to waste that!”

And they didn’t! In a matter of seconds, Robin had magicked her panties onto the kitchen worktop, hitching up her skirt. She didn’t bother with the magic, instead, un buckling his belt and forcefully pushing his jeans and boxers past his knees, by hand, grasping his penis firmly in her right hand and pumping twice, hard. He looked surprised at her speed. “Well, you did say you couldn’t wait!”

His hands went around her backside, ready to lift her onto the worktop and move his mouth down
onto her, to prepare her, as usual. However, this time Emma was taking charge. “No. No need. I’m ready – trust me!” her overblown pupils flared at him. “Inside – now!”

“My wish is my command, milady!” he grunted, lifting her up easily and over the top of his cock. Emma slid a hand underneath to line him up with her entrance and without further ado, still standing, he lowered her slowly onto his thickening member, both hissing in delight as she gently expanded to accommodate him.

“Ooooh, fuck! That’s good!” she groaned, into his mouth. Robin could only agree, feeling her, like a moist, tight velvet glove, consuming him. But he couldn’t just do this standing, without some sort of balance. So, as she squatted on him, wrapping her legs around his waist, he pushed her back into the wall, allowing him to really move in and out, growling with the intense, wonderful sensation of fucking his fiancée in earnest.

Emma, now really getting into it, brought her hands to his chest, tearing at his shirt, buttons flying off, to expose his muscular shoulders and back, pulling the material down as far as possible, without needing his arms to leave her ass to support her. This was sex in the raw, an animal passion that had overtaken them. As she moulded into him, her back squashed against the brick, he drove harder and deeper inside her. And my god, she loved it!

Her fingers gripped his upper back and she grazed her nails hard over the flesh, drawing blood. For a brief moment, an image of him doing exactly this to Regina popped into her mind, and she remembered the look of utter bliss as the brunette came loudly, her teeth biting her lower lip in ecstasy. How the image alone had been enough to trigger something in herself. As Regina’s face stayed in her mind, the familiar electric jolt ran through her as her orgasm hit. “Aaaaah, yeeesss!” she yelled.

Robin slowed a little, to check on her. “Have…have you?” he said between thrusts, his release surely only a minute or so away.

“Yes, but for god’s sake, don’t stop - I want you coming too!” she ordered. So Robin continued to power into her. “This is fucking heaven!”

At that moment, the purple mist appeared, Regina now apparating into the dining room doorway, and already sensing her lovers’ magic. It took a few seconds to focus and see what was happening. Regina’s mouth dropped in surprise, at the sight of Robin, his tight little bum on display, his trousers around his ankles, ploughing hard into Emma, who was pushed up against the kitchen wall!

Robin seemed to be growling aggressively at her, and Emma’s head, resting on his shoulder, had her eyes tight shut and teeth bared, almost snarling. Anybody looking at the Saviour would think she was in pain. But Regina knew that look, oh so well! She was in ecstasy, and clearly in the throes of an imminent orgasm. The sight of her two loves in such a passionate lock brought immediate and overwhelming feelings to the former queen, who seemed to be experiencing something below, once again, that she imagined her wife must currently be feeling too.

Emma dug her nails in his back and bit his shoulder, bringing a loud hiss from the outlaw. “Fuck Emma….” His voice faded, to be replaced by the blonde’s ear-piercing shriek. “Yes! Yes, come on! Oh fuck! Yessss!”

At the noise, Regina felt her own centre surge, a pulse racing through her. The second time in a matter of minutes, “Oh god! Ooooh…”

The noise made Emma’s eyes open immediately! She saw her wife in the doorway, her eyes closed and a hand on the door frame to hold her up, shaking violently with her other hand pressed on her
Robin heard Emma call to someone behind him, but with his own climax starting, it was too late to stop. Much too late! “Haaaaaaaah! Emma! I'm co....” he groaned in relief, as he exploded deep inside her. Even Emma felt his relief. “Hell! So...so...good!”

Seeing her gripping him tighter in surprise, he turned his head back, while still within her, to see Regina staring at them!

“OH! Sorry my love, would you mind...?” He blurted in embarrassment.

“Robin – could you at least either lift me off your cock, or put me down before we talk to my wife?”

The moment he lifted her off, still semi-erect, placing her feet on the ground, Emma, her face bright red, either from the orgasm or the embarrassment, raised a hand to cover herself in a clean pair of panties, before lowering the skirt. She looked at Regina, with no idea what to say. Although he is our lover after all! Why should I be embarrassed? However, seeing her wife in some sort of discomfort and awkwardness, she stepped up to her immediately, taking her hands. “Gina?”

“We urgently need to something about this mind-link - your orgasm went right through me!”

“What? I don’t understand?”

“You had one a few minutes ago too, didn’t you?” she asked, to a small nod from the other woman.

“I felt it! Unfortunately, I was standing in front of Snow at the time! At least give a girl some warning, would you?”

At that, Emma gasped, raising a hand to her mouth. However, Robin, realising what she'd just said, suddenly burst into a fit of laughter.

“IT’S NOT FUNNY, THIEF!” she yelled at him. “AND FOR GOD’S SAKE, PULL YOUR TROUSERS UP!”

But he was too far gone to reply. Tears of laughter streamed down his face and his body shook. Emma, seeing his collapse, started to grin too and rapidly fell in to uncontrollable giggles, her hands coming up to her face.

Seeing her lovers in hysterics, even Regina began to see the funny side, though she wasn’t going to give them the pleasure of showing it!

“Glad to see you find the idea of my involuntarily orgasming in front of your mother, so hilarious, Swan? Perhaps I’ll return the favour? When you’re next alone in the diner? Perhaps the Christmas party? I'm sure they'd love the sight of their saviour looking like she's got her vibrator stuck in the mains!”

That really didn’t help, and the pair still couldn’t stop laughing.

“Sorry milady, but I’ve got to agree with Emma on this one. It’s fucking hilarious!”

“After I spent the last hour grovelling to Snow White? Apologising and saying I would change and stop taunting her? Don’t you think I’ve suffered enough?”
Emma paused, finally bringing her laughter under control. As she wiped the tears from her cheeks, her face changed to something more...serious.

“Well. Perhaps I could consider it a decent form of retribution - for slapping me around the face?”

A look of shame fell across Regina in an instant, remembering what had happened only a few hours ago.

"Perhaps you're right. Perhaps I do deserve it!"

---
I Think we lost Mum!

Chapter Summary

Henry and Rumple prepare for their European tour. Word starts to leak about Belle and Ariel. Emma bumps into her old lover and his son and as they spend some quality time in New York, Regina and Emma learn Snow isn't as vanilla as they thought...

Chapter Notes

Merry Christmas to all of you! Hope you're enjoying the break. We're spending ours in the Alsace region of France. Food wonderful, weather terrible. Hence the gap since the last chapter. Hope you enjoy...

Wedding coming soon. Boy, have I got an idea for the honeymoon!

If I don't get the next chapter out in time, have a very Happy New Year!

Chapter 51

Two weeks later, having arrived back from Harvard for the long weekend, Henry and Rumple sat side by side at his breakfast table, finalising the itinerary for the forthcoming trip, with Ariel and Belle sitting opposite, Belle making suggestions for additional sites and things to do.

Arriving the previous morning, his family had mobbed Henry from the start. Honour and Margot adored their big brother (Margot now regarded by all as just one of the family) and monopolized his time the moment he’d arrived home. Finally free, after Henry had read them early bedtime stories, Robin had insisted Regina and Emma take their son out, to get some valuable time together, on their own.

Henry proposed dinner with his mothers at the Earl of Locksley. So, an hour later, the three sat around a dinner table. “I must admit, while I’m pleased you’re looking forward to the trip, your mother and I haven’t seen that much of you this year, what with everything that’s happened. And now you’re off for another five weeks. I’m missing you!” She frowned. Emma gave a sad smile, bringing her arm around her wife’s shoulder.

“It's true. We both do. But she’ll be fine, Hen. But we do miss you a lot when you’re away! Even if you are all grown up.”

Henry brought his hands over the table to take one of each of his mother's. “I know, mums, and believe it or not, I do miss you too! I love you and I know we’ve had a bit of a falling out over the last year, what with the jail, my magic, grandpa and everything. I promise I’ll try not to be so much of a jerk this year. But you’ve had so much going on since Robin came back, what with the babies and everything…”

“You're our eldest, Henry!” said Regina. “Just because we’re a big family, don't forget you’re in the
centre too! Without you, none of this would even be possible.”

“I guess. Anyway, enough of being maudlin! Tell me about the wedding plans? You fixed the date yet?”

“Maudlin? Hen, Harvard teaching you big words just to confuse your mothers?” said Emma, with a hint of sarcasm.

“It means over-sentimental or self-pitying, Emma!” rebuked the brunette. “And I for one am happy that our son is greatly developing his vocabulary. He is studying English Literature, after all! Still, never mind all that. Before we start talking about the wedding, I have a much more important question. Namely, why is your grandfather constantly being seen around Storybrooke in new casual designer clothes? Kathryn said he’s changed his wardrobe completely, and all the black suits seem to have disappeared. I know he came to see you a couple of weeks ago, so, what’s going on?”

Henry chuckled. “Yeah. A lady’s touch, in more ways than one!” Both women’s brows went up at that!

“You are SO going to explain that, in much greater detail, young man!” Emma smirked back. “You’re saying the Dark One’s got a new girlfriend?”

“Weeeell, I’m not sure about that! But they are close. Basically, a friend of mind, my flatmate Sofia. Well, her grannie owns some shops in Boston and New York and other places. We went out for dinner and they hit it off! They left us and spent a few evenings together. The next thing I knew, there’s loads of boxes of clothes he’s bought. All designer names. Upmarket stuff. I think Gabbie’s got the hots for him. I don’t care. He seems happier than I’ve ever seen him!”

“Gabbie? Gabbie who?” asked Emma. “Some business woman? Not like he needs the money…”

“Her name's Gabriella Weiss. She’s lovely; probably as wealthy as him! So no, it wasn’t anything like that. They just seemed to really get on together. She’s a widow and he’s single. So what’s the harm?”

Regina had already pulled out her cell phone, having heard the name before. Once she googled, she gasped in surprise. “’Gabriella Weiss. Designer and retailer’, it says here. She owns over twenty-five stores! Henry, this woman is dating Gold?”

“Hell. I wonder if Belle knows?” pondered Emma. “She’s probably going to be pissed!”

“No idea. Still, it’s none of her business now, is it? She’s got Ariel, after all.” The moment he said it, Henry realized he’d said too much. *His grandpa might have told him that in confidence.* “Sorry, forget I said that!”

“Belle and Ariel!” the wives replied, almost simultaneously. They saw the embarrassed look on Henry’s face, knowing he’d said too much.

“Yeah. I shouldn’t have said anything. I think grandpa told me that in confidence! Please don’t say anything to anyone? It’s not like they’ve announced anything,” He begged, awkwardly.

“Of course, Hen. But I always just assumed they were both straight!” whispered Emma, now conscious of being overheard.

“Doesn’t she want to get back to Prince Eric?” asked Regina, well aware of the mermaid’s story and the fight for her voice. She’d always assumed they’d found true love.
“They’re not together any more. Ariel’s been living at grandpa’s house for a few weeks now. It seems Eric is already with someone else. Some local princess, though I can’t remember her name. Ariel’s kinda moved in...”

“She moved in to Gold’s?” Emma gasped. “Is she even safe there?”

“Of course she’s safe!” he replied, a little irritated. “She helps look after Gideon.”

“I never imagined either of them could be...bisexual! The bookworm went out with Will Scarlett! Then that over-muscled baboon who runs the Rabbit Hole...”

“Yeah, but let’s face it, half the women around here seem to ‘dabble’ like that, don’t they...mums?” his tone was almost derogatory. The women looked at each other. Was that supposed to be aimed at us?

“Well, I’m more than surprised! The imp would normally have slaughtered anyone, man or woman, coming anywhere near Belle! I recall he beat up Keith Nottingham once, just for letching at her!”

“Well, don’t forget, this time gramps threw Belle out! Not the other way around. Now he just wants her happy.”

The women gave each other a look. “Enough to let Belle’s...girlfriend...live with them? Can’t see that working for too long. Oh, well, never mind all that. Are we going to get any more time with you this weekend? You said you’re going to Gold’s tomorrow?”

“Yeah, we’re finalising everything for the trip. Now, tell me about the wedding!”

“All in good time, young man! Now tell me, who’s this ‘Sofia’ girl? A ‘roommate’, you said!”

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*The following morning.*

“So it’s all agreed? Grandpa and I leave Oslo on the second Sunday afternoon. You and Ariel take the Eurostar from London, and we all meet up again at the hotel in Paris. On Wednesday evening, we’ll all take the train down to Strasbourg. Saturday we fly to Rome, so we need to confirm flights and hotels for that bit. So, five days in Rome. Everyone happy with it so far?” Henry asked the little group.

Rumple saw a look on his wife’s face. “Belle, something wrong? Something you wish to change? Now is the time to speak up.”

Belle sighed, loudly. “Nothing wrong, it’s just, Rome has got lots to see and you could easily spend a lifetime there. But I was really hoping to go to Florence. I’ve always wanted to visit the Uffizi Gallery - it’s got probably the best collection of mediaeval renaissance paintings in the world.”

“Yes, certainly the finest examples of Botticelli and da Vinci, if I recall”, pondered Rumple. “What about you Ariel, you fancy that?” he asked, trying to fit in the last few days of the trip before their return.

“Well, not really. I rather fancy Venice! It looks stunning. But I’ll go with whatever the rest of you decide on...”

*Henry was surprised the mermaid even knew about Venice!* “Well we can’t do both, as it’ll be the last few days and we’ll need to fly back Sunday. Though I must admit, I quite fancy Florence too,
Belle. I read up on the Uffizi and I’d like to visit the Ponte Vecchio if I’m there. Grandpa?”

“I rather like Ariel’s idea of Venice. I read up on it recently and The Doge’s Palace and St. Mark’s Square do look rather magnificent. There’s also a magical centre not far from there, on a little island close by.”

“So how about we just do two days in Rome?” suggested Henry. “Venice and Florence are just train rides away. Ariel, how about you and grandpa heading across to Venice while me and Belle go to Florence? Two nights away and then we come back to Rome for the last day! Next day, we get the flight back to New York!”

“An excellent idea, my boy; we all get what we want. Provided Belle and Ariel are happy with that?” The men looked at the ladies sitting opposite for comment.

Belle looked silently at Ariel, hoping she’d say something. The mermaid had moved in just over three weeks ago and they hadn’t spent a day, or night, apart. With the exception of Belle’s work at the library. She hadn’t discussed their situation with anyone apart from Rumple, although she thought Aurora and Mulan had already suspected there was something between them. That was, until Henry’s next question.

“That is, unless you two couldn’t bear to be separated from one another, more than a day?”

Both women’s cheeks pinked almost instantly. He knows!

“What? No…of course we can, Henry! I don’t have any problem with…but…what about Gideon? Who’s going to look after him there?”

“It’ll be my turn anyway,” piped up Ariel, squeezing her hand under the table. “If his father is joining me, we’ll be just fine! Unless you’d prefer to explore Venice separately, Angus?” she smiled at Rumple.

That surprised Henry! He’d never heard anyone, apart from Sofia’s grandmother, call his grandfather by his first name in this realm.

Henry looked to see how he would respond, but he seemed oblivious to it, merely smiling back at the mermaid. “Not particularly, dearie. We can split off from each other while we’re there, if you have anything specific to see that doesn’t appeal. But I’m more than agreeable for you to join me. It’ll be easier if two of us look after Gideon, after all. I’m sure Henry and Belle are more than capable of going their own way in Florence.”

Belle looked aghast at her. Had Ariel really just agreed to spend two days alone in Venice with Rumple?

“Great. I’ll go ahead and book the last bits then, grandpa. Three rooms in Rome, two in Venice, two in Florence, then three back in Rome for the last two nights, before the flights back. I’ll also sort out the trains too,” said Henry, pleased they’d finally agreed and finalised the complicated five-week itinerary. “Grandpa, did you get all the passports sorted out?”

“I did indeed, Henry,” He said, digging into his briefcase to bring out a large brown envelope. Handing Belle her own one, she was more than surprised to see what seemed to be a very recent passport photo of herself and a digital signature almost exactly like her own.

“Rumple, how did you…?” but she knew even before asking. Contacts? Magic? Perhaps a bit of both…

“It’s all in order, dearie. I’ve made assumptions on Miss Tritonsdottir’s date of birth. As her surname would attract suspicion, I’ve given her your maiden name, Belle. So it’ll seem as though you’re
sisters. I trust you’re ok with that, Ariel?”

“More than happy, Angus. You two seem to have thought of everything!” Henry was surprised at just how comfortable the mermaid and his grandfather were with each other. She seemed a lot more at ease about things than Belle!

“Thank you, we do try!. So, in two weeks’ time, early on Saturday Henry will pick you both up and you’ll drive to JFK. I will meet you at the airport, as Gideon and I will be leaving here on Thursday.”

“Why Rumple?” asked Belle, surprised at the change of plan. “Why aren’t we leaving together?”

“I have a prior engagement in Boston,” he said, with no further details. Henry saw Belle’s look darken, almost into a scowl.

“Oh? And can’t this ‘prior engagement’ wait until we get back?” her tone hardened, to the surprise of Henry and Ariel. “Can’t ‘it’… or is it ‘she’, wait?”

_Rumple knew that look!_ “No actually. I will be meeting my broker and yes, also spending some time with Miss Weiss. I have no wish, nor need, to postpone it. In fact, I’m very much looking forward to seeing her again, and my grandson is more than capable of organising things from here, aren’t you, Henry?”

Henry loved the way his grandfather treated him like an adult. Since his magic came in a year and a half ago, Rumple had taken him under his wing, teaching him so much. Not just about how to control and exploit magic, but also his business affairs and how best to make use of his management skills. He’d even given him a large endowment, making him less financially dependent on his mothers. Henry knew it was partly due to a guilt that burdened the man’s soul, at the loss of his own son, but that made him love the old wizard even more.

“Of course, grandpa. I’ll also let Sofia know you’re coming. She said she’d love to see you again for a drink. That is, if her granny doesn’t monopolise you, like last time!”

As he smirked back, Rumple’s face turned into a groan when he heard his son begin crying from the cot upstairs. “Bugger. He’s only been down half an hour! If he stays awake now, he’ll be up all night.” He stood, heading towards the door, as a voice behind him called, “I’ll come with you, Angus. Perhaps I could sing to him again if he doesn’t settle?”

“Good idea, dearie. Come…” the pair left the room together to settle the screaming toddler, leaving Henry and a seemingly irritated Belle alone. Henry couldn’t help but notice how her mood had changed so rapidly.

“Something wrong?” he asked her.

“Oh, nothing,” she huffed. “I just don’t see why he doesn’t leave the same time, with us. Henry, this woman. Gabbie? What do you know about her? Is it serious between them? I just…wondered.”

He ignored the question. “You’re jealous! You’re jealous of her!”

“No…don’t be silly, it’s nothing like that, I just…”

“You’re annoyed grandpa’s finally got himself a new girlfriend, aren’t you?” he said, irritated at her question. “I don’t see why – you’ve got one yourself! Don’t you think he deserves to be happy too?”

_That confirmed he knew about her and Ariel!_ She was stunned at his blunt question. “Henry…I’m not…yes, of course he deserves to be happy! I’m just surprised, that’s all! In the last few weeks he’s
changed his clothes, his entire wardrobe; all it seems because of this ‘Gabbie’ person! I just find it a little odd, after all the time I’ve known him.”

“Well, think of it from his point of view. It must also be a bit odd seeing his wife become a lesbian, don’t you think?” Belle was rarely lost for words, but that threw her.

Was she a lesbian? She was certainly in a lesbian relationship. But she still liked men, too! So she was bisexual? Like Aurora and Mulan? Or Emma and Regina? And what were her feelings for Ariel? She was certainly drawn to her. Very much so. For the best part of a month they had shared a bed, and each other. Sex with her was wonderful. But was she in love with her? And why was she upset about Rumple? Henry was right – he did deserve to be happy. So what is he to me now?

“Henry, this isn’t something I wish to discuss with you. It’s…between him and me!”

“Though it isn’t is it? You’ve brought someone else in here, haven’t you? Belle, I have no problem with who you’re with, but I don’t want you standing in the way of grandpa’s happiness, either. I’ve never seen him so happy and I don’t intend to allow anyone to fuck it up. Former wife or not.”

“I’m STILL his wife!” he growled back at him. “And you may be a grown man, Henry Mills, but you will not tell me how to treat my own husband!”

“Yeah. Like you did such a great job before, eh?” he sarked back.

---

Upstairs, the atmosphere in Gideon’s nursery was very different. Ariel stood silently watching, as Rumple cuddled the grouchy almost-toddler in his arms. He was singing him some sort of nursery rhyme.

“Oh, ye cannae shove yer grannie aff a bus.
Ye canny shove yer grannie aff a bus.
Ye canny shove yer grannie, cause she's yer mammie's mammie
Ye canny shove yer grannie aff a bus.”

Ariel listened to the rich, Scottish accent, as he sang soft and low. She smiled, seeing the little one slowly smile back at his father. She could feel the overwhelming love he had for his son.

“Now ye can shove yer other grannie aff a bus - PUSH! PUSH!
Ye can shove yer other grannie aff a bus - PUSH PUSH!
Ye can shove yer other grannie, cause she's just yer daddie's mammie
Ye can shove yer other grannie aff a bus - PUSH PUSH!”

She couldn’t stifle the little giggle at his words. She found the pair of them just adorable together, and a part of her wished that, one day, she might even be able to have a baby of her own. A tinge of sadness overcame her, as she remembered her last parting with Eric, the young prince who stole her heart. It was not to be!

“He’s so beautiful, Angus,” she whispered as she stepped closer to them. “I’d always hoped to have a child of my own, one day. You are a truly lucky man. He’s nearly asleep now. May I help him settle?”

“Aye, dear, of course. Let me hand him to you…” She cradled her arms as he moved into her space.
As she took the weight, she leaned in and kissed the man’s cheek, something she had done, almost nightly, recently. Usually as she retired for bed. “You’re a wonderful father, Rumpelstiltskin!” she breathed.

He would never admit it, but he had slowly begun to savour their little goodnight kisses at the end of each day. The mermaid was one of life’s innocents, untouched by the nastiness of the world. It made him want to protect her. All the more surprising, seeing as she was usually leaving to share a bed with his wife! “Thank you, my dear,” he whispered back. “And I hope one day you’ll have a chance to become a mother yourself. You certainly have a mother’s touch.”

“Hmm. Bit unlikely now, though. Probably why I enjoy having time with Gideon. He’s just perfect…”

“Aye, he is.” A moment later, for reasons unknown to him, he gently leaned forward and gave her a small kiss on her lips. “Never say never!” he whispered, stepping back and moving toward the door. It was Ariel’s turn to be stunned. He just…kissed me! And she had to admit, she rather enjoyed it!

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And so, two weeks later, Henry, Belle and Ariel set off for New York, bound for the airport. He’d hired a bigger car to take the extra luggage and baby walker, Rumple having gone on ahead with his uncle two days before. His family gathered to see him off. It had been an emotional farewell, particularly for his mothers. Although he’d mainly been living in Cambridge, near Boston, since winning his place in Harvard two years ago, his trip to Europe was a foretaste of what it would feel like in the future. With their son travelling far, far away from them.

Henry loved the fact he was now a good ten inches taller than either of them, as he brought both mothers into a group hug. “Mums, it’ll be fine! It’ll be no different to me being at university.”

“It will Henry, because you’ll be thousands of miles away, at least five hours ahead, and in a different time zone!” said Regina, not comforted in the least. “And why’s your grandfather not here, to travel to the airport with you?”

“He’s gone on ahead with Gideon. He’s seeing his broker and…a friend.” He looked across at Belle, who was standing just out of earshot, watching Robin and Ariel load everything into the car.

“This friend being Gabriella Weiss, by any chance?”

“Erm, yeah, probably. Why’d you ask?”

As they talked, Emma saw an odd look on the librarian’s face. “You ok? You look a little… nervous!”

“Oh fine, I guess. I am a little bit. I’ve read so much about the Land Without Magic from books and seen so much on tv, but it’s different from actually going there! I’m also nervous about the flying…”

“Don’t be. It’s a lot easier than you imagine. Get some of the complimentary drinks inside you, and get your head down for a sleep and you’ll be fine.”

“I suppose so. Rumple said he’s already booked some sort of ‘bed seats’. Harry said it was ‘business class’, whatever that means.”

The Saviour smiled back. Then, as they were now out of earshot, she couldn’t resist it. “So. You and Ariel? I definitely didn’t see that one coming, Belle!”
Belle blushed. *Clearly it was all over the damn town. “Um, nor did I.”*

“So, are you an item yet - is it ‘official’?”

She cringed. “No. It’s just…early days. So, we’ll see. Maybe.” *She really didn’t want to be having this conversation!*

“Perhaps this trip will help! Surprised you’re taking your ex-husband, though? I would have thought you’d have wanted to ditch him and do your own thing!”

“He’s still my husband, Emma! And my son’s father,” she seethed. “I know you two don’t get along, but I do! He’s…changed. And he’s invited Ariel and myself along on Henry’s trip, not the other way around.”

“Oh, he’s definitely changed! What with the clothes and everything. All very swish – it makes him look a lot younger! I guess he’s going out with someone, too?” *Emma knew she was pushing her luck, as she already knew the answer.*

“Yes, so I gather.” *Belle really needed to end this conversation.*

“Henry tells me you’ll be splitting up into groups for some parts of the trip?”

“Yes. There’s a lot to take in. We’re all going to London first. Henry will then head off to Oxford, Rumple to Scotland, and Ariel and I to York, where we’ll meet up again later. We’ve a few stops in between, but we’re together in Norway and France, then splitting up again before we all get to Rome. It should be fun!”

*God I hope so – I’m bloody petrified!*

---

Once they’d bid Henry a teary farewell, the Locksley and Swan-Mills families descended on the diner for lunch. Heading for the largest table available, Emma froze at the site of a too-familiar face. Killian Jones, with the proprietors, huddled in a corner! However, Ruby spotted the Saviour first.

“Emma! Did Henry get away ok?”

The blonde knew she couldn’t avoid him forever and had dreaded this moment. So, taking a breath, she stepped towards the group. “Hi Rubes, Dorothy. Killian, Rosalind, nice to see you both back!” She looked across at her former lover, for the first time in over a year and a half. *He still looks as hot as ever!* Then his piercing blue eyes found hers. *That look still made her knees feel weak.* Her voice betraying her nerves.

“Swan, it’s been a while. You’re looking well; and the family continues to grow, I see!” he nodded in the direction of Regina and Robin, who were behind her, pushing the long double buggy through the room, towards them.

“Um, yeah. Regina and I had two more girls! One each. And I gather you’ve got a son yourself?” she looked across at the still rather glamorous figure of Rosalind, currently sitting, feeding a tot with a spoon.

“He’s got two actually!” said Dorothy, standing close to Ruby, while she sat feeding their own slightly older toddler. “Nathaniel is Killian’s son too! We decided between the four of us, not to keep it confidential. Without Rosie and Killian’s consent, he wouldn’t even be here!” she looked with appreciation to the other couple.
“And Rosie is now my wife. We married just before Liam was born.” He leaned over to kiss her on
the cheek.

Emma stepped closer, to get a better look. “Congratulations, he’s lovely! I can see the resemblance
between the two of them. The eyes!”

By now, Regina had settled the children at their table, Robin walking across to stand by Emma’s
side. He exchanged a knowing look with Killian, before the former pirate stepped forward, giving
his old friend a hug, slapping his back. “It’s good to see you, thief!” said Killian. “Fate has been kind
to you too, I see?”

Emma watched the simple embrace between the two men, feeling a little hurt Killian hadn’t even
attempted to hug her too, even though it would have been awkward.

“Hello, pirate! And hello again, Rosie!” Robin then bent down to deliver a small kiss to the mother’s
cheek and she responded in kind. “Congratulations. He’s a handsome lad indeed! Thank goodness
he looks like his mother instead of this old reprobate!” Earning a chuckle from Rosie and an eye roll
from Killian. Emma was always surprised, even slightly irritated, how easily Robin seemed to mix
with everyone, even in awkward situations. “And to answer your question, yes Killian, I’ve been
blessed with two more daughters, Hope and Faith. Life is indeed rather good!”

Amid the uneasy tension between them all, Rosalind was the first to ease it. “I guess I need to get to
know you a little better too now, Robin. It seems my little brother is dating your little sister!”

“So I gather. Do I need to give him a ‘big brother’ interrogation?” he grinned.

“I’d enjoy it, though your Maria wouldn’t thank you! She seems more than capable of taking care of
herself. It’s all horribly sweet. I’ve never seen him smitten before and Anna and I just assumed he’d
remain a bachelor forever.”

“There’s someone for everyone out there Rosie!” he glanced at Emma, with a wink.

“Or in your case, more than one!” She gave a sly grin at the Saviour. “Emma, come have a hold of
Liam and let Robin take me to meet your babies.” Before Emma could object, the tall brunette stood,
handing Killian’s baby up and into her arms, taking the Saviour by surprise. “Oh, um…” she
stuttered, nervously. Robin stepped back to introduce Rosie to his own family, leaving Emma alone
with the others.

As she held the baby, she couldn’t help but notice the odd, resigned but happy look in her former
lover’s eyes. “Funny how circumstances change, eh Swan?”

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“So Carrie and Maria are going to be in New York next weekend? The same weekend we are?”

“Apparently so,” said Regina. “Carrie’s popping up to see Whale and Maria’s seeing her boyfriend.
It seems Charles Sage is opening some sort of music school there. Carrie said we should have a girls-
only evening. I thought we could perhaps combine it with our own wedding expedition. Your
mother could join us.” After her long-overdue apology a few weeks ago, Regina was finally trying
to mend bridges with her mother-in-law.

So, a week later, Emma, Regina and Snow found themselves in a New York bistro, sharing cocktails
with Maria and Caroline Locksley. Robin’s sister and cousin turned out to be great company, and
after Caroline had giving them a guided tour of parts of Manhattan she and Victor had discovered,
they sat happily tired from the day.
“Ok girls, shall we do a few clubs or what? Anyone in the mood for dancing?” asked Maria. Emma and Regina, having enjoyed their baby-free and child-free morning lie-in, weren’t too keen on making it a long night. However the voice beside Emma piped up.

“I’d love that!” announced Snow White, already tipsy from just three tequila slammers. “When David and I stayed nearby, I saw that neon-lit place on the corner opposite the hotel that looked fun. ‘Diva’s’, I think that’s what it’s called…”

Carrie cackled into her drink. “We can certainly go there. And you probably won’t get pestered by any unwelcome male attention. Just the opposite, in fact. It’s a gay and lesbian bar. Good music though…”

Regina laughed. “I hardly think Snow would feel comfortable amongst a dance floor full of lesbians! She’d probably freak out if another woman came on to her!” Emma also laughed, nodding in agreement, which drew a raised brow from her mother, who was now offended.

“Why on earth would you think that? Perhaps you don’t know me as well as you think, Regina!”

“Oh come on, mum! A lesbian club? It’s not as though you’ve even kissed another girl before…”

“Again. Why on earth would you think that, Emma? I’ll have you know…” but she was interrupted.

“Mum, you’re Snow White! We’re not talking about a childhood crush here!”

Snow was now annoyed, and the alcohol was now doing the talking. “Thank you both for your condescending comments! But for your information, I HAVE kissed another girl, and I have also had full-blown sex with another girl! Once, before I met your father and once with him alongside me! So there…” the small crop-topped brunette stood, collected her bag and angrily stormed off to the toilets, leaving an astonished pair looking at each other, wide-eyed.

“Wow!” said Maria. “I’m guessing by the looks on your faces that was a surprise? Certainly makes my love life tame by comparison. I’ve kissed and fooled around with a few other girls but never gone that far! Sounds like your mum’s a lot more interesting than you thought, Emma! And as for your dad…”

Caroline giggled. “Well I guess that makes me the dullest woman here. I’m boringly straight. Only men I’m afraid. Perhaps I don’t have the looks…”

“You surprise me,” said Emma, still trying to get Snow’s parting words out of her head. “First time I saw you, in Robin’s pub, you were definitely flirting with Gina. And Ruby!”

Maria jumped in. “Oh, Carrie does that with everyone, Emma! Men, women. She flirts with all of them. That’s how she gets people to do what she wants.”

“I agree, she does!” said Regina, winking and blowing a kiss in Robin’s cousin’s direction. “And it works too.”

Emma instantly picked up the look. “Hey, knock it off, you two! Stop flirting! Unless you’ve forgotten, not only are you sitting beside your beloved wife, but we’re both going to be marrying her cousin in a few months. Control yourself madam!” she rebuked, albeit with a loving smile.

“Well I for one am never going to look Snow White and Prince Charming in the same way ever again!” said Maria, making the others, except Emma, giggle again. “I mean, I may be straight but, I’d go three-way if David Nolan asked me - he’s a babe!” Seeing Caroline and Regina nod in agreement really freaked Emma out.
“Aargh, please stop! That’s my dad you’re talking about! I’ve only just discovered my mother’s taken part in girl-sex and a threesome! Enough already!” Then, realising they were just teasing her, a mischievous idea came to her. “Maria, did I ever tell you just how good your brother is in the sack? Robin is…”

“Ok, I get it!” Robin’s sister defended herself. "Last Thanksgiving your wife said he was ‘hung like a donkey’, if I recall; which sadly, I do…!” Regina pinked slightly at remembering her tease, looking at Emma with a shade of guilt. So, Emma couldn’t resist.

“She said that? Well it’s true! Did she also tell you he’s the King of Cunnilingus? The things he can do with that tongue of his…”

Maria almost spat out her cocktail. “OK, I surrender! No more talking about your parents and sex, or my brother! I got it!”

“A guy who can get two women pregnant, at almost the same time…” she continued.

“Emma, please,” said Caroline, between her loud chuckles. “I’m only his cousin. Even I’ve heard too much.”

“…stiff as a post! Lasts for ages…” she couldn’t resist turning the knife.

“Emma, kindly stop telling these Locksley women about our love life!” said Regina, imperiously. Though inwardly she thought it was completely hilarious. God, I wish I could tell Robin about all this! “I think you’ve disturbed them enough for one evening. And if Robin caught wind of it, he’d be far too smug!”

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Late that evening, after saying goodbye to Maria and Caroline, who decided to head for a nightclub, the wives finally got back to their hotel room, Regina having insisted on a decent suite. As the brunette disappeared into the bathroom to change and freshen up, Emma fell back onto the large bed.

“Gina, I’m completely pooped! Maybe I’m getting too old for girls nights out. I need my sleep…”

“Oh, what a shame,” said Regina, stepping back into the bedroom wearing the sexiest silk camisole Emma had ever seen her in, which showed off her figure to perfection. “I wasn’t quite ready…to sleep,” she purred. “I bought a few…little items. What you do think of this?” she pirouetted for her wife’s gaze.

One look and Emma no longer felt sleepy! ”I think perhaps I’m not that tired after all! I assume that’s something you bought when I left you to go shopping this morning?”

Regina nodded, as her wife sat up, turning to the small collection of bags on her side of the bed. “I did a bit of shopping myself. I’ve found something that might go very nicely with that top!” Emma, took a black box from one bag, opening it up to reveal a silk sleeve, containing something Regina had only recently read about. As she pulled out the purple rubber item, Regina gasped.

“Ooh! Is that what I think it is?”

“Uh-huh. It’s called a feeldoe,” she said, lifting up the strapless dildo. “One end for each of us.”

“Hmm. Perhaps we could give it a test-drive? If you’re not too…tired?”

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An hour later, Regina collapsed on top of her lover, completely spent. “That was…rather wonderful!” After the vigorous bout of lovemaking, both women hot and sweaty, the brunette slid lowly off Emma onto her back, gently removing the feeldoe, before laying by her side, as they both caught their breath.

“It was great, though you held it in a little easier than I did! Perhaps I should borrow those pelvic-floor weights Archie prescribed you? I think I need the practise…”

“Nonsense,” said Regina, entwining her fingers with her spent lover. “You were superb. I came four times, so I’m more than happy. Though practise would be fun! Perhaps Robin would enjoy watching…”

Emma laughed. “He’s a kinky little bugger, there’s no ‘perhaps’ about it!”

The pair chuckled in the darkness. “Oh well, we’d better get some sleep! We’re supposed to meet for breakfast at nine, then head to the bridal shop with Snow.”

At that, a horrible realisation overcame over Emma. “Oh Fuck!” her voice became suddenly panicky. “Oh, holy fuck!”

“What is it? Emma, what’s wrong?”

“Mum! After she stormed off to the bathroom at the bistro, I forget all about her! I forgot she was with us! Oh shit. Gina, we left her behind! What if she didn’t get back?”

“Calm down, my love. She’s not completely incompetent! I’m sure she’ll have seen we went off somewhere else and headed back to the hotel. She’s Snow White, for heavens sake. She survived in the open. Give her a call, or just call her room. She might get annoyed you woke her up, but just tell her you were worried. She’ll be fine!”

Emma sat up immediately, getting her phone off the dressing table and speed dialling her mother. Within a few seconds the call went straight to voice messaging. Slightly panicked, she left a message.

“Mum, it’s me. Sorry we left you behind back at the bar! I had too many drinks and forgot. We’re back at the hotel now. Give me a call and let me know you’re ok? Please?”

Regina had already picked up the hotel phone, calling down to Reception. “Hello, this is room 422. Could you pass me through to Mrs. Nolan in room 320 please?”

After a moment of checking, the voice on the other end said, “I’ve tried her line for you, Mrs. Swan-Mills, but I don’t think she’s back yet. Mrs. Nolan’s key is still here at the front desk. I’ll keep calling anyway and let you know if she picks up.”

Regina thanked the young man and put the phone down. “Gina, it’s one thirty in the morning! Mum’s not back, and she’s alone in New York City! What do I do? Dad is going to be so pissed!”

Less than a mile away and unbeknown to the pair, Snow White was currently fast asleep in a large bed, in a flat, over the Diva’s night club.

‘You get some rest, lovely.” Said a soft voice next to her, kissing her on the forehead. “You probably need it!”
Where the Hell were You?

Chapter Summary

Snow feels insulted and leaves the women, finding some interesting company at a nearby club. Emma becomes frantic with worry.

Chapter 52

It was seven in the morning and Emma hadn’t slept, worrying about her mother. She’d checked hourly with the reception desk, left messages on her cell phone and even gone down to her room twice to bang on her door, earning a fairly loud rebuke from a previously-sleeping guest next door.

She now sent her fifth email of the night:

Emma: Mum, I know you’re angry with me, but pick up the goddam phone and call! Let me know you’re ok!

Then after further consideration:

Emma: I’m sorry you thought we were poking fun at you! It was the drink talking…

Then her final text, at around seven thirty:

Emma: Mum, if I don’t hear from you soon, I’ll have to assume something is seriously wrong and call the police! For god’s sake, call me!

Emma tried to get her head down to catch at least an hour’s sleep, but it was no good. She thought about calling the police. Had it come to that?

In the cold light of day, she felt bad for helping Regina belittle her mother in front of Robin’s sister and cousin. Why did she always have to side with Regina over her mum? Even after all the apologising of two weeks ago, the pair still tended to treat her mother as some sort of mild irritation.

Even worse was the fact the four women had split up, two drinks later, without even realising Snow was no longer with them. “Jeez, how could I forget my own mother?” she groaned, annoyed with herself.

She nearly jumped when the phone rang, waking Regina in the process. “Any news?”

“It’s Colin at the Front Desk, Mrs. Swan-Mills! I put the word out, as I promised. The door key system indicates Mrs. Nolan definitely didn’t return to her room during the night. You said she was wearing a pale-green cocktail dress and you were last together at Petrus. I know Malcolm the manager there, so put the word out. He thinks she left just after you settled your tab. As she was alone, I also checked Diva’s. That’s the club opposite the hotel and lots of single women use it, as it’s a safer when they’re alone.”

Emma recalled last night’s conversation. When they’d ridiculed her. She’s alone…but definitely not single!
“Well I took the liberty of asking my friend Chrissy on the front desk. She said a lady answering your sister’s description went in there early evening. She was quite the life and soul of the party, apparently! Also spent a long time at the bar talking to Imogen, the manager on duty. She checked the videos several times, and she said she has your sister going in, but not coming out again.”

Because nobody would believe Snow was old enough to be her mother, Emma had pretended she was her sibling. “Not coming out again? Then where would she…”

“I go there regularly. They have a couple of spare bedrooms for rent…” he stopped himself, realising he may have said too much.

Emma’s face blanched at the implication. Mum? No, surely not? She’d never do that to dad! Would she?

“Erm…thanks Colin. That’s great news. At least I now know she’s safe!” Emma knew from her days as a bailbonds person, that concierges and door staff were often the best source for information when tracking people. “Thanks for doing all that digging. I’ll see you before we check out!” In other words, I’ll make sure to leave you a fat tip!

“All part of the service, Mrs. Swan-Mills. You have a nice day now!” They hung up.

“I take it they’ve found her?” said Regina, sitting upright in bed. She immediately noticed how white Emma’s face had gone. “Problem?”

“I’m not sure. Maybe.”

“Well, if you know she’s safe, perhaps you could come back to bed?” she fluttered her eyes at her. “I wouldn’t mind having some more…practise…with our new little friend!” she said, looking at the feeldoe on the side.

“Er…could I pass on that. Just for the moment. I…I…think I want to go down to breakfast.”

Normally, Regina would have been hurt by Emma declining sex with her, but seeing the anxious look on her face, she slid over the bedsheets to take her hand. “Emma, you’re worrying me. What is it?”

“Oh, nothing. At least I hope not. I just really need to eat.” Without another word, she stepped into the bathroom, freshening up quickly before heading down to the ground floor.

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The hotel always served breakfast in its ground floor restaurant, situated to the right of the main entrance. Residents could see everyone coming and going, which was why Emma situated herself at a table close to the full height, smoked glass windows. Serving herself a large cooked breakfast, fruit, orange and a flask of coffee, she sat and waited. And waited. And waited some more.

It was a good hour later when Regina finally came down, seeing her wife at a table close to the window. “Clearly you’ve had enough of my company this weekend, my Swan! Why else would you spend an hour and a half down here rather than in a warm bed?”

Emma looked up, sporting a guilty expression. “Sorry! I was just…waiting…”

“Waiting for what? Snow? Is that it? You didn’t tell me where she’s been.”

“I’d rather not say, just yet. But if I’m right, I’ll need to have a serious talk with my mother…”
The previous evening, Snow had seethed with anger at her daughter’s patronising putdown. Sitting in a cubicle in the ladies room of the bistro after she’d left them, she remembered the sneering comments from Regina and Emma, alluding to her past life. Their condescension. As though she knew nothing about life!

It had only been a matter of weeks since Emma, full of tears, had come to the farm to apologise for avoiding them. Avoiding her. How she’d cried in her arms begging forgiveness for past slights. Then Regina too, hours later, for a lifetime’s suffering inflicted on her. And now, two weeks later, here they were at it again, sniping at her. Putting her down. Making her feel like she knew nothing!

As she sat there, her anger turned to upset, and she couldn’t stifle her sobs. Unfortunately she wasn’t quiet enough to be heard by someone in the next cubicle. “You OK in there, honey? You don’t sound so good!” came a soft voice. “The toilet tissue in here is crap. You need a Kleenex? I’ll push ‘em under the door if you want?”

“Oh. Thanks!” she said picking up the small packet, taking a few and sliding the rest back.

“What’s upset you, hon? Don’t tell me, a man?”

“No. My man is just perfect. It’s my dau…” then she remembered where she was. How admitting she had a daughter nearly her own age would attract too many questions. “My little sister. And her wife. I felt like they were ganging up on me…”

“Yeah? Men, women, we’re all as bad as each other! Never mind, honey. You stayin’ in there till you feel better, or coming out so you can freshen your face up?”

“I think I’ll stay here for the moment. I’ll need to fix my make-up once I’m out. Thanks for the tissues erm, sorry I didn’t catch your name?”

“Imogen. I manage the club nearby. Diva’s. Billy, the boss here, is a friend of mine and sorts me out with food of a night. I’m on duty tonight, so if your sister’s still being a bitch, come over to my place. Food and drinks nothing on this place, but the dancin’ and music’s good.”

“Diva’s, that’s the gay club near the Marriott, right?”

“Yeah, that’s what it’s known as, but in reality, we let in most couples. Just not groups of straight guys looking for action. It’s a place where single women can feel safe, have a drink and dance, without any unwanted attention. We throw that sort straight out! Come in and ask for Immie! I’m the tall Nordic blonde at the bar…”

“Thanks, I might just do that! I’m Mary-Margaret. I’ll be the little crop-haired brunette in the green cocktail dress.”

“Then I look forward to seeing you, Mary-Margaret. I’ll stand you the first beer…”

“It’s a date!” Did I really just say that?

It was a good half-hour later when snow plucked up the courage to leave, still not wanting to face the others. Though as she walked into the bar, she quickly realised they had gone. “Oh that’s nice – thank you Emma!” she groaned, sarcastically.

The effects of the alcohol earlier had largely worn off, so she decided to head back to the hotel, albeit alone. However, seeing the green neon lights of the club nearby, she remembered Imogen’s words
and decided to head there instead. Go on, treat yourself Snow! A couple more drinks before bed would be nice…

Before she stepped closer, seeing two nightclub bouncers on the door, she pulled out her phone to call David. Just hearing his voice made her feel better already.

“Hi, my love! How are you getting on? Good day?”

“Hello, darling! It was nice. How are my boys? You been OK?”

“Bit tired, to be honest. Neil and I took Honour and Margot on the Jolly for a cruise around the bay. Robin stayed back with the babies.”

“Killian’s still there? I thought they would have sailed by now.”

“Nope. Apparently, Merlin’s back in town next week, So Rosie’s waiting back to see him. Anyway, how’s Emma? Has she chosen her dress yet?”

“We go dress shopping tomorrow. Though we had a bit of a falling out this evening. They said something and I felt they were picking on me. I probably over-reacted. They’ve gone off somewhere else without me, though I’m not sure where. I’m outside a club by the hotel.”

“I’m sorry to hear that, though I’m sure it’ll blow over by morning. They went off without you? That seems rude. But you’re safe, yeah?”

“More than safe. Erm, David, can I ask you something?”

“Yeah?”

“Have I become a little bit…too safe…to you? Have I become a little too ‘vanilla’?”

“The woman who fought ogres for breakfast? The woman who scaled castle walls to steal a ring? The woman who persuaded a kingdom to unite against a vile dictator? The woman I fell in love with? Don’t be silly - no chance!”

Snow chuckled. “Thanks. I needed that! But I meant more…personally. Perhaps sexually? Have I become a bit predictable?” This was her love on the line. If she couldn’t ask him, who could she ask?

“Where on earth has this come from? Why would you think that? Are you in any way unhappy with our love life? Do you want to do other things in the bedroom?”

“Absolutely not! David, you’re everything to me and I am more than happy, you know that! No-one knows me like you do! It’s just…earlier this evening, we were talking about going on to a night club. It seems it’s a gay club and Emma, Regina and the girls ridiculed me, saying I had no idea. I kinda got angry, and told them I had been with another girl before. And…I let slip about the threesome we had a couple of times! I’m sorry!”

There was now silence from the other end of the line, and Snow worried she may have hurt his feelings by breaking their confidence. “David? David, please talk to me? I’m sorry, I never had any intention of…”

“Did you tell them who you had been with? Who WE had been with? She may have been single, but she’s married now, Snow! I’m not sure her husband even knows! You do know that Emma’s going to keep going on at you until you tell her who it was?”
“Well I’m not going to say anything! I’ll just have to ride it out…”

“Me too. Though, purely between ourselves, if you ever feel you want to repeat the experience with someone else, I’ll support you. I have no particular wish too, but if it’s something you fancy, I’m in…”

“You always do. That’s why I’m so totally in love with you. Oh sod it! The battery’s about to die. David, I’ll call you in the morning! Love you!”

“Love you t…” the phone died. “Right then, let’s try this club!”

After mentioning Imogen’s name to a very large yet kindly looking guy, called Arthur, on the door, Snow was shown the way down into the cellar. Fortunately, it wasn’t too noisy and from the steps, she scanned the room. There were about fifty or so people dancing, some alone, some in couples, and one group of four. “Ladies loos are down in that left-hand corner over there, bar’s over to the right. If anyone starts to bother you, man or woman, just yell up to me and if I don’t hear you, you see that girl with the red top and the bandana?” he pointed to a shorter, Asian-looking girl who slightly resembled Mulan. “That’s Kimmie. She’ll help you out. Have fun…” and with that the kindly man bounded up the metal stairs back to the front door.

The music was loud, but not too loud, and the place seemed to have a happy hubbub of noise. A little like Robin’s pub, but modern, with music. As she stepped nearer the bar, a voice hollered out. “Short crop hair and green cocktail dress! Gotta be Mary-Margaret, right?”

“Imogen!” grinned Snow, stepping up and shaking her hand. “Nice to put a face to a voice! Thanks for the hankies, by the way!” She looked into the soft, pale-blue eyes of the woman. Imogen was even taller than Ruby, probably David’s height, but her face reminded her of Queen Elsa. A strikingly beautiful woman with a kindly face.

“Glad to help! I promised you a first drink. What’ll you have!”

“I’ll take whatever’s in that hand pump. I recently got a taste for darker, draught beer. My daughter’s fiancé owns a pub near us. They seem to have got me hooked!”

“Daughter’s fiancé? Girl, you’re never old enough to have a grown-up daughter! If you have then, damn! You’re looking far too good on it, lady!”

Snow giggled but realised she had revealed too much. “I meant sister. I call her ‘daughter’ because she acts like a child sometimes! But thank you for the compliment!”

“Is that the one who said mean things to you? I thought you said ‘her wife’ earlier. I must have misheard.”

“It’s complicated. Still, nice club!” she took a swig of a dark beer placed in front of her “Hmm, you were right, this is good! So you own this place?”

“Nah, there’s a brother and sister who actually own it. Both gay, like me. I manage it for them. Pays well, and you get to meet a lot of nice ladies!” she fluttered her eyelashes at Snow. “Mind you, I remember you saying your man was ‘perfect’? So you clearly bat for the other team…”

“Sorry, bat? Other team?” she said confused, which just made Imogen chuckle.

“You’re straight! Heterosexual.”

“Oh, I see! Well before I met my future husband, I suppose I would have been considered a bit
bisexual. Like my...sister. I have had experiences with women, but you know…”

“Well then, we’d call you bi-curious. Or you were…”

“I guess,” she started to pull her cell phone out to show her David’s photo, before realising her battery was dead. “Oh, dammit, I forgot,”

“Give it here, there’s a charger plate behind the bar!” she handed it over without question. As Imogen set it to charge, Snow couldn’t help but open up a little more to this stranger.

“That’s what I got upset over, actually! I mentioned coming to this place and Emma said I would run a mile if a lesbian ever went near me! Her wife said something similar. I got upset then…”

“You came here. Why didn’t you tell her about your past? If she’d known that, she wouldn’t have dissed you!”

“I kind of did,” she chuckled. “I stormed off, but not before telling them all not only had I been with a woman before, but that I’d also had a threesome with my husband!”

“Damn, girl, that’s hilarious! You’re ahead of me! A three-way is definitely on my ‘to-do’ list.”

“I thought you said you were gay?”

“I did. But three girls can get it on too, you know? Perhaps not often, but it happens. Friend of mind did once. Said she could hardly walk, or swallow, the next day!” Snow roared with laughter at that. As she did, she heard her partly recharged phone buzz into life, texts coming in. “You wanna take them?”

“No. Hand it over and I’ll put it on airplane mode. Imogen did and as she flicked the necessary slider, she saw the photos icon. She opened it up to one of her favourites. “This is David, my husband!” she said proudly, showing it to the other woman. Imogen studied the picture for a moment.

“Damn, girl! He is seriously fuckin’ hot! Jeez, even I’d go rub-a-dub with him! You play at a high-level, babe!”

Snow chuckled loudly. “Thank you. Are you sure you’re really gay?”

The tall blonde laughed back. “Well, ninety percent of me is, but a girl’s gotta keep all her options open, you know? Hell, if you and him ever want to repeat your threesome, you come right over here and see Immie!”

“Thank you for the compliment! I’d never cheat on him though, but I will mention this to him! If I ever ‘batted for your team’, as you put it, you would definitely be on my ‘to-do’ list!”

“Can’t say fairer than that! Now, if you’re getting on the dance floor, just stay clear of that really short-haired one in the corner with the Carrion T-shirt. She’s looking a bit predatory tonight. Any problem, just holler!”

---

The next two hours flew by. Snow got on the dance floor and danced the night away, stepping back to the bar to refuel in between. Forgetting about her earlier clash with her daughter, she watched the rest of the dancers with interest. Two guys, who seemed so good they were almost professional, gyrated and moved together seamlessly, at one point one clinging to the other’s back as they curled
together. As the music changed from rock and pop to more slow ballads, more couples came together, and she watched as two of the women held each other tightly, gently rolling their hips together as one, never once taking their eyes of each other, all others oblivious to them. She was reminded of Emma and Regina, when they first admitted their feelings for each other publicly. Some of the couples were clearly more interested in after-club activities of a more basic nature, and she watched as the more assertive and aggressive ones sought their quarry.

When the Bee Gees Staying Alive came on, Snow got onto the dance floor to bop to a favourite from her Red Cross cardio lesson. Immediately before her on the floor, wearing a light short dark blue party dress, was a strikingly pretty auburn-haired woman, of similar height and build to herself. She smiled shyly at Snow, before closing her eyes, swaying to the music. Snow noticed a taller, shaven head girl, several tattoos on a bare arm, suddenly appear behind the woman, pressing herself into her backside. “Hello, love, like some company tonight?” she said, a leer on her face. It was clear the shorter woman didn’t like the attention. “Er…no thanks!” she said nervously, a hint of panic on her face.

“Come on, gorgeous,” the taller girl’s arms snaked around her waist. “Just a little dance!” the shorter woman’s eyes flew open in panic. How dare she!

As the music switched to the band’s much more romantic How Deep is Your Love track, Snow was about to step forward to intervene on the woman’s behalf, when she felt a pair of hands appear on her own hips, as a head came down to rest on her shoulder. “Hi babe! Never seen you in here before - you alone?” She felt the girl press herself hard into Snow’s back. She couldn’t believe the audacity of the woman! She looked straight ahead, into the equally disgusted eyes of the woman in front of her.

“No actually! What does it look like? I’m with my beautiful girlfriend here!” she moved her hands forward to the other woman’s waist. Fortunately, the other woman realised what Snow was doing, and pulled herself into her arms. Snow rested a chin on her shoulder. “Now fuck off you two! Or I’ll ask them to throw you out!”

“All right, no need to be a bitch about it! Never even saw you in…” the shaven-headed girl’s voice switched to an “Ow”, as the Asian girl with the bandana who Arthur had mentioned earlier, pulled her arm behind her back, forcing her away from the dance floor. “I told you before, Josie, if you misbehaved again, you’d be out. And you are so out!” she frogmarched the struggling young woman to the staircase.

Snow continued to dance slowly to the romantic ballad with her new partner, neither wishing to pull away. As she didn’t see what had happened to the second girl, she decided to stay in character.

“Thanks for that!” the other woman whispered in her ear. “It happens a lot in these sorts of places. Shame, when all you want is a nice dance, good company and nothing else.” Both women swayed gently to the music, still holding each other, eyes closed. “This is nice though.”

“I agree. I’m Mary-Margaret, by the way. Though some call me Snow!”

“Because of the beautiful black hair, I guess? It’s Julia, by the way. Thanks for the dance, Snow. And getting me away from that asshole!” The shortened music switched to yet another romantic ballad, Too Much Heaven.” Snow pulled herself in just a little tighter. Neither woman had opened their eyes yet.

“You’re very welcome Julia.” Both women seemed to adjust into each other comfortably and Snow completely forgot herself as she lightly pressed her hips into her new partners. She enjoyed the warmth of Julia’s chest pressing against her own through the thin fabric, their chins now resting on each other’s shoulders. “Hmm. You smell nice. Chanel?”
“Yep. A present. Erm…Snow?” she breathed in her ear. “Don’t get me wrong. I’m really enjoying this, but I’m not actually gay. I’m happily married to a guy. I just…like the company of women too. Not to have sex with, just…the romance. Girls tend to be better at this stuff.”

Julia felt Snow’s responding giggle rumble through their chests. “We’re more alike than you think, Julia! I’m also happily married, to a wonderful man who knows me like no other. David is extremely romantic and I’d never be unfaithful but, this is nice!” They held each other till the end of the song. When she finally opened her eyes, a small blush appeared on both sets of cheeks. “Thanks for my dance, Snow.” She said, before placing a soft kiss on the other woman’s lips. “Can I buy you a drink before I head off?”

“I’d like that!” she giggled.

The two women raised a toast to romance. A few minutes later, Julia looked up to see a handsome clean-shaved man approach the bar. “And here’s my Paul! Snow, it’s been lovely meeting you. I hope to see you again sometime!” Even though her husband was standing close, she leaned over to place a soft peck on the other woman’s lips. “Safe journey back…”

As the woman disappeared, Imogen appeared back by her side. “That was interesting. For a bi-curious girl, you seemed a lot ‘gayer’ than you think. You were really into her, weren’t you?”

“Not in that way, Immie! I enjoyed the romance. I liked holding her, and I know she did too. But we’re both definitely straight and happily married. It was very nice though. I do see why so many women find love in each other. But my David is my one and only True Love!”

“That sounds like something out of Hollywood! Like Snow White and her, um…”

“Prince Charming! Snow White’s Prince Charming. Yes, it does, doesn’t it?”

Two hours later and Diva’s was ready to close. Snow had danced a few more times, only had a couple more drinks, yet she’d virtually collapsed, fast asleep, on the lounge seats near the bar.

“So where’s she staying, Immie?” asked Arthur, staring at the reclining woman. “Do you want to look in her bag, or her phone? May be a key card or something…”

“Let her sleep it off. You could put her in the room next to mine. There’s an adjoining door, so if she wakes and panics, I’ll hear her…”

“Alright.” He said, gathering up the extremely light woman in his arms. “You go first and open the doors. I’ll just lay her on the bed and take her shoes off. Don’t want her freaking out or anything. You can change her.”

“No, I’ll just leave her be. I’ll drop a spare towel and nightie if she needs it.”

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And so it was, Snow woke up in an unfamiliar bed. Relieved she was still in her clothes and underwear, with her phone, bag, towel and shampoo on the table next to her, with a large glass of water and headache tablets. Feeling slightly embarrassed, she quickly slipped her shoes on, ready to go over the road and into her hotel room. As she crept out, a voice called. “Good to see you awake! You want breakfast?”

“Oh, no thanks Immie! But thanks for the room. I don’t remember coming up here?”

“Arthur carried you up. You were too far gone to send home. Wherever you’re staying…”
Snow chuckled. “You could have. I’m virtually opposite! So I’ll go shower and change there. Thank you, Imogen. It’s lovely to have met you!”

“No problem. Come back sometime. And bring your super hunk husband with you!” she sniggered.

“You know, I may just do that!”

As Imogen led her down the stairs, through the back room, out the side door and into the morning light, the tall blonde looked down at her. “Well it’s been a pleasure meeting you, Mary Margaret! Now don’t be a stranger, I mean it!”

Unfortunately, as Snow was saying her goodbyes, a certain smaller blonde and her wife were looking at her from behind smoked glass windows. Silently watching as the pair embraced, kissing each other on the cheek, Emma stood to walk into reception.

Heading to the front desk to collect her key, Snow was stopped by a scowling Emma.

“And where the hell have you been?” the younger woman growled.

“Emma! What are you doing here?”

“Waiting for my mother! Who we lost last night, and I subsequently discovered had spent the evening, and the night, in a notorious gay bar!”

“Oh! Well, I wouldn’t call it notorious. Different, certainly…”

“WHY DIDN’T YOU ANSWER ANY OF MY BLOODY TEXTS?” she bellowed. “I WAS WORRIED SICK!”

“Lower your voice! We’re in public.”

“Never mind the fucking public! I want to know what the hell you were doing in there?”

Snow looked at her red, swollen face. She refused to be intimidated this time. “Emma, you will lower your voice when you speak to me. I am your mother, and…”

“DON’T YOU ‘MOTHER’ ME! What the fuck were you playing at? After what you told me last night, you spent the entire night in a damn gay bar! Then stroll in here first thing, as though nothing’s happened! I just saw you over there, snogging some woman! What the hell were you playing at? And WHO the hell were you with? Who is she? How could you do that to dad?”

At the mention of her husband, Snow’s change was instant! “DON’T YOU DARE BRING YOUR FATHER INTO THIS, EMMA SWAN!” she growled, Emma taken aback by her venom. “OF COURSE HE KNOWS! HE ALSO KNOWS YOU BELITTLED ME IN FRONT OF YOUR FRIENDS LAST NIGHT! YOUR FATHER ALSO KNOWS WHAT UPSET ME AND KNEW WHERE I’D GONE! I RANG HIM AFTER YOU ABANDONED ME!”

“Who were you with?” she continued, trying to control the conversation.

“None of your business! And don’t you DARE imply anything! I have never, and would never, disrespect your father or my marriage! I may have saved your life in the past, Emma, but you’ve made it more than clear you and your wife have little regard for my opinions. Or me! You all went off without me last night, after mocking me! That fucking hurt, Emma, and I don’t forget easily. Now if that’s all, I’m going to freshen up…”
Emma just wasn’t expecting this! An angry, spitting alley-cat instead of a guilty, embarrassed mother. “I just needed to know what you were…”

“Emma, hear this!” her voice went even deeper. “I expect your respect, or we will have no relationship! Unlike your wife’s continued inferences to the contrary, I am no halfwit. I am no idiot. I am no weak-minded spoilt princess. I am Snow White! Your father and I ran an entire kingdom, before you were even born! And without magic! We killed ogres, fought kings and queens and even stopped your fucking wife in her more psychotic phase, from destroying an entire nation!”

Regina now joined them, attempting to calm the situation getting even more out of hand. “Snow, stop!”

“AND YOU CAN FUCK RIGHT OFF, REGINA MILLS! I’M DONE WITH YOU! Two weeks ago you begged forgiveness for all the horrible and vile things you’ve done! I forgave you. Yet the moment you get the chance, you’re sniping right back and making bitchy comments once again! I heard you last night. Clearly your words to me meant nothing. Why did you even invite me, Regina? You still hate me, despite what you said, and you always will! I’m done here! I’m gonna pack and go home.”

Snow turned and stormed up to the reception desk. “Mum!” Emma called, but she snatched the room key from the waiting receptionist and headed upstairs without looking back. “Shit! I’ve done it again, haven’t I?”

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Snow showered and changed. She knew she’d overreacted, but having Emma imply she’d been unfaithful at the club had been one step too far! David was her absolute rock and anyone hinting otherwise always got short shrift from the princess.

As she picked up her phone to check in with David, she noticed the device was still set on Airplane Mode. “Dammit!” she muttered, disabling it. Moments later, the texts and voice messages started arrive. She looked at the flood of messages that came in, ignoring the accusing ones sent by Emma last night. Now looking at the ones sent in the last hour, she felt guilty for her harsh reaction to her daughter:

Emma:    Sorry, mum.

Emma:    I never really thought you’d be unfaithful to dad!

Emma:    I’m sorry I made fun of you

Emma:    I still want you to help me pick my wedding dress! We need to leave for Kleinfeld at 12.00

That irritated her, so she typed in a reply, which Emma read immediately:

Mum:     You mean ‘just nod my head and agree with whatever Regina says,’ surely?

Emma smiled at that. It was a start. At least she was talking! She typed a reply:

Emma:    Come on mum, don’t be like that! I need you there.

Though her smile ceased when she saw the next text:

Mum:     No, Emma. I learned a while ago that my daughter always does what her wife
tells her! You obey. With all your power and strength, I never imagined you’d become a Stepford wife! You know she’ll choose your dress. And your venue. The bridesmaid outfits. The pageboys. Everything. Run along and do what she wants. You always will, in the end.

That stung. A lot more than she would like to admit! *A Stepford wife? Is that what she really thought of her?* A tear bloomed in her eye as she remembered the last few years with Regina. After Robin’s death. Her move into the mansion. Roland returning. Honour’s birth. The wedding in Boston, when Regina had suggested it. The dresses they wore. All organised and chosen...by Regina. Even the plan not to tell Emma’s parents till after they returned, married, was Regina’s. And she had gone along with it, knowing it would probably upset them! The more she thought it through, the more she realised, painfully, there was some truth in her mother’s barbed text.

*Emma:* Do you even **want** to come to my wedding?

It took a few minutes before the reply came, which she’d been dreading:

**Mum:** You’re already married. There’s nothing any mother wants more than to see her only daughter get married. To help her plan it. To help choose the dress. The food. The catering. The reception. I missed all of that, and not because I couldn’t make it but because my daughter didn’t even choose to invite me. Have you any idea how much that hurt, Emma? Probably not. Your mind was only on your wife. I pray it never happens to you!

She slumped against the wall, now feeling thoroughly ashamed. Nonetheless, a final text arrived:

**Mum:** I’m not needed here. I’m taking the five o’clock coach back. Your father can pick me up from the nearest halt. See you back in Storybrooke...whenever you choose to visit.

That was the final nail in the coffin. It felt like her mother had just let her go! And all because she chose to tear her mother off a strip for staying out the night! Her mind in a whirl as sobs turned to tears. Finally, she reached out to her phone, before dialling the only person she truly trusted, when it came to her mother:

“Dad? It’s me! I think I may have screwed up.”
Get off the Coach, Mum!

Chapter Summary

Rumple arrives in Scotland. Robin gives his wives-to-be a reminder of what they promised. Emma tries to stop Snow from going home and Ariel and Belle come up with a solution.

Chapter Notes

Hi all! Pleased some people are still with me! This story has been running for over two months now and I've got about 3600 hits so far. Don't know whether that's good or bad. Thanks for those of you who've sent me encouraging comments and feedback. I still get the occasional shipper who doesn't like where this is going but I urge them then to read something else.

I hope you all have a Happy New Year and a lovely 2019

Love
Fi xx

Chapter 53

Edinburgh, Scotland - Henry’s Grand Tour – Day 14

Rumple was the first to check into the Balmoral, close to the centre of the city. He’d left the others in London a week ago, before travelling to Scotland. Over the next week, he had travelled far north, with his son, to the Orkney Islands, where a hidden magical city lay, discovering details of long-dead and unknown relatives in the church archives. It had been Rumple’s first ever real vacation, and he managed to fill his time well. Gideon was now standing and attempting to walk, distracting him frequently. Nonetheless, he delighted in the little one’s company. Gideon, provided he was entertained, seemed to be a happy child, frequently giggling at the smallest things. His changing expressions, when he sat staring out of the window as the sights fell away, reminded him so much of Belle. They’d left his mother and Ariel in London, though spoke daily with the women to discuss their days and what everyone had been up to.

“Good evening, sir, and welcome to the Balmoral,” boomed the large doorman as he opened the large door to them. “I’m Matthew. May I help ye with yer bags, there? Or the wee one?” his deep, soft Highland accent echoing across the large foyer.

“Thank you, Matthew. Perhaps the cases please?” as he stumbled in with an increasingly heavy Gideon in the mobile car seat. “Do you have parking?”

“Aye. A secure area at the back. I’ll sort it out and park her up for ye, then I’ll handle the cases and all that stuff. Let Mary here take care of ye!” he indicated to the pretty auburn lady behind the desk.
“Good evening, sir! May I have your name?” her voice was also soft and pleasant. He gave her the details.

“Let’s see now. Gold. Angus Gold. We have a party of four in three rooms, you and the bairn in the Royal Suite…”

“I don’t recall ordering a suite…Mary.” *How much would that cost in this place?*

“Ye didna, sir. I took a call from a Mr. Mills, who’ll be joining us this evening. He said it was a treat for his grandfather. Said you’d refuse, so he paid in advance! I wish I had someone who treated me like that!”

Rumple grinned. “Did he, indeed? I’ll have to have a word with him about his spendthrift ways…”

“Oh, he bartered me down sir! I had to give him an awfy guid price! Quite the market trader, your grandson! It’s Room 5 on the top floor. Hamish here will take your bags up when Matthew gets back. Now, if you and the wee one want to rest up, shall I sort out some tea and biccies for ye?”

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An hour later, Belle and Ariel arrived, having taken the short flight from London. They’d spent the last week trying to fit in as much as they could. Museums, galleries, some of the most famous historical sites, including the Tower of London and even a day trip to Windsor Castle. At Ariel’s request, they even managed to squeeze in a major rugby match, at a place called Twickenham. Belle didn’t understand the attraction, or the game, until she saw the sheer brute physicality, and the size of the players. That’s when she was reminded, she was very much bisexual! Albeit in a lesbian relationship. *Some of the guys were gorgeous! They’ve got arms bigger than my waist!*

And her feelings for Ariel only deepened with every day they’d spent together. The mermaid’s raw enthusiasm for life, for seeing new things and new experiences, only encouraged her more. At night, their physical relationship had also changed, going from energetic, urgent sex to slower, more intense lovemaking. However she still missed *him*! There was still a hole in her heart, which he once filled. And his absence this last week only brought it home that her feelings for her husband were still very much there.

“There’s your key cards, Mrs. Gold and Miss French. Mr. Gold checked in at least an hour ago. He’s in the Orangery, with his son,” said Mary. “I can have your bags taken up to the room, if you want? And organise some tea, of coffee and biccies to be sent in?”

Two minutes later, walking into the large conservatory, they spotted Gideon sitting in a high chair. “Giddie! Hello my darling! Mama’s missed you SO much!” Belle ran over to wrap her hands around his cereal-caked cheeks, delivering urgent kisses all over his face. “Have you been a good boy for your papa?”

“He’s been grand!” said Rumple, putting down the baby spoon. “And trying to walk and talk!”

The almost one-year-old gave a cheesy grin. “Mmmmmmm!”

Both parents beamed at the boy. “And you, Rumple?” Belle bent down, kissing him warmly on the cheek, wrapping her arms around his chest from behind as he sat. “Did you find what you were looking for?”

“I did. There’s a hidden town around the size of Storybrooke, close to a place called Stromness. Some of my ancestors on my mother’s side hail from there.”
Just then Ariel walked in, followed by a woman bearing a large tea tray and cookies. “Hi Angus, hi Giddie!” Seeing Belle now playing with her son, she also bent over the back of Rumple’s chair, turning her head to deliver him a welcome kiss. As she did, Rumple turned his head, receiving her open lips with his own. *It was quite chaste, but the simple act was spotted by Belle, who gulped in surprise, saying nothing.* “You had a good week? Taking care of your handsome young man here didn’t wear you out?”

“It did, my dear. But I wouldn’t have it any other way,” he smiled warmly at the mermaid. *Belle saw that too!*

“So what’s your plans tonight? You’ve had him all week, so I’m happy to stay in and look after him, if you wish. After I’ve had a decent bath. Belle, you could go off and explore the city with Rumple tonight if you want?”

“I’m a bit tired too, and I’ve really missed Gideon. I’d prefer to stay in tonight. Rumple, what’s your plan?”

“Nothing tonight, dearie, though someone else looking after him would be nice. Henry gets in soon. He’s taking the train up from York, so it’s unlikely he’ll want to go out. How about dinner here?”

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“So you both had a bust-up with Snow, she stormed off, and now she’s taking the bus home?” said Robin, on the web call. He was surprised at how quickly his fiancée’s weekend had deteriorated. “And that’s before you even went shopping for wedding dresses?”

Emma had just explained what happened that morning. How her mother flew off the handle at them. Robin had probed a little more until the pair had told him *what* had caused her reaction. “So though you didn’t exactly accuse Snow of outright adultery in a gay bar, you basically implied it?”

“Yeah, pretty much. That’s when she went ballistic! She accused me of being a Stepford Wife! Letting Gina have control over everything. Said it didn’t matter, that whatever she said, Gina would always have her own way, anyway! Then she dragged up all the crap about our last wedding. How much we hurt her.”

“Well, it’s no more than the truth, is it? Let’s be honest, if Honour came home after getting married without even telling us, you and Gina would be pretty pissed off, wouldn’t you? Can’t blame her for being sore!”

Emma rolled her eyes at him. But she, and Regina, knew it was a fair point.

“And Emma, you do kind of take a back seat to Gina when organising things? I bet she chose the date, the venue, your dress and everything else, didn’t she?” Regina stayed quiet, just listening.

“That’s not fair, Rob. Gina always consults me! I’m no fucking Stepford Wife!”

“Consults you after she’s chosen the options to choose from, though? Gina, I love you and you’re a fantastic organiser, but you do always try to take control! Who chose not to tell Snow, last time you married? And why?”

“I did,” groaned Regina. “I thought it best to get it done quickly, without the fuss…”

“Knowing full well it’s the biggest slap in the face any mother-of-the-bride could receive? That’s just cruel! Let’s face it, you two screwed up!”
“Gina and I would never deliberately set out to hurt my mother! And anyway, we asked her to come with us this time…”

“To do what? To manage anything? To choose anything? Or just to nod her head happily at whatever you decide? She sort of has a point, Emma!”

“Never mind, Emma!” said the brunette, ignoring him. “If she goes, she goes. We’re booked in Kleinfeld’s at 2.30; I’ve already seen three dresses online that I’d like to try on, and there’s more that would suit you. We can follow that with the bridesmaid options next door. Get it all done. There’s a stunning…”

“And again, Regina takes over the show!” said Robin, sarcastically. “Snow White is officially now redundant! Just like the first time, eh Emma?”

“Robin, someone has to organise this!” yelled Regina, now irritated by him.

“And that someone ALWAYS has to be YOU, doesn’t it Regina? Other people can give you all the suggestions they want – provided they’re yours!”

“Then what do YOU suggest?” she growled, irritation now bordering on anger.

“Well that depends! Emma, three weeks ago you were in tears, because you thought you’d screwed up your relationship with your mother. You made promises to her to try harder. Now, you’ve broken them, and made snide remarks, even implying she wasn’t being faithful to David! Do you actually want Snow White as a mother, Emma?”

Robin always had a horrible knack of getting straight to the heart of the problem. Last time, she screamed at him. This time… no, this time she was going to remain calm!

“What do you suggest, oh wise one? Stop the coach and beg forgiveness? Yet again?” said Regina.

“Stop the coach, certainly! Then give her control…”

“Control of what?” she was finding his supercilious attitude more than irritating.

“Everything! Your dresses, the venue, the catering. Everything…”

“Robin, you can’t possibly mean…”

“Yes, I do mean that! You promised to do better by her, yet here you are again, taking over and dividing mother from daughter. Keeping her out of it. You hurt her when you married. You hurt her today. Time to step back, Regina! Time to show her you were serious…”

“Robin, this is our wedding! I can’t just let her take over.”

“But I can!” said Emma, her voice harder. “Gina, there’s two of us in this marriage. And soon there’s going to be three. I agree with Robin.”

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And so, just before twelve thirty in the afternoon. Emma jumped on board the coach, waving her sheriff badge, hoping to god he didn’t suspect and call another cop to validate it, and insisting the driver hold till she checked the passengers on board. Spotting her mother at the back, she quickly covered the distance. The pixie-haired former princess looked glum, covering herself with a travel blanket.
“Mum, please get off the coach? There’s something we need to tell you.”

Snow looked unimpressed. “Just leave me alone, Emma! I’m not interested. You’ve said enough.”

Emma knew this wasn’t going to be easy. “Look, I’m sorry, OK! I shouldn’t have said what I did…”

“Sorry for what? For wrongly accusing me of being unfaithful to your father?” that earned a few gasps from nearby passengers and even a ‘bitch’ from someone nearby.

“I shouldn’t have said that! I’m sorry, I know I screwed up.”

“Yes, you did, didn’t you? Just…just go, Emma! Go be with your perfect wife. Go organise your perfect wedding. Who knows, perhaps your father and I might get even an invite this time!” Emma heard more comments from others. “Selfish,” from one. “What a shit – not inviting her!” and “cow”.

“For god’s sake, mum! I’m trying to…”

“You’re organizing the wedding, for god’s sake! All of it!” yelled Regina, appearing behind Emma. “You’ve won, Snow! You get to choose. All of it! Just get off the goddamn bus and let her explain!”

---

Henry Mills checked into the Balmoral late. Dropping his bags into his room and following his Rumple’s text, he appeared in the regal dining room, to see his grandfather, step-grandmother and her lover gathered around a large round table, having almost finished dinner. “Hi grandpa!” he said, hugging the older man before pressing a polite kiss on Belle’s and Ariel’s cheeks. “I got held up. Train problems. You all just finished?”

“How was Oxford, Henry? Did you get to see the college you want to get in to?” asked a smiling Ariel.

Henry went off at length about all the amazing things he’d seen and learned over the past seven days, particularly about the English city he was considering studying in for his post-graduate years. He told them about the people he met and the wonderful pubs he’d visited. “I see where Robin got his ideas for the Earl of Locksley from!” He told them about the trip to York, and his plans to go back. It had been an exhausting week.

Rumple looked at Ariel’s face as she took it all in. The mermaid had a zest for life and a keenness to learn that he had only really seen before in Belle. Everything seemed to be an adventure to her, and he noticed how easily she’d integrated herself into their odd little ‘family’. He noticed Belle studying her, as her lover told them about what she’d seen at the Victoria and Albert museum in London, the Tower of London, the maritime dockyard on the south coast and her trip into the London Eye, a big wheel on the river overlooking the capital. It was clear to Rumple that Belle had now fallen in love with the woman. He was unsure whether Ariel felt the same, but he felt a mixture of emotions at the change. Pleased Belle had someone to love. Pleased to see her with their son. But saddened that she was no longer his.

Half an hour later, Henry rose, telling them he was too tired to stay awake, before hugging and bidding Rumple goodnight. “I’ll go up too, Henry. Angus, thank you for a lovely dinner. See you in the morning. As earlier, she leaned down and gave him a quick kiss on the lips. “You coming up, Belle?”

“In a few minutes. I’ll have a nightcap with…Angus, if that’s ok to join you?” she asked Rumple.
Ariel smiled before leaning down and also giving her a kiss. “Ok, see you soon.” The two left the table, leaving Belle and her husband alone, for the first time in weeks.

“Something on your mind, Belle?” he asked, recognising her confused expression. “You seem out of sorts.”

“I’m not sure. May I ask a personal question?”

“You may, though I may choose not to answer!”

“Gabriella Weiss. Are you together? Sorry, it’s just, well you know about Ariel. I just want to know whether it’s serious? Whether it would affect my being with Gideon?”

“I can decline to answer, but I don’t see why I shouldn’t just tell you. Gabriella and I are close friends. She’s a mature woman, a grandmother herself, widowed but with a life of her own. We have an understanding. Is there a physical relationship? Yes, but the friendship is far more important. Are we exclusive with each other? No. We both agreed that if circumstances were to change for either of us, we would revert to just being close friends. I find her intelligent, delightful company and a welcome break from Storybrooke. Why do you ask?”

"Thanks for telling me. She’s clearly made a big difference. You seem happier, more relaxed, Rumple. Certainly a lot better dressed!” she smiled warmly at him. “Ariel’s always commenting on the way you dress now, your kindnesses to her, and your way with our Gideon. She thinks very highly of you, you know?”

“I have a great deal of respect for her, too. She has a very sweet nature and a remarkable way with Gideon. A marked cut above your other lovers, certainly!” at that, Belle frowned. “Don’t be like that. It’s fairly obvious your relationship with her has deepened and, as I only wish for your happiness, your change of orientation doesn’t concern or bother me. Not now. Are you perhaps wanting us to sign the divorce papers we drew up?"

“Despite what you may think, I’m not a lesbian, Rumple. I still find men attractive and, judging by the looks Ariel was giving some of the Rugby players this week, so does she. If anything, we’re both bisexual, albeit in a gay relationship.”

“Well either way, I want you to be happy. Fascinating though this may be, why are you telling me this?”

“Because, I’ve thought about this over the last week, while we’ve been apart. It’s painful to admit but, whilst I think it’s true and I have fallen for Ariel, I’m also still very much in love with someone else. Someone who, whenever I hear about him with another woman, makes me want to spit blood! Someone who I pray, one day, will be able to forgive me for my past misjudgements and perhaps learn to trust me again!”

Rumple looked at her, astonished and not expecting such a frank confession.

“Ariel also thinks I’m still in love with you!”

He sighed. “She said something similar to me. She offered to step away if we wanted to get back together.”

“She…she did?” It was Belle’s turn to be astonished.

“Aye. She told me she believed I was also still in love with you. She’s a very perceptive woman! I may have been angry with you, Belle, but I never stopped loving you. It was trust that was the
problem. But Ariel offers you something I cannot. Light, and a better future. I have a darkness in me I can never escape.”

“Could you ever trust me again, Rumple?”

You have to remember, I lost Baelfire! First to my own cowardice, and then to a vile bitch I still want dead!”

Belle winced, remembering she’d shared a bed, and herself, with that ‘vile bitch’. “You didn’t answer my question. Could you ever trust me?”

“I acted in anger, after losing Gideon. But… I believe I can now trust you with him. After all, I regularly leave him with you at home already. Now I’ll be leaving him with you and Ariel for days when we all head to Norway. And then when you take him home…”

“You? You mean you’re not coming home with us?”

“I’ll be flying from Rome back to London. I’m booked to have an operation. Once recovered and convalesced, I will head back to Storybrooke.”

“An operation? Rumple, is it serious?” her voice rising in alarm. “Why on earth didn’t you tell me?”

“I didn’t want to burden you. I had a consultation in London, shortly after we arrived. Merlin, or should I say Professor Sage in this world, introduced me to a specialist…”

“To do what, for heaven’s sake?” tears shone in her eyes. He didn’t tell me!

“He’s an orthopaedic surgeon. He’s going to operate on my leg. Belle, it’s something I should have done as soon as I found a way to enter this world without magic, without losing my memories. I intend to spend more of my time in these lands in the future, so needing a walking stick isn’t conducive to bringing up a small child!”

“I’m staying with you! I’m NOT having you here alone when you go through that!”

“There’s no need. I’ll be in good hands.”

“I didn’t ask you, Rumple, I’m telling you! I’m going to be here when you wake up! And so is Gideon.”

“Belle, it’s only corrective surgery on the bones. It’s nothing too serious.”

“I don’t care! I’m still your wife, and I love you. I’m staying!”

Rumple sighed heavily. He would love to have them with him, but she was now in a committed relationship.

“Rumple, you said you could trust me now. And that you still love me. Then there’s hope, right? I don’t want to divorce you, dammit. I want to see if we can save our marriage!”

“Then what of Ariel? If that’s what you really want, is it really fair to her?”

“No, of course not! That’s the problem. I love you and I love her. But that’s not allowed, is it? I want you both in my life! It’s greedy, I know. But, you said you and Gabriella are ‘not exclusive’. Is there a chance we could also one day be non-exclusive? It’s ridiculous, I know…”

Rumple was confused, unsure how to respond. “Have you discussed these feelings with Ariel? It
seems she could be badly hurt. You also run the risk of losing her.”

“Not in any detail. But I need to. I just need to know whether you’re open to the idea?”

“I need time to think. And you definitely need to discuss this with her.”

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It took another two hours for them to persuade Snow to stay. Regina left the talking to Emma. If Robin hadn’t requested it, she may have just gone back on the bus herself. The driver had almost called the cops to have them chucked off the bus, suspecting Emma wasn’t a real cop. The fact the blonde kept calling the woman ‘mum’ despite being virtually her own age, made the decision. But Emma won and they left the bus.

Snow made them swear she would not be overruled, and Regina almost ground her teeth to a pulp as the grudgingly agreed. The married couple now sat back in the hotel dining room, an hour before the booking at the bridal shop. Snow checked back in, and left the to make phone calls, before emerging with a small pad and a determined look on her face.

“Right! Kathryn Nolan is now checking on availability on the Town Hall roof garden! In case it’s full, she’s getting Little John to check upstairs at the Earl of Locksley. If it’s booked, I’ll ask your fiancé to overrule the booking. It is for his wedding, after all…”

“Why the Town Hall roof?” asked Regina.

“Because it can cope with up to one hundred and fifty guests, so should be large enough. If it’s raining or windy, the room below it will be big enough. It’s close to about three caterers, including Ruby as a backstop. There’s parking, bars and cafés nearby, and near enough to the hospital should anybody be ill…”

Regina’s brow went up as she looked at Emma, who was sporting an annoying smirk. “Sounds good so far…”

“Now the catering. Ruby’s on the case. It’s too big a project for them to manage, but she’s got good relationships with other caterers and venues in the area. I’ve given her the numbers, so I need you to figure what foods you would like. I’ve pulled off and emailed you about twenty different sample menus. Robin’s also put in a call to that fancy restaurant he and Emma went to last year. What’s his name now?” she stopped to look at her notes. “Pierre Roch, that’s it. According to Robin, he’s more than happy to help, but suggested you three go to his place and discuss the menu options over a meal…”

“Pierre Roch, the owner of L’Auberge Cachée?” Regina eyes widened in disbelief. “Pierre Roch is willing to cater OUR wedding?” she sounded like a groupie meeting her rock superhero. “He’s like one of the world’s best chefs!”

“I met him, Gina,” added Emma. “He’s rather sweet!”

“And hideously expensive, no doubt!” said Regina, still stunned. “He’s a five-star Michelin chef! I’m not sure we’d have that sort of budget…”

“Robin thought you might say that. He said don’t worry about it. He’ll cover it outside the wedding budget. Now, let’s talk about the wedding attire. I propose you choose your dresses first. That’ll then dictate what the groom, best man and bridesmaids should be wearing. So let’s go to this place you’ve booked.”
The two women silently nodded, giving each other an odd look. They asked Snow White to take responsibility, and she seemed to be doing just that! Regina was impressed, but she wasn’t going to tell her that!

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Two hours later, the three women found themselves at the Bridal shop. A rather grand dame, known among her staff as The Marchioness, sat them at a grand table, directing one of her staff to pour the trio some ready chilled champagne while other staff presented three identical white picture books.

“Now ladies!” Emma thought her French accent was possible fake, or at least exaggerated. “Which of you is the bride-to-be?”

Regina knew they’d face this, and was ready with a retort. However Snow stepped in first. “Madame Valerie, this is my…younger sister Emma and her wife, Regina. They married some time ago, and are now solemnizing their vows, also having a more formal, traditional wedding. So they will both be choosing today. I trust that isn’t an issue?”

Snow had already seen some people’s looks when they heard Emma had married Regina.

The tall, haughty woman’s severe face broke into a small smile. “No issue whatsoever, Mrs. Blanchard. I understand why you asked. My wife and I were wed as soon as same-sex marriage became legal!”

That little comment put Emma and Regina at ease immediately. “That’s good to know,” said Emma.

“Now, here are the dresses in our current range. Do not worry about your size at this stage. Everything is adjusted to fit, or bespoke. ‘Think about the ‘feel’ as much as the ‘look’. You need to be comfortable in it all day. Some questions to consider. What time of year will the event be held? Morning or afternoon? Indoors or out? Then consider the event. Will there be a theme? Try not to get too set on a particular style, as when you try it on, you may change your mind entirely. Don’t lose sight of what type of bride you want to be. Remember, you want to look back at photos of yourself in ten-years-time, and still love your dress! Now I’ll leave you in peace to browse. I suggest you each select four or five styles. My team will not bother you until you’re ready or need assistance. Please don’t rush, just take your time. Enjoy the champagne and relax.”

She bade them farewell, with a smile. Then Snow got up. “OK. I suggest you two start to do this bit together, and shortlist a few things. I’ll have a look through the store and come back in a while…”

“You don’t want to choose with us?” asked Emma. After all the bloody fuss getting you here! She thought.

“I’ve already seen the perfect dress while you were talking to her! It’s a cut above the rest…”

“For me, or Emma?” said Regina. “Who should wear this ‘perfect’ dress?”

“Either of you! Although, if I had a wife, jointly getting married to our new husband, I would personally like to wear the same dress as her. Just my opinion, though…”

“Mum, we have very different tastes and styles. Gina’s dark, and I’m fairer. Shouldn’t they be different?”

“Perhaps. For me, it would just be a symbol of our female love already being as one! Just my opinion…” she stepped out, leaving the pair to shortlist.

Emma and Regina spent the best part of an hour working through the choices. They selected six
each, and the staff came and helped them try them on. By the end, not entirely happy with any single one, Regina sat back, now dressed in one of the shop’s silk dressing gowns, to take another large slug of the champagne. “I’m exhausted! I knew it was tiring but…”

Emma came out of another changing room, while the staff set the last dress aside. “You’re exhausted? Well I’m totally fucked! Still not sure, though…”

As they slumped at the table, helping themselves to the canapes in the centre, Snow reappeared. “Any luck?”

“Nope! Seen ‘em all, tried a few. Not there yet…” said her daughter.

“We looked right through the catalogue. So much for your perfect dress, Snow!” said Regina.

“Oh, it isn’t in the catalogue. It’s one of the new arrivals! I saw it hanging, on the way in. I didn’t want to say anything, until you made your choices.”

Regina sighed, much louder than necessary. “Go on then - let’s see it!”

Snow nodded, leaving them to speak to a member of staff. A few minutes later, two girls appeared behind her, holding two sizes of the same dress. The Marchioness appeared behind them.

“Ah, I see you’ve spotted one from our new British designer? The Belle Epoque range. New in yesterday. Very elegant and, I have to admit, rather pricey! I’ve a couple of pictures you can see, or you can try them on…”

Fifteen minutes later, each bride-to-be-again appeared outside their respective rooms, facing each other, the assistants flapping behind to adjust the trains. Regina gasped when she saw her blonde wife in all her glory, clad in the most beautiful, simple yet elegant silk dress she had ever seen her in. “Oh my goodness. Emma, you look utterly stunning! You are a vision!”

“I have to agree,” said Madame Valerie. ”It seems to complement both your figures perfectly. You wouldn’t be the first bridal pair to choose the same dress.”

“It’s an old cliché, but I feel like a million dollars!” said Emma, looking Regina up and down. “And you’re a goddess, Gina! Jeez, I wish we’d done this the first time!” Then she heard a sob nearby. “Mum…you OK?”

“Perfect! You both look just…perfect!” she almost choked on her tears. ”Robin will be struck dumb when he sees you!”

“Robin?” said the Marchioness.

“Our fiancé!” said Regina, earning an odd, disappointed look from the proprietor, and a smirk from Snow.

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A gentle knock sounded on the door of the Royal Suite. Rumple sat upright in his bed, reading a tourist guide for Edinburgh. Gideon lay sound asleep in the adjoining room, the door open. “Dammit!” he grumbled, getting up to open it. “Oh, it’s you!”

Belle and Ariel both stood in the corridor, in matching hotel dressing gowns. “Sorry to disturb you, but I had a talk with Ariel, after you and I spoke. May we come in?”
“Well, I guess so, though you’ll need to keep your voices down. Gideon’s asleep in the side room. Come in.”

“Hell, this room is bloody enormous!” said Belle. “Henry said he’s upgraded you. But this!”

“Aye, it is rather grand for me. A bit ostentatious. Can I get you both a drink? They have a decent whisky in that tantalus over there. Fancy a dram?”

“Yes please, Angus!” said Ariel. “That bed’s huge! You could get all five of us in there and still have space!”

He poured three generous measures from the crystal decanter, handing one to each of them before moving to deposit himself on the bed. “Yes, well. There’s just me. Now ladies, what can I do for you?”

“Belle told me about your hospital visit and your operation after the trip. And I agree with her. I want to stay too. We can look after Gideon. He’d want to be near his father. So if it’s alright with you, we’ll stay till you’re ready to leave hospital?”

“Well…that’s very kind but, what about the library? And Ariel, don’t you have something you need to do…”

“Oh, bugger the library, Rumple! You’re more important! We want to be with you when you go through this. We are a family, of sorts, aren’t we?”

“Aye, I guess.” He smiled at them, feeling genuinely flattered they cared so much, though he saw the nervous look in Belle’s eyes. “And is there anything else?”

Once again, Ariel saw her nervousness and took the initiative. “It’s about us! Belle, me…and you. She told me what you discussed, so I think I’m the one that still needs to say something.” Taking a large gulp of the whisky, she moved around the large bed, lifting herself up to sit on the end of the mattress, bringing her legs up. Belle copied her, so Rumple had them both facing him at the foot of the bed.

“She and I talked. As I told you before, I believe you and Belle are still very much in love each other. And you’ve both virtually admitted it to me. I know there are obstacles, but it’s the small things I notice between you. I told you both that, if you decide you want to be together, I won’t stand in your way. I do love Belle and, if I’m truly honest with myself, I’ve developed feelings for you too, Angus. And I feel I love Gideon as my own. Belle has told me she loves me, but I will let you decide.”

Rumple stayed silent for a while, considering his words carefully. “I want you to stay, Ariel. As I said to Belle, you give her something I cannot. You complement each other. What do you want to do about it? What’s your ideal solution?”

“I want you and Belle together. I want to share her love with you!”

“And I’d like to share Ariel with you, Rumple.” That brought a surprised gasp from the mermaid. “Belle?”

“You don’t think I’ve noticed? The shared kisses outside Giddie’s door when you both settled him? The looks. The hugs. It’s something I’d like to explore. I don’t want to be the centre of attention, a battleground for you two to argue over when times are rough. But if you two can explore your own feelings for each other? Well, that would be the ideal solution for me.”
“You’re suggesting something like Robin has with Emma and Regina? Or Mulan with Philip and Aurora?”

“Possibly, though it wouldn’t hurt to try, would it?”

Belle and Rumple looked at each other, each trying to guess the other’s thoughts. “Well I’m certainly willing to try. Rumple?”

The Dark One was desperate to hide his confusion under the usual layer of calm. *Can I really share with both of them.* Looking at the pair, sitting there facing him, on his bed, in their dressing gowns, made his mind whirr. “Well let’s try and see where we get to, shall we?”

“I suggest we try some date nights!” said Ariel. “Me and Angus, then you and Angus. Then you and me.”

“Makes sense,” said Belle. “I was hoping to stay close to Giddie tonight, as I’ve missed him all week. May I.”

“Of course,” said Rumple, sliding out from the sheets. “We’ll swap rooms. I’ll take yours and see you early in the morning.”

“Why? This bed’s plenty big enough for all of us! If you don’t mind, of course?” said Ariel.

“What? Oh…no problem.” Shit! There could be a problem!

“Great.” A moment later, the mermaid slipped off her dressing gown to reveal the rather alluring deep red satin chemise that Belle had worn when he first returned from Boston. Belle similarly dropped her gown to the floor, revealing the pale blue version previously worn by her partner. There they stood, two beautiful visions, standing either side of his bed. Rumple quickly swallowed his drink, sliding under the sheets to ensure they didn’t see the growing bulge in his pyjamas.

“Belle, probably best you get in the middle? I’m the lighter sleeper, so I’ll get up if Giddie wakes in the night,” said Ariel.

Belle nodded, shuffling into the middle of the large bed, opening the duvet for Ariel to climb in beside her. Seeing the two of them here, beside him, was playing havoc with the uncontrollable organ in his pyjamas. Just when he thought he was a suitable distance from resting against Belle’s rear, the mermaid pushed herself into the chestnut haired beauty’s front, before leaning right over her, pushing her back, to quickly plant a warm, not entirely chaste, kiss on Rumple’s mouth. “Goodnight Angus! And thanks again for this wonderful holiday! It’s been great, so far and we’re only ten days in!” she breathed, enthusiastically. Unfortunately, the effect of seeing the redhead virtually mount his wife, pressing her back into his erection, had the effect of only enlarging it further!

Belle had noticed! Had felt the hardening organ against her buttocks, and smiled inwardly with delight. She turned her head to one side, trying to look at him. “So...don’t I get a kiss then?” she asked.

“Oh, sorry!” He used the excuse to pull his lower body away from hers, before raising himself on his elbow to plant a kiss on her cheek. “Good night, Belle.”

*She wasn’t finished torturing him yet!* “Oh, so she gets one on the lips, and I have to make do with one on the cheek! Hardly seems fair…” she whined.

*He knew she was playing him!* “Oh, very well!” he breathed, leaning over again and this time covering her lips with his own and pressing in firmly. He felt her own surprise as she felt his tongue
quickly slide in and out, briefly massaging her own.” Good night, Belle!”

“Ooh, that looked nice!” whispered Ariel, who saw everything. “One of those for me too please!” without asking, she pushed in again to seize his lips in a more heated, though equally swift, kiss. Seeing her lover and her husband exchange what was basically, a fleeting French kiss, had an instant effect between her thighs. Ariel unpeeled her lips from Rumple’s to latch them on to Belle’s, giving her the same treatment. A swirl of tongues. Over in seconds, the simple exchange left two people feeling very flustered. Belle damp and Rumple with a cast iron erection.

“How the hell am I going to get any sleep now? thought Rumple.

I'm never getting any sleep now! thought Belle. Thanks a bunch, Ariel!
Chapter Summary

Belle and Ariel take control and Rumple submits willingly. An old acquaintance of Emma and Robin is coming to Storybrooke. Henry drops his grandfather well and truly in the brown stuff. Snow gives David a piece of her mind!

Chapter Notes

Happy 2019 Everyone!

Thanks for those of you who have written, making suggestions, offering feedback or positive comments. I've learnt so much these past ten weeks! This chapter is definitely a smutty one, so those of you who find that awkward may want to wait until the next one. I find writing these the hardest of all, as I'm looking for erotic but not too pornographic. Feedback is always welcome (provided it's not nasty or too mean). Someone suggested I was treating Regina and Emma as too much of a unit, rather than two separate powerful people. They may have a good point, so I'll work on that.

It may be a week or so before I'm able to update again, as I'll be travelling, so I hope you enjoy it. Fi xx

Chapter 54 - Oh, What a night!

About twenty minutes after the lights went off, Rumple lay, wide awake, on his back. Trying to think of anything, but the fact that two extremely attractive women were asleep beside him. Or so he thought.

“Can’t sleep?” Belle whispered in the dark, turning to face him.

“Sadly not,” he whispered back. “I guess I’m over-tired! Too much on my mind…”

“Sorry. We didn’t help. I…I felt you…against me!”

Rumple cringed in embarrassment! “I’m sorry…that was impolite. I shouldn’t have…”

“Why apologise? I didn’t mind! I was just thrilled I can still produce that sort of reaction in you!” she turned to face him in the dark, to ensure they weren’t overheard by the snoozing mermaid. “You didn’t embarrass me at all. I remember when you came back from Boston. And we were on the bed with Giddie. Was it me, or her, that made you…”

“You. Both of you, I suppose! You’re both very attractive. And in those outfits. I’m only a man, Belle.”

“Yes, I saw! Most impressive! You affected me too, you know? Just now, when I was squashed
between you both. One of the reasons I can’t sleep either.”

“Then I’m flattered. I never thought you would think of me like that, ever again.”

“You kidding me? When she leaned over and kissed you – it did things to me.”

Just talking about this was having an effect on me. “Belle, you’d better not talk like this, I’m…” he stopped the moment he felt her warm hand slide into his PJs to gentle grasp his penis. “Ooh!”

“Big. That’s what you are. Big. Because of me. Because of Ariel. Because of us!” the pace of her breathing quickened as she drew herself closer. “Feel me too, Rumple. Feel what I feel like right now.”

Oh hell! It’s been a while! Though he couldn’t resist doing as she asked. Curling in to face her, he brought his right hand slowly onto her hip, before sliding gently around and into the sheer lace panties. Belle slowly lifted her left leg, to allow him extras access. As his hand drifted over her lightly haired mound, she gasped as his fingers drifted between her lower lips. She was absolutely soaked!

“See what you’ve done to me?” She squeezed him harder, before gently pumping up and down. “Rumple, I won’t be able to sleep without this! I want this. I want you. Now!”

Without his magic, Rumple felt out of his depth with this astonishing woman. However, he wasn’t going to pass up such a wonderful opportunity. “Are you…are you quite sure?”

“Most definitely! I’m ready, as you can tell. Rumple…” she took her hand away from him, to quickly slip her panties off. It was a matter of moments before she eased herself up, and over him, grasping him before lining him up at her entrance. Already highly aroused, she knew she wasn’t going to last long. Easing herself slowly down over his swollen brim, he gasped loudly as he felt it slowly disappeared within her folds. “Oooh, fuuuuuck!” she groaned, trying to keep her voice to a whisper, but finding it increasingly difficult. It was the first time in over six years he had been within her, and she relished the sensations as it slipped in further.

They both looked sideways to the mermaid, who’d turned over in her sleep, now facing them with her eyes shut. Rumple looked at her sublime, relaxed face in the moonlight. “She’s beautiful, isn’t she?” Belle breathed, as she rose and fell.

“Absolutely entrancing,” said Rumple. “You complement each other perfectly.”

Remembering how he used to get so turned on when she talked about what she liked and what they were doing, she whispered to him: “Imagine her doing this with you, Rumple? Imagine her doing this…with us!” she knew she was very close, and that her words would also bring him to his own peak sooner. So she couldn’t resist, turning the language blue.

“Imagine the three of us, Rumple? Imagine her sliding down on your big, hard cock, just like me. Imagine ploughing into her, just like me. Imagine seeing me eat her out, my darling! Imagine eating her out yourself, while I’m on you. Imagine the three of us…together! Just imagine it!” she noticed her words had made him now push even harder into her, even faster, his shaft pistoning. How his breathing changed! She was very close now, and he wouldn’t be far behind!

“Remember when you walked in on us? Remember what you saw? Remember her fucking me, Rumple! She was hard up against me. Ramming my pussy with hers, clit to clit! Did you like that? I did! She was…Oh! Oh, I’m close, I’m going to…Oh god! Fuck! this is unbelievable! Yes! Yes!
She stopped, shuddering as the most powerful orgasm ripped right through her. “Yeeeeeessssss!”

Her filthy talk had brought him to a peak, and he desperately sought to hold himself back until she’s reached hers fully. Now, feeling her tighten around him, he couldn’t hold back any more. Tightening his hold on her hips even more, the familiar pulling within his groin took over, and he felt his balls twitch violently as he climaxed within her. Within seconds he felt it again, as he released a second, shorter time. Then a smaller, final ejaculation left him gasping for breath. “Oh god, Belle! That was…was…astonishing! Words fail me!”

Belle collapsed violently on top of him as he maintained himself within her. “Oh Rumple! That was just…” she gasped, sliding onto his right side, leaving him sandwiched in between them as he drew breath.

“That was bloody hot!” said a soft female voice to his left, making both Belle and Rumple instantly freeze.

“I heard what you said, Belle! I knew you were a naughty little minx, but I had no idea you could be such a potty-mouthed princess, too! Quite the turn on!” she giggled, making Rumple also chuckle, deeply.

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“So, Milord, usually L’Auberge Cachée does not provide outside catering or venues, but as it is you and Lady Emma, I’m sure we can do something. Professor Sage did speak so ‘ighly of you! What is ze special occasion, monsieur?”

“Merci, Pierre. Emma and I had a wonderful dinner with you last year. In fact, Merlin will also be joining us next week and his youngest, Annabelle, is living here at the moment!”

“Oh!” Robin knew the mention of the Sorcerer would always get his attention. “I remember Anna when she was just a baby! So beautiful! And her sister? Celia or the fair Rosalind? It seems so long since I saw zem!”

Robin chuckled. “Rosalind. Though she likes to be called Rosie! Pierre, we can come to you, but why don’t you come to us here in Sherwood? We have a decent pub. The food may not be anything like your own, but I think it’s edible! It’s traditional English fare! Then, we can discuss the wedding.

“English? Mon Dieu! Oh well...never mind!” Typical snobby French anglophobe, though Robin. “You said ‘wedding’? Who are ze lovely couple?”

OK, this is where it gets difficult! Robin, appeal to his snobbery, old son! he thought to himself.

“Well Pierre, that’s why I’m asking one of the world’s greatest chefs, to cater for us! We have a lot to learn over here!” Ok, this is where it gets really awkward. “The wedding will be for my fiancée Emma, who you met. Merlin said you were from the Old World, so I can tell you now! Emma is in reality a former princess of the Enchanted Forest. She’s the daughter of Snow White and Prince Charming. She is already married to Regina Mills, the former Queen of the Enchanted Forest. And they are both marrying me, Lord Robin of Locksley!” Use the titles, Rob, it may work with this one!

The line went silent. Shit, I’ve blown it! He thought I’d already married Emma!
Finally, an overawed voice was heard at the other end of the line. “Snow White? Snow White…is the mother of…one of the brides? Lady Emma’s mother is Snow White?

“Yes. Snow and Emma are in New York together now, choosing wedding dresses. Why?”

“Incroyable! I cannot believe she survived! Milord, would you introduce me to ‘er Royal Highness?”

That surprised him! Snow clearly had a big fan! “Of course, Pierre, she’s going to be my mother-in-law, after all. She’s a lovely lady. And you’ve met her husband David? Prince Charming?”

“Only ‘er, I’m afraid. She’s not just a lovely lady, she’s an incredible lady, monsieur! She and ‘er dwarves saved my entire village! I owe ‘er my life! And that of my daughter and granddaughter! Monsieur, it would be a true ‘onour to provide ‘er daughter’s wedding feast! When is ze date?”

Well that’s easier than I thought!

---

Rumple still really couldn’t believe this was happening! After he and Belle had made love in the dark. Correction – when they had fast, urgent sex in the dark, trying not to wake the sleeping mermaid, they had no idea that Ariel had been awake for most of it! She’d slowly turned her head to face them. Although magic didn’t apply in this land, her vision was far more acute than any humans. After all, the oceans are very dark down below. So, through the slits of closed eyelids, she’d watched their frenetic coupling with interest, more than turned on by her lover’s actions. She recognised the noises coming from Belle and knew when her orgasm was close. Ariel had been more than turned on, especially when she started including herself in her dirty talk to Rumple.

“That was bloody hot!” she said, smiling when she saw them freeze, knowing she was awake!

“I heard what you said, Belle! I knew you were a naughty little minx, but I had no idea you could be such a potty-mouthed princess, too! Quite the turn on!” she enjoyed the shocked look on their faces. Even Rumple chuckled at that!

“You don’t mind?” asked Belle, now feeling nervous, pulling herself into Rumple’s side, more embarrassed at having been caught.

“Why should I mind? You are married...after all,” said the mermaid. “And besides, you know you don’t have to just imagine the three of us being together!”

Rumple’s jaw fell. Had she really just said that? He was totally speechless.

“Ariel? Are you...serious?” asked Belle, still whispering, despite all of them being awake.

“Completely. I imagined something like this, anyway. That is, if you two were willing? I’m not sure whether Angus is attracted to me, as he is to you, but…I like him!”

Belle’s shocked face transformed into a sly grin. “Oh, he likes you all right! Well, it’s not as though he’s not unfamiliar with handling two women at once, is it, Rumple? Hilary and Katja, the Fridge from Finland? You seemed to defrost her, OK.”

Rumple still hadn’t spoken. This was unreal!

“Well Angus, I guess it’s down to you. I know I’ll like to…explore this,” she pulled herself into his
left side, lifting and moving his arm around her shoulder as she settled her head on his chest. “If you are?”

He still couldn’t find the words, his mind a blur. As he felt her soft body move into his left side, Belle brought herself into his right, the two women’s heads now resting on his upper chest, their faces a mere couple of inches apart as he held them. Ariel leaned forward to latch her lips onto Belle’s in a brief kiss, before the librarian whispered something to her that he couldn’t quite catch. *These two are going to kill me!*

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It was now one in the morning at the hotel, and Henry was in his Edinburgh room, on a web call with his mothers, as they collapsed in their New York hotel bedroom. “So you’ve got the wedding dresses all sorted out then and you really took grandma with you, without killing her? Mum, I’m impressed!”

“OK, a little less sarcasm, young man! Yes we did and…I admit, she was helpful!”

“Helpful?” added Emma. “Come on Gina, she found it! Give her a bit of credit? And she’s organising the venue and the catering, Hen. So, now we need to get you and Rollie suited and booted, and the girls, though your mum and I can take care of all that. Now, tell me what you’ve been up to? Where are you, exactly?”

Henry launched into an excited summary of the last ten days. About the college in Oxford University he was currently considering, the people he’d met, trips to London and York and finally meeting back up with his grandfather.

“Yeah, grandpa’s spent most of this week on an island off the north of Scotland. There’s a magic settlement there, a bit like Storybrooke. I met up with him earlier this evening. He seems fine.”

“So Belle and Ariel didn’t go with him? He left them in London?” asked Emma.

“Yeah. He took Gideon. They spent all week down south. Not sure what they were up to, but they got here just before me.”

“Just the two of them? Well, I guess Belle and Rumple are definitely over, then.”

“I guess. The three of them get on pretty well though. In fact, after we get to Rome, Ariel’s heading off to Venice with grandpa, while Belle comes to Florence with me.”

“Well…I guess it’s due to a certain Gabriella Weiss?” asked Regina. “By the way, you never answered my question last week about her granddaughter. Sofia, wasn’t it? Just how close are you, Henry? And what about Violet?”

“Mum…please!” he groaned back. *This was one topic his older mother always went to.*

“Hen, we just want to know you’re being careful…” said Emma.

“And using protection!” added her wife. She couldn’t resist winding him up.

“Mum, Ma, I can’t believe you’re asking me all this stuff! Yes, of course I’m being careful! I’ve already told you, Violet and I are just friends now! ‘I’m not actually with anyone serious at the moment! But, I’ll tell you what. Let’s have a deal?’”

“You sound horribly like your grandfather, dear!”
“I promise never to ask about your love life. Either you two, or with Robin. And you promise not to do the same with mine. Deal?”

“Hen, don’t be like that! We’re just concerned mothers; we love you, miss you and want the best for you!”

“I know, and I love you both too, but honestly, I’m fine. You taught me well and, while I’m not exactly a naïve virgin, I’m not going after everything that moves! I’ve had good role models. You two and grandpa David. I spoke to him yesterday…”

“You spoke to my dad? He never said.” Why am I always out of the loop?

Henry chuckled. “I speak to him a couple of times a month. Just a quick catch up. He told me about Uncle Neal and that tree yesterday! Seemed funny, but shame about his broken arm though…”

“Neal and a broken arm? Henry, what on earth are you talking about?” Regina’s voice rose in alarm. After Emma, her younger brother was by far and away her favourite Charming and she had a soft spot for the over-enthusiastic eight-year-old.

“I’m surprised you don’t know! Neal saw a bird’s nest high in a branch of a tree, close to the farmhouse. Apparently, there’s a mother and chicks in it, and a cat was climbing up to get to them. So Neal poofed himself up there, to get in front of it. After, he panicked when he saw how high up it was, and got stuck. He was too frightened, so couldn’t use his magic to get back down. So he screamed for grandpa David.

“Poor lamb!” gasped Regina. “What happened?”

“Grandpa heard him. It’s too high for ladders, and there wasn’t anybody with magic powers around. You were away, Robin was out, Merlin’s family were all away and I think Anna was in theatre in Sherwood. So grandpa climbed up it with a rope. He lowered Neal down safely, but before he got himself down, the rope snapped. He landed badly and fractured his collar bone!”

“Ow!” winced Emma, remembering what that was like. “Why didn’t he tell me?”

“I asked him. He figured you had something more important to do with grandma in New York. Said you needed the time together and that if she got wind of it, she’d be on the next coach back! So he asked me not to say anything. Oh! I did it again, didn’t I?”

“He should have told me, not you, Hen! How is he now?”

“Sore. Apparently, he’s in a neck cast or something. He’s out of hospital. Anna will patch him up once the bone’s had time to heal. I think Blue’s keeping an eye on Neal.”

“I’ll call him!” said Emma. “Don’t worry Hen, I’ll say it just slipped out. But I’ll need to tell grandma otherwise she’ll give me hell if she knew I knew, but didn’t tell her!”

Something else was on Regina’s mind. “What about Honour and Margot? Wasn’t David supposed to be looking after them yesterday?”

“Yeah. When Robin got the news, he picked them up. They’re all with the Men now. They’ve a leaving party for John and Elsa as they’re heading off to Arendelle soon.”

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Belle couldn’t believe they were actually doing this! Just over half an hour ago, Ariel’s flirting with
Rumple had resulted in the Dark One reviving completely from their earlier activities. He’d watched the pair of them kissing tenderly above him, whispering sweet nothings. Then the hands. Belle had softly massaged his stomach before sliding ever-so-slowly down to his recovering member, still slightly sticky from herself. Ariel’s hand had slowly met hers before their fingers gently interlocked together around the shaft, drawing his flesh slowly up and down. He inhaled sharply, panting at the renewed sensations.

As he felt Belle’s lips move across his cheek before latching on to his own, Ariel’s head moved lower, dropping kisses across his stomach before moving to their target. Feeling her lips slowly move across and onto his organ, sucking hard on the helmet, brought a shiver to his entire body, making him groan into the librarian’s mouth. “Hah!” he cried in shock as Ariel’s teeth gently bit under his brim. So sensitive, slightly painful but…wondrous!

Belle sniggered, seeing the joyous look on his face. “Good?” she whispered into his lips, until she saw, still bathed in the moonlight, her lover’s head slowly rise from under the duvet.

“Sorry, but you’re hard as a rock and I can’t wait!” said Ariel, before hitching herself up and drawing a leg across him, assuming the exact position Belle had been in half an hour ago. She didn’t waste time, lowering herself onto him and taking him fully inside her in one smooth movement. “Aaaah!” she moaned, “soooo good!”

The sight of Ariel riding her husband sent a burning sensation straight to her core. Twisting she lowered her mouth hard onto Rumple’s, sliding her tongue inside his mouth to dance with his own, before whispering “Is that good? Is that good, my darling? How does she feel? She’s close, I know she is! Make her come, Rumple!” She slid her hand down between them, feeling for where they were joined. Two fingers slid down, either side of his shaft, her forefinger seeking out Ariel’s clitoris. Desperate to avoid screaming as the orgasm took over, the mermaid grabbed the back of Belle’s head, pulling her mouth onto her own to scream into it. “Mmnngh!”

It was too much for Rumple! Feeling her tightening around his length and knowing he was only a few seconds away himself, he twisted violently, turning her over, almost squashing into Belle but with his penis still inside. Now he was on top, forcing himself into her as hard and as fast as he could. Ariel immediately wrapped her legs around the back of him, drawing his in. “Oh my god!” he rasped, feeling the enormous pull of his groin as he exploded inside her. “Haaah! Ariel! Belle! Oooh shit! Soooo good!”

He collapsed from her, lying on his back, utterly spent, and taking deep breaths. Ariel was equally shaken, trying to recover her own breath as she lay in a sheen of sweat, next to Belle. The librarian gave her a soft kiss on her forehead, before tilting herself up to look at Rumple.

“Yes, that’s what it’s like. So different, so…”

Still panting, and between breaths, “There is…no comparison…whatsoever! That was… incomparable!”

“Ariel,” she chuckled softly. “I think we broke him!”

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“WHY THE HELL DIDN’T YOU TELL ME!” yelled Snow, now on the web call with David. “You told Henry! But you couldn’t tell your own wife?”

David sighed, knowing this was how she would react. “Don’t fret, Snow. It happened yesterday afternoon and Henry called me on the tablet and saw the shoulder brace the hospital put me in. It’s
painful, but Anna said it’s a mild fracture and could have been a lot worse. It’ll heal. There’s some internal bruising too, but she wants it to come out first before she uses any magic."

“You still should have told me! David, we vowed never to keep things like this from each other!”

Snow had called him within minutes of Emma telling her Henry’s news. As the Saviour tended to keep her own problems very private, she sympathised with her dad, feeling almost guilty that she’d told her mother. She and Regina sat on nearby chairs, out of view of the camera, while Snow berated him.

“I know, my love! But you and Emma had more important things to deal with right now and I didn’t want you running back here to fuss over me.”

“I’m your wife, David! That’s my job! That’s what we do for each other!”

“I know. But we have a daughter, and she’s more important right now! Have you two made up?”

Snow glanced over the screen to where Emma sat, blushing slightly. She realised they hadn’t told him they were listening in to the call. “Yeah, we made up. We’re good.”

“I’m pleased to hear it. I was worried. And Regina’s fine too?” The former queen’s brow raised, waiting to hear her reply.

“As well as she ever is…” she replied, uncommitted, not looking at the woman in question.

“Now Snow, she reached out to you and apologised! For everything! That takes guts and you said you’ve forgiven her, so you now also have to work at it too! You can’t keep bringing up the past and throwing it at her, whenever it’s convenient. You have to let it go too…”

Regina smirked as she heard him gently chide her back. Thank you David! I could so kiss you right now!

“I suppose so,” she almost whispered. “Anyway, stop deflecting. I’m coming home on the next coach…”

“No Snow, don’t! Come back tomorrow with the girls, as you planned! I’ll be fine here. Blue’s checked in on me and Ruby’s downstairs with Neal. Robin’s checking up on me later. All’s good. Just all of you get back here safe and sound tomorrow afternoon. Please Snow, spend some valuable time with our girl!”

Emma smiled across at Regina, who squeezed her hand. “That’s why I’m a daddy’s girl!” she whispered.

“Oh and another thing I almost forgot!” said David. “Do you remember a French guy called Pierre Roch?”

Regina’s and Emma’s ears instantly pricked up at that!

“Can’t recall him. Why?”

“Robin tells me this fella Pierre has offered to do all their wedding banquet, if they want! It seems Robin and Emma met him last year. He’s now a world class chef, apparently, and a huge fan of Merlin’s.”

“Still don’t remember him.”
“Well he remembers you! Apparently, you and the dwarves saved him and his family during the Ogre Wars. Anyway, he specifically asked if he could meet you. So, Robin suggested he set up a formal dinner for all of us, Pierre and Merlin.”

“He wants us to set up a dinner for a chef?” Snow was incredulous. “Why go to all the trouble? There’s plenty of people who could cater for them?”

Regina simmered, red-faced, gently on the other side of the screen. It was bad enough that one of her biggest culinary idols, a five-star Michelin chef, was a fan of the woman! ‘Because he’s one of the world’s best, you imbecile! You put him off, and I’ll…I’ll…’ Then she felt Emma squeeze her hand gently, smirking.

“Not like him, apparently! Robin thinks he’s better than most. Emma’s a big fan and I gather Regina is too! So you might want to buy yourself something suitably ‘regal’ before you come home… tomorrow!”

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Floating Tom Cats & Runaway Unicorns.

Chapter Summary

An embarrassing slip-up raises Henry's suspicions to the relationship between Rumple, Belle and Ariel. The Sorcerer returns to town and Henry gives the travellers a lesson in Anglo-American English. Snow returns to Storybrooke, to discover her son's magic may be getting a little out of control. A warm welcome awaits Emma and Regina.

Chapter Notes

No smut in this chapter (though Chapter 56 will definitely be, and an OutlawSwanQueen one at that). Thanks for all your feedback, which is always appreciated! There's also certainly going to be a one-week gap until the next chapter is published, as I'll be travelling.

As always, I welcome your comments...

Fi xx

Chapter 55

The morning after

Rumple woke up to the soft griping of his son in the adjacent room. Gideon seemed to be making some sort of gurgling noise, meaning he was now wide awake, needing a morning bottle and food.

As his eyes slowly adjusted to the early light, Rumple felt the rise from the bed on his left, as Ariel swiftly stepped out from between the sheets. “My turn. I got this!” she whispered, heading towards the room. He couldn’t help notice her crumpled chemise and bare bum as she headed across. A sight for tired eyes!

To his right, Belle remained snuggled against his side, enjoying his warmth. “Hmph. What time is it?” she groaned groggily, before yawning and stretching.

“Just after six. No rush. We’re meeting Henry for breakfast at eight.”

At the sound of his deep voice beside her, Belle recovered consciousness, slowly realising the position she was now in. Although not entirely naked, she was covered in only her silk chemise, the matching panties presumably thrown on the floor somewhere. I had sex with Rumple! We had sex with Rumple! He’s still here!

As embarrassment flushed through her cheeks, her thoughts were interrupted by the sight of Ariel, similarly clothed and pantie-less, carrying Gideon in her arm and fiddling with a bottle in her right. She admired her lover’s wild bed-hair (or should that be after-sex bed hair?) flowing over her shoulder, a contented look on her face. Ariel smiled back. “Morning, lovely! You wanna hold him
while I get his bottle sorted out?”

“Hmm? Oh, sure – give him here. I’ll feed him.”

“Ok, then I’ll make the tea. Or Angus, do you prefer coffee?”

“Tea please, dearie. I canna abide those horrible coffee sachets they leave in these places. No taste.” Rumple smiled at the simple, relaxed domesticity going on around him as the two women shuffled around with baby bottles, cups and kettles.

He heard a little chuckle from the redhead, now standing near the boiling kettle with her cute little bum cheeks clearly on display under the sheer silk. “You know, since being up here, your accent has gone slightly more Scottish since last week. ‘Canna abide?’ I love it!”

‘Aye, well, we do like to differentiate ourselves from the English over the border. There’s a rivalry, friendly most of the time, you know?’

Belle now clutched the growing one-year-old to her chest, relishing her first chance to feed him in a week. “You are getting so big, Giddie. Papa tells me you’re trying to walk? Don’t grow too quick, my love. I’m going to miss this too much!”

For the next half hour, the three sat in and on the bed, playing and coddling Gideon as he giggled, grinned and desperately tried to move around. Belle smiled at the happy scene, wishing every morning could be like this! However, she knew there was an issue looming. Last night, she, and Ariel had had sex with her estranged husband, the father of their child and, effectively, her landlord. However, Rumple and Ariel seemed oblivious to any concerns, happily fussing over Gideon.

“Erm…sorry to break up this happy moment, but, do you think we should talk about what happened last night?”

Rumple frowned, guessing she’d do this. However before he could say anything, Ariel spoke up. “I don’t see why? It was rather lovely! We all enjoyed it, and I don’t regret what happened. Angus definitely enjoyed it! Didn't you?”

“Yes, of course. It was wonderful, but…” he words were brought to an abrupt halt by a loud rap on the door.

“Who the hell? At this hour? It’s not even seven…”

“It’s ok, you stay with Gid. I’ll go,” said the mermaid, stepping nimbly up. “Just a minute!” she called, before pulling a dressing gown from the floor, wrapping it around her and heading to the door, regretting it the moment she opened it wide.

“What is…? Oh, Henry! Good morning!”

“Ariel?” The surprise on his face, seeing Ariel answer the door so early in the morning, was as nothing compared to the sight behind her. There was his grandfather, sitting in the large bed with his back to the headboard, nursing a cup of tea. Belle was sitting on the top of the sheets, both hands holding her son’s, as he appeared to be attempting to stand. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to disturb you! I knew grandpa woke early, so I…”

The three adults in the room froze, realising what Henry had just seen! Ariel was just relieved she’d had the foresight to put her dressing gown on before opening the door! Belle was sitting on the bed, in only her chemise, desperately wondering where she’d left her panties? The older man was the first to respond, weighing up the alternatives. *If he asked him to come back later it would be suspicious. If he stayed…*
“Henry, my boy. Come in. The ladies got here a little while before you! Belle and Ariel offered to help with Gideon this morning. How did you sleep?” he deflected.

“Oh fine, thanks grandpa,” said the tall young man, stepping in. “Sorry if I came in too soon, it’s just I wanted to show...morning, Giddie!...a map of the city for today! I can pop back later if you prefer?” His grandfather’s explanation on why they were there being perfectly logical.

“Nonsense!” he was under the duvet wearing no PJ bottoms, probably lying crumpled at the bottom of the bed! So he couldn’t walk over to him. “Pop it on the table there and we’ll take a look. Could you check for my magnifying glass? It’s in my small leather toiletry bag. You should find it in the bathroom next to the mirror.”

“Sure!” Henry stepped away from them, towards the bathroom, though he couldn’t help but notice, out the corner of his eye, that Belle seemed to be pulling Gideon closer to her. She was wearing something very sheer and clearly didn’t have a bra on underneath. Oh, well, night wear! But his keen eye also spotted that she definitely didn’t have anything on below that, at all! The silk had ridden quite high! He went into the rather large bathroom, finding the leather bag in question. He unzipped the side pocket, to see a watchmaker’s glass inside, pulling it out carefully. He was only gone less than half a minute. While gone, Ariel had quickly snatched up Belle’s dressing gown from a nearby chair, bringing it over to her, as swiftly as she could. Belle passed Gideon to Rumple, who had now already retrieved his PJ bottoms, sliding them back on under the quilt. Ariel helped her lover slide quickly into her own gown, before she darted under the side of the duvet for decency.

“Panties?” she mouthed silently to Ariel, who merely shook her head, not having time to retrieve any.

The next few minutes were awkward, as Henry enthusiastically told them about the places he wanted to visit. “Belle, Ariel? Come and have a look. I figured we should first take the tourist bus around, then go to the castle before we head for Arthur’s Seat!” The three gathered around him, Ariel now holding Gideon, and Henry oblivious to the earlier panic. The two women had now relaxed more, getting into the discussion of the day’s events to come.

After ten minutes, Henry folded the map. “Ok, I’d best go shower. I’ll see you down for breakfast at eight?”

“Ok, my boy. I’d best give Gideon something solid before we head down. I don’t want him bawling!”

“Henry nodded and stepped back towards the door. However, he caught sight, on the top of the crumpled bed, of Gideon’s milk bottle, lying on its side, with a small milk patch surrounding it! Stopping to pick it up, “I didn’t think these things were supposed to leak?” he said, placing it upright on the side table near the lamp.

That’s when he spotted them. On the carpet near the bedside table, a couple of feet from each other. Two pairs of frilly panties, obviously worn and left aside. One pair deep red and the other pale blue. Interesting! “Ok all. See you later!” he said, before leaving the room.

“That was close!” said Ariel, grinning. Seeing Rumple’s wry smile, the pair looked at each other before they burst out laughing together.

“Belle looked at them, her cheeks reddening. “It’s alright for you two! I was sitting there without anything on! If I hadn’t pulled Gideon in, he would have seen my stretch marks and a hell of a lot more besides!” That just seemed to set off the other two even more, as tears of laughter ran down Ariel’s cheeks.
“Well we’d best go shower and change too! I definitely need one after last night!” said the redhead. ‘Belle, have you seen where my panties went? I think I flicked them across your side…”

“Will these do?” said Rumple, now at the far side of the bed, holding a pair of sheer panties in each hand. He’d just picked them up from the floor next to the side table, on which stood…the bottle of milk Henry left!

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“Robin! Nice to see you again. Wedding all sorted yet?” said The Sorcerer, shaking his hand.

“Hello Merlin. Good to have you back. All in planning at the moment, though thank you for having a word with our wonder-chef! He’s coming over next week. You staying long enough to see him?”

“Yes, I’m here for a few weeks. I’ve come to see Rosalind and Killian, while they’re in port. I’m missing my young grandson. Plus Annabelle, of course.”

“Well, your daughters’ now have quite a fan base here, you know? Their constant friendly jousting in the pub is quite something to behold. And Anna and my sister seem joined at the hip! You know she’s going out with your boy?”

“I do indeed, Robin. I met Maria and Anna two days ago, in New York. Charlie’s opening up the new education centre there. That boy doesn’t seem to stop, so it’s nice to see him getting serious about someone. He’s rather smitten, you know?

“Maria also seems keen, so here’s hoping. You’re heading to the hospital next?”

“I am. But I wanted to see you about something for which I’m going to need your powers…”

“The Sorcerer needs MY powers?” Robin became slightly anxious. “Is this a problem like the one with the Black Fairy and Rumple’s child?”

“Not quite. Though it does affect Rumple directly!” his voice became serious.

“You know he’s away right now with Henry, travelling across Europe? He’s not due back for another month…”

“Indeed. Which gives us the opportunity to plan the extraction properly. We don’t want any slip-ups!”

“Extraction? I don’t understand…”

“We’re going to remove the Dark One from within Rumpelstiltskin! We’re going to kill him, then bring him back to life, after extracting the creature to a safe place!”

“Hasn’t that been tried before? I recall it went wild. Emma had to become the Dark One herself, to save it from consuming Regina! It’s one of the first times I realised they had more than friendship between them.”

“Though this time, with the right planning, it will be very different. Robin, ever day Rumple spends away from magical centres, the more the demon is weakened and needs to escape. Various things have been going on in his life that have already weakened it.”

“But last time, it ended up in Emma, then Killian. Can you be sure that won’t happen again? The Dark One can’t be killed! It has to go somewhere!”
“True. I will send it to a newly created realm, where nothing else, no one person exists. I will need all the higher level magic practitioners in the town to help with this. So I need Emma and Regina on board. Their magic, Reul’s, yours, mine. Plus a someone very special to seal the new realm.”

“Seal a realm? Who on earth has a power to do that?”

“Jeffersen. He’ll be joining us tomorrow.”

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Henry was already sitting at the large breakfast table, when the others joined him. Freshly showered, Rumple sat Gideon in the high chair as Belle and Ariel joined them. The Author was already tucking into a significant plate of cooked food. Bacon, eggs, fried bread, sausages, beans and a strange looking black disc.

“Henry, what’s that black thing on your plate?” asked Belle.

“Black Pudding. When they tell you what it’s made of, it sounds disgusting, but it tastes pretty good!”

“Nothing wrong with oats, barley, fat and spices, my boy! Although the blood does make it an odd colour.”

“I’ll go with the kippers,” said Belle, unimpressed.

“So, guys. First event, at the castle, is at eleven, so there’s a couple of hours to kill. I need to buy a couple of things I left behind in Oxford. There’s a big shopping area close by, so I’ll go there first.”

“Can I come with you, Henry?” said Ariel. “I need to get some extra clothes and things. It’s cold up here!”

“I would have thought mermaids didn’t feel the cold!” he said, lowering his voice so not to be overheard. “It’s pretty chilly in the ocean.”

“You don’t notice it when you’ve a tail. Turning me human has changed all that…”

“Understood. Don’t forget, if you’re looking for pants over here, they call them trousers! If you ask for pants they might think you mean underwear.”

“I remember!” added Belle. “And they call panties ‘knickers’ over here! I read it somewhere…”

“Aye. And never tell them you can’t get your ‘fanny’ in those ‘trousers’, Ariel!” said Rumple.

Henry chuckled loudly, earning a quizzical look from the two women. Henry leaned closer, lowering his voice so not to be overheard. “‘Fanny’ doesn’t mean ‘backside’, or ‘bum’, over here! It means ‘vagina’! They’d think you’re deformed!” That earned a snigger from all around the table. “I’ll bear that in mind!” said Ariel.

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Storybrooke

Regina’s car drove over the town line early the following evening. It had been a long drive back but a fruitful weekend. The Swan-Mills women smiled to each other as soon as the magic flew back into them. “Feels naked without it, doesn’t it, Gina?”
“Sorry, what?” asked Snow, recovering from her doze in the back.

“Nothing, dear,” said Regina. “We’ll drop you off first before we head home.”

“Yeah, I’d like to pop in on dad. Check he’s ok! That shoulder injury sounded nasty!”

Ten minutes later, the car pulled up at the farmhouse. The sun shone on the horizon across the edge of the forest and the view into the valley never looked lovelier. Snow sighed gently, looking forward to a decent bath, a cuddle with her son before bedtime, and snuggling under the sheets with her man.

Unfortunately, getting out of the car, her pleasant thoughts were disturbed by the unbelievable sight of a giant ginger tom cat floating gently above the trees! At first she thought it was some sort of balloon but then she realised, in horror, it was a real, live cat, wailing loudly!

Ignoring the others and racing to the back lawn, she saw her son, Neal, waving his arms in the air while Ruby, standing nearby, looked on in horror, her hand to her mouth, trying to shout to him!

“That should have done it! She should have gone down again!” he yelled back.

“What the hell is going on?” barked Snow, now having reached them. “Neal, why do I have a giant flying cat in my garden? And where’s your father?”

The boy turned, seeing his mother and looking suitably embarrassed. “Oh, hi mum! Welcome back. Don’t know anything about floating spells, do ya?”

“Oddly enough, no! That would be your sister’s department! What on earth have you been doing?”

The cat, suspended about twenty feet off the grown, was bigger than a truck and very distressed.

“I tried to magic him off the tree by making him float off it. I wasn’t going to hurt him, but he keeps going after the chicks! I did that one ok but when I tried to bring him back down again, he got… big!”

Snow’s annoyance wasn’t helped by the two chuckling women now coming up behind her! She Turned around to them with a glare. “Don’t!” she warned. “Don’t you dare encourage him!”

“Hi Gina!” yelled Neal to his sister-in-law, relieved at a friendly face. “I screwed up the reversing spell! Couldn’t help me out, could ya?”

Regina had a very soft spot for Emma’s young brother. They’d always been close and he was one of the first to welcome her into the family when she got together with Emma. The former queen stepped up to him, dropping a hand on his shoulder and a kiss on the top of his head. “Of course. I’m impressed you got the floating spell right! That takes a lot of concentration. Did you picture it reversing in your mind?”

“I thought I did, but I guess I got distracted…”

“That happens. Here, we’ll do it together.” She took his hand and whispered something to him, indecipherable to the others. Almost immediately, the cat started shrinking slowly, eventually reaching its original size, before finally floating down to the lawn. The moment it’s little legs touched the grass, the terrified animal raced across the lawn, desperate to get away.

“Thanks, Gina. You’re the best!” said the wild haired eight-year-old, lifting himself up to kiss her on the cheek, making the former queen beam with happiness. As he turned quickly back to his mum to face her chiding, Emma stepped beside her. “Hardly noticed me. He’s definitely your favourite! I’m getting quite jealous, you know?”
Regina tittered. “He’s adorable, and so much like Roland, always getting into mischief. I love him!”

Snow cuddled her son. “Right, now that’s over, let’s get you cleaned up and ready for bed, young man!”

“OK. But I guess I’d better get the unicorn back in first!”

“WHAT?” his mother’s eyes glared at him, eyebrow raised.

“Erm…Honnie’s unicorn?” he said, his voice laden with guilt. “She left it here, and I kinda…brought it to life. Not quite as big as the cat but…sorry ma!”

“Oh, goodie!” groaned Snow sarcastically, ignoring the women behind, who were collapsing with laughter. “Ruby, can your wolf smell a large pink and blue unicorn? Please?”

Ruby was also laughing with the others. “Well…I’m not sure what unicorns smell like, but I’ll give it a go!”

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“David, you said it wasn’t serious!” said Snow, teary-eyed, on seeing her husband’s upper torso encased in a surgical support.

“It’s ok, Snow. It looks worse than it is, and this is just to help me sleep at night. Doctor Wells said I need to wear this for a few days and keep the shoulder still till it comes off. He’s back on Wednesday to check me over.” He winced, turning to face them.

“Doctor Wells? I haven’t heard of him?” said Regina. Snow and Emma were sitting either side of him on the large sofa. “Where’s he from?”

“Anna and Merlin knew him in New York,” said David. “He’s from a magical land, so he can get over the town line. He’s rotating with Whale for a few weeks. Seems a good guy.”

“Mum’s right though, dad! It looks nasty! You should have said. We could have come back sooner…”

“No, Emma. As I told your mother yesterday, you three needed to clear things between you. Neal and I were just fine.”

“Yes, I saw!” said Snow. “Flying giant cats and releasing fluffy unicorns into the forest is perfectly fine?”

“Oh, let him be, love! We were young once! I’m sure this one,” he looked at Emma, squeezing her hand and smirking, "...would have been just as much trouble if she were around at his age.”

“Nonetheless, you worried me too, dad! When Henry told me, I had to tell mum! You know, Regina and I were talking a few minutes ago. About helping with Neal…”

Regina took over. “Neal’s magic is quite powerful for his age. I certainly wasn’t floating and animating things at eight years old, so he needs a bit of help to manage his magical emotions. I think Emma and I can help him control them, and Merlin’s also in town if we need more advice. If you’ll let us?”

Snow frowned but David nodded in agreement. “That makes sense, Snow. Regina does seem to have a connection with both our children,” he winked at Emma. “I think we should let them…”
Snow slowly nodded. "Alright, but go carefully! That little bugger’s already said he was going to turn one of Anton’s pumpkin’s into a wedding carriage for you two!"

“Ambitious!” said Regina, grinning.

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As Emma pulled the car into the driveway, Robin was already standing outside the door ready to greet them. Regina smiled up at him as he walked across while they got out. "Hello strangers! God, I’ve missed you two!" he said, stepping right in front of Regina, wrapping his arms gently around her, before pulling her in for a warm, rather open-mouthed kiss. Nothing too urgent or frenetic, just nice and soft. Regina giggled, reciprocating with a quick dart of her tongue across his own. “Hmm, nice! With a welcome like that, I should go away more often!”

“Where’s mine then, thief?” said Emma, stepping in alongside them. Robin eased gently back from Regina, before taking the blonde into his arms.

“Coming right up, beautiful!” he breathed, latching his lips onto her own and prising them gently open to deliver another warm welcome.

Emma felt a familiar hardness against her stomach. “Mmm. I think somebody’s missed us, Gina!”

“That may be, but we’ve children to attend to my dear! And after that drive and chasing a unicorn around a forest, I need an early night!”

"Unicorn?" asked Robin, confused.

"Don't ask," said Emma. "Though Gina's right, we do need to get up early."

“All in hand, my lovelies. Hope and Faith are tucked up in their cots, Roland’s at Will’s, and Honour and Margot are with the Briars tonight. Emma said she’s not working till Wednesday, so we get a lie-in.”

“They’re with the Briars?” said Regina. “Robin, they have school in the morning!”

“No, they have field study, actually. Mulan and Rory organised it. So, as I said, you get a lie-in and I’ll get up for the babies when they wake up. You can rest up.”

“That, Locksley,” breathed Emma, before kissing him again. “Is one of the many reasons I fell in love with you!”

“And there’s me thinking it was because I’m good in bed!” he smirked.

Regina stepped into their side, leaning closer to their lips and pulling herself in. “Sounding a little confident in yourself there, thief?” she kissed their cheeks.

“Well I haven’t had any complaints so far, Mrs. Swan-Mills!” He pressed his lips into her right cheek, Regina immediately doing the same to Emma, who did the same to Robin. All three then turned their mouths slightly right to bring their lips together in a mush, flicking their tongues out for a moment to savour the others. It was a little act of silliness, a game they played sometimes, when they were not in danger of being overlooked.

He still held them tight. “You have no idea how much I’m looking forward to marrying you two!” he whispered. “I can’t wait to see you both in your bridal gowns. And, whatever you’ve bought for the evening…”
It was Regina’s turn to notice the prominent bulge in his chinos. “I can tell! But I’m afraid you’ll have to wait for the big day…and night!”

Emma’s pupils went larger. “You know, Gina, there were some other…items…we bought, which he hasn’t seen us in. Perhaps a little fashion display may be I order?”

“I think you could be right!” she chuckled darkly as the purple cloud gathered around the three of them, whisking them into the bedroom.

It was going to be a long night!
Welcome Home!

Chapter Summary

Robin gives his fiancées a proper Locksley welcome home after their weekend break!

Chapter Notes

Back after a post-Christmas break in France, so sorry it's taken a while.

OK, this is going to be a fairly smutty chapter, as some have requested. So if that sort of thing bothers you, just ignore this one and wait for the next two or three chapters where the plot will move on!

I wanted one with just the Locksley-Swan-Mills trio coming together and I find these incredibly difficult to write.

Again, any suggestions for improvements, I'll take them on board. But no nastiness please!

Enjoy, with my love, Fi x

Chapter 56

The purple mist disapparated in the master bedroom, leaving the three of them still in their tight huddle at the foot of the bed. As they broke apart, Robin announced, “I need a pee. Give me a minute!” earning a frown from the brunette and a wry grin from the blonde.

“Way to kill a girl’s romantic mood, thief!” Regina hollered as he went inside. “And sit down in there for a change! I really don’t need to hear a drum roll while I’m seducing your fiancée!” Regina retorted, looking hungrily at her wife as she heard a guffaw of laughter from the bathroom. She rolled her eyes, trying not to grin.

“Who said I need seducing?” retorted Emma, wrapping her arms around the other woman’s waist, before turning and pushing her forcefully down onto the bed, earning a soft giggle, Regina grabbed her wrists to drag her on top of her, so Emma pushed her hips down hard against her own, though as she was wearing denim jeans, there was no friction. So instead she moved slightly higher, lashing their lips together in a clumsy kiss before separating.

“Hold on, before we get too heated, let’s get the things up from the car and put them away, before we get ready for bed.”

A couple of minutes later, Robin stepped out of the bathroom, having showered, and now in a dark blue silk dressing gown that showed off his broad, sculpted chest, covered in light downy hair, to perfection. Emma stepped in front of him, placing a soft kiss on his lips. “Hmm, you smell nice! If you’d said you were taking a shower, I would have joined you.” As she said it, she slid a hand over...
the bulge of his boxers to give his package a little squeeze. “As it is, I’ll have to make do with Regina!” she chuckled, a coy grin on her face.

“Oh, you poor unfortunate soul, Swan!” Regina retaliated. “Who said I’d even join you?”

“I did! I know a horny queen when I see one,” said the blonde. “Come on!” she grabbed her wife’s hand, pulling her towards the vacated bathroom, leaving Robin standing outside, feeling quite envious. “You sure you don’t want me to come with you and scrub your backs…and anywhere else?” he offered.

“Why don’t you pop down and get us all a little drink, my darling?” said Regina. “I’d love a whisky and water!” Emma nodded to him, indicating she wanted the same. “Gina and I’ll go freshen up. Take your time!”

“Why do I get the feeling you’re trying to get rid of me?”

“We are!” said Emma. “Rob, take the hint? I’m sure it’ll be worth it...in the end!”

“Ah!” he finally got her meaning. “Three large whiskies it is, then!”

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“Drinks, ladies?” he said, reappearing ten minutes later. He heard them both, still in the bathroom, and smiled as he heard their soft voices as they chatted, a few chuckles in between. He was always surprised at how, for two such independent women, Regina and Emma always seemed, whenever circumstances allowed, to carry out their night time cleansing rituals together. He assumed it was just a sign of how close they were these days, and he always felt that there was something rather adorable about it. He’d even made occasional jokes about it since he moved in.

On one occasion, he’d been having a relaxing evening bath with Regina, when Emma, about to go on night shift, had suddenly burst in, before lifting the toilet lid, and sitting down to pee, while they were still there. Robin had instantly looked away, and Regina could see the embarrassment on his face. “Robin, are you all right?” the former queen had asked, before looking across at her wife. “Oh, Emma, do you think…?”

Emma looked up as she sat, seeing Robin deliberately looking away and realising what she’d done. “Oops, sorry! I didn’t think…” she stood, now feeling embarrassed herself. “Sorry Rob, I should have asked…”

“Emma, it’s fine!” Robin interrupted. “I just wasn’t expecting it. I’d always been brought up to believe a toilet was something private, be it a man or a woman. We all do the same thing, after all, don’t we? Sorry if I just made you feel...awkward!”

“It’s fine. But men stand at urinals in the gents to pee, sometimes side-by-side when it’s busy, don’t they? So, I don’t see the difference. It’s not like Gina and I ever actually poop in front of each other, is it?” she chuckled.

“Please change the subject, Emma!” groaned Regina to her wife. “I’m having a lovely soapy bath here. Just finish and get in here. Or go, either way…”

“I’d love to join the pair of you, babe, but no time. I’ve got to be at the station in ten….”
Living with Emma had made him loosen up his attitudes to such things, though he was always careful to respect their privacy by knocking on the bathroom door first. Nonetheless, as he waited for them to emerge, he felt a little left out. Trying to occupy himself, he saw about eight shopping bags at the base of the bed, which definitely hadn’t been there when he left!

“I’ll put the shopping away!” he called at the closed door. “There’s nothing I shouldn’t see in them, is there? No wedding dresses or anything?”

Emma’s voice came back. “Don’t be silly, we’d never bring those home! We have to go back for final fittings in a month. all that stuff gets made up for us. There’s some of the girl’s clothes you could put in their room, and the baby gear. There’s a few dresses you could hang up though…” he heard their muted chat still going on.

“You two all right in there?” he called. “Need a hand?”

“Not unless you’re good at shaving women’s legs? We’re almost done.” the voice called back.

As he lifted various items out of the bags to hang them, he put the children’s clothes to one side, together with a toiletry bag. Then he spotted a smaller black bag, inside a larger one, apparently from a shop called ‘Romantic Depot’. Curious, he lifted out the contents. Carefully wrapped inside white tissue paper, was a neatly packaged box with the words ‘Athena Rechargeable Strapless Strap-On’ on the side. Although he’d never seen one before, its purpose was obvious. He grinned to himself, as he turned it to read the description on the base of the box.

“‘Play with 3 intensity levels & 4 pulsation patterns…easier grip for the wearer…full vibration through each end!’ Blimey girls, you’ll make me redundant at this rate!” he chuckled to himself.

“You naughty minxes, how can I compete with that?” hearing a hand turn the bathroom door handle, he swiftly dropped the vibrator into its bag and that into the larger one, just in time.

Regina was the first to appear, and Robin’s jaw dropped when he saw what she was wearing. His true love stood by the door, wearing a sheer, ivory, full-length silk gown. No, not a gown, more like a dress! he thought, as it seemed to cling to every perfect curve like a floating, smooth coat of paint. She clearly had no underwear on beneath it and with her hair down, she looked like a goddess from one of those Hollywood films she was so keen on.

“Oh my! Gina, you look utterly ravishing!” he said, his eyes desperately trying to stay looking up at her eyes and face, and not at the dark nipples and areolae that were clearly visible underneath.

Regina knew that look and was delighted it had the intended effect so quickly! His eyes were entirely lust filled, and she smirked as they focused a little too hard on her face. “You think this looks good? Just wait till you see your other fiancée! Emma?” she called.

Moments later, Emma stepped out from behind her, rather more nervously than Regina had. Unlike Regina’s full-length number, the Saviour wore a black silk baby doll nighty, with a very short hemline and matching G-string. It was deliberately provocative, in a style Emma had never worn before. Seeing it on a mannequin in the store, Regina had suggested she try it. The blonde felt a little awkward wearing it, not sure whether her wife and fiancé would regard it as a little ‘trampy’. At least that was until she saw the look on Robin’s face.

“My god, Emma, you look sensational! Though it seems a shame…” he said, grinning evilly.

Emma felt slightly hurt by that. “What…what do you mean? Shame? You don’t like it?”

“Oh, I like it very much indeed! But I don’t think those pants you’re wearing are going to survive
when I take them off with my teeth!”

Her frown instantly turned into a pink-cheeked grin. “Don’t you dare! I expect a few good wears out of this. Otherwise you’re buying me some more!” By this time, he’d stepped right up to them. “Gladly, if they make you look like this! My ladies, you both look good enough to eat! And I mean that, in all ways…”

He stepped up to her, giving her a soft kiss on the lips, and Emma gasped as she felt his growing erection press into her stomach. He turned his mouth to deliver a similar kiss to Regina, which she accepted, though within moments she pulled back, giving him a quirky look. “Robin, I know we agreed the next time we did some role-play, it was your turn to be the 'Dom',” breathed Regina. “Well…I’m wondering if you’d be acceptable to being my Sub again, this time? In return you can dominate me twice over next time. Would you mind?”

“Depends what you have in mind, your majesty. I don’t mind a bit of tying up or blindfold, though I’d much prefer to see the two of you use the new toy you’ve bought yourselves last weekend!”

“What?” Emma’s eyes whipped across to the bags on the floor. “Have you been peeking?” Her cheeks reddened as she realised what he’d seen! Her wife was already blushing.

“I am a former thief, Emma. Old habits die hard…”

“Well, thief - that rather depends on whether you’ll co-operate!” added Regina. "Would you lie down and let me tie you up?"

Without another word, Robin smiled back at them before dropping his dressing gown to the floor and lying back in the centre of their bed, all too eagerly. “I guess my punishment awaits?”

Regina sniggered darkly, twirling her fingers. “You bet!” Four sets of padded handcuffs appeared on his wrists and ankles, pulling gently to stretch and attach him to the bedposts on each corner. She was careful to go slowly, as if the victim was yanked too quickly, the results could be quite painful. Robin now lay before them, his bare torso exposed, in only his new dark-blue silk boxers. “Hmm, now that’s better,” said Emma. “How about a blindfold?”

“No, I don’t think so,” growled her wife. “I think our fiancé should suffer more by watching, don’t you?” She turned to Emma, slowly pulling her into a tight hug and making a great show of kissing her hungrily. The blonde eagerly responded, their mouths now wide and latched together, Emma’s hands now in Regina’s long locks and holding her face to her own in an almost angry kiss.

Robin lay back watching, now starting to realise just what Regina had in mind by ‘suffering’! Seeing his lovers, the two most beautiful women in Maine, making out aggressively had its usual effect on him, as his cock hardened even further. And his damn hands were tied! It was true that he could certainly magic the cuffs off and haul them both onto him, but he had agreed to do things her way! And the sight in front of him was certainly more than stimulating! His breath held as they carried on, as though he was invisible.

Maintaining their kiss and continuing to hold Regina by the back of her head with her left hand, Emma’s right now drifted over the brunette’s ivory silk nightdress, over a stiff nipple, before moving ever south. A short stop over her abdomen, her fingers quickly worked under the shift and up, to softly cup her mound, before gently sliding an index finger between the warm lips that awaited her.

Regina quickly followed suit with her own right hand, moving down and into Emma’s matching G-string. As their wet lips separated, their hands and fingers went to work, and by the changes of expression as they looked at each other so intensely, Robin knew just the moment they had entered
each other, arching wrists and fingers now working in parallel, their breathing becoming so much more laboured.

_Hell, he was turned on!_ His cock now pushing hard against the little fly buttons of his boxers, forming a significant tent above. _Gina, you bitch, this really is suffering!_ Nonetheless, he grinned, knowing this was exactly what she intended. As if to confirm it, Emma finally groaned out, shaking as she spoke “Enjoy…enjoying the show, thief?”

He chuckled. “You know I am! That was the intention after all, wasn’t it? Now let me out of these cuffs, and I’ll show you just how much!”

“In a min…in a minute!” stuttered Regina, her orgasm clearly starting to build “You’ll have…ooh that’s good! Have to wait till we’re…we’re done. That’s…what you get from…uh…going through ladies’ shopping bags!” she struggled to speak, their foreheads now pressed together as their entire torsos seemed to shake.

Robin couldn’t believe his eyes! His lovers were trying to talk to him as they fingered each other relentlessly. _He felt like some sort of perverted voyeur, even though he was very much invited to watch._ “Then I’ll wait patiently, though I promise you, miladies, that won’t be your best orgasm of the night!”

As he spoke, he saw how in synch they were, Emma seeming to automatically move faster, Regina slowing, to ensure their climaxes would either be together, or as near as they could get. “Gina, I’m close…” she growled at the other, still shaking. “Mmm. Me…too! Together?” Their words seemed to encourage the other to their peak. “Aaah, fuuuuck…. mmm” Regina’s cry was muffled by Emma again slamming their lips together, as she screamed into her mouth.

“Holy shit, that was hot!” groaned Robin, feeling almost in pain at watching them. As they separated, Emma fell back onto the bed, Regina collapsing on top of her. He stayed silently, watching them slowly recover their breath. Finally, Emma turned to face him, seeing the frustrated look on his face. “You OK?”

“No. I’m lying here with a cock busting out of my pants, having just watched one of the sexiest displays I’ve ever seen! Of course I’m not OK! It’s one thing punishing me, but it’s quite another torturing me. So sorry Gina, I’ve changed my mind, and I’m revoking the deal!”

The cuffs and short chains suddenly vanished from his arms and legs as he sat up, with a wild look in his eyes, which the pair had only seen once before. **“It was my turn to be the Dom tonight! Any problem with that, _my ladies?_”**

Regina gasped. He rarely did it, but she secretly loved it when Robin turned all _caveman_ on her! He was always so careful, so gentle, so obliging of her feelings. But occasionally, when he’d put up with quite enough of her shit, he could become quite fierce! _And she loved it!_ Emma had only seen a flash of it once before, though Regina had mentioned what could happen.

“Remember the safe word?” he said, almost growling. An evil smirk appeared on the brunette’s face as she nodded slowly without speaking. “And you, Emma? Do you remember our safe word?” He looked almost predatory, like he was about to have her for dinner. “Er...’Beetlejuice’?”

“You chose the word, Emma. Now, ready?” Again, Regina nodded, not sure where this was going, but sure as hell wanting to find out. Emma saw that look, and also nodded.

“Good! Now, let’s see. Or in your case, let’s not see! Close your eyes, both of you.” Within seconds, Emma felt a soft, padded, yet secure blindfold appear over her eyes, blocking out all light.
“Hey!”

Regina got the same treatment. “OK Robin, I can’t see a thing! Em, sounds like you’re blind too?” she almost giggled the words. *She knew Robin would never hurt them, but the uncertainty was still there!*

“Now, unlike what you did to me, I won’t tie you down to the bed. But…” A moment later, Emma felt herself being lifted off the bed, clearly by magic, and she felt herself floating in the air! Then, a warm magical force roll her over, so she was *probably* facing down, floating over the bed. “Woah, Robin! What the hell?” she laughed, knowing she was probably safe, but definitely not in control! Next, she felt a soft binding on each wrist as she was tied to something. No, not something. *Someone.* “Robin, what’s going on?”

“Emma, he’s bound your wrists to mine! It appears you’re floating just above me! Robin, at least lower her on to me? Is this intended to be kinky or just perverted?” she asked, her voice growing slightly concerned.

“Neither. Just an awful lot of fun. For me!” said the deeper voice nearby, as Emma felt herself being lowered slightly. “Remember, you can always use the safe word and I’ll stop immediately! So now ladies, just what was it you bought yourselves on your trip? Oh yes, here it is! The ‘Athena Rechargeable Strapless Strap-On’! My, it looks fun. Have you tried it yet?”

Regina now chuckled loudly. “Robin, don’t you dare!” her laughing set Emma off too. “Rob, you’re supposed to be turning us on, not putting on a circus act…”

He ignored them. “‘3 intensity levels & 4 pulsation patterns…easier grip…full vibration through each end’” he read. “Girls, you’re very naughty, replacing me with some sort of novelty garden hose! And a vibrating one at that! Now then, let’s see how it works, shall we?” They heard him take it out and switch it on, as a small whirring noise came.

“Robin, if you really are intending to use that on one of us, you need to sterilise it first!” called Emma.

“That’s what magic is for,” he said, casting a short disinfecting spell over the device. “And I wasn’t going to use it on one of you. I thought I’d use it on both of you! That’s what it’s for isn’t it?”

“Robin! If you’re really intending to…OOOH!” she said, as she felt a lubricated object being slowly inserted between her labia. He moved it slowly down and carefully, working the double-bulbed end along then inside her. “Easy there!” she gasped. Her shock at the insertion was mollified by the vibration of it as he worked it inside. “God! We hadn’t switched it on before. It feels…really rather good!” her breathing became erratic.

Emma quickly realised what had just happened. “Well that’s Gina sorted. What about me?”

“Patience. Give me a moment.” Seeing she was still wearing her now crumpled G-string, he swiftly eased them off down and off her. “Better still, let’s not ruin all that nice lingerie!” he breathed from behind her. A second later, Emma and Regina felt their clothes disappear completely, the blonde’s breasts dropping down slightly at their release, to rest against more warm flesh. Regina’s. She recognised the feeling of Regina’s thighs now sliding around her own as their stomachs pressed together. Before she had a chance to react, she felt him gently part her lower lips before manoeuvring his fingers…no, the device…gently inside her, bending the longer end gently to fit snugly between the two of them.

“It’s in you, too?” whispered Regina. “Yeah!” her lover responded. “Feels good, but we need to
move…” Emma now attempted to grind into her, though without use of her arms it was proving difficult. “Rob, you do know we can’t get the benefit of this with our wrists tied, don’t you?” said Regina. “We need to move with it in, just like the real thing”

“You’re absolutely right. Though it does look rather incredible from down here! Now, before I let you go, how does it compare to the ‘real thing’?”

*Emma knew all men have fragile egos when it came to women’s toys. She also knew their response would dictate what he did next. Time to massage that ego, girl!*

“It feels great when it’s on – but it just can’t compare to a real one!” she whispered back, encouragingly.

“It could never compare to you, Robin!” added Regina, knowing they were now playing him.

“Flattery will get you everywhere, miladies! Though not sure whether you really mean it! So, let’s find out, shall we?” And with that, he gently eased the device straight out of them both, throwing it to one side before magically freeing their wrists, moving onto his knees on the bed and without any warning, eased his now seriously engorged cock gently inside Emma. She gasped at the difference in thickness. “OOH! No, definitely NO comparison! Haah, easy there, tiger!” she shuddered as her body adjusted to him. “That’s definitely…goooood!”

Feeling the Saviour’s mound start to push down against her abdomen, Regina wrapped her legs around the blonde, feeling Robin’s warm hands take her calves and gently raise them, to accommodate Emma’s frame more easily. Though he wasn’t actually inside her, Regina could still feel what he was doing to Emma. “You’d better have the strength to carry on with me after, Outlaw! You promised me a better orgasm than the last one!” she moaned.

“A promise I will deliver, my love, come hell or high water!” he puffed, now holding Emma’s thighs from behind and driving hard in to her. His mind went back to the very first time they had made love, in just this position! Though this time, he wanted to make them climax fully, before allowing himself his own release. He knew Emma was very close as she appeared to be tightening on him. “Gina. Hold me!” gasped Emma. With her blindfold still in place, the brunette dropped her hand down between them to seek out Emma’s clitoris, only to find Robin’s larger fingers were already there. “I’m…I’m…FUCK, ROBIN! GINA! OH YES! YES!! YES!!!” she screamed as the fierce jolt ran straight through her.

After he gave her time to settle, she clenched him tightly before he slowly eased himself out of her. Expecting to be moved to the side so he could give Regina what she’s asked for, Emma was instead surprised to find her lower half once again being lifted into the air!

She then heard Regina hiss loudly under her. “Aaaaah, steady there!” He was clearly already inserting himself inside her! Emma now felt Robin’s shoulders move directly under her thighs as she floated, his warm hands on the back of her legs as he took her weight. “What the…!” she gasped when she realised what he was doing! His mouth moved directly onto her entrance, before sliding his tongue slowly inside her, making a moaning noise in appreciation. She imagined what the scene must look like, his mouth on her pussy and his cock buried deep in Regina as, from the jolting movements, he was ploughing her remorselessly. Just the thought sent her a little dizzy!

It took less than a couple of minutes for Regina to reach her peak, as Robin’s lips now latched on to Emma’s clit. “Hnnngh! Don’t stop! Don’t you dare stop!” As Regina’s orgasm hit, she reached out, grabbing Emma firmly, to pull her mouth to hers, firing her tongue inside to massage her own as she heard his familiar low growl, the sure sign he was finally coming. “Mmmmmmmmmmmngghhh!” he
grunted, loudly.

As he finally withdrew, completely sated, the blindfolds disappeared, and the two women blinked at the bright light. Emma rolled off Regina, still holding her as they lay side-by-side.

“You OK?” asked the Saviour.

“More than OK!” she replied. “I really needed that!” she kissed her forehead.

“Me too! I’ve never seen our boy act like that before,” Emma whispered. “I admit, I rather liked it! I was a little nervous at first. I nearly yelled out ‘Beetlejuice’ when he had me floating there! Quite the Master, when he wants to be!”

“Sorry if I made you uncomfortable, Emma.” He said, just within earshot of her last comment. “Though you do know, it’s your turn to be the Dom next time we do something like this? I’m sure you’ll exact a suitable revenge!” he rose from them, to go to the head of the bed and roll down the duvet.

“You can count on it! Now, although we just had one, I think I need another shower…”

“That’s a shame,” Robin climbed under the duvet, Regina moving quickly into his right side, as it was his turn in the middle. “I rather like the smell of the three of us under the sheets, after we’ve made love…”

Emma looked at them, all snuggled up, before deciding to forgo the shower and just climb in beside them instead. “You, Mr. Locksley, are becoming kinkier and kinkier as you get older…”

“Perhaps you’re right. Any complaints?” He wrapped his left arm around the blonde’s shoulder, pulling her in to rest on his left breast. She smirked at Regina’s contented face as she rested on his right, before leaning across to drop a quick kiss on her lips.

“None whatsoever.”
News from Norway

Chapter Summary

With Henry and Rumple's trip more than halfway through, he calls his family for an update.

Roland however, has discovered something he really wishes he hadn't...

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone. Just a very short fill-in chapter this time, preparing the story line for the next few as we get towards the wedding. Thanks to those of you who have patiently stuck with me on this, my first ever story!

I'm taking a little longer to release each chapter now as university has to take priority. But I'm still aiming to get the chapter out within a couple of days.

Love, Fi x

Chapter 57

One week later.

At just before three in the afternoon, the Locksley and Swan-Mills families assembled around the large sofa, with Robin’s newly purchase MacBook (a gift from Regina, as he was getting more computer-savvy) resting on the coffee table, far enough away for them all to be seen by its camera. Hope and Faith were both sleeping soundly in their cots, having just got back from an afternoon walk around the park, in an attempt to settle them before the call. Emma and Regina sat side-by-side in the middle, with Margot and Honour bunched on their knees. On the floor in front, sat Roland. “Ok everyone ready? Robin could you make the call please?” asked Regina, excited to finally get a chance to speak to their son for the first time in a fortnight.

Moments later, the weird beeping noises indicated the video call had connected, and Henry Mills face showed up in the centre of the screen. “Hi guys! How’re you doing?”

“Hi Hen!” called Emma, “Never seen you with a beard before! Looks kinda cool!”

Everyone called their hellos simultaneously, before Regina led the way. “Henry, my love. We’ve missed you so much! Where are you now? What time is it over there?”

“Hi mum! It's a about nine in the evening in northern Norway, right up in the Arctic Circle, in a city called Tromsø. It’s brilliant!”

“We saw the pictures you posted, Hen! It looks beautiful!” added his younger mother. “I’ve always wanted to see the fjords and the mountains. It looks a bit like where Elsa and Anna live! Is there
“Are you kidding? There’s a film festival this week in town. Grandpa and I are going dog-sledding tomorrow and a whale spotting trip. We’re out seeing the Northern Lights this evening. There’s quite a decent university and student population up here. There’s loads to do. And Rob? They’ve got a decent brewery up here!”

“Ah, civilisation then? Sounds like a great place. How is my godson doing over there?”

“Gideon’s fine. He just started walking and now they can’t stop him! He’s playing merry hell, trying to climb out of his crib at night, but the three of them have got him under control. It’s hilarious watching them, though.”

“So, they all get along? No tension between Gold and Ariel?” asked Emma.

“No, just the opposite! The three of them seem really happy.” Henry wasn’t going to mention the panties on the floor incident! “I’ve never seen grandpa like this! I think it must be that the Dark One can't control him when he's away. He’s a new man. Happy, and it’s taken years off him. Probably even more so, once they fix his leg...”

“Fix his leg? What are you talking about?”

“He’s staying in London for a few weeks, after I leave. He’s booked into a private clinic, and they’re going to operate on his leg. He’s put it off for years, but now he’s ready to get it fixed. Belle and Ariel are staying back with him, until they discharge him.”

“And happy? That doesn’t sound like him.”

“You’re right, it doesn’t. But he’s different away from home, mum! A lot more relaxed. It's great being with him, like he's discovered a new life!”

Robin stayed quiet, remembering Merlin’s plans for the Dark One once he came home.

“And you’ve got quite a sun tan there, young man! I hope you packed some sun screen!” Regina couldn’t help going into protective mama mode, despite his age. Beneath the new light scruff of beard, his cheeks were quite red.

“It’s just a bit of wind-burn from skiing! We went down some serious slopes over the weekend. I got a few lessons too. Belle is really good at it! Ariel didn’t want to come, so she stayed with grandpa and Gid.”

“Henny, have you met any trolls yet? I read about them at school!” said Honour, bored with the adults’ conversation.

Henry then went on to tell his little sisters about a troll village nearby, careful to embellish his story enough to make it exciting, but believable. He loved telling Honour and Margot fairy tale stories.

“So, you’re back in just over a week, Henry?” asked Emma. “As you’re not flying back with Gold, would you like us to come and meet you at JFK? Your mum and I need to go back to New York anyway for a final fitting. If you’re with us, we can get yours, and Roland’s, morning suits sorted out, too! We could spend some time together, then go with you to Cambridge and perhaps spend a little time in Boston?”
“That sounds great, ma. If everyone came down, we could have our first-ever real big family break away from Storybrooke! The rest of you guys can see where I live! Ro, you can see a proper football game live!”

Everyone turned to look at Roland, who seemed completely distracted and, unusually for him, sad. Until now, they'd hardly noticed that he hadn’t said a word all afternoon. “Roland, are you all right?” asked Regina, feeling awkward for having just noticed his silence. He didn’t answer.

“Roland? Your mum’s talking to you!” said Robin, a little louder. His mind seemed miles away.

“Hmm? What?” he said, coming out of his trance. He gave Regina a very odd look!

“Henry was talking to you! He asked you if you wanted to meet him in New York!” said his father.

“Huh? Oh…New York…yeah, sounds great.” He said, without any trace of enthusiasm and looking almost tearful.

“Roland, is something wrong?!” his father asked.

“It’s fine, dad. I’m just…sorry, I’m going upstairs…” Without saying another word, he stood up and went off quickly, despite their calls to him.

Henry saw it all on the video link. “Did I say something wrong, Robin?” he said, worried he’d upset the boy.

“No, I don’t think so Henry. But something is seriously bothering him! Perhaps there’s a problem at school, either way, I’ll deal with it!” he looked across at Regina, whose face also showed concern. Roland was always the most ebullient, happy, positive child she’d ever met. This really wasn’t like him!

“So, Hen, where are you off to next?” asked his blonde mother.

“France. We leave in two days to fly to Paris. Belle and Ariel stay there a bit longer while grandpa and I take a fast train down to Strasbourg. It’s a really old medieval city and according to him there’s a magic realm there too. After that, its two days in Geneva in Switzerland. Then we meet up again in Rome for a few days After that we split up again…”

Robin lost his focus on their call, worried about Roland. Is being bullied? Problems at school? Perhaps something to do with a girl? At twelve years old, girls were beginning to notice him, though as usual, at that age they matured before the boys and tended to look at the older boys instead.

For the rest of the call, they gave Henry their latest news. About Regina starting to give Neal more lessons to control his magic. About their celebrity chef coming next weekend to plan their wedding banquet. And other minor news about the wedding planning and David's recovery. Finally, they finished the call, Regina was by his side in an instant.

“What’s going on with Roland?”

“Really not sure, Gina. I’ll go up and talk to him.”

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After leaving him a good ten minutes, he knocked on his son’s door. “Roland, may I come in?”

He asked twice, and getting no answer, slowly opened it to find him sitting on his bed, fully clothed
and staring blankly at the television screen. “Roland? Talk to me please?”

“Hmm? Sorry, it’s nothing. I’m fine…”

“Clearly everything is not fine Roland! And you and I have never held secrets from each other. Talk to me? You know by now you can tell me anything…” he pleaded.

Roland sighed loudly. “Not about this…” By this time, Regina had walked up the stairs but hesitated to join Robin, listening instead from outside the door, unseen.

“Roland, I’m serious! Are you being bullied? Just tell me…”

The red-eyed twelve-year-old looked up at him, with a grief-stricken stare. “No. If I ask you something, something personal. You swear you’ll tell me the truth?”

That was a surprise! “I swear.” he didn't hesitate

“I heard some older women talking in the village. I think one of them may have been Gilbert’s mother. They obviously didn’t know I was listening because they were talking about you, Emma and Regina. The fact you’re now engaged and getting married. Again. Then they started talking about my real mum, Marian.”

It was very rare for Roland to refer to Regina as anything over than his mum these days. Her ears pricked up.

A hint of hardness entered his voice as he looked into his father’s eyes.

“Is it true Regina murdered my mum?”

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The Evil Queen and Regina

Chapter Summary

Killian gets time with both his boys. Ruby and Dorothy plan a trip, and Roland gets comforted by someone he wasn't expecting.

Chapter Notes

Hi guys. Thanks again for sticking with me. This is a trigger-chapter for several other mini-stories within. I wanted to focus partly on Killian and his sons, then on Roland, as he comes to terms with his mum's death.

After this, the pace will pick up as we head for the wedding...

Hope you enjoy it. Love Fi x

Chapter 58

The Jolly Roger

Killian Jones sat in the large captain’s chair, holding his now-sleeping eleven-month old son Nathaniel in the crook of his arm, his free hand gently stroking the boy’s cheek. Opposite him sat Ruby and Dorothy, each holding a glass of port, served by Rosalind, who stood beside her husband. The two couples had just enjoyed a hearty lunch on board, cooked by Killian’s new chef Patrick. Replete, they were now slowly recovering.

“Ladies, in the month I’ve been back, I feel I’ve fallen in love all over again. I’m going to miss this one terribly…”

Dorothy smiled across at Ruby, who was holding an equally slumbering Liam Jones in her arms. “And now he’s met his father and brother, I’m sure he’ll miss you too. Do you both really need to leave?”

“Sadly, we do,” answered Rosie. “Kill’s still got a bunch of things still to do from Zeus’s list. Plus, we’re going to Queen Elsa’s and Little John’s wedding. We’ll need to be gone at least two months.”

“I’m sorry to see you go,” said Ruby sadly, looking at their baby boy resting asleep on his father. “I wish we could come with you. With the boys, I feel we’ve all become quite the little family now, the four of us…”

Rosie smiled down on her. “Aw, what a lovely thing to say! I feel the same about you two. We’re family now.” She leaned over and placed a soft kiss on the wolf’s cheek. “You know, seeing Nat and Liam together gives me a warm, fuzzy feeling. Like it would be wrong to separate them…”

“I have to agree with my girl,” added Killian with a wink. “You know, you’re welcome to join us!
Rosie’s father will be in Arendelle for the wedding. I’m pretty sure he could open some sort of portal to get you back quicker. Thanks to him, we have some larger cabins here you could use. We’d be more than happy to have you as our honoured guests.”

Dorothy looked excitedly at her spouse. “Oh, I would love that. I used to travel so much, and we haven’t since…well, since we’ve been together. Ruby, is there any way…”

“Dot, Killian, we have a café to run! Of course, I’d love to go but, I don’t see how we could!”

“Well Mike’s got the kitchen all nailed, he’s found part-time staff for him and serving in front of shop recently, and he’s forever telling us to clear off and take a proper break! Why don’t we ask him?”

“Yeah!” Rosie said excitedly. “And don’t forget that Killian can magic up money! Coin doesn’t matter to us these days, so we could help make him a very generous payment for his time while you’re away! Girls, I think it’s a great idea. You both get a decent break and a chance to visit Arendelle, and our boys get a chance to be together. And with Tink still in Arendelle, I get some decent female company on board. No offence Kill!”

“None taken love,” he chuckled. “The crew’s earthy humour can get a big much, I guess?”

“You can really magic up money?” asked Dorothy, dumbfounded. “So why do you keep sailing?”

“I owe the guy who brought me back from death. Big time. So, if he has some ‘tasks’ for me, I’ll do ‘em.”

“I’ll talk to Mike in the morning.” Ruby said, coming around to the idea. “Though we do also have a Royal Wedding over here in six weeks’ time, Dot. Remember? We’re not doing the catering, but we are guests!”

“Royal Wedding?” Rosie seemed confused. “Who?”

“Regina and Emma Swan-Mills. They’re marrying Robin Locksley. It’ll be the second poly wedding here.”

“Oh, of course,” said Rosie. “I almost forgot. My sister’s become bosom-buddies with Robin’s sister. They both talked about it over drinks. Apparently, they were all in New York last week, shopping.”

“Can we get back to the topic in question?” asked Killian, not wanting to be reminded of his former lover’s nuptials.

“I’ll have a word with dad. See if he can guarantee a portal back to Storybrooke after the Arendelle wedding. I may be wrong, but I think others are going there too, so he may already have it in hand. I’m sure we’ll have you back here in no time!”

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**The Mansion – Mifflin Street**

“Did Regina murder my mum?”

Robin’s jaw dropped in shock, unsure how to respond. However, Roland wasn’t done. Not by a long
way. “Is it true that Emma and Killian Jones almost got her back accidentally, by going back in time, but Zelena murdered her before she even got here?”

“Ro…Roland, I…”

“You swore you’d tell me the truth, dad! Did they? Did they kill my real mum?”

“Zelena did, the second time! Royal guards killed her the first time, on the Evil Queen’s orders. That’s not Regina though…”

“How? How did she kill her?”

“Roland, I’m really not sure…”

“How DAD? How did she die? The truth!”

Robin felt almost intimidated by his son. “Villagers said that she was captured by the Black Guard, after dropping off two children at a safe site. She was hanged nearby.”

“Hanged?” My own mother, hanged! “Did you find out which soldiers did it?”

"We found out it was three of the Alpha Guard, some of their most vicious. Though I'm not sure which one, exactly. Alan a' Dale and I...dealt with them."

"I hope that means you killed them?"

Robin nodded. "It was quick...and clean. Better than they deserved.”

“And Zelena? How did she murder my mum?”

“I’m not sure. Apparently, your mother was putting up a fight not to come with them, so either Emma or Killian knocked her out. While she was lying there unconscious, while they were gone, the Wicked Witch killed her and swapped identities, so she could travel back with them. That’s all I know.” He watched his boy's expression change, from sadness to anger.

“She killed her, while she just lay there? Where’s her body? Where’s her grave?”

“I really don’t know, son. Somewhere in the Enchanted Forest, I presume.”

“But Zelena would know, wouldn’t she? She’d know where she put her body!”

“Roland, wherever she’s buried, that’s not your mother, my Marian, anymore! Her spirit, the woman I loved, has moved on to a much better place! And you know what? I truly believe you’ll see her again!”

“It’s not enough, dad! Even Regina and Zelena, the women who killed her, get to visit their parents’ graves! Henry goes to his dad’s whenever he’s back. But me? Nothing.”

“Roland, I not sure how we could even…”

“Zelena! How can you let her live, dad? Knowing what she did! Now you have magic, why couldn’t you just kill her? Destroy the bitch who murdered my mum!”

He ignored the swearing. “Because that’s not who I am, Roland! I thought about it many times and came close to doing it when I first came back. It's one of the reasons I'm getting therapy from Archie. But Zelena is also Margot’s birth mother, Roland! Margot is an innocent in all this.
“Well you had no problem killing King George or the Black Fairy, did you? But the woman who murdered my mum? Well I DO want to kill her!” he growled. “She gets a fucking life, and everything forgotten, but I get no mother…forever!”

Robin never saw Regina listening outside the door. Never saw her react in shock when she heard his anger. Never saw her slump to the floor, leaning against the wall with her knees to her chest. Never saw the tears flow.

“Roland, I killed those two bastards because they were killing others and threatening worse. I won’t kill Zelena because…”

“Because she’s Regina’s sister? Did she even apologise for raping you? Because that’s what she did, didn’t she?”

Oh, that hurt! He’d gone straight to the nub of why Archie was treating him! Robin felt like crumbling at the vile memory.

“Roland, please! We have to move on. We…”

“I want to kill her. I WILL kill her! She doesn’t have magic any more. And if she never comes back here, I’ll go to her! I’m sorry dad, but I don’t think I can live here right now. Not…like this!”

“Roland, don’t talk like that! This isn’t you! I know you’re angry. I was too. But you’re only twelve. You have to live with us…”

“I can live in Sherwood. The guys can take care of me, like they always have. Like when you died…”

“Roland, NO! Despite what you’ve just discovered, I am your father and you will obey me! You will NOT leave this house without my express permission. Do you understand?”

Roland said nothing. Just sat staring at him, challenging him with angry eyes.

“I SAID DO YOU UNDERSTAND?” Robin roared, sadness turning to anger.

“You can shout at me, but can’t keep me here forever, dad!” his son challenged, eerily calm for his age. “I know you’re bigger than me and have magic now. You can lock me up. But one day, you’ll have to let me go. And I vow I will kill that bitch, or die trying…”

Robin’s heart broke. We didn’t want to shout at or fall out with his wonderful boy. Didn’t want to lock him in his room. Didn’t want to bellow at him. Hell, he understood why he was so angry. He’d just discovered his own mother had been murdered by someone he knew! But he couldn’t condone murder. He had to take a stand now if he were to avoid everything spiralling out of control!

“You’ll stay in your bedroom tonight. No TV, no phone. I’ll bring your supper here, but you will NOT leave your room. You can use the adjoining bathroom but I’m putting a seal on anywhere else. I’m sorry Roland, but you cannot take the law into your own hands…”

“Like everyone around here who has magic does, eh dad?” a cynical tone returned to Roland’s voice.

Robin wanted to respond, but thought better of it. Let's both cool down! He flicked his fingers to
create a magical barrier, preventing the boy from leaving his room, combined with a sound blocking charm. As he stepped out, he hardly noticed his fiancée sitting just outside the door, on the floor with her head in her hands.

“Gina? What are you…? What did you hear?” he almost groaned the last words.

“Enough,” she sobbed, red eyed. “He’s right though, isn’t he? If anyone had done to me; what I, or Zelena, have done to his mother, to your family, I would have killed them in the blink of an eye!”

“You’re not that person any more, Gina. You know that!”

“Doesn’t bring back Marian though, does it?” she croaked.

“No. But you, unlike your sister, regretted your actions ever since!”

“Every day! But it still doesn’t change things. He’s right to hate me…” she still couldn’t look up to face him.

“Roland doesn’t hate you! It’s just…this is all news to him, Gina. He’s confused but he’ll get through it. As I did”

“I need to talk to him. I need to apologise. I need to fix what I’ve done…somehow.”

“No, Regina. Seriously. If you go in there now, it’ll just make things worse! I’ve also just put a seal on his door.”

“I murdered his mother, Robin! His life was ruined, because of me!”

“That’s an exaggeration. He hardly knew Marian. He was very young…”

“I heard him. He doesn’t want to live here…with me.” She almost whimpered the last words.

“What’s going on? I heard shouting!” said a new voice, making them jump. “Gina. What’re you doing down there? Why are you crying?” asked Emma, seeing her wife still on the floor, her knees to her chest.

“Roland found out about Marian. About how she died…both times!” Regina croaked, between sobs.

“Yeah,” agreed Robin. “He was angry and said…some things. I’ve sealed the room till he calms down. I’ll bring him some dinner later but…it’s not good.”

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The moment his father left the room, Roland picked up his tablet to make the call, something he’d been intending to do when he’d been interrupted. “Ro? What you doing, bro? You stormed off! What happened?” asked Henry.

Roland had come to regard Henry as a kind-of step brother over the last few years. Both having had a fairly traumatic childhood and the loss of a parent, the boys had an affinity, an understanding, and the pair had grown to confide in each other. Though Henry, under sound advice from Emma, Regina and Archie, had never disclosed to him the circumstances of his mother’s death or his father’s rape at the hands of the Wicked Witch. So, as Roland now told him what he knew and what had happened, he felt guilty for having withheld so much. “Why didn’t you tell me, Henry? I thought we were friends?”
“We’re more than friends, Ro. I think of you as my little brother! And I’m sorry I didn’t tell you, but my mums and Archie really thought you knowing all that stuff could do you more harm than good! I was planning on telling you when you were a bit older. You deserve to know, but…”

“But you couldn’t tell me now? Henry, they murdered my mum!”

“You forget, Zelena was responsible for my dad’s death too! He died to save the town from her. I know how you feel Roland. There’s not a day goes by when I don’t think about him. Especially when I see that ginger bitch in town.” It was rare for Henry to show anger, but old feelings surfaced.

“Even more reason to kill her!” said the wild-haired boy. “She doesn’t deserve to live.”

“Roland, you may be right, but I’ve seen this before. Killing Zelena won’t bring your mum back! And don’t forget, Margot is an innocent in all this! If anyone should punish Zelena, it should be your dad. But he won’t do that, because he’s one of the good guys. And what about my mum, Regina? She'd had Marian killed the first time. Do you want to kill her too?”

“I don’t know. I can’t imagine her doing something like that. Dad says her soldiers did it. But she was in charge, wasn’t she? She let it happen…”

“The Evil Queen killed hundreds, perhaps thousands, Ro! Some of them were mothers and children. But that isn’t the same woman who you live with now!”

“I don’t think I can live here…with her…anymore. Now I know.”

“Rollie, you don’t mean that! You’re just angry, and I get it but, you need to think…”

Roland decided to blank him. “Sorry Henry, call coming in. I really need to go!” he said, suddenly, before ending the call.

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The Town Hall

“Come on in, Sheriff. You said you needed to see me?” said Mayor Philip Briar, welcoming his guest into his office.

“I did, Mister Mayor. Thanks for seeing me at short notice.”

The former Prince Philip had been the elected mayor of Storybrooke for over a year and a half. In that time, after proposing Hank Morgan, a former Knight of the Round Table, as his sheriff, the pair had restored a sense of order to the town, following a turbulent period after the removal of Mayor Spencer. Although both were military men from another age, they had embraced the new knowledge and technology from the Land without Magic, learning and introducing computers and many other modern systems to the running of the magical town. With the result that most of the administrative functions became smoother, simpler and more streamlined as a result. And now-elected Sheriff Hank Morgan and his trusted deputies had played a strategic part in its success.

“You’re welcome. What can I do for you, Hank?”

“Well…I’ve decided, or I should say Laura and I have decided, to move to Connecticut. She has family there and, what with Violet now in Boston, we felt the time was right. I’m giving you a month’s notice.”

“Oh! I’m sorry to hear that, although I wish you both well. Not so good for me, though! You’ll be
difficult to replace. You’ve been an excellent sheriff. I’m sure I’m not alone in saying I’m going to miss you.”

“Thanks, Phil, that’s kind of you to say. And for the record, I’ve enjoyed working with you enormously. You’ve made so many changes here, I’m sure you’ll find an excellent replacement. What about Mulan? She’s always been a superb officer, far better than me. I’m sure she would be an excellent sheriff. Or Emma Swan-Mills? She’s held the post before…”

“True. Well, I agree with you about Mulan; she is my wife after all! And I did propose her once! Though I think if she took it and won the election, I should rightfully stand down as the mayor. I don’t think it’s healthy to have both the senior positions held by members of the same family. I have no problem in standing down after all. I came into this on a temporary basis, but I’m a soldier like you, not a politician.”

“I think most of this town would disagree with you on that! Your little family is very well regarded here, and after all that nonsense with the royals, Spencer and Nottingham before, you were all a breath of fresh air. You have two rather astonishing wives, young man! Aurora is rather brilliant at running the nursery, the social services and the elderly support team. And Mulan? Well let’s face it, she could run anything thrown at her.”

“I know, I’m blessed! We got some very strange treatment from some people when Rory and I married Mulan, but I couldn’t imagine life without either of them! Well Hank, first you’re going to help me interview your replacement, then you’re going to the principal guest at the leaving party I’m going to throw you! Mayor’s orders, and all that!” He smiled at his sheriff, knowing he was going to really miss his friend.

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Three hours had passed since Robin had magically sealed his son in his room. Three hours of guilt on his part, and he felt terrible for doing it. Regina had stayed silent, knowing that if she interfered, it could well backfire. She was the cause of this, after all! Her past crimes coming back to bite her. The thought of losing her younger son to bitterness made her feel quite ill.

As he sat, silently nursing his coffee in front of the fire, Robin felt a warm hand wrap around his arm. “Rob. I know it’s your decision. You’re his father, after all, but out of the three of us, I’m the one least involved. Would you mind letting me talk to him alone? Just the two of us?”

He looked up to see soft green eyes staring down at him in sympathy. “Well, I’m not sure if it would help…”

“Let me try. Please?” Emma pleaded, lowering herself to place a soft kiss on his forehead. He smiled, before pulling her head a little lower to kiss her lips. “OK.” He flicked his fingers to silently change the spell over Roland’s room. “You can go in now. He can’t come out…”

A few minutes later, as he sat on his bed, surfing for details on Zelena’s current whereabouts, Roland heard a soft knock on the door. “May I come in?”

Of the adults downstairs, Emma was the last person he expected to see. “If you must. Dad’s locked me in.”

The door opened, and Emma silently stepped in, moving closer to the bed. “I know. Can I have a word?”

“If it’s to tell me I can’t kill Zelena, then no. Dad already gave me the talk…”
“No. It’s not that. I just wanted to talk to you. Not to talk about her, but to tell you something about me. And Regina.” She stepped closer, lifting herself on to the end of his bed, before bringing her legs up. He rolled his eyes, expecting yet another talk on behaviour, or revenge.

“You know, Roland, I was completely alone most of my life, right up until I was twenty-eight. I didn’t know where I was from, who my parents were, or anything. All I had was a blanket that said ‘Emma’ on it. I spent most of my childhood being passed between foster homes. I went on the wrong side, I stole, I got pregnant and I even once went to prison. Then one day, an annoyingly persistent ten-year-old boy came to my flat, telling me I was the mother who had given him up for adoption!”

“I heard about that. From Henry.”

“Yeah, well. I came to this crazy little town. Your mum… I mean, Regina… well she was the mayor. And a pretty horrible one at that! She tried to run me out of town. She really was a thorough b-i-t-c-h!”

“You mean bitch? If you mean bitch, just say bitch!” he smiled.

“Yeah, all right smart-ass. Bitch! I hated her!”

“You hated Regina?”

“Completely. She was horrible to me. She thought I was a threat, and tried to get rid of me. Even giving me a poisoned apple turnover to put me under a sleeping curse, just like she did Snow White! She tried to kill me!”

“And Henry bit it instead, right? To prove to you he wasn’t making things up!” he knew the story. Emma sighed. This was going to be more difficult than she thought!

“Well, anyway. Henry was under a sleeping curse, I kissed him back to life and finally started believing in magic. It took a while before I realised, after something Rumpelstiltskin said, that I had it too! After that, I also realised Henry was right. Snow White and Prince Charming really were my parents.”

“And Mayor Regina Mills was the Evil Queen!” Roland added, making Emma wince.

“Yeah. Although even then, she was trying to change. For Henry. She and I had fights. She wanted to kill me, and I sure as hell hated her! But somehow, we survived. Ro, do you know how and why she became the Evil Queen?”

“She had magic! That sort of power over other people makes you do some stupid stuff!” he replied, certainty in his voice.

“It does, but something needs to trigger it! Did she ever tell you about Daniel?” he shook his head.

“Daniel was a stable-boy, who became Regina’s first boyfriend. They were very much in love and she wanted to marry him. Unfortunately, Regina’s mum, Cora, who was a right bitch, had plans for Regina. She was a violent psychopath who had a plan for her daughter to become queen…”

Emma gradually told Roland about the Red Queen’s past crimes, including arranging for the murder of Snow White’s mother, Queen Eva. Then how she arranged for Regina to act as a nanny for the young Snow White, gaining the attention of the old widowed king, Leopold.

“There was no way Cora would let Regina marry Daniel. She wanted her to become queen by
forcing her to marry Leopold. So, Regina planned to escape with Daniel. Unfortunately, she made the mistake of telling Snow White when she nagged her about something. Unfortunately, Snow told Cora. Cora stopped them by killing Daniel, crushing his heart, right in front of Regina!”

Roland eyes widened in shock. “She killed him in front of her? That’s…that’s…”

“Horrible! It sent Regina crazy. Over the edge of sanity. She vowed revenge on Snow, for breaking her secret!”

“So that’s why Snow White ran? But that’s just stupid! Her mum killed him, not Snow!”

“Very true. And later Cora forced her to marry Snow’s father, the king. Leopold was quite a brutal man. He was an old, frustrated but powerful king, who now had a very young bride and he…well, let’s just say he treated her badly. VERY badly!”

“You’re saying he raped her, aren’t you?”

Emma felt bad for revealing more about her wife’s past than she had intended. But he was a bright boy and he needed to understand. So, she just nodded. “And she had no way out. He was the king! That’s got to make anyone go crazy. So she completely lost it. She tried to get her revenge on Snow White, and that’s where the ‘Evil Queen’ nickname came from. Then, Rumpelstiltskin, who had taught Cora magic, realised that Regina had it too. He trained her and in her mental state, it just made her worse…”

“I read she murdered thousands. How did Snow survive?”

“Well, I’ve only known my own mum for the last twelve years or so, but one thing I do know. She, and my dad, are amazing fighters who never gives up. Plus, they’re brilliant at rallying people to their cause. The Evil Queen saw that, but the more she threatened and killed people, the more hostile they became, and the more they rallied to my parents.”

“So how did they stop her if she had magic?”

“I’m not sure how exactly, but I think it had something to do with Rumpelstiltskin, again. They captured her once, but mum wouldn’t let them kill her, and banished her instead. So, she decided to escape it all by using a special dark curse that Rumpelstiltskin had created, to make a new realm that she could control. That’s how Storybrooke was created. But to do it, she had to sacrifice the life of the one person she loved the most.”

“Who? You said Daniel was dead. Who could love such a horrible person?”

“Her father. My Henry was named after him. I met him in the Underworld. He seemed to a kindly, gentle man, but without magic, too weak for a powerful witch like Cora. He was the last person who believed Regina could become good again. So to enact her curse, she crushed his heart…”

“She killed her own father? Regina killed her dad?” God, this was worse than he thought! She was a psychopath!

“No Regina, the Evil Queen! But even after that, she still wasn’t happy in her new life. She needed saving.”

“By you, the Saviour?”

She chuckled. “Hardly! No, she was saved by Henry. He convinced her she could change. There was a time that he rejected her, and it nearly broke her! But eventually he realised that she was just
the product of a very, very damaged childhood. Henry made her change for the good. A few years later, someone else came into her life. Someone who convinced her she could permanently renounce all darkness, and be capable of adult love. Any ideas?"

“Dad?”

“Exactly. Your dad! Her True Love, according to Tinkerbelle. And you, Roland, in your own way, you helped, just by loving her! Between you three, you changed her magic from dark to light. For the first time in her life, she was cherished. Then, nearly seven years ago, your dad showed the greatest love of all; he sacrificed his own life to save Regina, his daughter, and you ultimately, from one of the greatest evils ever. Hades, Lord of the Underworld! but that really did break her! Her true love was gone, for the second time. Roland, I’m not making excuses for her past, but I just want you to see what led up to it!”

“And what about you? You fell in love with her too…” his face showed no reaction, good or bad.

Emma had never spoken about this with Roland before. Until recently, he had always been a lot more distant from her than Regina, choosing to always call her by her first name.

“I did. I lost my own love, Killian, in the Underworld just before your dad was killed. I became sick. I’m not sure whether you’ve learned about depression yet, Ro, but at the worst moments in your life, you sometimes do stupid things. I drank too much alcohol and took drugs. I had to go to hospital to have things pumped out of me. But your mum…Regina…she was much worse! After losing Robin, she was so depressed she even tried to…tried to…harm herself.”

“You’re trying to say she tried to commit suicide?” he said it in a matter-of-fact voice.

*God, that kid’s smart! He knows too much already for a twelve-year-old!* “Yeah. But our family managed to save her. There’s still a good few people in this town who care for her. Who know she changed. The two of us were in a very bad way. And all because we lost the loves of our lives!”

For the first time, the wild-haired boy gave her a sad smile, dropping one of his hands on to hers, giving it a squeeze. *Another thing your father does!* she thought.

“Go on. I’m listening…”

“All of that happened in just the first few months after their deaths. Then, Regina discovered she was pregnant, with Honour. She felt even more guilty that she could have killed her by accident. We were both having treatment under Doctor Hopper and Doctor Whale. We both moved into my mum and dad’s place and spent a lot more time together. Neither of us could work, so we lost our jobs as mayor and sheriff. Finally, she gave birth to Honour, and that triggered us to go find her big brother; we needed you home, kid! About a year later I moved in here, as it was easier taking care of the baby together, while we were still going through the treatment programme.”

“And that’s when you fell in love with her?”

“It took a while. I slowly got over Killian’s death, and started going out again. That’s when I started to see Regina very differently. Once she’d moved past her darkness, I saw someone astonishing. She’s really an incredible woman. Yes, she’s beautiful and clever, but she has so much love in her, Roland! After a little while, my feelings for her grew to something more than just friendship. I had no idea she felt the same about me, until Archie banged our heads together. It was a little weird at first. We both felt guilty, like we were betraying the memories of Killian and Robin. Plus, neither of us had ever been in a relationship with another woman. It took a long time, but finally, we admitted we were in love with each other. A year later, I plucked up the courage to propose. I still wasn’t sure she
would accept."

"Thank you for telling me. I saw it made you uncomfortable. And what about my dad?"

Emma found it easier to smile this time. "Ro, when your father, Robin Hood the hero, first came back from the dead, nearly two years ago, I couldn’t bear it! Regina was always madly in love with him and I knew I never stood a chance. The guy who gave his life for her? No competition! But something happened. Something wonderful. Robin never wanted to break us up so he decided to befriend me instead. I never imagined it would happen, but I began to fall in love with him too! I won’t give you all the sordid details, because that’s adult stuff. but I can honestly say I have never loved another man, not even Henry's father, as much as I now love your dad! And I’m so looking forward to being his wife! Well, one of his wives!

“I know he feels the same about you, Emma. About both of you. He told me…”

The pair sat silently for a few minutes, holding hands, with Roland deep in thought. Eventually, and without warning, he rose onto his knees, before shuffling closer to her, silently wrapping his arms around her neck. Then, finally, his tears came. And Roland Locksley once more became a twelve-year-old boy, crying for the loss of his birth mother. Emma welcomed the change, hugging him tighter. It was the closest the pair had ever been. He pulled his head back, having left a large damp patch on her shoulder.

"It’s…it’s not fair! I don’t even have a picture of her! John, Will and the guys tell me all about this incredible woman who was my mum. All the things she did. And I’ve got no memories. Nothing!” he returned to sobbing. It even brought a few tears from Emma.

"You’re right, Ro, it isn’t fair! But you’ve given me an idea. What if I told you I might have a way to get a few pictures of your mum? Would that help?"

He nodded silently, before burrowing his head back into her shoulder. She continued to hold him. “I’ll do my best Rollie,” she whispered, before kissing his cheek. “I love you.”

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The awkward afternoon led to an uncomfortable evening for Regina and Robin. Emma never left Roland’s bedroom. After playing with all their daughters and toddlers, reading them bedtime stories and getting them settled, the pair finally prepared for a, probably restless, sleep. Regina had spent all day worrying about Roland’s likely reaction when he next saw her, now he knew she was responsible, or at least partly responsible, for Marian’s death. She now lay in the centre of the bed, trying to read, for the umpteenth time, a page from Cymbeline, one of Shakespeare’s lesser known, later plays, which she knew Henry had been studying recently. It just wasn’t sinking in.

Robin quietly stepped inside the bedroom. “I always think you look sexy in those glasses!”

She half-attempted a smile, rolling her eyes. “Robin, you’d say I was sexy with a monocle! Have you checked on them yet? What’s going on in there?”

“Yes. I peeped in. Emma’s in bed with him and they’re snuggled up. Let’s try and talk to her.” He stepped to her side and took her hand. Closing his eyes, he focused on his blonde fiancée, using his mind to reach her with their telepathic link. Fortunately, she wasn’t asleep.
'Emma, my love? Is Roland asleep? Are you ok?'

'Robin? That you? Jeez I still can’t get used to talking this way! I keep thinking I’m going mad!'

'It’s me. How did it go?'

'He’s asleep now. I might stay the night with him, if that’s ok? It was quite emotional. We talked a lot. About Regina’s past and about mine. He’s a bit better now, but there’s a lot of feelings he’s bottled up about Marian. He’s really upset about the fact he can’t remember her. Rob, do you have any drawings of her or anything that belonged to her? You said you used to draw?'

'No pictures, but I may have something back in Sherwood. I’ll check in the morning. I haven’t drawn for a long time. I made lots of sketches of Marian, but they all got lost in the realm switch. I could ask Tuck though. He keeps lots of old records and things. Perhaps he has something…'

'I thought not. But I had an idea. You remember those dream catchers from Camelot? Well when I was a Dark One, I used to pull memories out, to put them into the catcher to display them. I don’t have those powers now, but Mulan said Merlin’s back? Perhaps he could help us pull something from your memories of Marian to show him? We could even get a picture or two from it?'

'Emma, that’s brilliant! I’ll call him in the morning.'

'OK. Gina? I can sort of sense you. Are you hearing this?'

'I’m here, Em. I was just listening. He must hate me so much right now! I’m not sure if he’ll ever look at me again, after what I’ve done!'

'That’s not true. Just give him a chance for everything to sink in. He’ll be OK, you’ll see. Anyway, you get some sleep. Robin, hold our girl especially close tonight, please? I’ll try to sneak in first thing tomorrow. '

'I will, and thanks for doing this. Sleep well, my love. Our love.'
A Chef comes to Storybrooke

Chapter Summary

Roland learns more about his mother from some of the Merry Men and one of Regina's culinary heroes comes to town.

Chapter 59

Granny's Diner – the following morning

“Rubes, I’ve been offering to do this for you for ages! You need that holiday. Go. We’ve got everything covered over here; I’ve got the kitchen’s taken care of, and Donna and Paul know what they’re doing. Take the damn holiday!”

“You sure you can cope? We’ll be gone the best part of a month. Shouldn’t you talk this through with Steffi?”

“Already have, Dot. In fact, I was going to wait for a little while before mentioning it, but I’d like to propose something to you two. Steff’s mother passed over a couple months back, and she left us a fair sum. We had thought of leaving Storybrooke, and starting a little diner of our own someplace. But she and I got talking and, well, she doesn’t really want to move. We’ve got lots of friends here.”

“So you want to set up your own café here…in Storybrooke?” Dorothy gulped. Hell, they hadn’t seen that one coming! He’s the best chef they’ve had in ages, and the competition really wouldn’t help…

“No, of course not. I wouldn’t do that to you two – you’re mates! So, we were intending to ask you whether you might be interested in letting us put some money into the business? Coming in as junior partners, like. I think I can help us grow it, and Martha’s old ice cream parlour’s been empty a while. I figure we could set that up as a bakery. That could give us a bit more room in here to expand things…”

“Mikey, you’re serious? You’d like to come in as partners?” Ruby looked across at Dorothy, equally surprised.

“Yeah. I mean, we work well together, right? I thought it could make sense. And also means Dot can get off and travel more, like she used to, and not worry about the business.”

“Mike, I don’t know what to say. We cant make any decision yet but, you come up with the numbers and your ideas, and we promise we’ll give it some serious thought, eh Rubes?” she asked her wife. The wolf looked equally astonished at the offer. Then Ruby remembered where the business came from in the first place.

“Er…as part of what you’re thinking, would you want to change the name or anything like that?”

He looked surprised. “Why on earth would I want to do that? Everyone around here knew Granny and, frankly, I also loved the grouchy old broad, god rest her soul! No, we should keep the name. Though we could call the other place ‘Mike’s Bakery’, or something like that?”
As they continued to chat, the bell on the front door sounded for the first customer of the day. “Jeez, it’s seven thirty already! Time for work, everyone,” said Ruby. “Mike, can our decision wait till the end of the week?”

“Sure, I’m not going anywhere. You get off and deal with Grumpy.”

“We need to change his nickname back to Dreamy! Have you seen him around his girl, these days?”

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Around the time Ruby and Dorothy were starting their day, Emma woke in an unfamiliar, less comfortable bed. Opening her eyes gently, she felt Roland’s hot, pyjama-clad body pressing into her side. Heck, Ro, you’re like a little radiator! she thought, as she slowly moved them apart. He was sound asleep. Normally an early riser like his father, his emotional talk with Emma last night had led to the boy falling asleep much later than usual. She slowly extracted herself from the bed, before deciding to go to the bathroom in her own bedroom. The girls would be waking fairly soon, so fingers crossed, Emma might catch a few minutes before the morning mayhem began.

As she walked in, she saw only Regina lying under the covers, Robin having presumably gone down to make coffee. “Hi,” she said softly, before sliding under the duvet, to pull herself into her wife. “You sleep OK?” she said, kissing her forehead.

“Not really. Not after what happened yesterday. You?”

“Not great. Rollie went off about midnight. He’s still asleep.”

“I can’t imagine he’ll ever want to even see me again. What if he refuses to come to the wedding? What if he wants to have nothing more to do with me?”

“Gina, I don’t think it’s that bad, honestly. We had a long talk last night and I…well basically, I told him a lot. About your past as the Evil Queen. About me and how I’ve screwed up. He asked about us and Robin. So I told him everything I knew. He cried a lot, which is probably good as he’s been holding it all in for so long. I think he’s more angry with Zelena, than you. I had a quick look at his tablet just after he fell asleep. He may only be twelve, but he’s already tracked down Zelena to Seattle! To where she’s staying. He’s already got into her private Facebook and Twitter pages. He’s quite the detective.”

“Why would he do that? What would he do with it all?”

“Destroy her reputation, basically. Or go after her…”

“He’s twelve Emma! There isn’t a malicious bone in his body!” She said it, though wasn’t so sure now!

“Well we'll see, won't we? Still, let's just play it by ear. Now then, I haven’t heard anything from the babies. Shall we go in there and face the day? Or what say we have a quick cuddle, and let our beloved fiancé face the fury of four hungry dames?”

“You’re mean! No, we better get up. He won’t be able to cope with all of them, and we need to get over and see Merlin. You remember we have that dinner with Pierre Roch tonight? It’s bad enough that the chef I adore thinks the sun shines out of your mum’s ass! We don’t want her screwing up the one chance we get to have one of the world’s best to cook at our wedding.”

“She’ll behave! She knows it’s important. Ok, come on girl, how about joining me in the shower?”
“If you’re thinking about getting dirty before we get clean then you’ve no chance. I ache all over…”

“Then I’ll just have to massage your back for you, won’t I? And any other bits I find on the way…”

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A little while later, they joined Robin downstairs, to discover he’d already made breakfast for Margot and Honour, fed Hope and Faith in their highchairs, and was now preparing more pancakes, presumably for his wives-to-be.

“You, my darling husband-to-be, just keep getting lovelier and lovelier by the day!” said Emma, with a wide grin as she swiped a syrup-coated pancake straight off his own plate, before ramming most of it into her mouth. “Mmm…so good.” She mumbled, almost unable to speak.

“Well, the way to a deputy sheriff’s heart is through her stomach!” he replied, before leaning in and biting off the piece of pancake that still hung outside her mouth.

“Oh, gross daddy!” said Margot, rolling her eyes at him. At seven years old, she’d now started to pick up far too many of Regina’s mannerisms. “Mama, ma was eating that!”

“I quite agree, Margot!” said Regina, albeit hiding a smirk. “Contain yourself, papa!” she chided.

Robin ignored her, instead swinging around and placing a buttery-lipped kiss on the brunette’s nose, which also made the two girls chuckle. As the usual glare and reaction was about to come, Robin quickly wrapped his large hands around her sides, knowing just where she was the most ticklish! That earned a loud scream and cackle from the normally controlled former mayor, who collapsed into uncontrollable giggles as he tickle-tortured her.

“Quick Honnie, daddy’s attacking mummy! Let’s get him!” the redhead laughed, jumping off her chair to attack Robin, jabbing her little fingers into his waist and clutching his leg. Honour was now doing the same on his other side, both laughing hysterically as their father pretended to collapse on the floor from the onslaught. “Yeah, you get him girls! Get the big bad man!” yelled Emma, encouraging them. As Honour sat on his chest and Margot rolled over his legs, Emma quickly got down on the floor and whipped off one of his slippers, before pushing her knuckle into the base of his foot, just where she knew he was the most ticklish, making him now yell.

Regina guffawed at the ridiculous display, dropping down to her knees to press two fingers gently into the base of his neck. Another ticklish spot she’d discovered from Roland. “Do you surrender, Lord Locksley? Or do I have my queen and princesses torture you some more?” This was followed by Emma ramming her knuckle into his foot. God he was so ticklish there!

“Argh, nooooo! I surrender!” he yelled between tight laughs. “Four women on one poor defenceless man! Have you no mercy?”

“None whatsoever!” she breathed, before placing a kiss on his lips.

The happy family got up and continued finishing their breakfast, Robin finally stepping up to the table and taking several pancakes onto a plate, with a glass of orange. “I’d better take Roland up some breakfast. He’ll be starving by now.”

As she watched Robin head up the stairs, Regina turned to them. “So, girls, I need you to help your mama and I get Hope and Faith cleaned up for the day! Your Aunty Maria’s going to be here soon and we’ll all be heading to your grandma and grandpa’s farm.”

“Really?” said Margot, excited. “Is Neal going to be there?” she was rather smitten by Snow and
David's son.

“Probably. So, let’s bath and change these babies, then we can…” she was stopped by a loud call from upstairs.

“He’s gone!” Robin yelled. “Roland’s gone!”

Emma stood up and immediately raced up the stairs. “That’s impossible! He was sound asleep ten minutes ago! You sealed his room. I felt the barrier. There’s no way he should have got through that! You only opened it just or me, right?” she asked.

“I’m sure I did! His room was sealed. We’d better notify everyone to look out for him. I’ll message the men and Sherwood. You let your parents know and anyone else you think needs to. Just say he’s upset and gone missing!”

“I’ll let mum know first. She knows just about everybody! Rob, you remember I said he had already figured out where Zelena was staying? He might be going after her! I’ll let Hank know, so they can cover the town line…”

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Merlin had arrived in Storybrooke late the previous evening, and stayed the night at the convent. He’d arrived at the Earl of Locksley early, to meet his daughters Anna and Rosie for breakfast, before the latter headed off once more with her husband on the Jolly Roger. Killian Jones had stayed behind on his ship, to look after Liam and prepare the vessel for the long journey to Arendelle. He smiled as he watched his precious girls each plough through a huge cooked breakfast, smiling to himself.

“Girls, I’m always amazed you two can eat so much. Considering you both have whippet-like figures, I really don’t know where you put it! Slow down there, Rosie, it’s really not going to be taken away!”

“Sorry dad. But you know what I’m like with bacon and eggs! This is good stuff! I’ve never had any problem, it’s Anna that puts it on!” she nudged her sister, playfully.

“Not sure about that, sis! You’ve been packing it on your thighs recently…” she scoffed.

“Enough, girls. Stop the squabbling, even if it is in jest! Now, I want to talk about the arrangements for this Arendelle trip, I…” he was interrupted by Robin’s sister Maria, stepping out from the kitchen in a hurry, looking flustered.

“Maria? Over here!” her best friend called out. “Something wrong?”

“What…Anna? Hi!” the perturbed woman called back, before noticing her friend’s family. “Hi Professor! Rosie!” she seemed panicky. “Yes…um, well, I just a message from Robin. He says Roland’s gone missing! I need to go help look for him!”

Annabelle was already familiar with her friend’s nephew. “Roland? Shit…OK, let me help you look!” However, just as she stood up, Maria’s phone buzzed with a new message. This time from Alan a’ Dale:
AaD:  Don’t panic! Roland’s here with me! He just arrived a couple of minutes ago, looking upset. Rob, hold off the cavalry! Me and Tuck are talking to him. I’ll feed him and call you!

Maria sighed in relief. She loved her young nephew. "He's safe!" A moment later the phone buzzed again:

Robin:  Thank god! Ok, stay in touch. He got some bad news yesterday. Please keep an eye on him?"

AaD:  That's what mates are for! Now bugger off and leave us be. You know he’s in good hands...

“He’s OK! He’s somewhere over here. Panic over!”

“Good!” said Merlin, pointing to a spare seat. “In that case Maria, please come and sit with us? I haven’t spent any proper time with the lady who seems to have stolen my boy’s heart. Come have breakfast with us?”

Anna smiled up at her. “Dad, I’m not sure that’s a good idea! This one’s a Locksley. You think we have big appetites? This one’ll eat you out of house and home!”

“I think we’ll survive,” he chuckled. “I want to get to know her. Come, Maria. Tell me if my son is behaving himself!”

As Maria grinned and sat to join her boyfriend’s family, at a small lodge nearby, Roland Locksley was sitting with Friar Tuck and Alan a’ Dale. “Roland, your papa is clearly worried about you. He’s just texted me. What’s going on? I love your father as a brother, but you know I can keep a secret, when required. What’s going on?”

It took a little while for him to open up, but Roland finally told them what he’s learned about his mother’s demise. About Zelena and Regina and how he wanted revenge. The friar placed a warm hand on his shoulder, in sympathy. He knew Robin had probably already lectured him, so decided on a different tack.

“What do you know about your mother, Roland?”

“Not much. Dad used to tell me a lot about her adventures. How they broke into castles and attacked royal stagecoaches together. He said my mum was a pretty good fighter. That, and he loved her…”

“Did he tell you what she looked like?” Alan interrupted. “Tuck, you still got those old sketching books?”

“Maybe? Give me a few minutes…” he said, leaving the room.

“Roland, your mama, Marian, was a real looker! Very bright too! I’m sure she broke quite a few hearts before she came by your dad. He stole her family’s horse, you know?”
“He stole her horse? Why…”

“Cos, he thought they were rich! She was from a noble family, but the king had purged and exiled them. That horse was all they had. So, she went chasing after him to get it back. Gave him a first class bollockin’ and merry hell, she did! But he just looked at her, acting like a lovesick puppy!” said Alan. “She was quite a girl, your mum!” While the news made him feel proud, her loss just made him feel…empty!

“We all loved her. She taught me to read and write, you know! And when I realised my interest was more in men than girls, she was the first person to accept it. She gave me the courage to face the rest of the Merry Men. Bit difficult that, when you live among them. She was like my big sister.”

“Dad told me you and him…tracked down and killed the guys who hanged her?”

“He told you about that, did he?” Alan was more than surprised. It wasn’t the most honourable thing he’d ever done, and he and his leader never spoke after the deed was done. “Well, I can’t say I’m proud of what we did, Ro. When we got to that little village up in the hills, we discovered quite a few bodies and a lot of devastated, grief-stricken people. We found your mum in a barn there…” his voice suddenly became hoarse with emotion, remembering those dark times. “Your pa completely lost it! We left the men to help with the burials and the two of us went after the bastards who did it! Your dad’s a brilliant tracker, as you know, and we found one of the Royal Guard holed up nearby. We…we tortured him to find out who’d done it! It didn’t take long. We found out it was one of the generals, Fitch, and two of his men!”

“I want to know everything, Alan! What happened next?”

“It took a day to track them down. There were now about six of them, camped out in the forest. They were preparing to attack another little hamlet near the coast. All that just so the Queen could get the Princess! Robin and I waited in the trees. Once we knew it was only them, we planned the attack. We waited till two of them left, in opposite directions to act as lookout. We…despatched both of them.” Despatched? he thought, so much easier to say than kill!

“We were two against four. As the others hadn’t returned, they rest got twitchy. So, we had to strike now or lose them. Robin took one of ‘em out with an arrow to the chest from a good hundred yards away! He went down, and the rest panicked. One ran from the rest, but an arrow to his leg brought him down. Your dad didn’t waste time. I’d never seen him so wired up! We grabbed the guy on the ground by his balls, threatening to cut ‘em off if he didn’t say who hung Marian! When he told him, he went for Fitch in a straight swordfight. Nasty bugger didn’t stand a chance - short sword, straight to the guts!”

Roland winced at talk of his dad killing another. Alan continued. “The guy on the ground – I can’t remember his name – tried to fire his crossbow at him, but I saw it and sliced the guy. The last one, Hamilton, was the bastard who actually hung Marian. Rob virtually took his head off!”

Roland sighed, satisfied at finally hearing what happened to his mother. “Thanks for telling me! And not holding anything back, like everyone else has done around here!”

Alan’s large hand patted the boy’s shoulder. “No problem, lad. Though your papa’s probably going to have a blue fit when he finds out I told you!”

Friar Tuck appeared again, this time with a large box containing sheets of notes and…drawings. “Roland, I’m not sure whether you’ve ever seen these?” He pulled out a sheaf of twenty or so sheets of paper containing…drawings. Most were faded and greying, but not all. “See here, my boy? This here’s your mum!” He handed him a letter-sized card-like sheet, with a charcoal image on it.
The image was of a young woman, probably in her late twenties, with long, luxurious dark hair which ran over her shoulders. With high cheekbones and a straight nose, dark piercing eyes looking into the distance. The drawing was quite detailed, and the artist had clearly tried to convey her lightly tanned skin. Much like his own. Tuck handed him another, this one of her head and shoulders, looking more directly at the artist. There was more than hint of kindness and warmth in her eyes and whoever had drawn this had clearly spent a long time studying her. A third drawing showed the beautiful woman reclining on some sort of trestle, facing the artist and almost flirting with him. Roland saw just how elegant she appeared. Clearly tall and slim, she wore a thin dress that revealed not too much of her cleavage and long legs. She was clearly very beautiful.

“And this is really my mum?” a tear fell down his cheek.

“Aye, lad. That’s Marian. Quite a stunning woman, wouldn’t you agree? We all miss her…”

“Can I keep them? And any other’s you’ve got?”

“Of course, my boy. It is your mother, after all. Though might be a good idea to ask the artist, first!”

“The artist? Who is he?”

“Why your papa, of course! He used to draw all the time of an evening. Couldn’t even bear to look at them after she passed, though. I don’t think he picked up a pencil ever again…”

_Dad could draw? He had no idea._

Dad could draw? He had no idea. “These are great. Thanks guys…”

“No problem, young fella. Now then, I promised your papa I’d feed ye! So, let’s go into the pub and get some breakfast. Cos I’m pretty sure there’s three very anxious parents wanting to see you after you ran off. And you don’t want to be facing them on an empty stomach now, do ye!”

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“Thanks, Tuck, that’s a relief! I’ll give them an hour, then I’ll be over, ok?” he ended the call as his fiancées waited patiently for the word on Roland.

“Alan and Tuck have him and Alan’s giving him some breakfast. Apparently, he was asking a lot of questions about Marian. Alan a Dale told him about her hanging, and what we did to the soldiers afterwards. Tuck found a batch of my old drawings. He wants to give them to him, so I said yes. I’ll leave them a little while before we go over there…”

“Robin, please don’t be too angry with him!” urged Emma, “The guy was really shaken up last night. I know he disobeyed you but, come on, he had just found out how his mother was murdered! He’s only twelve.”

Robin sighed loudly. “I guess you’re right. We can let it slip this time. Hell, it even brought back a lot of uncomfortable memories for me, too.” He gave the blonde a hug and kiss on her cheek. Regina had stayed silent throughout, listening. “Gina, you OK?”

“Not really. I just want to find some way of apologising to him for…everything.”

“My love, we’ve been through this a hundred times. The Evil Queen was a very different woman in a very different time. How did you think I was able to fall in love with you?” said Robin. “And as for the people who actually hanged Marian? Well, they’ve been dealt with long ago. I killed them!”

That comment made Regina raise a brow in surprise. “I always wondered what happened to General Fitch and Colgrave! They were the Queen’s…my…best men.”
“Yeah? Well I’m better!” he said quietly, turning to step out of the room.

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The moment Roland walked with Alan into the large dining area of the pub, he was besieged by anxious friends of his parents, all concerned following Robin’s text alerting them to his disappearance. As they crowded around, he smiled sadly, appreciating their kind words and assuring them he was feeling better. He clung tightly to the small leather satchel Tuck had given him, containing pictures of his mother. A moment later he felt a hand on his arm. “Aren’t you going to have breakfast with your favourite aunty? What you got there?”

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It was close to noon when Robin, Emma, Regina and the children finally arrived at the Earl of Locksley. Regina hung back from the rest, nervous about approaching the boy. She took the double pushchair from Robin. “You go on ahead. I’ll wait here…” Looking towards the centre of the room, they saw Roland sitting at a larger table, with people around him. Stepping closer, Robin saw the table covered with paper and cards. Drawings. His drawings. He hadn’t seen them for quite some time.

“Well, Roland?” he said softly. “How are you?”

The boy sat close to his aunt Maria, staring at one, slightly larger picture. The detailed drawing showed Marian, lying asleep on something, with a black-haired baby, presumably him, probably aged about one, in her left arm with her right hand resting protectively across him. It was the only sketch that showed the two of them together. “May I see?”

The image took Robin right back to the day he first drew it. He remembered how they’d had to flee an existing camp that the King’s Guard had appeared too close to for comfort. Robin had assembled the group and they’d spent most of the day trekking through the forest to find a higher, better defendable spot, before setting up camp. It had been Marian’s first real stop all day and after nursing her child, she lay her head back to rest. Robin had seized the time to draw his love and their young child.

“That’s a lovely drawing, Robin!” said Emma, appearing beside them. “I didn’t realise you could draw!”

“My mother taught me. We used charcoal from the fires. It used to be a hobby of mine…”

Roland looked up at his dad, glumly, knowing he’d be furious at disobeying his order to stay inside. “I’m sorry dad. I just needed to get away…”

Robin looked across at his sister and cousin, before sighing. “It’s all right, Roland. I’m not angry any more. Last night was difficult for both of us. Let’s let bygones be bygones.” Maria smiled sadly up at her big brother, nodding slightly in agreement with his decision. Emma started to look through the other drawings.

There were half a dozen pictures of Marian and Roland. Three or four of some of John, Will and the men. A very striking one of Mulan in her battle armour, plus several castles and village scenes. “Rob, you have a real talent here! They’re excellent! Why on earth did you give it up?”

“My heart wasn’t in it. Not after I lost Marian. I guess I just lost interest.”

The blonde wrapped an arm around the boy, kissing his cheek. “Ro, there’s someone who wants to see you so very much! But she’s very nervous about it. She thinks you hate her.”
Roland looked across to where Regina stood awkwardly, now holding on to the long baby buggy, with her face looking down to the floor and glancing up nervously from time to time. He stood without saying another word, slowly walking across to her. Emma watched closely. Regina seemed to be almost trembling. Just before he reached her, he pulled out a stool from a nearby table and carried it across. Now in front of her, he placed the stool on the ground, before standing on it, so they were the same high. He stood, ramrod still, until she lifted her face. Slowly he opened his arms, inviting her into them.

His simple actions made her almost collapse in tears, as she moved forward to accept the hug. “Oh, Roland! I’m so very sorry…” was all she could manage. They held each other silently for a good minute. It was such a moving scene that, as Emma brushed a few tears from her own cheeks, she saw that Maria, Caroline and even Anna Sage, were doing the same! She smiled across at them.

As Regina continued to hug Roland tight, hoping this moment would never end, he leaned his lips close to her ear, to whisper, “I know you’re not the Evil Queen anymore. I forgive you!” Unfortunately, that only caused her to blub even more!

It took another ten minutes for her to finally calm down. Enough for her to move to the table. “You do realise, you two ruined my make-up, back there, don’t you?” said Maria, which broke the tension as several of the other women laughed and nodded in agreement. Then she saw the pictures, presumably of Marian.

“Oh, Roland, your mother was really rather beautiful, wasn’t she? I particularly like this one of you both. She looks so serene! Robin, I had no idea you could draw like this? They’re wonderful…” various nods and murmurs ran around the table.

“He was always drawin’ her, was our Rob!” added Alan. “He used to have loads more. And then some they kept to themselves, if you know what I mean?” That earned a giggle or two around the table.

“You drew some nudes of her, too?” asked Emma, earning a shy nod from her fiancé. “Can’t say I blame you. She’s gorgeous!”

Regina agreed. “Definitely. Roland, these are good enough to display. Would you like us to hang some of them in our house? We could get them framed…”

“Yeah. I’d like that…mum.”

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That evening, having settled into their large suite at the inn, the trio prepared for their dinner with Emma’s parents and Pierre Roch. After having bathed and put the little ones to bed, Regina stood at the bathroom mirror finishing her makeup while Emma changed into a new dress. Robin sat in the lounge with Honour and Margot, reading a final story before Robin himself got changed.

Unfortunately, their precious family time was interrupted by Emma’s phone going off.

“Hi mum! Everything ok? We’re expecting you over here around seven thirty…”

“Fine, Emma. Your father and I may be running a few minutes late though, as we’re just waiting on Neal getting back from his punishment duties in the stables and the barn. We’ll be on our way as soon as we can…”

“Punishment duties? What’s my baby brother done this time?” she rolled her eyes before putting the phone into speaker mode for her lovers to hear.
“I don’t really want to talk about it! Yesterday, he did something extremely…embarrassing at school, just to make everyone laugh. It was inappropriate; which is why, as part of his punishment, your father and I are making him clean out the stables and the cowshed before he goes to bed tonight…”

“Embarrassing? Come on mum, out with it! You know I’ll find out in the end. What did he do?” Regina and Robin could hear the conversation now, drawing their attention.

“Seriously, Emma, I’d rather not say. He did something…inappropriate in poor old Nurse Garvey’s first sex education class. Let’s leave it at that!”

Regina broke into a broad grin, wondering what her wife’s younger brother could have done? She knew Neal was advanced and put in a senior class, but… Do they really do sex education classes for nine-year-olds?

“Anyway, do let Mr. Roch know we will be there. Although, I really don’t know why we have to have all this fuss! And…you can tell Robin that I know perfectly well how to dress to impress. Without his advice, thank you very much!”

Both women looked across at the former outlaw, brows raised in puzzlement. “Robin? What on earth did he say to you?” Emma asked.

“To use your fiancé’s exact words to me: ‘He’s a bit pompous but he is French, Snow. So, use your femininity. Wear something sexy! Think teeth and tits! That’ll do it!’ Fine words indeed, from my future son-in-law!”

Regina tried desperately not to laugh, but couldn’t stop herself, her cackle being picked up by Snow. “Emma, are you on speakerphone? Honestly! It’s bad enough being told there’s about forty gas-filled condoms flying over Storybrooke, without your wife finding it funny! It really isn’t, you know!”

That did it. Emma collapsed with laughter. “Oh god! Sorry mum, but I have to disagree - it’s bloody hilarious!”

“Unfortunately, you father seems to think so too! Perhaps you should try spending some of tomorrow trying to shoot, or magic, the bloody things down! Yes, that’s it! If you want me to preen and grovel to that ruddy French cook, you have to promise me that you and your wife will get the bloody things down tomorrow!”

Regina groaned. “All right, Snow, you win! Just don’t screw up tonight, then we’ll solve your little floating contraceptive issue. That ‘ruddy French cook’, happens to be one of the world’s best chefs. A gastronome who, for some bizarre reasons, thinks the sun shines out of your nether regions! We want him for our wedding. So, even if Robin put it a little too succinctly for your taste, the point remains. You need to impress him…”

“I don’t need advice on how to impress a man, Regina, thank you very much!” The phone line went dead.

“Shit! You don’t think she’ll pull out, do you?” the blonde asked. “After Robin went to all the trouble of getting him here!”

“No chance! I know Snow. She loves being the centre of attention. She’ll be there!”

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Emma, her wife and their fiancé, appeared in the bar area of the inn, just before seven thirty, as
planned. Merlin, his daughters Annabelle and Rosalind, having also been invited by Robin to attend, were already there to greet them. Thankfully, Killian had chosen not to attend.

“Emma, Regina, lovely to see you again!” the Sorcerer boomed. “Care for a drink?”

Regina looked at the grey-haired, bearded man. It was very rare for her to feel truly humbled by anyone. But this man, the greatest sorcerer who ever lived, was an aberration. Not a god, but pretty damn close! He was nearly two thousand years old, had sired countless children, consulted with gods and the dead, was supposedly immortal, could read minds and had the ability to split himself into numerous characters. And yet here he was, looking forward to a dinner with his two daughters, like any normal human being.

“Regina, you know Annabelle, of course. But you remember Rosie, one of my older girls?”

“Of course. Rosie, it’s lovely to see you again. I gather congratulations are in order since we last met. You married Killian and had a son, I gather?” she answered, politely. When she’d first met the tall brunette, clambering down from a truck, she’d wrongly assumed the tall brunette was interested in Robin. Now, knowing better, she was more relaxed.

“Hello Regina! Yes, our boy, Liam. He’s ten months old now. And I gather your girl’s a few months older?”

“We’ve two. Faith and Hope, by Emma, were born the same day. We are blessed…”

Pleasantries were exchanged within the small group until a stranger appeared. Regina instantly recognised the short, balding man from his numerous cookery programmes, tv appearances and food websites. Pierre Roch. For a food junkie like Regina, it was like meeting a pop idol. She stiffened as he approached. Elegantly dressed, in what was clearly a very expensive dinner jacket and bow tie, Pierre sported a small, waxed moustache and walking cane. On his right was a slim, elegantly dressed younger woman with large expressive brown eyes and a beaming smile. Recognising Robin and Emma, Pierre stepped forward offering his hand.

“Bonsoir mesdames et messieurs! I’m delighted to meet you all. May I present my daughter, Mia?”

The young woman stepped forward.

Robin was first to speak, offering his hand. “Enchantée, madame! Robin Locksley, à votre service…”

“English is fine, Robin! Dad’s the French native, but it’s most appreciated! And…it’s mademoiselle, actually!” She flicked her eyelashes flirtatiously, clearly interested in him. A look picked up by Emma and Regina! So, he thought best to follow it with: “Et, je vous présente mes fiancées, Mesdames Regina et Emma Swan-Mills?”

“Your fiancées? What, both of them?” she said, looking across at his two lovers. He merely smiled and nodded. “Oh…you lucky boy!” which induced laughter, breaking the tension.

“I am indeed. A very lucky boy! Thank you both for coming at such short notice. I’m sure you’ve also met…”

“PIERRE, YOU OLD DOG!” yelled Merlin, turning from the bar with his hands full of drinks for his daughters. As they took them, he grabbed the chef and pulled him into a tight hug. “It’s been too long my friend!”

Pierre seemed a little overcome with emotion. “Professor! It’s wonderful to see you. I still owe you a great debt indeed. And of course, you remember Mia?”
“Of course, I do! Mia, how are you? And how is your beautiful daughter, Estelle?”

“Almost twenty-two now, Professor! She’s in college, studying medicine. She still talks about you. You left a big impression on her...”

“Please drop the handle and just call me Merlin! I’m delighted. She always was a bright girl.”

The group exchanged pleasantries, Merlin introducing his daughter and calling for more drinks. As everyone started to relax, Emma whispered in Robin’s ear. “So, what’s with the French? Merlin’s induction?”

“Actually...I was taught by my parents. Links to Norman kings, and all that stuff. They felt it necessary.”

Pierre stepped in front of Regina, who blushed when he took the back of her hand and pressed his lips against it. “I met your delightful wife Emma last year, madame, and Robin spoke of you as a former queen. But he didn’t tell me just how truly beautiful you are! Quite the injustice, I think...” he said, a little too smarmily for Robin’s taste.

“Why thank you, monsieur Roche! I’m a great admirer of your work!” she gushed, instantly going in to talking about the menus from one of his books she’d recently attempted. Robin smiled at Emma, placing an arm around her waist as they tried to feign interest at Regina’s obsession. The master chef was polite and attentive, but clearly used to this kind of flattery. Emma knew that Roch hadn’t yet committed to actually catering their wedding lunch, hence the reason for the invitation. He looked a little disinterested, but Regina hardly seemed to notice.

It was then the main door opened, Emma instantly spotting her father holding it open for his wife to come through. Damn, dad, you look sharp! she thought, as Charming appeared to be wearing a formal dinner jacket, crisp white shirt and bow tie, which fitted his large frame perfectly. Emma felt quite proud of him at that moment. Then she noticed her mother.

As she entered the room, Emma’s breath hitched in surprise. Her mother was wearing a magnificent, clearly designer, off the shoulder rose-coloured silk gown. Her hair was long (was that a wig, or hair extensions?), her eyebrows carefully threaded over bright eyes, make up subtle and she looked ten years younger. Wearing matching heels, she seemed six inches taller and in short, utterly regal. Every inch a rightful queen! Even Regina, usually always ready with a sarcastic retort for her former step-daughter, seemed completely lost for words. She couldn’t deny it – Sidney was right. Snow was the fairest of them all!

Taking Charming’s arm, the couple stepped slowly forward towards the visitors. Pierre had already spotted her, and stepped away from the little group to face her. The woman who, years ago, had saved his entire village from destruction by the ogres. “Oh, madame! Your Majesty!” he gasped, completely captivated by the short brunette before him. “I am so very ‘onoured to meet you once more!” he bowed ridiculously low. His daughter now appeared beside him, performing a generous curtsy before whispering, “Majesty!”

Snow stepped forward, offering her hand, which Pierre lifted carefully to place a small kiss on the back. “C’est un plaisir de vous revoir, monsieur Roch! Et ta belle fille, Mia, n’est ce pas?”

Roch beamed with happiness at her having recognised him, as his daughter then shook her hand. “It is, your majesty. I’m surprised you remember! I was brought up over here, so English is my first language. I’m so pleased to have a chance to meet you again. You saved my life!”

“Thank you, Mia. And please do just call me Snow. It was really the dwarves who did most of the
saving that night, particularly Dreamy. He’s known as Leroy here. I’d be happy to introduce him tomorrow if you’re staying over? But first, I need to introduce you to the man who’s saved my own life, more than a few times. Have you met my husband?”

“Je suis très heureux de vous revoir, Monsieur Roch,” said David, offering his hand. “David Nolan.”

“Prince Charming!” Mia almost swooned as she looked up at Snow’s husband, clearly impressed by the handsome man before her. “Your reputation, sir, like your wife’s, is rather considerable!”

Emma, Regina and Robin silently watched their exchange. And for the first time in her life, Emma finally began to understand how so many people from the Enchanted Forest regarded her mother and father. Snow White had been a name, an image to her. But to these people, she had been one of them! A real hero, a beacon of hope who who saved countless lives. Watching her now, behaving effortlessly like a true leader, a majestic queen with two of her subjects, she felt incredibly proud. And then there was her father. Their Prince. He seemed to just ooze effortless charm, as he flirted gently with the man’s daughter.

“Does every fucker around here speak French, apart from me?” She whispered to her wife, who merely smirked back at her.

“All members of the royal families were expected to speak it, Emma! Nonetheless, your parents do appear to have risen to the occasion. Even I have to admit, I am rather impressed!” said Regina, as Snow and Charming led their party through to the formal dining room, Snow on Pierre’s arm. She whispered to Robin. “And as for you, my thief, I know why you’re doing it, but could you kindly not reciprocate her flirting too much?”

Robin grinned back at her. “Gina, she just acknowledged I’ve got two fiancées! I hardly think you need worry. Depends on how much you want that man feeding us in six weeks’ time?”

The rest of the evening flowed smoothly. Much to Regina’s chagrin, the Charmings ended up taking the chef and his daughter off to discuss the wedding in more detail, even though the three fiancées were sitting close by. Eventually, as the evening drew to its close, Pierre and Mia stood, thanking their guests effusively for all their hospitality, before finally taking their leave. Snow and David joined them over a final coffee.

David summarised. “Right then. Pierre WILL provide the wedding lunch, on the dates we agreed. He’s sending us about ten menus to give you some ideas. He’ll provide the food, the sous chefs and some of his serving staff. We just provide the people and the facilities. We’re budgeting for around two hundred. Is that right?” asked David.

“Dad, a meal for two at his restaurant was over seven hundred dollars! The bill will be huge. There’s no way we should have that number...” Emma protested. But her father put a calming hand on her shoulder.

“Emma, he’s providing, as in paying for, the food! We only pay for all the drinks and some of his people.”

“How the hell did you manage that?” asked Regina in disbelief. “He’s one of the world’s best! Robin said he usually doesn’t even do this sort of thing, let alone pay for it!”

“Because of my magnificent wife, Regina! Who, I’m sure you’ll agree, played her part perfectly. One of so many reasons why I remain madly in love with her.”
Snow beamed up at him, before putting a hand around the back of his head, pulling him down for a gentle kiss on his lips. “My prince!” she whispered, “You are so getting some tonight!”

Unfortunately, her whisper wasn’t quite soft enough not to be picked up by Emma and Regina, who both winced at their display. “Okay, really didn’t really need to hear that.” The blonde grumbled.

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It was close to one in the morning when Regina slowly rolled off Emma, to lie on her left side. The three of them were now sated after an hour’s blissful, unhurried lovemaking. Lying side-by-side, on their backs on the enormous bed, all starting to get their breath back as they now looked at the beautiful full moon, in a cloudless night sky, bathing them in its soft light through the large bay window.

“Well I thought that went very well! Your parents really pulled out all the stops and did us proud, didn’t they Emma? Snow especially. She had our Mister Roch virtually eating out of the palm of her hand.”

“Yeah! I’d never really seen her like that before! It made me feel very proud of them both. She was just like a…a…Rob, is that what I think it is?” she said, as an ugly, distorted but very bloated, large balloon floated past the window, bathed in moonlight.

“A gas-filled condom? Yes…I do think it is…” said the former outlaw, a grin rapidly turning to chuckling. “How many did she say he released?”

“About forty from the sex-education nurse’s stock. There’s a dose of reality for Snow! I do so love your little brother, Emma!” said Regina, collapsing furiously into giggles.

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Chapter Summary

Our travellers arrive in Rome. Rumple tells them he's planning a major change in his life. The Swan-Mills women are planning something. And Belle gives her lover and husband her blessing to get to know each other...

Chapter Notes

Still with me? Thanks for your patience. This will be the last of the planning chapters for a while, before we hurtle towards the wedding.

Thanks also for the positive feedback and those who have PM'd me on FFN (I really must get around to publishing it there).

Fi xx

Chapter 60

Rome, Italy – One week later

After Henry checked into the Hotel De Russie, he quickly showered and changed before calling Belle and Ariel’s room. “Hi guys, how’s things? How’s Gid?”

In a nearby room, cases were open and clothes scattered as Belle tried holding the phone to her ear while screwing on the bottle top. “Hello, Henry! Good to see you got here safe and sound. Not so good, unfortunately. Gideon’s teething and he’s got an upset tummy. Ariel just changed him but he’s quite fractious!”

Henry could hear the screaming child in the background and she definitely sounded distressed. “Bad luck. D’you want me to come over and help?”

“Don’t worry. He has to sleep some time, right? Is Rumple with you?”

“Not yet. We came in on the same flight but I left him at the airport. he went to a travel agent, to make a few changes. He should be here in an hour. Listen, you sound a bit anxious - let me come and help?”

Five minutes later, the young man knocked at their bedroom door. Belle opened it and the first sight that greeted him was of a flustered Ariel trying to hold the screaming twitching, red-faced infant. “He’s been like this for a couple of hours. I think we might need a doctor!”

“Here, let me take him. Share the load, right?” the brought his large hands around the baby, lifting him onto his chest. “Hey there, young fella! It’s going to be all right.”

“I just texted Rumple, asking him to stop by a pharmacist!” said Belle. “I just ran out of Bonjela to
rub on his gums. But I’m more worried about his stomach!”

Henry looked at the two women, who had both been looking after Gideon since he and his grandfather had left them in Paris, to take the train to Strasbourg three days ago. They both looked utterly shattered. “Listen, it looks like you two haven’t slept in a while. What say we get him calmed down, and I take him off for a walk in his buggy? You two could get a bit of sleep…”

Ariel looked at Belle, silently pleading with her to agree. “Are you sure? He’s being difficult and his diapers have been horrendous!”

“No problem. I’m used to it having changed my sisters’ quite a few times! Let me just text grandpa and let him know what’s going on. Put a few bits together for me, and I’ll take him. Text me when you feel better!”

Belle placed a kiss on his cheek. “You, Henry Mills, are as much a saviour as your mother!”

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Surprisingly, once the one-year-old had left the hotel, being pushed in his buggy by his nephew, Gideon slowly drifted to sleep in the warmth of the Mediterranean evening. Henry had already texted his grandfather and they now met again in the historic grounds of the Pincio Promenade. Rumple, delighted at being reunited with his baby boy, snuggled him as he fed him on his lap.

“That stuff you put on his gums works quick!”

“Aye, lad. And the Calpol should kick in soon. Teething and upset stomachs often go together. Still, he’s settling now. How are Belle and Ariel?”

“Honestly? They look completely shattered; like they haven’t slept in a week! That’s why I took him off them.”

“Good idea. It’s never easy; I’ve also noticed the difference here, when I don’t have magic. The Dark One doesn’t need sleep, so I’d forgotten how hard it is.”

“Do you miss it, being away from all that power?”

“Sometimes. It’s like a drug. But after a week or so, no. Except I do get tired and hungry, like everyone else.”

“Can you feel the Dark One talking to you now? Does he "know" what we’re saying?”

“No Henry, I can’t feel him now. Although he spoke to me in Strasbourg, when I visited the Isle of Souls. That’s the place I was telling you about? It’s a sealed hamlet, a bit like Storybrooke. The Dark One appeared to me then, wondering what the hell I thought I was doing. I don’t think he’s aware of anything when I’m away from anywhere magical. Unless I consciously think about it. Why do you ask?”

“Well, for the last few weeks you’ve seemed a lot brighter, happier. Much more content. I just wondered whether it was a change of scene, or you being away from his influence? Either way, I like it! I’ve really enjoyed these last few weeks with you, grandpa. Makes me wonder how it would have been with dad.”

“I’ve been thinking much the same, my boy. Baelfire was a natural traveller. He would have adored a trip like this. At least I get a chance to share it with his boy. And my young boy, of course! But it’s interesting you ask, because there’s something I’ve been considering for a while now…”
“Doing it more often? Getting away from the magic?”

“Aye. I can't open my thoughts to it when I’m at home, because my darkness picks up on it. He can read my thoughts when I’m there. I’m considering leaving Storybrooke.”

“What – for good?” Henry was startled by the admission. ‘You’d really give it all up?”

“Well...I have more than enough wealth to last me several lifetimes. My boy here is growing fast, and I frankly don’t want to outlive him! Provided I also get regular access to my grandson and the family you may well have one day, a fresh start, without the darkness, would be welcome…”

“But grandpa, without the darkness – you’d die!”

“We all have to one day, Henry. Death is the ultimate release! For the first few days of this trip, I missed the power. But now? I relish the freedom I have, even if the price is not being immortal.”

Henry’s mind swam with so many thoughts. The implications of Rumple leaving Storybrooke for good. “I don’t know what to say. I understand why you’d do it, though I would see a lot less of you if you went, apart from regular trips. What about Belle not seeing Gideon? I can’t imagine she’d take that lightly!”

“No lad. There’s the rub. I have no wish to part mother and son. We would have to behave like civilized, divorced couples with children the world over, and figure out joint custody arrangements. I couldn’t bear to be parted from Gideon for too long. That is my dilemma.”

“So, when are you going to discuss it with her?”

“Soon. Probably before I have the operation on my leg. I would appreciate it though, if you would keep this information confidential, at this stage.”

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The following evening, with Gideon’s stomach problems now under control, he slept soundly in his room as the hired babysitter sat over him. Downstairs, in the hotel’s dining room, the four of them enjoyed a sumptuous dinner, catching up on events of the past week. Ariel told them about their stay in Paris, visits to the landmarks, including the Eiffel Tower, the Champs-Élysées and Versailles. Belle waxed lyrical about the Sacre-Coeur and the Notre Dame cathedral. Henry told the women of his trip to the ancient city of Strasbourg.

“And Rumple, what about your magical excursion in Strasbourg,” asked Ariel. “Was it anything like you imagined it would be?”

“Not really, dearie. Nothing like Storybrooke. However, I discovered I knew a mage who had previously moved there. She gave me some useful insights into a few things and I picked up one or two useful items. An interesting trip though…”

“So, we’ve another two days before we all split up again,” said Belle. “As we’re all together tomorrow, any thoughts what you’d like to do? We haven’t been to the Coliseum yet, and I have always wanted to see the Sistine Chapel, particularly Michelangelo’s frescoes.”

The other three all nodded their heads in agreement. “Sounds like a plan,” agreed Henry. “If we do that and St. Peters, then later I’m happy to stay in for a change and look after Gid. You two had him all week and grandpa looked after him last night. I quite fancy a quiet night in with my uncle! Besides, I won’t get to see him for a while once we get to London…”
The two women looked across to gauge Rumple’s response. Since their night together in Edinburgh, they had been careful not to be caught like that again. Each morning, depending on who was looking after Gideon, the three would gather to help feed and dress him first thing, though they hadn’t spoken about the sex the three of them had enjoyed two weeks ago in that Edinburgh suite. Many things were left unsaid. *Perhaps this was the opportunity to clear the air?*

“That’s kind of you, my boy! If you’re quite sure? We’ll make sure we get back at a sensible time…”

“It’s fine, grandpa. He can spend the night with me. I’ve looked after babies before and if he get’s sore teeth again I know what to do. Seriously, you guys have looked after him throughout and I know it screwed up a few of your nights. Come and collect him from me in the morning. He’ll be fine!”

“You, Henry, are turning into a really lovely young man!” said Ariel, standing to place a kiss on his cheek. “You’re going to make some girl very happy one day. I would love a night out!”

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*The Mansion – Mifflin Street*

“That looks rather lovely there, doesn’t it?” said Snow, admiring the newly-hung picture of Roland and Marian above a fireplace in the drawing room. “You can see where Roland got his eyes and hair from. I think I remember meeting Marian Fitzwalter once, a long time ago. She was strikingly beautiful. I’m still surprised you have it hanging up here, though? Considering she was Robin’s first love…”

“Yes she was, but more importantly, she was also Roland’s mother. A woman my sister and I wronged dreadfully. It seems a small price to pay for that injustice. It’s also a reminder to me. To be better…”

Snow smiled sadly, pulling her daughter-in-law’s hand around her arm. “You’re NOT that woman any more, Regina. As Emma and Robin have told you on numerous occasions. Actually, where is my daughter?”

“In the study, pleading with Robin to let her see the other drawings Tuck dropped off. It seems our forest friar, in his wisdom, decided to keep a lot of Robin’s personal effects back when he had a breakdown over her death. A lot of things got lost over time, but he’s a hoarder, apparently. Robin assumed they’d been destroyed but Tuck kept them, sealed, in his own lodgings.

“Drawings of what?”

“Lots of things, though Alan a’ Dale implied Robin had made more personal drawings of her. Emma wants to see them…”

“Why? If they're personal, he’s kept them back for a reason. Why would she want to see her fiancé’s, possibly intimate, drawings of another woman?”

*Because she wants him to draw her the same way!* she thought but couldn’t say it. “Who knows?”

In the drawing room, Emma was standing in front of the desk, Robin seated, looking at the wax-sealed box which Tuck had dropped off the other day. Her curiosity was getting the better of her and she was tempted to use her magic to open it, or remove the contents, without breaking the seal. The only thing that had stopped her was when Robin had told her, very firmly, that he would regard it as a major breach of his trust. “Please, Robin? Let me see them? They’re only drawings!”
“Drawings from a very painful part of my life, Emma! You forget, Marian was my wife!”

“Yes, I know. But a week ago, I had no idea you could draw like that. It’s a gift, Robin! And I think you should use that gift. You now have five, not one, beautiful children. I would love to see you draw them, so we have something special to remember them all by before they change. I realise, some of your sketches of Marian may be nude or even ‘intimate’, but it really doesn’t matter. I don’t feel threatened by the fact you loved her! She was special, but what about Regina? My wife, and soon to be your wife, is also special. One of the most beautiful women on the planet. I would treasure having a sketch of her. Something private I can keep for ourselves. I know you may never fully come to terms with Marian's loss, but we love you too. Your entire family does!”

Robin sighed loudly, slowly standing up. “Very well. Open it. It’s just…I would rather not see them myself at the moment. It’s still too painful. Go ahead…” he raised an arm, and part of the fixed wax seal around the box split. “Just take care of them and don’t take any away…” he slowly stepped out of the room, walking past Regina and Snow, who were hovering outside.

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As soon as he’d gone, they walked into the study to find Emma, who by now was engrossed in several pictures from the unsealed box. “Emma, what on earth are you doing?” her mother rebuked. “Surely you haven’t…”

“He’s very talented, isn’t he?” said Snow. “I love the way he’s captured her eyes!” However, the next one she pulled out of the box took Emma’s breath away. It was a similar drawing to the last, this time with Marian reclining, her body towards the artist but looking off to the distance and… completely naked. Although her upper body and breasts were shown, her legs were carefully crossed, one over the other, to maintain most of her modesty. Regina gasped with surprise. “Oh…it’s lovely, Emma! Look at the way he’s shown those legs! The way the light plays off her face. The muscle detail around her torso is incredible; and her breasts and shoulders are exquisite…”

Emma agreed. “It’s quite something. He’s got a real talent there, Gina! We have to get him to start drawing again…” As Snow lifted the picture to study it, Emma used her telepathy to communicate silently with her wife, without being overheard:

“I’d love to get Robin to draw you like that! You need to help me persuade him…”

“Emma, I’m not having my bare breasts displayed on a wall!”

“I meant for me, us. A private picture, silly!”

Oh, well…I guess that would be all right. Only if you pose for one for me too!”

“Definitely. So, help me persuade him, then!”

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Rome

“I am absolutely stuffed,” groaned Belle. “That veal was heavenly, but I couldn’t eat another thing!”
Rumple had found a rather grand restaurant in the guides, not far from the hotel. Being free of caring for Gideon for the first time in weeks, the three had enjoyed cocktails in the sun, before sitting down to a lavish spread. They’d gone out of their way to order the most unusual, or lavish, items they could. Especially dishes they’d never find back home. While he and Belle started on black caviar and toast, Ariel had feasted on foie gras (Rumple deciding to avoid telling her it was made from bloated goose liver, illegal to produce back home). Belle’s Osso Bucco was sublime, while the mermaid and Rumple had made short work of the most tender fillet steak in pate they’d ever tasted.

“That’s a shame, madame,” said the helpful but rather obsequious waiter. “Perhaps I should come back in a little while? I have the most perfect hot profiteroles in cream. Our house speciality. I guarantee after one taste, you will finish the bowl, or it will be on the house!”

“That’s a challenge I definitely have to take you up on!” said Ariel, happily sated. “But I agree, let’s leave it a little while!” The waiter nodded curtly and left. The three sat back, contented, Rumple slowly swirling his wine in the glass, before swallowing back in contentment.

“Angus, I know I’ve only known you a few months, but I have to say I’ve never seen you look so relaxed and happy! High living clearly suits you…”

Rumple smiled his crocodile smile. “Why thank you, my dear! I have a lot to be thankful for right now. For the first time in hundreds of years, I don’t have a demon regularly whispering in my ear. I’ve spent nearly a month in the company of my baby boy, and my wonderful grandson. I’ve enjoyed the company of not one, but two extremely attractive and intelligent women in some of the most beautiful cities on earth. I’ve dined well and seen many sights. How could I not be happy?”

“So, you haven’t missed the power?” queried Belle. “The pull of the Dark One? When you visited that magical land, he didn’t appear?”

“Oddly enough, no! That surprised me. He appeared to me when I was in the Scottish Highlands, and looked even more ‘ill’ than ever. He scorned me as always, but he seemed tired.”

“Tired? But he’s an immortal evil spirit. He can’t get tired…can he?”

“I didn’t think so, but it seems the longer I stay away from any magical worlds, the weaker he becomes when I return! Oddly enough, that leads me to discuss something with you which I’ve been…avoiding. I’m starting to consider leaving those lands for good. Perhaps permanently living in the world without magic.”

“Permanently? But…but Rumple, you can’t! You’d grow old and die! And what about Gideon?”

“Dying is what people are supposed to do, Belle. Live, grow old, and die. Being immortal isn’t a blessing Belle, it’s a curse. And as for Gideon, I would never willingly separate him from his mother…”

“So, what the hell? You saying you’ll just up and leave us? Leave Gideon? Rumple, he needs you!” the librarian choked, her eyes reddening. “After Bae? How could you do that to him? To us?”

Ariel had stayed silent, now placing her hand over his on the table. “Angus, she’s right! Gideon needs you. And so does Belle! Heck, even I don’t want you leaving us!”

“Ariel, I want this darkness gone. Forever. I have plenty of funds to provide for the pair of you in bringing up our son. I want him to remember me as a kindly, loving father, not as a Dark One, which will certainly happen if I return permanently to Storybrooke. I have no doubt the beast inside me will recover, or possibly even seek another host. I couldn’t bear seeing that happen to someone else! It
seems to be the best option…”

A tear slid down Belle’s cheek. “Well, I don’t think I could bear that! There must be another way.”

“I think there is,” said Ariel, squeezing Belle’s hand with her free one. “We could join him…”

“What? What are you suggesting?”

“Belle, you and I both know that you’re still very much in love with Angus, as he is with you! Could you not leave with him? Then Gideon could be with both of his parents. It seems the best way…”

“But…what about you? Ariel, I couldn’t leave - I love you! I love both of you…” she whispered the last words. Rumple stayed silent, surprised they were even discussing it. Ariel took both her hands in her own.

“Well, I guess that brings us to the elephant in the room, doesn’t it? Because I love you too, Belle. After that wonderful night in Edinburgh, we’ve all avoided talking about it, haven’t we? I’ve already admitted I’ve started having feelings for Angus too, although I don’t know what his are for me. I’m willing to explore this, if you both are too. Perhaps if we could work on that, I could possibly join you away from the magical world…”

“But…even if that was possible, you’re still part mermaid, aren’t you? Would you even survive away from magic for too long? We’d lose you. Rumple, is it even possible?”

“I’m really not sure. This is Triton’s area of expertise, even though Ursula cast the spell. I would need to speak to him to find out. Relations with him are strained, but your mother does currently owe me a great debt. Ariel, are you serious about this? Do you really have feelings for me? I assumed that night in Edinburgh was a one-off. Your emotions were taking over at the time. Plus the drink…”

“Then you really don’t know women, or mermaids, as well as you think, do you Angus?” she sniggered. “Yes Rumple, I was being serious. I’ve lived with you a few months now. I’ve seen how you are with Gideon, with Henry and of course, Belle. You pushing us together was a selfless act, no matter how you want to dress it up! I’ve seen a side of you that only Belle has, and yes, I am attracted to you. The question is, how do you feel about me?”

Rumple sighed, louder than he intended. “When you first moved in, I admit I was envious of the love Belle felt for you. You give her something I never could. Light. Though watching you with my son, my feelings changed towards you. I’ve lived a long time and I knew I was also starting to be sexually attracted to you. Running around our house in exotic lingerie doesn’t help either!” Both women laughed at that, the tension reducing. “But I’ve found you surprisingly pleasant company, young Ariel. And more intelligent than I imagined! You know, I detest stupid people and am an amazingly cantankerous man. But I would be lying if I said I didn’t have feelings for you, too…”

Belle’s heart overflowed with happiness at her two loves declaring their interest in each other. “I want you both to pursue this! I don’t want just to be the fulcrum for the three of us. If we do explore this, I want us to be equal. In all things. Ariel, Rumple, you two are leaving on Monday to go to Venice together, while I head off with Gideon and Henry to Florence. So…I’m giving you both my consent, to do whatever you want to do together, to pursue this. Physically, emotionally, whatever…”

The other two looked at her in astonishment. “Belle, are you absolutely sure about this?” asked Rumple.

“I am. Spend time together. Really get to know my wonderful girlfriend, Rumple! Travel, talk, wine,
dine and, if it comes to it, make love. Just know, you both have my blessing…”
Chapter Summary

Henry plans his return from vacation. Robin comes to terms with his loss. Ariel and Rumple get to know each other in Venice.

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone!

Sorry the update times between chapters have been getting longer but university has to take priority. Thank you so much to everyone who stuck with me on this, my first ever story. Over sixty chapters already, with another ten or so to come, I have decided to open up a new, follow on story straight after this has concluded, based on this and keeping with the relationships but bringing many old characters in.

Again, thanks for your patience and your VMs which have been so encouraging... Fi xx

Chapter 61

The Mansion – Mifflin Street

Another week passed, and the Swan-Mills and Locksley family were assembled, once again, on and around the sofa for their Saturday morning, weekly web call with Henry. As usual, Emma and Regina sat in the centre, Hope and Faith on their knees with Margot and Honour in front of them on the floor. Robin stood behind them in the middle. Only Roland was missing, out for his usual weekend soccer match.

“Hi mums, hi all! How are you doing?” the older children cheered at seeing their big brother appear on the screen.

“Hello, my prince!” Regina began, “We’re all well. It feels like you’ve been away forever! And that is a rather full beard, young man. A week ago, it was a light fuzz!”

Henry chuckled. “Yeah, all the guys my age seem to have them over here. Robin, you should let yours grow too!”

“Too much hard work looking after it, my boy. Plus, it’s hot when you’re working…”

“I think it suits you, Hen!” said his blonde mother. “It goes with your new tan. So where are you now?”

“Florence, in Italy. You should really come here on holiday, mums! There’re so many famous places to see; I’ll send you the pictures. We’ve booked to go into the Uffizi Gallery early tomorrow morning. Belle’s never stopped going on about it! She reckons it’s the best museum in the world.
There’re loads of Da Vinci’s, Botticelli’s, Michelangelo’s, you name it. This place is like walking in history! But I’m completely shagged out from all the walking, so we’re going to be taking Gideon off for afternoon tea by the river.”

“I did look up Florence on the web. I recognised the bridge from the photos. Yes, it looks fabulous. What about your grandfather?” Regina knew it was churlish to keep calling him ‘Gold’ when Henry was fond of the man. “How’s he coping with all the walking?”

“He seems fine, though he and Ariel flew to Venice this morning. We’ll see them when they come back on Monday.”

“Gold and Ariel have gone together?” asked Emma, surprised. “and they left you two with the baby?”

“Yeah, they get on fine. Really well, actually! They even do a little bit of singing together, to help Gid get off to sleep at night. I’ll tell you mums, you wouldn’t recognise him when he’s away from Storybrooke. It’s like he just comes to life!”

“Have you got me a present, Henry?” yelled Honour, bored with the adults’ conversation.

“Honour!” her older mother rebuked. “You know better than to ask for gifts! You should never…”

“It’s ok, mum!” Henry laughed. “Of course I have, Honnie! I’ve got something for all of you. I’ll be home in a week or so, and you’re coming to meet me at the airport, aren’t you?” Honour beamed back at him, and Margot also gave a gap-toothed smile, having just lost one front tooth recently. The girls adored their older brother and were so looking forward to having them back, to play with them and snuggle up with him in bed when he read them stories at night.

“So, Henry, about your return. We’re all coming up to meet you Tuesday week at JFK,” said Emma. “I got your flight details. Robin’s bringing the Sherwood minibus to fit everyone in. We’ll drop your stuff off at the university, and then we’re staying in Boston for a couple of nights. The others definitely aren’t coming back with you?”

“No. They’re all flying back to London for grandpa’s operation. They’ll stay there while he recuparates. They may be a few weeks.”

“Wonderful!” Regina interrupted. “We’ll have you to ourselves for a few days! Henry, we need to get you and Roland kitted out in your suits for the wedding. Don’t forget, it’s only a month away! Most of it’s sorted out, but your mother and I need to go to New York for the final fitting, so perhaps you could come with us?

“I get to see you in your wedding dresses? I thought that was supposed to be bad luck?”

“That only applies to the groom,” the brunette turned to smile at their fiancé, who squeezed her shoulder. “It’s bad luck for a groom to see the bride, or in our case, brides, before the event.”

“Then I’d love to come. You can come see my flat since we painted it. But I don’t want you lecturing me on the mess!”

“That’s our job, Henry, we’re your mothers!”

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Venice
“Oh my god! That is such a breath-taking sight! I can’t believe we’re really here?” gasped Ariel. After the short flight from Rome earlier that morning, the mermaid and the Dark One had taken a water taxi from Venice airport straight to the hotel, situated on the side of one of the most famous and historical sights in the world. The Grand Canal. Everything before her looked like a Canalleto painting. And she adored it.

Earlier that day, they’d checked into the luxurious Gritti Palace hotel, on the famous waterfront. Ariel had suggested they change the two-room booking into just one, and Rumple decided to upgrade to larger suite. Although money was no real object to him, he still balked at the room rate, and the sheer cost of everything. Still, this was a unique experience, he had to keep reminding himself.

However, in their suite, all thoughts of money spent were completely forgotten when Ariel laid the most sheer, pale grey silk chemise on the Emperor bed, as she unpacked. Holy hell, I do hope she’s wearing that tonight!

The next few hours were spent sightseeing. After visiting the Doge’s Palace, the Rialto Bridge and several more of the world’s most famous monuments, the pair took a leisurely gondola ride around the canals before finally stopping for coffee and a snack in the Piazza San Marco, one of the most recognized public squares.

“Angus, I still can’t believe we’re actually here!” Ariel shrilled, almost shaking in delight. “It’s all just like the films! Everything!”

“Forty-three Euros for two coffees and some water! That’s like fifty dollars! What in the hell?” Rumple was astonished at the, sadly legal, blatant rip off.

However, Ariel calmly stood, taking her camera in hand to take yet more pictures, before stooping down to lift his chin, and whispering in his ear...

“Yes, it's obscene, isn't it? We're only paying for the location, and they know it! But, my dear Angus, it’s nothing like as obscene as the ideas I have for the two of us tonight!” She followed it with a short kiss to his lips. The astonished look on his face morphed into a huge grin, as he whispered back. “You do know I’m not an immortal here, don’t you? You really will be the death of me…”

“Well…could be a great way to go!”

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Storybrooke

Emma walked into the study, surprised to see Robin, sitting silently at the large desk. “Sorry, I didn’t realize you were in here! I was just going to catch up on some paperwork. I’m just…” she stopped talking, when she realised he hadn’t even noticed her!

In front of him, the box Tuck had brought over just a week ago, containing Robin’s old drawings, was now open, with various sketches and pictures laid out on the desk. He remained sitting, silently staring at just one picture in his hand. She noticed it was a small, hand-sized relief of Marian, face and bare shoulders only, and remarkably detailed, looking straight at the artist. She stepped close, putting a hand softly onto his shoulder.

“I drew this just after we found out she was pregnant…” he almost whispered the words, sitting motionless.

“Really? She looks lovely. Very serene. It's good,” she offered back. Though as she leaned down to look closer, she saw his deeply distraught face. Tears rained down his cheeks and he had made no
attempt whatever to wipe them away. She’d never actually seen Robin cry before, and the effect was rather disturbing. *Now she finally understood why he found unsealing the box so difficult!*

“Rob! With everything that you had going on, you never really had the time to grieve for her, did you? You’ve mourned her passing, yes, but you never really grieved! All that time...” she breathed. He looked up at her, grief-stricken, saying nothing. Just shaking his head slowly.

“Well use me, my love? Please?” she sat on his lap without asking, wrapping her arms around his broad shoulders, pulling herself in to him in a desperate attempt to comfort. “Let it out!” And then his tears returned, with muffled sobs, as he clung on to her. The pair stayed like that for at least ten minutes more, never letting each other go.

Eventually they separated, Robin wiping his cheeks. “Thanks. I think I needed that! But I’ve soaked your top...”

“Who cares. Robin, I’ll always be here for you; you never seem to realise it, but you’re a truly wonderful, kind man. That's why everyone loves you. I’m so looking forward to becoming your wife. Even though I’ll never live up to the mark Marian set, if I can be anywhere near as important in your life as she was, then I’ll be a very happy woman.” she sniffled.

“You're up there already, Emma! I love you. I couldn’t imagine my life now without you in it. Or Regina. I’m blessed...”

She pressed her lips softly against his. “And I’m a very lucky girl. So was Marian!”

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“Henry, I’m shattered! Please, no more walking for me. I need a cold drink!” Belle groaned. She and her step-grandson, had spent three hours in the Uffizi Gallery, pushing the child buggy around the most extraordinary art gallery in the world. In the afternoon they visited the markets on the Ponte Vecchio, the historic picture postcard stone bridge, and the Duomo. Then they’d stopped for a late lunch before starting off again, and now the librarian’s legs were aching.

“Fair enough. How about we head back to the hotel? I’ll take care of Gid, while you go freshen up? We’ll have a bite to eat at the hotel and settle in for an early night?”

“Perfect. I’ll make a couple of calls too. Thanks again for taking care of Gideon last night. I haven’t had a chance to dress up or relax over a long dinner in ages!”

“No problem. He was as good as gold last night,” he looked down at the snoozing baby. “And you three seem to be getting on like a house on fire. I’m still amazed that grandpa’s so cool about the two of you being…together. He seems so much more chilled than I’ve ever seen him!”

Belle’s cheeks pinked, not really wanting to discuss their relationship. “Erm…yes, we do all seem to get along just fine.”

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*Venice*

After their long first day, Rumple and Ariel had gone back to the hotel suite, both exhausted. Although there’d been a little flirting going on through the morning, as the afternoon progressed there was definitely a nervousness, an anxiety, between the pair of them. It was the first time they had ever been alone for so long together, without Belle, and the mermaid now seemed a lot more reticent. “I’ll go shower and freshen up. You may want to get a little sleep before we head down to
dinner,” Rumple suggested. “There seems a perfectly acceptable restaurant here? Perhaps I should order a table…”

“That sounds nice,” she said, her voice almost emotionless. Something he immediately picked up one.

Sensing her nervousness, his voice became softer. “Listen Ariel, I know what you said to me this morning. And what Belle said to us, but I need you to know that…oh dear…how should I put this? You are under no obligation whatsoever! Nothing needs to happen between us, either this evening, or in the future. You’re Belle’s special friend and I truly respect that. Please don’t feel under any sort of pressure. If you prefer, I can still arrange for a second room.”

She smiled. “No, please don’t do that! It’s true, I am a bit nervous. I know I’m usually full of bravado but…well, it’s just us here now, isn’t it?”

“Oh, indeed it is. Just us. So, let’s just assume nothing will happen tonight, and take that pressure off us both? Why don’t we just enjoy a nice dinner, perhaps a drink or two, and get to know each other? There are so many things I still don’t know about you…”

The mermaid gave her first genuine smile of the afternoon. “I would like that. There’s so must I want to understand about you too.”

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Four hours later, the pair had enjoyed cocktails, followed by a light meal and were now on to the coffees and brandies. They had asked each other so many questions about their histories. Rumple had tried to avoid the awkward ones about his father, the odious Peter Pan, or his mother, Fiona the Black Fairy. Ariel knew some of his history with Belle and her girlfriend had already told her some things about Milah and Baelfire, so she skirted over the more uncomfortable history. He told her something of the power of the darkness. Of how it overwhelmed him for decades, until he brought it under some sort of control. He’d asked her about her father and mother, King Triton and Queen Athena, and their current strained relationship. Despite the difficult topics, Rumple had enjoyed the red head’s company far more than he had imagined. The woman clearly had many hidden depths. She was intelligent and a surprisingly quick learner.

Now, as he sipped at the scolding coffee, he watched Ariel bring the balloon glass to her lips, taking her first drink of the liquid. She gulped a large measure, which seconds later caused her eyes to bulge and she began coughing furiously. “Gaagh! Bloody hell!” she wheezed.

Rumple chuckled softly. “Sorry, I should have told you! Cognac can be quite strong! Best to just sip it!”

“Thanks for the warning! Better late than never,” she coughed. “It’s a lovely taste though!”

“Waiter, two more large cognacs please?” he asked the man hovering nearby.

As she calmed, taking a sip of the coffee, the mermaid seemed much more relaxed than earlier. “Angus, thank you for that lovely meal! And for everything you've done. The holiday, the flights, everything! It’s been the best adventure of my life and it couldn’t have happened without you!”

He smiled a genuine, friendly smile. “You’re perfectly welcome, my dear. I’ve enjoyed it too. I’m hundreds of years old, so I should have done something like this a very long time ago. I think it’s having you, Belle and of course, Henry and Gideon with me. Everything seems so much lighter here.”
“I’m glad. You’ve gone through one hell of a life, Angus, and suffered more than most. You deserve this.”

“Thank you. Although now, not having my powers, I’m feeling somewhat tired. Perhaps it might be time for bed?”

“Yes, I think so too,” She winked.

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The nerves came back as Ariel went into the bathroom to change. After a brief shower and freshen up, she reappeared back in their ornate bedroom, to find Rumple, now wearing only a pair of black cotton briefs, arranging a pillow and blanket across an adjoining sofa.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

“Well…I said I didn’t want you feeling uncomfortable, so the sofa will be perfectly fine for me. You take the bed.”

She smiled at his thoughtfulness, but shook her head, taking his hand instead. “No, Angus. There’s no need, I’m fine now, honestly! Please, come and join me in the bed. It’s big and comfy and I’d rather that, than you sleep there.” As if to enforce the point, she moved in to give him a soft, gentle kiss on his lips.

“Well if you’re really sure? As I said earlier, I have no expectations…”

“I know. And it’s very sweet of you. Nor do I. Now come to bed.”

He moved between the soft cotton sheets. “Can I just say, that chemise looks wonderful on you? You are an exceptionally beautiful woman, Ariel. I can see how Belle is so smitten…”

“She’s not the only one, Angus. You’re a remarkable man, and I’m beginning to think only she and I know the true you,” she breathed into his ear, drawing herself closer into his warmth as he switched off the lights. “Cuddle me?” she whispered. He obeyed, and they silently held each other in the dark. As they settled, Ariel kissed him softly on the cheek, which in turn made him turn his head instinctively, to capture her mouth gently with his own. “Hmmm,” she breathed, as they separated. “Nice…”

“More than nice,” he agreed, attaching his lips for another. Slowly feeling more emboldened, she gently slid her tongue past his teeth, coiling it gently against his, and was more than pleased to feel something stiffening pressed against her thigh. Delighted she could be the cause, she whispered in the dark, moonlit room

“Do you remember the last time we were together - like this? When we were with Belle? I heard everything. I found your secret weakness, Angus. The secret thing that turns you on more than anything!”

Breathing into her ear, he whispered back, “And what would that be, o’ devious little mermaid?”

“You love it when she talks dirty! When she says what she wants! I heard her, and I heard you!”

“Oh, you did, did you?” he was enjoying this. “And didn’t anyone ever tell you it’s very bad form to eavesdrop on other people’s conversations? Behaviour like that should be punished! And unfortunately, for you…Belle also told me your particular ‘weakness’!”
Ariel gulped, not sure where this was heading. “She... she did?”

“Oh indeed... she did! So, for such a crime, I think some sort of chastisement is in order.”

“Chastisement? What sort of chastisement?”

“I think a spanking would be appropriate. Perhaps you need to be put over my knee! Perhaps your lower cheeks should be as red as no doubt your other cheeks are right now!”

“Oh!” It was a good job he couldn’t see her face in the dark. She was starting to get quite turned on! However, she could see his face all right, with her enhanced sight. He was staring intently, eyes blown with lust. “Well, I suppose it was a very naughty thing to do!”

“It was indeed. So, I’m afraid, my dear, I need you to remove those undergarments and bend you across me for a suitable punishment!”

She didn’t hesitate. Sporting a mischievous grin, she quietly slid her lace panties down and off her legs, before climbing across him, deliberately pressing her abdomen over his now very hard erection, as it pushed against his boxers. It was merely moments before she felt a warm hand roll across her now exposed buttocks, followed by a single, hard slap. “Ooh!” she groaned, feeling herself becoming wet with excitement. The blow was hard enough to sting slightly, but not enough to really hurt. However, he followed it up with a few more slaps, each small buttock in turn, while punctuating them with a single word between each slap.

“You (slap) must (slap) not (slap) eavesdrop (slap) on (slap) private (slap) conversations (slap) that (slap) do (slap) not (slap) concern (slap) you (slap)! Is (slap) that (slap) perfectly (slap) clear?”

Hearing a gentle groan from the mermaid, who continued to lay still, Rumple thought he may have gone too far! That he’d overstepped the mark. However, the mermaid’s next comment, as she rose, reassured him. “Thank you, Mr. Gold, Sir! I will try to remember that – though if that’s the punishment on offer, I can’t guarantee I won’t transgress again!” she rose up to deliver him a kiss on the lips. “Perhaps there’s something else I can do towards making amends?” Without seeking permission, she moved her head lower down his body, before sliding a warm hand into his boxers to seize hold of his swollen organ. “It seems fair...”

Rumple quickly realised what she intended to do and placed a hand on hers to stop her. “No, my dear. Thank you but not this time! I think I should return the compliment you bestowed on me back in Edinburgh! Now lie back, please...”

Although he asked, his arms now came around her firmly, to roll her away and on to her back. A moment later, he was up and kissing her mouth before moving his lips down. As they roamed over the delicate silk, he took a moment to lower one strap, easing the fabric below her left breast before his mouth claimed it. Drawing his lips back, he swiped at her now turgid, pink nipple with his tongue before his teeth came around it to give the lightest of bites. “Aah!” she hissed. His fingers had already claimed the other bud as she started to pant. Moving on, he brought both hands under the fabric to remove it from over her head, before moving himself over her. Ariel expected to receive his weight on her, but he clearly had other plans. With his arms now either side to take his weight, Rumple now kissed her stomach, heading lower before swiping his tongue into her navel. Relieved to find that, following her shower, there was no unfortunate taste of body lotion or soap, her continued toward her thighs, distributing his kisses evenly.

Ariel had only ever received cunnilingus from one man before. Eric, her prince. Only once! Whilst he had been initially willing, she could tell by his actions down there he found the process rather distasteful. He had eagerly lapped around, before sliding his tongue into her entrance, rather
clumsily. She’d felt awkward at the time, so told him she didn’t really get much feeling from it, and she would instead prefer to see his face. He’d taken her advice, without question. It was only later when Belle, having joined her in reading up on the subject the internet, asked for them to try, that she gave it another go. And that was a different experience altogether! Belle had never discussed her sexual past with Rumple, or anyone else, although she’d picked up snippets recently.

One of the first things Belle discovered when her relationship with Rumple had turned physical, was that the Dark One was a surprising master of cunnilingus, and it was often a foretaste to their lovemaking. So, having received some of her most powerful orgasms that way, the librarian was determined that her mermaid should also get to experience something like that. Having never gone down on another woman before, she needed to learn how to give, rather than receive. So, together they read up on the do’s and don’ts, the hygiene implications (god, that was a turn off) and watched some very odd pornography, to attempt to learn before they tried. The first time Belle had performed on her, it had really paid off, the redhead almost slamming her groin hard into her face as she came! Ariel had then returned the gift, though it still took a little practice. However, the overall opinion of the mermaid thereafter, was that men were simply not good at it, because they didn’t have the parts in question to know how it feels!

However, here was Rumple, lips now kissing between her thighs, nipping her skin and about to go further. So, she hesitated. “Angus, you don’t need to! Really, I’m fine! Just…just come here!” However, he seemed to ignore her completely, lining his mouth up at her entrance before whispering, “I disagree!” Flattening his tongue against her opening, he slid across it very slowly, applying pressure. Ooh, that’s…nice! Moments later, she felt his tongue start to turn into a point, before sliding around the side of her clitoris. It curled over the top, with a light flick on the nub, before continuing down its other side. “Oh…yes…that’s good! That’s very good!” she encouraged him. As her hips involuntary starting to raise to meet him, he placed his lips over the top of the nub itself, sucking gently.

“Fuck!” she gasped, no longer whispering. He’s…he knows what he’s doing! “Yes…keep doing that!” Moments later though, she was disappointed to feel his lips come off her, as he slid a single finger inside the warm, wet entrance, checking she was ready. Definitely! Sliding out, a second finger now joined the next push. “Ooh, shit! More, more please my…my love!” Obeying, a third finger now joined it slowly, and he started to rhythmically pump them inside her, curling them up towards her spot before again bringing his mouth down onto her swollen clit. This is heaven! She thought as she felt her imminent release. “FUCK! Angus…just…just don’t stop! Don’t you dare stop!” she growled, gripping the bedhead strut tightly as she came, the fierce orgasm powering through her “Ooooooooooooh! Fuuuuuck!!” she gasped as she felt herself sink in bliss

As she stilled, Rumple slowly rose over her, coming up to her face before delivering a short kiss to her lips. “Was that all right for you, Miss?” he asked, smiling smugly, because he already knew the answer from her expression.

“All right? It was fucking unbelievable! Where the hell did you learn to do that? Belle?” He chuckled softly. “Yes, but don’t forget I’ve been around a good few hundred years! You do get to learn a few things in that time.”

“Well you, Mister Gold, are the first man ever to give me an orgasm like that! And I’ll definitely be wanting a few more! If Belle had told me what you can do with that tongue of yours…”

“I’m sure we shall have plenty more opportunities in the future, should you so wish. Belle too.”

“Well now, I need to return the compliment! So, on your back, if you please?”
Rumple smiled at her. “Thank you but there’s no need, Ariel, really! Although I’d much rather be inside you right now. If you would like that?”

“Like it? I would fucking love it! Though I wonder if we could perhaps try something? With me facing down and you behind me?”

That was yet another surprise from this astonishing woman! Rumple had long believed that was not a preferred position for any women, as it implied submission. Like a lord and his serving wench. Or an animal. It was unsuitable for a lady, surely?. He had certainly never taken Belle that way, nor had she asked. “You’d like me…behind you?” It was his turn to feel embarrassed, and she smirked at him, knowing what she would say next would affect him. “Yeah. You know, Belle and I bought some…toys recently. We bought a strap-on. I discovered I kind of like it when…when she takes me that way, with her behind me. She prefers missionary though…”

The blunt talk of his wife and her lover using an apparatus, sent feelings straight down to his cock! “Well, um, I have no problem with that. Perhaps you would like to…assuming a position?” Ariel just managed to stop herself from bursting out laughing at the way he’d phrased it, knowing it would kill the mood completely! Lifting herself onto her knees she saw the bulge now straining in his boxers. “Let me help you with that!” she slid both hands into his boxers, pushing them down to release it. As his upright penis sprang out, she quickly seized it with her left hand, bending over and lowering her mouth onto it, giving it a single, hard suck. “Oh my!” he groaned. Releasing it quickly, she rolled over on to all-fours in the centre of the bed, before pulling two pillows under her and raising her ass into the air. The effect on Rumple was instant!

Slipping off the bed, he quickly removed the boxers from his ankles, before turning back. She was raised up to him now, ready for him. No woman had ever wanted him this way before, but she had insisted. And this gentleman would ever refuse a lady, would he? Pulling a side vanity drawer open, his hand sought out one of the condoms he’d put in there earlier. She spotted what he was trying to do. “No need! I’m on contraceptives, remember?” she groaned. “Now, stop wasting time and Fuck me, Angus!”

Oh hell, if she carries on like this, I’ll be dead before I even get home! But the sight before him was all consuming, so as he stood at the edge of the bed, he pulled her roughly, backward, still on her knees, to the edge, positioning himself. “Ready?” he whispered. She nodded, “Just…” before she finished he slid the dome of his cock between her labia, coating himself in her essence before sliding in. As he felt the tightness of her give way, they both moaned in ecstasy, groaned in bliss and growled their expletives. The pace slowly increased as she encouraged him. “Harder! Harder, my darling! Fuck me!” And he did. He really did! Within seconds he was slamming hard into her depths, not only feeling the warmth and tightness of her, but also the unfamiliar sensation of her small, bare buttocks slamming hard against him. This was wonderful! He wondered why he had never tried this before!

They came within seconds of each other. Ariel first, the fierce jolt rifling throughout her body. “YES! YES! OH FUCK, YES!” she screamed, no longer concerned about other residents overhearing them. Moments later and feeling her tighten around his cock, Rumple’s own climax kicked in as he felt the pull from his groin. “AARRGHHHH!” he growled, almost like a dog, holding her hips tightly against him as he exploded deep inside her.

They collapsed sideways onto the bed, him still inside her and almost unable to breathe, let alone move. It took a while for them to steady themselves, before, softening, he slid out and she turned around to face him. “Good?” she whispered as his arms came around her. “Oh, so much more than good!” he replied, exhausted.
Half an hour later, as they considered a repeat performance, Ariel’s phone rang. “Ugh! Who’d ring at this hour?” she groaned as she leaned to her side of the bed to collect it. However, seeing the beautiful face assigned to the number, she whispered back to him. “It’s Belle! So late? Hope she’s ok…”

“Well you won’t know unless you answer it, dearie!”

She picked up, putting the call on speaker phone, “Hi babe! Everything alright?”

Belle was dressed for bed but, not having slept on her own since Ariel had moved in with them, now found herself restless. Having made herself a cup of hot chocolate from the sachets provided, she now stood looking out of the large window towards the up lit Florence Cathedral, taking sips. “Hi, gorgeous! I was missing you both. To be honest, I was also feeling a little lonely!” And horny, though I’m not telling you that! “And wondering how you two have been getting on?”

“It’s been wonderful, Belle. We’ve seen so much! Angus and I even took a boat ride on the canals!”

“Really? I’ve always wanted to do that! I always fancied a ride on a gondolier!”

Rumple burst out laughing. “I think you mean ‘gondola’, dearie!” chuckled Rumple, from the bed. “A gondolier is…”

“I know exactly what I meant – dearie!” she snarked back, causing all three to laugh. “And you know what I mean! I’ve been itching to find out how you two got on today?”

Ariel gave Rumple a mischievous look back, as she grinned. “As I said, it’s been wonderful! However, before all that, I have a bone to pick with you, Mrs. Gold! It appears you told Angus our secret!”

“Pardon? What are you talking about? Our secret?”

“That your mermaid enjoys a good spanking!” Rumple called out, making Ariel blush furiously and Belle gasp.

“Angus!” said the embarrassed mermaid.

“Rumple!” said the equally embarrassed librarian.

The pair of them chiding him in unison, only made him guffaw. But he couldn’t resist, crowing, “And now I must agree with you, Belle. She does!”

They both heard the second gasp at the other end of the line. “Oh…well I guess that answers that question!” she chuckled. “So, I’m assuming you’ve…”

But it was Ariel’s turn to shock them, a devilish look in her eye. “We have! Your husband’s been absolutely delightful and a complete gentleman. He’s been entertaining me all day. He wined me, he dined me, he romanced me. And he’s just fucked me senseless!”

Belle, having just taken a large slug of the hot drink, now sprayed the entire contents of her mouth out in shock, coughing furiously. Even Rumple’s jaw hung open!

“I wish you warned me before you said that - I’ve just spat hot chocolate all over the carpet!”

But the wicked mermaid wasn’t done. “And…you never told me that he’s the King of Cunnilingus!”
Belle was stunned at what she’d just heard! She had brought them together! She had given them permission to do this, with her blessing. This is what she’d wanted! But now they’d really gone through with it! Her husband and her girlfriend had just had sex, without her!

After the silence, and sensing there was something wrong at the other end of the line, Rumple called across, “Are you ok, Belle? Say something. Have we offended you?”

“What…no, of course not! I said so, didn’t I? I’m just a little surprised, now it’s actually happened! I’m fine. It’s just…well, to be honest, I wish I was there with you! Especially after what you’ve just told me…”

Rumple sniggered. “We wish you were here too, my dear! We’re both missing you. What are you doing now?”

“Well…I’m about to mop up hot chocolate from a bedroom carpet, I guess! I’m standing by the window, looking out at Florence Cathedral. It’s so beautiful, but I wish you were here with me. Both of you.”

“Two days, babe,” said her girlfriend. “Tell me what you’re wearing?”

Well that was a segue! “Er, some cotton yellow PJs. Why?”

“No reason - I thought you might be wearing that raunchy red number I bought you before we left Paris.”

“I love it, but I’d only wear that if you were here! But you’re not, so if I’m on my own I just want comfort. Boring, I know…”

“Pity. I thought that perhaps if you wore that, then tonight I’d wear the purple baby doll you bought me! Then…I could think about you. And fantasise about you. And you could think about me…”

Rumple listened, without saying a word, feeling invisible as the two women had clearly forgotten he was still there, hearing everything. However, the blatant suggestive flirting between his wife and her girlfriend was certainly having an effect. “I could do that,” said Belle. “How about midnight? I’ll send a message to you, and you send one to me!”

“Would you ladies like me to leave for a while? It seems a shame for me to be here, interrupting your romantic moment…”

There was a silence from the other end, until finally, “No Rumple. The two of you have connected today. Just hold her please? Hold onto each other and love each other, and make sure you both get back here early on Monday! And for god’s sake do the same for me when you get back! I need you. Both of you! Oh, and Rumple?”

"Yes, my dear?"

"Be a sweetheart and upgrade my room to a suite for the next two days, please? Preferably with a side room for Gideon? And cancel your own room!"

Ariel looked across at Rumple, who had a huge grin on his face. "I can do that, dearie! Leave it to me..."
Chapter Summary

Rumpelstiltskin undergoes his operation, leaving a worried belle and Ariel. Henry arrives back in New York to a family reception.

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone. My apologies for the delay in releasing this, due to a trip abroad and some unforeseen extra work needed in university. This is another of those fill-in chapters as we gear up for the royal wedding in Arendelle and then the big one in Storybrooke...

Thanks for those still reading. It's always appreciated. Let me know your thoughts. Love Fi xx

Chapter 62

Storybrooke – Sheriff’s Office

“Your’re serious? You’re offering me the Sheriff’s badge?” said Emma, incredulous.

“I am,” repeated Mayor Briar. “The sheriff and mayoral elections aren’t due for two years. Sheriff Morgan is leaving at the end of the month. He and his fiancée are going to live in Connecticut. He recommended you be offered the role. You’ve done it before, Emma, and you know the people here and how the system works. They respect you…”

“Hank’s leaving? I knew he was getting married, but I wasn’t expecting this. I seem to remember Mulan wanted the job, before you became mayor. Shouldn’t you be asking her?”

“You’re right, and I did. I also told her when I was elected, that I would happily resign, as and when she chose to take the job on, as I regard it as a conflict of interest. But she asked me to stay on, so I did.”

“She was right. Phil, you’ve done a great job here; everything’s a lot more streamlined since you took office, and you and Hank simplified all the administrative crap you inherited from Spencer. All the new IT and everything! You should be proud. I don’t think anyone would really object if Mulan became sheriff, while you’re still mayor…”

“Thanks, but I think Mu’s had a change of heart. She’s also enjoying being a mother and spending more time with Aurora and the children. Rory’s occupied with all the social services stuff and managing the old peoples’ home, so she said she was happy as deputy but doesn’t think a full-time role would give her enough time with the family…”

“I get that. I don’t know whether it’s because I’m getting older but, with five kids at home, it’s different! So, I’ll be honest, Mister Mayor, I’m not sure yet whether I can accept it. Not quite a full-
time role anyway. Perhaps part-time? I need to talk to Regina and Robin first. Can you wait a few days?"

“Of course. Give me your answer by Friday week, and if you don’t want it, I’ll understand. Hank’s got a few weeks left yet, but he said he’ll stay on for a little longer if need be. If you accept, I’d want you to take on the added responsibilities after your wedding and honeymoon. We’re looking forward to it!”

“Good. And once again, don’t go rushing to resign! A lot of people like you here and trust you, Phil. I wish Regina and I could’ve said the same when we left office..!”

“Water under the bridge, Emma. Everyone knew you were in a very bad place then; but it’s all come right now, hasn’t it? You’re finally getting your happy ending. Plus, it’ll be nice not being the only thruple in Storybrooke. Perhaps a few less people looking at us, as though we’re odd, or deviants?"

“I must admit, when I first watched Mulan walk down the aisle to the pair of you, I thought it was a bit weird. It took me a while to understand. And now, look at me? I’m about to have a wife and a husband all of my own!”

“Double the love, Emma, double the love! You do all seem very happy, though, when I’ve seen the three of you together. When Rory and I married Mu, I got to hear about all the crass comments about me just wanting two women in my bed, or being sex-obsessed. All that kind of stuff. Rory got some ridiculous comments from the older folk, saying she was just a lesbian who just didn’t want to lose her kid in a divorce. Apparently that makes me something called a 'beard'! But it’s all died off now...”

“Yeah, we got a little bit of that, but we’re good. To be honest, I’ve never been happier. I’d like Henry home more often, though. Apart from Spencer trying to kill us both last year, it’s all been too peaceful. I’m just waiting for the next magical monster or demon to invade...”

“Don’t go tempting fate!” he chuckled, “We’re good now. And when anything does come, we’ve got even more magical help. Not just your family, but Robin and some of Merlin’s too. Annabelle’s here sort of permanently, and I’m told by the Sorcerer himself that his son, young Charles, when he’s around, is particularly good in a scrap, if need be?”

“Yeah, I heard that, too. Apparently, Charlie Sage has dark magic, but it’s under control, thanks to his dad. You know we’re going to be loosely related, don’t you? Charlie’s engaged to Robin’s sister...”

“So, let’s face it, most baddies aren’t going to want to get on the wrong side of your family now, are they? Plus, you’ve got young Henry! Quite the powerful magician too, Merlin tells me. How is he doing, by the way?”

“He’s been travelling across Europe for the last six weeks, so apart from video calls, we haven’t seen him for ages! Regina’s getting desperate, so we’re all going up and collecting him from the airport Tuesday, and staying there for a few days. I’ll let you know about the sheriff job after that, if it’s OK with you?”

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*The following Monday – Rome Airport*

After everyone returned to Rome on Friday night, for their last two full days of their long trip, Ariel, Belle and Rumple had been inseparable. After upgrading to a suite, and after leaving Henry
following dinner, the trio had shared a bed, and themselves, repeatedly. There was a shift in their relationship, that all three recognised.

With Gideon in a carrier, they’d finally got to see Vatican City and the Sistine Chapel, the Coliseum and numerous lesser-known sites. Henry couldn’t help but notice a change in all three of them, and the synergy between his grandfather and both women. Once, when he went to order up pancakes from a street vendor, he turned his head back, to ask Belle whether she wanted chocolate sauce, when he saw it. Rumple, his son strapped to his back, had turned his head to receive a kiss on the lips from Ariel…which was definitely more than chaste, without being lewd! Belle was attached to the other woman’s side, and seemed to be smiling as she looked at them. Interesting! Remembering the incident with the two pairs of panties in his grandfather’s Edinburgh hotel room, it only confirmed his suspicions.

Would he say anything? No. Would he tell his mothers? No. It was his grandfather’s business, and he seemed happier than he’d ever seen him before. He couldn’t ruin that!

And so, two days later, the four adults and toddler gathered at Leonardo da Vinci Airport. Henry’s flight to New York was due to leave a couple of hours after the rest of them travelled to London. So, as he stood at the departure gate, he felt rather sad that their glorious vacation had finally come to an end. He hugged both women, kissing their cheeks, before finally turning to Rumple. A good foot taller than his grandfather, he surprised Rumple by pulling him in to a tight hug. “Grandpa, I will never be able to thank you enough for this trip! For being with me for six weeks. I’ve really enjoyed it, but more importantly, I got to spend the time with you!” he almost croaked the last words.

Rumple, a little overcome by the young man’s reaction, felt his own eyes redden. “You are more than welcome, my boy. I’ve enjoyed it even more than you. Getting to know my Bae’s boy properly has meant…so much to me. We will definitely do something like this again, Henry!”

“I’d like that. Now, you get that hospital to fix your leg properly, even if it takes a while? If it drags on, I’m coming out to see you. No arguments! I want you well, grandpa, and I don’t care where you decide to live in the end, I’ll come!”

“Thank you, my boy. I’m sure all will be well…”

As they separated, Henry saw that Belle and Ariel had moved nearer to check-in, now out of hearing range. So, he leaned, whispering. “And grandpa? I for one, think the three of you would make an excellent ‘thruple’! Whatever you all decide, I support you!”

Rumple’s eyes bulged in surprise, not sure how to reply. He knows!

“Er…thank you, Henry! That’s good to know!”

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Tuesday morning – JFK Airport, New York

“Henry!” screamed Honour, the first to spot her older brother walk through the arrivals entrance. The dark-blonde girl jumped between the rails, rushing up to him as he pushed his trolley out from the doors.

“Hi Honnie!” he stopped, lifting her into his arms as the rest of the group looked on, laughing but concerned she wouldn’t get squished by the other arriving passengers coming up behind him.

“Honour, give him a chance to get out of there, first?” yelled Regina. Henry kissed the girl’s cheek
before placing her on top of the large trolley full of bags. “You sit there, Hon, and let’s get out of the way first!”

Stopping in a safe spot, as Robin moved to take the heavy trolley, lifting Honour down, Margot immediately did the same, hugging her brother tightly. “We really missed you, Henny!”

“I missed you too, Marge, but I’m back now! We’re going to spend some time together, yeah?”

Next up were his mothers. Long practised in their little ritual, Robin couldn’t help but smirk when Regina and Emma moved forward together, either side of their son’s chest, putting an arm behind each other’s back to tighten the space, before pulling him into their conjoined hug and placing their heads on either side of his, kissing his now bearded cheeks in unison. “You’ve no idea how much we’ve missed you!” whispered Regina. “Yeah, big, hairy man! Perhaps not so long next time?” added Emma.

Henry chuckled, slightly embarrassed by all the fuss. “I’ve missed you too, mums - a lot!” he gave them both a kiss on the cheek. As they parted, Roland stepped up. “Hiya, fella!” he said, offering an open hand to the older brother, who clasped it, twisting their thumbs around the other’s before withdrawing them and pushing them together again in some sort of mock-punch teen ritual, making the others chuckle. “So, what’s with the grizzly bear look? Ran out of cash for a decent razor?”

“Yeah, something like that,” he laughed. “But it works on girls, Ro!” That earned a disapproving look from Regina. “Henry, I hope you’ve been behaving yourself?” She knew he was already popular with girls, but she didn’t like to think of him as promiscuous.

“Of course, mum. You know me,” before she could give a suitable response, he saw Robin. “Hi Robin! Still going to marry these two then? Once they get the dresses, there’s no turning back!” Emma gave him a mock-slap on his arm as they released him. Robin ignored the question, instead bringing him into a man-hug, shoulders in and with a hefty slap on the back. “The face-fungus seems to suit you, young man - though there’s a bit of food I see trapped in there!”

“Oh hell, there isn’t is there?” he said, feeling through his beard “I wondered why she wouldn’t take my number! I just thought she was…” he looked at the smirking man. “Wait…you’re kidding, right?”

“Guilty. Welcome back, Henry,” said the former outlaw. Emma saw the embarrassed look from her boy, reminding her so much of his father!

London

Belle and Ariel stood away from the bed, Ariel holding Gideon in his sling as they looked on, the nurses preparing Rumple for the operating theatre. They’d arrived at the small private London hospital three hours earlier, and watched as the now nervous man moved back onto the bed. Within minutes a bearded, bookish looking young man and woman, looking officious and in white coats, walked in, the man moving over to shake Rumple’s hand.

“Welcome back, Mr. Gold, I hope you had a good trip? I remember you said you would be travelling quite a bit since we last spoke. This is our primary orthopaedic surgeon at the Lister, Professor Grant, who will take the lead on your operation.”

The woman, who looked to be only in her late thirties, but with an immensely confident demeanour, stepped forward. “Emilia Grant,” she said, taking the Dark One’s hand in greeting. “I’m delighted
to meet you, Mister Gold. Sir Merlin Sage spoke to me at great length about you! He was originally my tutor at medical college, and after I qualified. I spoke to him last week, and he asked me to take particularly good care of you! Mr. Moseley here will be assisting…”

“I thought Mr. Moseley would be the surgeon?” Rumple wasn’t sexist, just…nervous.

The white bearded surgeon smiled. “I can assure you, Mr. Gold, I will be in theatre with you. But Professor Grant is even more experienced than I am in this procedure. I did discuss this with Professor Sage and he thought it a good idea too! You’re getting two surgeons for the price of one, and I can assure you, you’re in extremely good hands.”

Those words reminded Rumple of the other words he’d written on that paper over a year ago. Trust Merlin. “Very well, I’m sure that’s in order. How long will I be unconscious?”

“Around two hours, we hope, but perhaps more if there are any complications. As you know, we’re performing three procedures on the lower leg and ankle. The operation itself will take us about an hour and a half, the rest will be recovery from the anaesthetics. Is there anything you would like to discuss before we proceed?” the woman seemed very succinct and to-the-point, qualities Rumple always admired. “No, thank you. Perhaps a few minutes with my wife and our friend?”

“Of course. If you’ll excuse us?” The surgeons left without further ado, leaving just the three of them, with Gideon fast asleep as Ariel transferred him into the buggy. Belle seemed the most anxious. Of all the years she’d known him, Rumple was never fully out of control, apart from that brief week when the darkness passed from him into Emma. And now here he was, with no magic available, about to be knocked out, while someone operated on him. Would he even wake up again?

Seeing her tension, he whispered, “Belle, please come over here?” As she did, he took her hand. “It’ll all be fine, I’m sure. Just…just in case, for any reason, I don’t recover…”

“No, please, let me finish. It’s unlikely but…if something goes wrong, I’ve left a short letter for you both back at the hotel, and one for Henry. Please see he gets them. I’d rather you didn’t read them unless, well, unless it becomes necessary…”

The full force of what he’d said hit her. She’d always regarded him as immortal, but in a land without magic?

“Ariel, please take good care of her? And promise to look after my son? Let him know that, despite all my many failings, I loved…love him so very much…”

Even the mermaid choked at that. This curious, remarkable man who had recently come to mean so much to her. “I promise!”

Moments later, one of the theatre staff came in with Moseley, a small tray in his hand. “This injection will just put you to sleep before we take you through and give you the other anaesthetics, so you go deeper. Mr. Gold, are you ready?”

“One moment, please?” said Belle, stepping to the other side of the surgeon. She leaned over the bed, to place a soft kiss on Rumple’s lips, whispering, “I’ll be waiting here. Sleep well!” As Moseley watched her, a smile on his face, he was more than surprised when she stepped back, her position immediately taken by the other woman, the redhead, who now leaned down to give an equally affectionate kiss on his lips. “We both will! See you shortly, Angus!”

“Now then, Mister Gold. I’ll administer the injection now. If you’d like to slowly count backwards
from twenty? Let’s do it together. Twenty…nineteen…eighteen…seventeen…”

Rumple’s slid gently into unconsciousness before the count even reached ten, leaving a nervous, sobbing Belle in Ariel’s arms.

“He’ll be all right, babe. You’ll see!” she whispered, not altogether sure, herself.

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*The Regency Hotel, New York – five hours later*

The large family sat in their mothers’ hotel suite, surrounded by a huge pile of paper from opened presents. Henry had certainly been generous! Margot had received a junior crossbow and target kit, while Honour opened a children’s digital camera. A second present for each girl revealed a pink mermaid’s tail blanket for lounging and sleeping in, an idea he had after spending time with Ariel. Emma and Regina received a pack containing two leather cell phone cases, designer sunglasses, and perfumes to match their individual tastes. Roland opened a small drone and a walkie talkie set. The babies were given mobiles and luminous stars for their bedroom.

“Thank you, Henry! It’s very generous of you. Roland, girls, say thank you to your brother?” the others yelled their thanks, the girls each giving him a kiss on his cheek. “Henry, doesn’t my papa get a present too?” asked Honour. Robin didn’t seem bothered in the least, but he was touched at his little girl’s thought.

“Oh, thanks for reminding me, Hon! Of course, he does, he’s family, isn’t he?” *that made Emma and Regina smile, knowing he’d fully accepted their forthcoming marriage*. The Author walked over to one of the larger cases, rummaged around and retrieved a cardboard box. “Sorry Robin, I almost forgot. I had to pack yours separately to go in the hold of the plane.”

“Why thank you, Henry; I wasn’t expecting anything!” he opened the security sealed edge, which contained some sort of leather pouch. Opening it, he found, “A knife? Why thank you, I…”

“It’s a Honkai hunting and throwing knife. For some reason you can’t buy them in the USA, but it’s legal to bring one in, I checked. It’s some sort of carbon and steel blade. Really strong and doesn’t ever need sharpening, but it’s perfectly balanced. I saw how much time you practise throwing your short sword, so I thought…”

The former outlaw had already removed the blade it from its leather scabbard, now balancing it perfectly on the edge of his finger “It’s perfect Henry! It’s a very kind thought.”

Emma saw the three large cases. “Henry, you only went away with that big Bergen! What’s with all the cases?”

“I did a lot of clothes shopping and stuff. Also, quite a bit of food I fell in love with and can’t get here. And cheese, mum! Real cheese that tastes of something! One of the cases is for Sofia. I met her older sister in Strasbourg, and she asked me to bring some things back. I didn’t realise just how much stuff!”

“Is Sofia your girlfriend, Henry?” asked Margot, curious.

“She’s my flatmate, Marge. And a good friend.” He said, deflecting the question.

“I’ve heard you mention this ‘Sofia’ girl a few times, Henry. Will we have a chance to meet her?” *Regina was always concerned when she heard about any women in his life.*
“Maybe when we drop this stuff off in Cambridge. But no ganging up on her, alright? I know what you mums are like…” he gave Robin a knowing look. The older man slowly nodding in agreement.

“Right then, Swan-Mills family!” Robin called them to order. “What say we let this young man change, have a nap, if he needs one, and freshen up? Your mums here have their fittings at three o’clock, so let’s leave them be. Who’s for ice-cream?”


“Robin, don’t go ruining their appetites! We’re all having dinner tonight.” cautioned Regina.

“Don’t worry about that. Gina, you know Roland, the girls and I can manage the babies, until we meet Maria this afternoon? As Henry’s already going with you, why don’t you both stay here with him? I’m banished anyway, so I’ll see you after the fitting!”

“Excellent idea, fiancé of mine,” Emma gave him a kiss on the cheek. “Henry, you go take a shower and a snooze. Your mum and I will be here waiting for you…”

“Robin, you do know what that means, don’t you?” Henry groaned, looking at his mothers. “These two will be giving me the Spanish Inquisition about my love life, and I’ll be trapped! You sure you don’t need help?” his eyes pleaded, making Robin chuckle loudly.

“No, my boy, you can’t get out of it that easily! Your mums have been deprived of you for two months now. They need this!”

“We are still here, you know?” scowled the older woman.

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Half an hour after the others left, Henry had showered and now lay, dressed, on the top of his bed, trying to get a short nap before going shopping with his mothers. After closing his eyes, Regina, sitting on a nearby couch, stared lovingly at the now fully grown, tanned, bearded man that was her son. She whispered to Emma, “Just look at the size of him? I can’t believe it’s been twenty-one years since I brought him back from here, screaming at me! And now, he’s all grown up. Doesn’t really need us any more…” a sadness to her voice.

Emma was about to say something consoling, when Henry, clearly not as asleep as they thought, breathed in his soft, deep voice, “Don’t be silly, mum - I may be more independent these days, but I will always need you both! And I’m not too old for a hug, either. So, come over here and lie with me?” Grinning like a Cheshire cat, Regina took her shoes off, quickly followed by Emma, to gratefully climb onto the bed, laying either side of their son, wresting their heads on the left and right side of his broad chest. He brought his long arms around their shoulders and hugged them to him, ready for his nap. His blonde mother looked contentedly into her wife’s eyes, just happy to have some time alone with their boy.

“This is nice,” he said as they both snuggled in. “So, it’s really all happening then? Robin Hood is really going to be my stepdad?”

“Yeah, Hen, it is, and he is,” said Emma. “If you’d asked me that two years ago, I would have said you were mad! But now? You still OK about this?”

“Very OK. He’s a great guy and a very good dad. You all fit well together. You know, I’m sorry I don’t tell you enough but - I’m very proud you’re my mums!” Regina felt her heart swell with pride. And with that, all three of them drifted off into a light sleep.
Two hours later, Henry found himself inside the bridal shop’s parlour, a glass of champagne in his hand, watching a very tall, thin woman, boss and fuss around her staff, as both mothers tried on their adjusted dresses behind the thick curtains. The woman, who Regina greeted as Madame Valerie, looked down her nose at him, as he sat thumbing through a catalogue. *This one’s definitely not got kids!* He thought. One of her assistants, a young brunette, had already flirted with him, and he was just at the point of introducing himself properly, and perhaps getting her number, when Emma stepped out from behind her curtain, followed by a girl holding up the back of her skirt. His eyes goggled in surprise. She looked at least three inches taller as she walked forward nervously, the white silk clinging to her slim waist, the train flowing gently behind. He didn’t know much about wedding dresses, but he knew she looked stunning. “Ma, you look wonderful!”

She smiled back. “You’re sure? You don’t think the top half makes my bust look too big?” *she couldn’t quite believe she was asking her grown up son for fashion advice.*

“It’s perfect, ma. I’ve never seen you look so good!” he offered.

“Well you should see how your other mum looks! Gina - you ready to come out here?” she called back. Slowly, the curtains parted, and Regina herself walked through towards them, a girl carrying her train behind.

“Hell, you look awesome too, mum. Both of you!” And he was right, the brunette did look ridiculously elegant. She stepped slowly forward to take Emma’s hand as they now stood, side-by-side, in their wedding dresses, for their son’s opinion. “Absolutely fantastic! I like the veil, mum. But…hold on, you’re both wearing the same style? Not something different?”

Regina gave a cautious grin. “Yes Henry,” she looked lovingly at her wife. “Believe it or not, the idea came from something your grandmother said when we were here last. Your mother and I are already a married couple, after all, so we thought it would be nice to present ourselves to Robin, as that couple!”

“There’s that - and the fact we both wanted to wear this particular dress!” added Emma, with a smirk.

“Well, I’ve always thought you were both beautiful, but this is something else! Robin’s going to be completely blown away!”

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Half an hour later, having paid and arranged delivery of the dresses a week before the wedding, Madame Valerie had insisted they share a last glass of champagne with her. Henry had already quaffed several glasses while he’d been waiting, spending his time flirting with the assistants. He’d insisted the young girls join them for the drink, much to the owner’s disdain. Regina was surprised but didn’t object, as they toasted their health.

One of the girls, a slim brunette called Kim, clinked glasses with Henry, before asking, “Sorry…but I couldn’t help overhearing what you said earlier. These are your mums, they’re already married, to each other, and soon they’re both going to be getting married to the same guy?”

Henry chuckled. “Yeah, something like that!”

“A polyamorous wedding? I’ve heard of them, but never seen one before. Sounds cool! Good luck to you both. Whoever he is, is a very lucky man!” she raised her glass to them. “Cheers to your
It was the first time their unusual relationship had ever been aired in front of anyone outside Storybrooke, and the young girl’s easy acceptance of it warmed Regina’s heart. “Thank you, dear. That’s kind of you to say. I hope more people come to accept us, as easily as you do!” she raised a glass to the girl.

Madame Valerie had remained silent, before raising a glass to toast the women. The woman already told them she had a wife during their first visit, but it was obvious to Emma that she was no fan of the male of the species. "Hmm. Yes, I must agree with Connie! Your future husband must indeed be an unusual man, to have you both as his brides!"

“Actually,” said Emma, placing her empty glass on the table and giving her a steely stare. “He is. Very unusual. You know, two years ago, I couldn’t stand him! Now, I can’t stand being away from him for too long! And I’m more certain than ever that we’re doing the right thing.” She winked at her wife.

“As am I,” added Regina. “Robin’s our thief. He stole our hearts…”

“A thief called Robin?” sighed Connie. “You make him sound like Robin Hood!”

The women shared a smile, as Henry rolled his eyes. “Yes, I do, don’t I?” said Regina.

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Enjoying their first longer break with Henry since he started at Harvard, Emma and Regina each took an arm and led him out to get his own wedding attire. “I’m glad Rob took the wagon; I’m not sure I’m safe driving now!” said Emma. “Now come on kid…sorry, Henry…let’s get you kitted out!”

“Actually ma, I was just thinking. I don’t know the stores here, but my friend Sofia’s grannie runs a store, or two, in Boston. They’ve got their own tailors there. She could…”

“You mean Gabriella Weiss, your flatmate’s grandmother?” Regina remembered him telling her about Rump’s possible love interest when the bookworm found a new girlfriend. “Henry, what an excellent idea! Let’s get your morning suit in Boston. Perhaps persuade Robin to get his and Roland’s there, too!”

Henry knew his older mother’s keenness had more to do with meeting the Dark One’s love interest, than him buying a suit for the wedding!

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“Good afternoon, Mister Gold. How are you feeling?” Rumple slowly opened his eyes to see a young chestnut-haired nurse’s face slowly come into focus.

“Dry - may I have some water, please?” he croaked.

“That’s due to the tube that was down your throat, which I just removed. There’s nothing to worry about; the surgery’s gone very well. Professor Grant just needed to carry out some more remedial surgery on the ankle, so you were under a little longer than anticipated. I’ve paged her, so I’m sure she’ll explain it all shortly. Now, I’ll give you a few sips of water, but best not to take large gulps until the anaesthetic wears off, otherwise you’ll just feel sick!”

“Granted. How long was I asleep, nurse? And Belle, Ariel and my son? Where are they?”
“You’ve been down just over four hours. The two ladies who were with you earlier? They just went off to get coffee. They’ve been in the waiting room the whole time you were in surgery. I’ll get someone to pop down for them. You just rest up!” As she removed several monitors from his chest and arm, the lead surgeon walked through the door.

“Hello, Mister Gold, back with us I see?” After exchanging pleasantries, she got straight down to business. “We’ve repaired the damage to the Talus and Calcaneus bones in your ankle, but the fibula in the lower part of your leg needed strengthening too - you’ve clearly been walking on this damaged limb for quite some time. Quite extraordinary for a man in his mid-fifties!” Well, he could hardly put three hundred and fifty years old on the forms now, could he? “You must have been in a lot of pain? But everything went well. We’ve straightened the bones and repaired damaged tissue. I expect that plaster off within about a week, you walking on crutches a week after that and, all being well, you walking normally within a month. Any questions?”

After she left, Rumple returned to a light doze, eventually being woken by an even younger nurse as she checked over the needle in his arm and the connecting tube leading to a pale translucent bag of god-knows-what. He closed his eyes to go back to sleep, when a soft pair of lips pressed down on his own. Opening his eyes, he discovered Belle immediately above him, sporting a worried smile.

“Hello, my love!” she whispered down at him. “I was worried you’d never wake up. Feeling better?”

“I am now you’re here,” he croaked. “Though another one of those kisses wouldn’t go amiss!”

The nurse looked down at them with a smile, though that changed into a surprised look when a red-haired young woman, pushing a sleeping child in a buggy, joined the other woman’s side, taking her hand and interlocking their fingers, before leaning over the patient, whispering something and delivering her own full kiss to his lips.

“Glad you’re back with us, Angus! Belle and I have been a bag of nerves since they put you to sleep. They had to send us away, eventually! We went walking in the park…”

Rumple gave them a tired smile. “You’re both a welcome sight for very sore eyes. However, I wonder if I may perhaps ask two small favours?” Ariel and Belle nodded.

“The two, I hope unopened, letters which I left for Henry and yourselves? Could you kindly bring them to me now I am…returned? Also, could you bring me my phone? I need to text my grandson…”

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After dropping all his bags at the Cambridge flat he shared with Sofia, Henry had introduced all his family to her, along with their friend Veronica, an English post-graduate studying in the Harvard Medical faculty, who had stayed over to help Sofia paint the apartment before Henry’s return. Explaining where the family was heading next, the two flatmates had offered to help mind the girls. Regina, seeing the two tall, elegant young women were clearly close friends of Henry, was desperate to ask questions, but Emma had railroaded her out of the place before they could be made uncomfortable. Sofia phoned through to her grandmother, who had been advised they were coming to the store, so she set up a little welcoming party.

“Henry, it’s lovely to see you again!” said the store owner, pulling him into a hug. “And you’ve brought your family this time? How delightful.”

“Hi Gabbie! Yes, lovely to see you too. These are my mums, Emma and Regina…” he introduced
them. Gabrielle shook their hands firmly in greeting.

“It’s a pleasure,” said Regina, itching to talk to the Dark One’s love interest. “Henry tells me you’ve already met one of his grandfathers?” She studied the flawlessly dressed older woman. Clearly bespoke tailored clothing, grey hair pinned up into a delicate chignon. The woman exuded effortless grace.

“Why yes. We haven’t known each other long, but Angus Gold is now a very dear friend to me! I’m hoping he’ll visit when he returns from London. Henry, his foot operation’s today, is it not?”

“Yeah. I’m expecting a text from him once he’s out. He sends you his love…”

“Such a delightful man…” she sighed. “Still, Henry, let’s not shilly-shally. I’ve asked Maurice, our Head Tailor, to make himself available and he’s already expecting you on the fourth floor. You said someone else was also wanting to be fitted?”

“That’ll be me!” said Robin, stepping forward from the back of the group. “Madame Weiss? Robin of Locksley, at your service!” he gently lifting the woman’s hand, to place a feather-light kiss on the back, accompanied by a slightly flirtatious grin, bringing his dimples into action, causing an immediate melting on the part of the older woman. Henry couldn’t hold back a snigger, as he saw his mothers both roll their eyes, almost as one, at the display. Typical bloody Locksley! thought Emma, with a chuckle of her own.

“And my son Roland needs a wedding suit too! Rollie, come over here and meet this lovely lady?”

Roland had been trained for this. Half of the adult women in Storybrooke had told the twelve-year-old that his dimples were his best feature, and seeing how his father used them to make women smile, he decided to give this older lady both barrels of charm too.

“Oh my - what a handsome father and son you make! Hello Roland, I can see you three are going to be keeping my team rather busy this afternoon. Ladies, why don’t we retire to the coffee lounge while the boys do their thing? Your girls will be in good hands with Sofia and Veronica, so we big girls can have a gossip…” They were interrupted by Henry’s cell phone ringing as a new text arrived. Pulling it out he saw the message:

Grandpa Gold:    I woke up! Henry, my boy, you still have a grandfather…

Henry smiled at the news, immediately replying:

Henry S-M:    Just as well, I need you around for a long time yet! I’m with Gabriella. She sends her love and is asking after you, hoping you come to see her when you’re well. After the trip with Belle and Ariel I wasn’t sure what to tell her?

Not expecting a quick reply, as he was about to pocket the phone, when it beeped again:

Grandpa Gold:    Send her my love back and tell her I should be walking in a month and I will come visit you all as soon as I can. Also, please tell her ‘Medici is
He pocketed the phone. “That was a message from my grandpa Gold, Gabbie. He agreed to let me know as soon as he was awake from the operation and ok. It went well, and he says he’ll be coming to see you when he flies back.” He told the woman, who broke into a broad smile at the news. “Oh, and another thing. Apparently, he wanted you to know that ‘Medici is alive, well and forgives?’”

At the last six words, Gabriella face morphed into one of blessed relief, her eyes welling up with tears. “Oh, thank god!” he sobbed. That is very good news indeed!” leaving everyone around her more than confused. What was that all about?
A Wedding in Arendelle

Chapter Summary

With two weeks to go before their own wedding, the family gather in Arendelle for Elsa and Little John's own nuptials. A few surprises await...

Chapter 63

Arendelle, Norway – Two weeks later

“Fucking hell!” Emma whispered to Robin, as they surveyed the sheer scale of the colossal ballroom where the wedding reception was to be held. “Look at the size of this thing?”

It was a truly amazing sight. Vast ice arches, towering well over two hundred feet high, supported the massive vaulted ceilings, containing hundreds of thousands of inlaid diamond crystal-like icicles. The effect was stupendous. “It’s magnificent,” agreed Robin. “John told me Elsa got the idea after watching that Disney film about her and Anna.”

“Frozen? Yeah, I can see that. Still, it’s bloody clever. I’d forgotten how powerful her ice magic really is! I mean, Sherwood is impressive, but this?” she nudged him, smirking and knowing how he’d react.

“Thanks for your vote of confidence in your fiancé, my beloved! Need I remind you that Merlin, and I, put in ‘tardis’ technology into the clinic AND the community centre? And created a permanent magic-blocking zone! May not be made of ice but it’s still ‘bloody clever’, eh?” he nudged her back.

“Yes, all right. I guess in the magical cock-waving department, you’re very impressive!” she conceded.

He bent closer to her ear, whispering, “And my cock isn’t made of ice…as well you know!”

She snorted, slapping his arm and laughing, “Shurrup, someone might hear you!” she pulled him closer. “Anyway, where’s Gina gone? She was with Rowland a minute ago…”

“She’s glad-handing some royal stiffs. I saw her go off with Anastasia, Will’s wife, a minute ago.”

“Glad-handing royal stiffs? I think the term you’re looking for, Mr. Locksley, is ‘greeting royal guests’?” She loved how Robin, despite his noble background, was very much one of the common people, and adored by them for it. “And may I remind you that technically, in two weeks’ time, you’ll be ‘King’ Robin, yourself?”

“And how often do you refer to yourself as Queen Emma, my love? Never. Only in this silly pampered world.”

“Now don’t go all silly and political on us now. We’re doing this for Gina, and my parents…and the bride and groom. So, I need you to promise to be on your best behaviour!” she placed a small kiss on his cheek.

“Hmmph,” he groused, “well at least I get to take the piss out of Little John after the ceremony. I
trust you’ve been practicing your curtseys?”

“Oddly enough, I have! Mum’s been giving me lessons in deportment, which basically means walking properly in a corset tight enough to cut off my blood supply! Dad’s been covering social etiquette. So, how to address a duchess, use a knife and fork, and curtsey without farting!” she sarked.

“They’ll make a lady of you yet!” he returned, kissing her lips. “Though I prefer the original version. Are you going out with Elsa tonight?”

“Yeah, I’m under orders, just like you! I am Chief Bridesmaid, after all. Elsa’s having a girl’s night out somewhere around here; and it’s my job to get her back safe and sound, make sure she doesn’t shag anyone, doesn’t get too pissed and gets a decent night’s sleep in time for the wedding. To use one of your sillier expressions, which Henry seems to have adopted, if she winds up with a hangover, or late for the wedding, John will have my ‘guts for garters!’”

“A fine English term! I’m supposed to do the same for John. He likes his ale, does that one, and although he has a bottomless pit for a stomach, he seems to hold it well, so it shouldn’t be a problem. Still, it must be nice for you to have some time with Elsa again? I know you were close…”

Had anyone else said that to her, Emma would have merely acknowledged their friendship, forged in adversity when the royal queen had come to Storybrooke in search of her sister. However, knowing Robin had scanned her entire mind nearly two years ago, she knew he’d seen something more between them. “Um, yeah, we were. I know what you saw, Rob, when you scanned me. But did you ever tell Gina about that?”

“Why would I? It’s your business, Emma. You were single at the time.”

“Thanks. But I will tell her sometime, though. She has a right to know. One day.”

“Well, when that day comes, perhaps you should ask her about the dragon? Because, if my suspicions are correct, she probably had a similar experience with her…”

Emma’s eyes widened as she considered his words. She’d always felt there was a certain chemistry between Regina and Maleficent, on the rare occasions they met these days, but had never sought to question her on it. “You think so? Well, I…” but she was interrupted by more guests arriving, and a cheer ringing out from a small group as a certain large man entered the room, causing Robin to smile.

“John! How are you, you big lump?” he just about managed, before the gentle giant swooped him up in yet another of his bone-crushing hugs. Emma chuckled at the sight of her lover being so easily manhandled and lifted by his best and oldest friend.

“Better for seein’ you Locksley, you old git!” he boomed, dropping the man down and doing the same thing to Emma, producing a “Woah!” from the Saviour as he lifted her up like a feather.

“Em! Is this old crook looking after ye? Nice of you to come to this little gaff. Bit understated, if you ask me! Surprising what Elsa can do with a bit of cold water, innit?” he joked.

“Put me down, you silly sod!” she giggled, kissing the cheek of the man she and Regina regarded as a big brother. “You’re not supposed to go around ‘picking up girls' when you’re about to get married!”

“Sorry, love, Just pleased to see you all! Young Roland’s shooting up way too fast, and your Honnie’s growing into a real beauty, like her mums. Luckily, she and Margot don’t take after their father and his ugly mug, do they?” After a few minutes of verbal sparring, the friends were joined by
Queen Elsa, walking toward them arms linked with Will’s wife Anastasia, the renamed White Queen.

“Is this man bothering you, Emma? I can have the guards remove him, if you wish?” she said, a Cheshire Cat grin on her face as she winked at her fiancé.

“Elsa!” yelled Emma, delighted to see her friend, before the two blondes wrapped each other in a hug. “It’s been too long!” said the queen. Emma kissed the other woman’s cheek and Elsa immediately did the same, adding a “God, I’ve missed you!” in almost a whisper. They stayed holding each other for a moment, before realising their respective lovers were looking at them. “Me too!” said Emma. It was a happy reunion, though from across the room, a certain former queen eyed her wife’s actions with a hint of concern.

As the afternoon wore on, various new guests arrived to greet the soon-to-be married royal couple. The biggest cheer went out for the arrival of the queen’s sister, Princess Anna, and her husband Prince Kristoff, accompanied by their young son Antony. Emma watched as Kristoff quickly hugged his old friends Snow and Charming, apologising for having to leave them for an hour or two, before heading out of the room with their son.

But what happened next did surprise the Saviour. Princess Anna stepped in front of David, saying something in greeting which she couldn't hear, before placing a brief kiss, not on his cheek but on his lips, to which he responded in kind! Odd. Did dad have something with her in the past? Emma remembered him telling her stories of when he was a shepherd, and the young princess having introduced him to sword skills. But what really surprised her, was the fact that their kiss happened directly in front of her mother, who didn’t seem in the least bit concerned. In fact, as Anna and her father parted, his place was now taken by her mother, Snow White, who also now enveloped the princess in a happy hug, before Anna and her mother shared a kiss on the lips, too! Interesting! Emma remembered how, just over two months ago, Snow had got angry with her and Regina in New York and told that she was not naïve and innocent, that she’d had not only a lesbian experience, but a threesome too! Could Anna have been the other woman? They did seem very close.

She decided to keep the thought to herself. For the moment.

The next surprise of the evening was the arrival of the Sorcerer, although the woman on Merlin’s arm wasn’t one of his daughters, it was…

“Mal? Whatever are you doing here?” she heard Regina call from a side of the vast room, walking quickly towards the odd couple. “I thought you’d left these realms?”

“And hello to you too, Kitten!” purred the tall, elegant blonde, immaculately dressed in Chanel. Regina winced, hating when she called her by that pet name whenever they met. “I was captured by the Black Queen’s forces and…well, killed to be precise!”

Regina was aghast. “But…you’re immortal! You can’t die. Can you?”

“It seems I can, apparently, though not perpetually! However, my man here discovered where my ashes were held and…well, brought me back!” The normally steely-eyed dragon looked at Merlin with nothing short of adoration. “And then that’s when I discovered who he also was…”

“You’re not making any sense. What do you mean, who he ‘was’?”

“Merlin is Lilith’s father, Regina.” That brought a gasp from everyone who heard it.

“I don’t understand. I remember you once told me her father was another dragon called Draco?” As she spoke, Maleficent’s daughter appeared from somewhere behind Merlin, stepping forward to take
his hand.

“I was indeed in dragon form, Regina.” the Sorcerer answered on her behalf. “It was a very long time ago, and we were both single and, frankly, a little impetuous and naïve.” He winked at Maleficent, who now shared a throaty laugh with him, looking almost coquettish. “I’m afraid we only knew each other by different names. In our dragon form, I was Draco and she was Scylla. I never knew her as Maleficent, and I wasn’t even aware she’d fallen pregnant when we parted, till I met her by chance, after a cask of her ashes were retrieved from one of Fiona’s deepest caves. And now? My Scylla is not only returned to me, but I discovered I also have another beautiful daughter. My Lilith here…”

Lily appeared almost bashful, as she was introduced to the group, her parents coming either side of her.

“Well…that’s just wonderful, Mal - and for you too, Lilith!”

Merlin smiled lovingly at his daughter. “And now I’m looking forward to introducing her to her brother and sisters, starting with Anna and Rosie, who should be arriving with Killian anytime…”

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It took a while for things to settle, before Emma finally had a chance to speak to Lily, her old friend from the Land Without Magic. “So…it turns out not only is your mother the ‘Mistress of All Evil’, as she says, but your dad’s the greatest sorcerer who ever lived? That’s quite the heritage, Lils!”

“I know, right? I still can’t get my head around it. I stayed away because of all the dark magic crap surrounding me, but he says he can help me control it, like he had to do with my…brother! God, even saying that seems unbelievable!”

“Well if anyone can, Merlin can, right? I’ve met his children and they’re lovely. Looks like you and your mum are on your way to your own happy ending…”

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As evening came, everyone assembled for the pre-wedding formal ball and dinner. Emma marvelled at how well it had been organised, with small assigned name cards set on large tables, each table sitting eight or ten guests, with a top table for the imminent bride and groom and honoured guests. As she looked for their names on charts in the entrance, Emma was relieved to see her family would all be together on one table of seven (the babies with a childminder), not too far from the top table.

Margot and Honour looked on with wonder at all the elegantly dressed men and women coming in. Margot had already made friends with a young blonde girl at a nearby table and Honour seemed to be chatting with a slightly older boy. She chuckled to herself at the site of Roland flirting easily with an interested girl who was at least four inches taller than him. And Henry? He’d been working the room, talking to assembled guests with an ease that reminded her so much of her father.

Merlin appeared in the entrance, arm-in-arm with his newly discovered daughter, who was now wearing a pale yellow ball gown and her hair down, over one shoulder. Emma gasped, having never seen the usually tomboyish Lily in anything other than jeans and tops before. She looked beautiful and positively radiant. Behind her, Maleficent, similarly dressed, walked in, talking animatedly with Merlin’s younger daughter Annabelle. I wonder what she thought, finding out she’s got a half-sister? The foursome made their way to sit at one of their own allocated table, leaving a gap of four seats in front.

As they were about to take their seats, Henry’s eyes twinkled in delight as he spotted an old friend
move towards their table. “Grace?” Both his mothers followed his gaze across to a tall, willowy dark-blonde woman of similar age to their son. They hadn’t seen her for over a year and the awkward, gangly girl with braces on her teeth had transformed into a stunningly beautiful young woman. Henry clearly had noticed!

“Henry? Henry!” she moved quickly around the table to hug her old friend, warmly kissing his cheek. “You look incredible!” said the Author, careful not to hug her too tightly as her father walked up behind her. As she blushed at his comment, Henry raised a hand to him. “Mr. Hatter! It’s good to see you again!” Henry rather liked Jeffersen. He was one of his grandfather’s few friends and he knew Rumple trusted the quirky time traveller.

“Likewise, Henry. It’s been a little while. Rumple told me about your planned European trip before he left. How did it go? How’s he recovering from the operation?” Henry and the former Mad Hatter caught up with recent events, his daughter taking the young man’s hand. Once again, Regina was surprised at just how much went on between her son and others, of which she wasn’t aware. As the one who created Storybrooke in a curse, it was unsettling.

“Jeffersen, I’m a little surprised to see you here,” asked Regina as the pair sat down. “I wasn’t aware you knew the Arendelle royal family?”

“I helped build the portal, with Merlin, that you all used to get here! I also know Prince Kristoff and Princess Anna,” he explained. However, a small gasp from Emma interrupted them. As Regina followed her wife’s stare, she spotted Killian Jones and his wife enter the room, accompanied by Dorothy and Ruby Lucas. The foursome made their way to Merlin’s table, where the Sorcerer stood beaming with delight as his daughter stepped up to cuddle him. Lily, looking unusually shy, also stood to be introduced to the second of her new half-sisters. Although she couldn’t hear, the group seemed very animated. After explanations, Rosie moved to give Lily a bear hug in welcome. Dorothy and Ruby were introduced, and the table seemed to buzz with conversation and excitement.

“Were you surprised to find out who Lily’s father was then?” Emma asked.

“Not surprised. Shocked!” she admitted. “I’d never have thought of Mal liking someone like that!”

“What, a man?” whispered Robin. “I know she had a child, but I’d always just assumed she preferred the fairer sex. Someone like you, Gina!” He added, his face a mask of innocence.

“What on earth’s that supposed to mean?” she kept her voice down, to avoid Henry overhearing.

“Oh, come on Gina,” Emma countered, “Or should I say ‘kitten’? She’s always had the hots for you…”

Regina saw the teasing looks on their faces. “Emma…I told you once before, until you, I had never…”

“Never had sex with another woman?” she interrupted, still whispering. “I know, but what about just making out with one? It’s no problem if you had, it’s all in the past, right?”

Regina was horrified her past with the dragon was not quite the secret she thought! Though before she could think of a reply, Robin added fuel to the fire. “It’s OK to admit it, Gina. We don’t judge! After all, it’s not like Emma hasn’t snogged another girl before…”

Emma’s brow rose in horror. How the hell? Then she remembered his mind scan. “Robin…you promised!”

“Sorry Em, it just slipped out. It was just…look, I fail to see why this is an issue? Most people have
done something like that. Sorry, but it’s fairly obvious. You and Elsa, Gina and Maleficent. Just a part of growing up…” He looked quite apologetic for his faux pas, as Regina and Emma exchanged a look.

“Ladies and gentlemen!” boomed a deep, rich voice from a tall man in the centre of the room. “Please stand to warmly greet your hosts for the evening! I give you, Her Majesty Queen Elsa of Arendelle, and her fiancé and future king, John Little of Storybrooke!” Cheers erupted as the soon-to-be-married couple walked down a staircase and into the centre of the ballroom, Elsa nodding, waving and smiling to all around, as the tightly held onto the arm of her man, who looked positively horrified, blushing at all the eyes on them. Emma thought it was hilarious, though as the clapping died down, she and Regina couldn’t help but overhear a comment from someone, reluctantly standing at the table next to hers.

“Can you believe it? A queen of Arendelle marrying some low-life thief? Her father must be turning in his grave!” Emma turned to see a rather grand, white-haired woman, scowling beside her friend as the royal pair went to the top table. Regina moved closer to the woman in an instant, furious at the barb.

“That ‘low-life thief’ happens to be a dear friend of mine,” she snarled, “and one of the most honourable men to have ever lived! He’s worthy of any queen, and I’ll thank you to keep your nasty little comments to yourself!” her face now red with anger.

“How dare you address me! Do you know who I am?” growled the woman, some inches taller than Regina.

“I neither know nor care who you are, but perhaps you have heard of ME? Regina of the Enchanted Forest, formerly known as the Evil Queen?” with that, she opened her palm to reveal a fireball, its heat felt immediately by the woman, who stepped back in fear. “And if you slander my friend again, I will have no hesitation in showing you how I gained that nickname!”

Another lady came beside the woman, taking her arm. “Your ladyship…please?” she pulled her further away from Regina, back to her own table. Feeling Robin’s large warm hand on her arm, the former queen calmed, turning to him while extinguishing the fireball. “Sorry, I overreacted.” He merely smiled in understanding, kissing her forehead and gently turning her back towards the table as the Master of Ceremonies continued.

“And we’re honoured to welcome their honoured royal guests. Her Majesty Snow White, Queen of the Enchanted Forest, escorted by His Royal Highness Prince Kristoff. And following them, His Majesty King David of the Enchanted Forest, escorted by Her Royal Highness Princess Anna!”

As the clapping resumed, Emma rolled her eyes in disbelief at the ridiculous formality. “Jeez, what’s with all the handles, and the ‘Queen Snow’ bit?”

“I know it must seem very antiquated to you, but your grandfather was the king,” Regina corrected, “so that makes Snow the rightful queen, even if I did usurp her throne. The title is correct for the occasion and I never wanted to be queen in the first place!” she whispered, watching the procession enter. Emma marvelled at how her mother looked as she stepped in on Kristoff’s arm. Wearing what looked like a very expensive ballgown, with long white lace sleeves and a full skirt, she looked every inch a queen. Her father, taking Anna’s hand, wore a military uniform and looked very distinguished. The Saviour couldn’t help but feel real pride, smiling at the sight of her parents as they made polite greetings, chatting to well-wishers nearby. They were clearly known to, and much loved, by some of the Arendelle crowd.

“Make quite the regal pair, don’t they?” said Robin, as the royal group sat at the top table for
festivities to commence. Honour, now standing on a chair to see over people, gasped in wonder. “Mama, look at granny and grandpa! Granny looks so beautiful! She really is a queen, isn’t she?” Emma smiled at her little girl, happy she’d had a chance to see this. “Yeah, she really is Honnie. My mummy’s a real queen!” she replied proudly.

As the evening progressed, jugglers, acrobats and fire-eaters entertained the crowd as the banquet proceeded. Much food and drink was had, and eventually everyone started to mingle. As the Charmings worked the crowd, David finally arrived at their table. Emma, feeling comfortable with half a bottle of wine inside her, stood to greet him. She gave an exaggerated curtsy to her father. “Your Majesty! How honoured we are for you to come over and mingle with us proles…” she sniggered.

“Now you just behave yourself. young lady!” David replied, moving in to hug his daughter, kissing the top of her head. “I came over to ask for dances with some of the prettiest ladies on this table.” He looked down at Honour and Margot, who were both excited at watching all the elegant ladies in their finery take to the floor with their partners as an orchestra starting to strike up the music. “So, who’s going to be first? Lady Honour, would you give me the pleasure of sharing this dance?”

The little dark-blonde beamed up at her grandfather. “Why thank you…Your Majesty!” She copied her mother’s curtsy, making the adults chuckle, before taking his hand as he led her onto the dance floor. David called back “Lady Margot? I expect a dance with you next!” The adults watched as Charming lifted his granddaughter into his arms to sway around the floor like a natural. Robin looked on before moving to his red head daughter “Margot, shall we dance?” She nodded excitedly, as he led her away. Regina and Emma saw how Henry had already gone to Grace’s table, taking her hand and leading her to the dance floor. Even Roland, resplendent in his small tuxedo, had left their table to chat to a young girl of similar age, nearby, leaving the two women sitting on their own.

“Typical – they’ve abandoned us already!” said Emma, standing up before giving her wife another exaggerated curtsy and taking her hand. “Your Majesty, would you do me the honour?” Regina smiled back, followed royal protocol by returning her curtsy. “Yes, Your Majesty, I would be delighted. I’m all yours…”

“Hmm…perhaps later?” she whispered back, flirtatiously. “You don’t think they’ll have a problem with two women dancing close around here, do you?”

“I hardly think so. Have you seen who your mother’s dancing with?” Emma followed her gaze to see Snow White whirling around the dance floor with Princess Anna, both laughing at some comment the younger woman had made. “Those two seem rather close! Did you see when they met each other earlier?” Regina took the blonde’s hands, wrapping her arm around Emma’s waist to pull her in.

‘Yeah. She kissed dad that way too! You remember what mum said to us in New York before she stormed off? About another woman and a threesome?’

“I was thinking the same thing! Perhaps it was the princess, but I suggest we say nothing. Don’t want her flying off the handle again…”

For the next hour, the music and tempo changed, the drinks flowed, and dance partners were swapped. Henry made sure to save time for both his mothers and his grandmother. Regina was delighted when he asked her to dance, though more than surprised to find just how well he could move! Especially to what must have been unfamiliar ballroom music. “Henry, you seem to know what you’re doing. Have you been taking lessons?” she asked as he twirled her, making him chuckle.
“I was worried at making myself look an idiot, so Grandma’s been coaching me – she’s good at this sort of thing. Mind, you’re pretty good yourself, mum!”

“Oddly enough, your grandfather David taught me. In Camelot, before I danced with Robin for the first time. He’s a good, calm teacher.” They looked across at the man in question, currently whirling Queen Elsa around the floor, to several cheers. “Though he is a bit of a show off!”

“Yeah. Mind you, Robin’s pretty nifty - look over there!” he pointed to her fiancé, who was now paired up with Maleficent in a waltz. She seemed to be laughing with him! *The sight of them together bringing a weird pang of jealousy to Regina. I’d never even seen Maleficent smile before! Must be due to finding Lily’s father after all this time. You were close once, weren’t you mum?”

*Oh Henry, if only you knew!* “We were. She’s an old friend and much misunderstood by so many. I’m glad she’s found her happiness…” They were interrupted by Emma returning to the table, flushed as the orchestra moved to its end of the piece.

“Hell, for a two thousand-year-old guy, he can bloody move!” she said, looking at Merlin’s back. “I need to sit for a few minutes and catch my breath. Enjoying yourself?”

But Regina was too focused on Robin and Mal. As the music died and the dancers applauded the orchestra, her thief bowed to the tall blonde, kissing the back of her hand and Mal responding with a curtsy. Robin now turned from the dancefloor, moving back to his fiancées. “Having a good time, you two?”

“Yeah, but I’m pooped! Elsa wants a girls’ night out, so I think I’ll head back to the room for a quick lie down first. Gina, what about you?”

“Well, I’ve danced with most people in the room, including my wonderful son, but our thief here, our very own fiancé, still hasn’t asked me!” she frowned, looking up into Robin’s piercing blue eyes. “Perhaps he found the dragon more inviting company?”

“Don’t be silly, I tried to get to you quite a few times, but you were busy dancing with Emma, Kristoff, Charming, the girls and Henry. I haven’t asked Emma yet either, so I’m asking you both now. Ladies?”

“Maybe a quick one but you’ll have to hold me up!” said Emma.

“Then let’s all dance together? Come on…” he insisted. A minute later, the three of them stepped onto the dancefloor as the new band struck up a more romantic number. They came together in a much-practised hug, Emma and Regina facing Robin as one, their arms around each other’s back and waist, free arms around Robin as he hugged them to him. They’d often held together like this, though only in private. Usually before one of them left home, or before they made love.

And whenever they did, they automatically went into their little routine. Each of them moving their lips simultaneously, kissing the cheek on their left, before switching to the one on the right, Regina then locking lips with Emma’s, then Robin’s, before he took Emma’s in turn. It was an odd little performance, but important to the three of them. *An affirmation of their love. The children had seen this regularly and ignored it, even though Henry sometimes winced with embarrassment.*

However, this was the first time their audience had ever seen something like this. Seeing not two, but three people, so obviously deeply in love, move as one. The two women and their fiancé looking adoringly at their lovers as they swayed to the music, everyone else now invisible to them. Henry heard various gasps, giggles and comments as Robin and his mothers seemed to attract attention from all. No couples seemed to come back onto the dancefloor until David, seeing looks of awkwardness
from others, decided to walk across and take his true love’s hand, moving to dance closer to them. Taking the hint, Little John whispered to Elsa, “Shall we?” before taking her hand and moving to dance near his friends. As their hesitant audience saw the most senior royals in the room dance, fully accepting of the odd trio, the peoples’ acceptance of them was finally established. From this moment, word would now go out throughout the realms, that the former Evil Queen of the Enchanted Forest, the Saviour and the Outlaw who Zeus returned from death, Regina Mills, Emma Swan and Robin of Locksley, were in a relationship, soon to be married.

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As the partying continued long into the evening, the Arendelle revellers were wholly unaware that they were being looked upon, through large mirrors and globes, their words and actions being recorded for posterity, and studied by a small group of celestial beings, as a god and three goddesses discussed something other than the scene before them.

“Please, husband. You know that I’m right!” Hera was adamant. “He also deserves to be returned.”

“I’m not convinced. Yes he has done well, but I have no desire to set a precedent. And I did already return the outlaw to his own family, at Aphrodite’s request.”

“You did, my lord, and you also made the right decision. Locksley also used his new powers well, to the betterment of his people, whilst siring two more saviours,” agreed Themis. “But Hera is right. Since his passing, he’s cleansed so many lost souls from the underworlds, in so many realms. He was also taken unjustly, like the outlaw…”

“I also must agree with my sister wives, my lord!” added Mnemosyne. “Plus, you’re no doubt aware that Athena is in debt to the Dark One? No god or goddess should ever be beholden to a human. This would be a way to cancel it!”

“So, my wives are uniting against my decision?” groaned Zeus. Though the last point turned it for him. “Very well. Summon him. I will return him, if that is what he wishes. However, from what I can see, the Saviour has now moved on! She is to be married once more, so I do not believe their love can be resumed.”

“Probably not, but he left a son - the Author. And we all know what his future will be! He deserves his father…” Hera enforced, for good measure.

“Persephone is going to be seriously annoyed! She’s grown quite attached to him, since Hades passing…”

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A Wedding and a Welcoming Committee

Chapter Summary

Elsa and John wed in Arendelle, and the long European vacation finally comes to an end for Rumple. In Olympus, Zeus decides to send another hero back among the living. But a different type of welcoming committee awaits his father, the Dark One.

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone! I’ve said it frequently, but thank you so much for everyone who has taken the time to comment or send advice, suggestions and feedback to me via FFN (I wish personal messages were possible on AO3). We have roughly six chapters to run now but the wedding will be with us shortly. Thanks for your patience.

Hope you enjoy it. Fi x

Chapter 64

Arendelle, Norway – Wedding Day

“Come on, my beautiful swan, we need you up!” said Regina, kissing the blonde’s cheek and lightly rubbing her ear, which usually worked when rousing the Saviour. “Chief Bridesmaid? Wedding? Remember?”

“Eugh!” she groaned, wincing at the sunlight. “Just a few more minutes. Not awake yet…”

“Emma, it’s seven thirty! The wedding’s at eleven, so you can’t lie in. Come on now, up! Or I’ll set Honour and Margot on to you…”

“Aw, enough already! That woman had us doing shots at midnight, ten hours before she’s getting married! I’m out of practice, Gina. You should have been there to stop me!”

“No, because one of us had to stay sober, just in case you were like this. Now, if you don’t want me to magic you into a cold bath to wake you up, I suggest you get up and run a hot one yourself. Now!”

“Only if you get in with me! Anyway, where’s Robin? At least he always brings me a coffee and sympathy!”

“He stayed over with John, probably trying to stop him getting wasted too! Last I heard, a group of them headed off to a nightclub. I didn’t even know they had them in Arendelle!”

“Yeah, they do. A couple of pretty good ones, actually. Me and the girls passed a strip club that Elsa wanted to go into, but Ruby said she spotted Will and the boys in there. Pity, it looked like a good one. We found something else…”
“John spent his last night as a bachelor in a strip club?” Regina was horrified. “Was Robin there?”

“Well he is the Best Man! Anyway, me and the girls went to another club instead. Unfortunately, it was mainly geared for guys, with only chicks dancing, so Dot and Rubes enjoyed it. Mind you, seeing us all pile in, Elsa persuaded him, and one of the barmen got up and gave us a show. He was seriously ripped, so it was great!”

“So, my wife and our fiancé spent the evening watching girls and a boy take their clothes off? Two weeks before our own wedding? That’s reassuring!” she sneered.

“It was funny! You know Rob and I would never do anything untoward. Hell, I didn’t even have a lap dance. Elsa had three!” The blonde stripped before walking naked in to the bathroom. *Even when annoyed with her, Regina couldn’t help but admire her wife’s beautiful athletic body, arse cheeks and back.* “C’mon Gina, join me? If you do, I’ll spill the dirt on what the others got up to! And what I learnt about Princess Anna!”

Regina sighed. *Even after three years of marriage, Regina still couldn’t resist any chance to be naked with Emma.* “Oh, very well. But you take the tap end this time!” As Emma sank into the large slipper bath, her eyes widened as Regina let her dressing gown drop to the floor, revealing her own perfect body in all its glory.

“Ooh, very nice,” she moaned, admiringly. “Regina, you still look as ravishing as the first day I saw you naked!”

“Thank you, darling,” she stepped up to the now half-filled bath, before climbing slowly in to slide down opposite Emma, moving her legs either side of her. “I can assure you I feel the same about yours. But now, tell me what happened last night?”

“Massage my feet and I’ll tell you anything you want? Anything.”

“Oh! Well, in that case…” With a twinkle in her eye, she picked up Emma’s right foot from under the foam, resting it on her stomach to slow massage between her toes, something she always loved. “Tell me about you and Elsa. What did Robin mean, when he said you had ‘snogged another girl’ and he went on to name her?”

**Damn you, Robin!** “Oh, come on, that’s not fair! I meant ask me something about last night, and you know it! I didn’t…wait, hold on. I’ll tell you everything, provided you tell me about you and Maleficent! You first…”

Regina sighed. Again. **Well, I did bring it up, didn’t I?** “Emma, I never lied to you when I told you that I had never ’been with’ another woman. I meant of course, that I had never had sex with another woman! I met Maleficent shortly after I was forced to marry Leopold. That bastard repeatedly raped me, and I would escape to Mal’s castle regularly. She showed me affection at a dark time in my life.”

“By affection, you mean kissing and cuddling? Anything else? Fingering, perhaps?”

**Hell, so blunt! Emma knew how to probe! And that damn superpower of hers could easily spot a lie. She winced, knowing she had no choice but to be completely honest.** “Yes, there was an element of…masturbation, but nothing more! No actual penetration by either of us. It was mainly confined to kissing and hugging.”

“Thank you. As for me and Elsa, it was when she arrived in Storybrooke. We’d just defeated Ingrid and her magic was out of control, like mine. We had a couple of moments when we were alone. It was just kissing rather passionately. It could have gone further, but Killian almost walked in on
us...

"And are you still attracted to her? I saw the way she looked at you."

"Not in that way! I just see her as a close friend now. What about you and Maleficent?"

"Pretty much the same as you two. I do still care about her, though. Robin was right. Whilst I know Mal got pregnant and gave birth, I’d always assumed her proclivities lay with women, rather than men. Before I knew her, Mal had a rather torrid affair with Aurora’s mother, Briar Rose, right under the nose of her husband, King Stefan. They eventually fell out, and she put her under a sleeping curse from which she escaped, much like her own daughter did. Mal has been a tortured soul for a very long time, and losing her child just made it worse. Hopefully Lilith, the Sorcerer and his family can bring some light into her life..."

"Certainly Elsa is now blissfully happy with Little John. She’s just worried about him, and all the fuzz over being a royal. She told me that if he asked her, she’d abdicate and hand over the throne to Anna tomorrow..."

"I can understand that. I didn’t want it either. Which leads us on to Princess Anna! What did you find out? About her and Snow?" Unfortunately, before she could answer, the slamming of the bedroom door outside made them both jolt up in shock. "What the hell?" Without any hesitation, Emma turned swiftly in the bath, leaning her back against Regina’s chest, attempting to shield her from the intruder, as foamy water shot over the edge onto the surrounding floor. Regina, her arms now around the Saviour, formed a fireball in her hand, ready for them, should they enter.

"Emma? Gina? Are you in there?" yelled Robin from the other side of the door.

"Robin, you scared the crap out of me!" the blonde yelled back, calming as Regina extinguished the flame beside her. "We’re taking a bath. Come in!"

The archer opened the door. The first thing that caught his eye was all the water on the floor. “What the...” but stopped the moment he saw his two loves staring straight back at him from inside the bath, Emma leaning back into Regina’s chest. “Having fun?” he smirked at the gorgeous couple. Just seeing them together like this still turned him.

"Getting clean, actually!” Regina countered.

"Hmm. Well, seeing you both there, how about getting dirty, instead?"

That earned a laugh from Emma. “You seem too perky, considering you lot got back after we did!”

“Ah, that’s what comes from taking Merlin with you on a boy’s night out! He showed me a couple of new spells to get rid of the alcohol in the blood and freshen up! I used them on John just before I left him...”

“Well come here and use one of them on me. I could do with waking up!” begged Emma, sliding under the bubbles and dragging Regina down behind her.

“Certainly, miladies. But first, perhaps a good morning kiss?”

“I wouldn’t, I haven’t brushed my teeth yet. I….mmppff!” she stopped as Robin closed his mouth over hers regardless. What the fuck? she thought, as, without permission, his tongue slid into her mouth. However, a moment later, she felt a light, airy buzz from within as a tingling sensation spread from inside her mouth up through the back of her head. Fucking weird! However, as the sensation eased off, her head felt so much lighter. And no longer sleepy!
“I hope that’s not the way he taught you?” she giggled. “That felt seriously weird! What did you do?”

“Gave you a kind of alcohol detox and a happy pill! If I did it right, you’ll feel great the rest of the day…”

Regina, laying silently behind her. “Well you’d better give me a little of what you gave her, then. I may not be hung over, but I sure as hell didn’t get a lot of sleep last night.” So, Robin repeated what he’d done to Emma, sealing the brunette’s mouth with a kiss and introducing his new spell in to her too.

“You have so got to teach me that spell - I’m buzzing! Anything else he taught you? Like how to bring up five kids without child minders and baby sitters?”

Robin sniggered. “Nothing quite as useful but…oddly enough, yes. Merlin had a few drinks with us last night and I think he may have been a bit drunk towards the end. It could have been that, plus the fact his romantic life may have picked up recently, but he took me aside from the rest of them and gave me a mind link with a couple of particularly useful ‘happy wife, happy marriage’ spells to us to try!”

Regina’s brow rose. “And by that you mean…in the bedroom?” Robin nodded, a salacious grin now appearing on his face, and a rather obvious bulge in his trousers, noticed by both of them.

“Stop talking, strip and get in!” said Regina

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The scale of the Arendelle wedding itself was tremendous. Full royal pomp and pageantry, with soldiers, resplendent in their uniforms lining the route. Everybody in the city seemed to have turned out to witness the marriage of their magical queen to a gentle giant from Sherwood.

Robin had taken his Best Man role seriously, ensuring his friend was delivered to the church on time, fresh as a daisy, partly thanks to the Sorcerer’s gifts. And now, the Bride stood nervously at the back of the church, her hands trembling with anxiety, waiting for the music to strike up and make her way towards her future.

“You OK, Els?” asked her chief bridesmaid, taking the bride's hand in her own, squeezing it to calm her. “You can do this! Provided you’re absolutely sure?”

“About marrying him? I’m sure. It’s just…look at all of this, Emma?” they looked over the hundreds of people in the pews, all waiting patiently. “I’m terrified!”

“Yeah, I hear you. But, put all that stuff aside and just focus on John! He’s there, Elsa, waiting for his bride. You look amazingly beautiful right now, and I just know he’s going to be swept away. You think you’re nervous? Well think about him. He’s never even been in a place like this before!”

“I am! He never wanted to be a king, Em. John hates all the fuss, all the protocol. He just wants…”

“He just wants to be with you, and that’s all that matters! Make everything else invisible and concentrate on him, that lovely thief of yours. Soon he’ll be a royal thief!”

The queen gave a hesitant giggle. “Thanks. Funny, you’ll be doing this with your own thief in two weeks’ time!”

“Yeah. I’m already married but I’ll be shitting myself too! So, I’ll need my friend there, to calm me
down too.” Emma gave her a kiss on the cheek and a quick hug. “Now get out there and go get your husband!”

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The rest of the service proceeded smoothly. As they made their vows, even the most hard-hearted found themselves teary-eyed, as the bride and groom pledged undying love and devotion. When the Bishop finally declared them husband and wife, another smaller ceremony had to take place. Namely the crowning of John Little as King John of Arendelle. Although he hated any form of public speaking, John nonetheless, under Robin’s previous coaching, delivered his acceptance vows of office perfectly, swearing undying loyalty and devotion to his queen. Elsa herself finally placing a crown upon his head.

Finally, with the services and formalities now over, the newly married couple could relax, making their way back to the banqueting hall. However, Will and some of the Merry Men couldn’t resist giving the pair a low bow to their friends as they entered, prompting the entire hall to follow, with the men bowing and all the women curtseying grandly. Even the four queens, Snow, Regina, Emma and Anastasia followed suit.

“My liege!” yelled Will, bowing even lower than the rest, a smirk on his face. “We are honoured and unworthy,” earning a chuckle from Elsa, a glower from John and a smack on the arm from Anastasia.

“Well you certainly are, Scarlet!” growled John. “OK you lot, enough’s enough. No more bowin’ and scrapin’ to me! Elsa’s the queen here. You can do it to here cos she’s my lady, but the first person to call me ‘King John’, goes home with no lunch an’ a doggy bag!” earning guffaws and loud cheers from the guests.

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One week later – JFK Airport, New York

As the trio left entered the Arrivals Lounge after their long flight from Rome, Rumpelstiltskin was more than surprised to find the Sorcerer waiting for them.

“I don’t recall arranging for you to come and meet us?”

“You didn’t. But I thought it best to catch you here, before you all head back to Storybrooke. Forgive me ladies, but would you allow me to speak with Mister Gold in private, just for a minute or two?”

“What, now?” asked Belle. “Couldn’t you let us freshen up at the hotel first? We’ve just come off a long flight!”

Rumple realised it must have been something important for the most powerful sorcerer of all time to meet him. “Belle, let me speak to the Sorce…to Professor Sage, for a few minutes? If the two of you head over to that coffee lounge over there, I’ll be with you as soon as I can. Leave the trolley. I’ll bring it…”

A minute later, out of earshot. “Well?”

“Forgive me, Rumple, but I needed to speak to you with some urgency. Before you left for Europe, you met me outside the Storybrooke town line and told me that the Dark One seemed to be much weakened, possibly even dying. You asked for my assistance.”
“I don’t recall any meeting! My memory is usually more than excellent…”

“That’s because you took a forgetting potion immediately after. You didn’t want the Dark One reading your mind when you returned.” He watched Rumple’s mind working overtime. “Have you seen him since you left?”

“I visited three magical towns. He appeared to me twice. Yes, he was substantially weakened. A pale grey colour and very tired. What did I ask you to do at this supposed meeting?”

“Are you ready to have the darkness removed from you forever? Even if it meant a real possibility of death?”

Rumple looked deep into the other man’s eyes, trying to detect deception. *If anybody had suggested any such thing to him in the past, the darkness within him would have ended them. But now?*

“I think…I am. Over the last six weeks, for the first time in centuries, I’ve discovered a world without that malevolent force looming over me. I would be more than happy to stay away from it forever, but I do not want to leave my son behind as a result. Nor do I want him parted from his mother and…anyone who loves him. He needs both of us. What do you have in mind?”

“Forcefully removing it from you the moment you cross the town line.” He answered, without hesitation,

“That’s been tried before. It cost your apprentice’s life!”

“It did, but I wasn’t there to control the process. However now, there are other powerful practitioners on hand to assist me. I believe we can finally wrest it from you.”

“But you can’t actually kill it, can you? Last time, it took control of the Saviour when it left me. It will find someone else. Anyone, if necessary. Some poor soul will suffer, and what then? No, it took me centuries to only partially control it!”

“I agree. That is why we need to remove it. Not just from you, but from any realm…”

“But it has to go somewhere. Who will do it? How will you do it?”

Merlin seemed guarded. “I would rather not say precisely how, or who, in case the darkness gets the information from your mind the moment you enter a magical place! That is why I prepared this!” he pulled a small green bottle from his coat pocket. “It’s a memory potion which will only erase memories of our meeting and conversation from your mind. Everything else will be unaffected.”

“You seem to have prepared for this. What do you need me to do?”

“Sign this letter, which will confirm our conversation and your agreement. Take the potion before you cross the town line. That is VERY important! I will return your memories to you as soon as we know the Darkness has been removed from the realm!”

Rumple looked at the text, his mind going back to the few words he’d written after Merlin had given, and erased, his memories previously. Pulling out his wallet, he extracted the message he’d written last year:

*Trust Merlin – Completely!*

“Very well. I’m in your hands. However, I’m taking two days here to visit a friend and take my…wife and friend, sightseeing. I shall arrive Monday afternoon. I’ll phone you and confirm when we’re
“So, you’re really saying I can go back?” Neal asked, incredulous. “I don’t understand! Not that I’m not grateful but, why? Why now?”

“I am giving you the choice, Baelfire. You’ve proved unusually worthy since your passing. Whilst you could have chosen to move on, you stayed and battled against my brother’s allies in so many underworld realms. You’ve released hundreds of thousands of souls for judgment. Despite that, it was not originally my intention, but…” the god looked across at the four women who stood nearby. “I’ve been persuaded that, given your son is of a critically important age, there is even more reason to give you this gift.”

“Critically important age? Is Henry in trouble?”

“No. Though without guidance, he could well be in the future. Your Henry has a great destiny ahead of him, which I cannot reveal to you, lest you change their course. A great many things have changed since you departed the living…”

“I know about Emma already. I saw through Persephone’s looking glass.” The goddess of the Underworld winked at him as he gave her a wry smile. “She fell in love, and married Regina, Henry’s step mother. I understand they’re raising Robin Hood’s daughter together, as well as his son. They moved on, as they should, and I have no problem with that. Though Henry leaving for university must have been hard for them.”

Persephone stepped in front of him. “In the world of the living, two years have passed since then. Your son has magic now, Bae! Powerful magic. He needs guidance…”

“Henry has magic? But how? If he has, that would mean that Emma and I were…”

“True love? Yes, that’s correct. Or at least it was when you were living. Your son is taking guidance from your own father.”

“My papa’s helping Henry? I can’t believe it!”

“It’s true,” added Zeus. “There have been many changes. I also returned Robin of Locksley to his family. Go with Hera and Mnemosyne. They will bring you up to date on all that has happened, so you know what to expect. I’m also giving you some additional gifts for your return; powers to better protect you this time. When you’re there, speak with Merlin. And Locksley. They will guide you in their use.”

“Robin Hood? He was a good guy and I liked him, but I don’t recall him having magic!”

Themis stepped in. “Well he does now, and he’s a major presence in the lives of the Saviour and the former queen as they raise his children together. Come now, my wives and I will prepare you for what you will face.”

“One final thing,” said Zeus. “I have a small task, a favour I must ask in return.” Neal knew the Lord of the God’s ‘favours’ were never favours but commands. “The young Queen of Dunbroch has some difficulties with magical beings attempting to take over her rather peaceable kingdom. It is an uneven
fight, caused by allies of my departed brother. I need someone to level the playing field, so she may have at least a chance of survival. I owe her father that much. King Fergus was an honourable man.”

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*The following Monday – Mifflin Street*

“Ok, I understand. I’ll see you at twelve.” Robin pressed the end call button on his phone.

“Problem?” asked Regina, seeing how twitchy he was. “You look worried…”

“It’s this business with Rumpelstiltskin. He arrives back in town today. Merlin still wants us to intercept him the minute he comes over the town line…”

“You’re still going through with that? Robin, this is dangerous! You remember what happened to Emma last time? Somebody could die! Certainly, the imp could…”

“It is dangerous, but it’s different this time. Merlin’s there, Jeffersen will capture the darkness and I gather his son Charles will be doing something too, but I don’t know what. There’ll be a few of us. It should be OK.”

"*Should be?* That’s hardly comforting! Robin, this is serious! The Dark One is a powerful malevolent force that can’t be killed! If this goes wrong…” he saw she was starting to become tearful. “I lost you once. I couldn’t bear to do it again…”

“And you won’t, Regina.” He moved swiftly to wrap his arms around her. “I trust him to do what’s right. Rumple has agreed to us doing this. I’m also doing it for his son…”

“Gold knows? But he could die! Why would he agree to this?”

“Because it’s a curse he’s carried for too long. With no magic, he’s free. He doesn’t want to be cursed forever. Gina, I made a promise to Merlin that I would help.”

Regina’s tears turned to anger in a matter of moments. “And you’d risk your life, again, for him? You’re getting married next week, or had you forgotten!” her voice kept getting louder and angrier. “You have children, Robin! Five children! And they need their father, not just some stories in a book about a dead hero! THEY NEED YOU, DAMMIT! Don’t do this! Just…don’t!” she seethed.

“You know I have to. You’d do the same. When you were the only two with magic, you and Emma did…”

“At least let me do this with you? I have powerful magic too, unless you’ve forgotten! Or are you damn men too chauvinistic to admit a mere woman could help!”

He stayed silent, knowing her anger was based on fear. Fear of losing him. “You are powerful, Regina. But we have been given specific tasks to capture it. We trained for this eventuality…”

“You trained? That just makes it worse! Why didn’t Merlin ask me or Emma?”

“Because you’ve both had the darkness take you over in the past! That’s why he didn’t ask Maleficent. Or Lily. You would be a target once it’s released, apparently. Regina, he didn’t avoid talking to you about it for nothing. It’s just that your past leaves you even more vulnerable, should it escape.”

She tried to suppress her anger. Knowing he had a point. “How’re you even going to do it? Last
time, the imp’s heart stopped. You’d either have to capture it…or kill him!”

“It’s already weakened. We’re going to capture it. Blue and the fairies have been drafted in too, to help with the containment. There’s no way it should leak out into Storybrooke. You know how Merlin plans things, Gina. He’ll make it as safe as he can. I trust him.”

“If you get killed, I’m coming to go down to the Underworld…to murder you myself!”

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“He’s been as good as gold! I’m just glad he’s over the teething!” Belle placed the blanket back over Gideon as he lay asleep in the car seat. In front of her, Ariel checked the map, trying to identify roughly where the hidden town of Storybrooke was. “I think we’ve got about an hour to run. Angus, what do you think?”

Rumple held the steering wheel tightly, his mind completely distracted. As his lovers called to him, he finally came out of his thoughts. “Um…sorry…what?”

“Angus, have you even been with us? You seem miles away! Something on your mind?”

“Sorry. Yes, there’s a few things but…nothing to worry about. How’s Gideon back there?” That made the two women guffaw, with a hint of ridicule.

“Rumple, we’ve been talking about him for the last ten minutes! You really weren’t with us, were you? I just gave him a bottle and he’s gone back down to sleep. He’ll be fine, at least for a couple of hours. Ariel asked you how far away we really were? As it’s not on any map…”

“Sorry. I reckon from here, we have about sixty miles to go.”

“Well, clearly you didn’t hear what I said earlier! Angus, I was telling Belle that the last few weeks, this whole trip, has been the best thing I’ve ever done in my entire life! I absolutely loved it. I got to tour a continent, and we wouldn’t have done any of it, if it hadn’t been for you! I’ve seen so much, and I’ve even gained a lover! Two, which seems awfully greedy.” She reached over to kiss their cheeks lightly, taking Belle’s hand.

“I agree, it was wonderful! Thank you so much for this Rumple. For everything!” she also leaned in, placing a kiss on his cheek. “Though you do seem very distracted today. Is your leg bothering you?”

“No, it’s fine Belle. A little tender, but it’s fine.”

“Will you be OK for the wedding next weekend? Henry’s very anxious that you go.”

“Probably. I spoke to him yesterday. I don’t really want to go, but the bugger said he’ll get a wheelchair and push me around, if need be. He doesn’t want me getting out of it.”

Ariel sniggered. “He knows you too well! Should be a good party afterwards, though. I’m surprised I got an invitation to join you. I hardly know them!”

“That’ll be Robin’s doing,” said Belle. “He said before we left that he wants his godson there. Nice of him.”

“Yeah. But I don’t think that’s what’s bothering you is it? I think I know what it is. Angus, you’re worried about the return of the Dark One to you, aren’t you?” she put a sympathetic hand on his shoulder. “We’re here for you now, you know that.”
Looking in the rear view mirror, he gave the former mermaid a sad smile. “You’re very perceptive, my dear.” But he said no more, clearly not wishing to discuss it further. He had thought of saying something about his impending fate at the hands of the Sorcerer, but decided it was best to say nothing. When he’d met Merlin at the airport, he’d signed a short letter which explained his complicitness in whatever was about to happen. But now? Now he was just nervous. Very nervous.

Ariel and Belle didn’t pursue the matter any further, and the sedan continued the drive towards the hidden town. However, Belle was more than surprised when, only a mile or two from where Rumple had told them Storybrooke lay, he pulled off the road into a small lay by. “What’s happened? Why are we stopping?”

“Just something I need to do, before we enter, my dear. Nothing to worry about.” He reached into the small dashboard storage box on his side door, retrieving what looked like a small dark blue bottle, with a small piece of note paper around it. Without any hesitation, he pulled out the small cork stopper, putting the bottle to his lips. “Rumple?” yelled Belle, recognising the colour. “Is that some sort of memory potion?” But it was too late to stop him swallowing the entire contents in one go.

“Angus, what’s going on? What was that?” asked a very worried Ariel. Their lover seemed surprised himself, discovering he was now still sitting at the wheel of his car with a small empty bottle in his hand, but no idea why he’d taken it. “Erm…I’m not entirely sure? I feel ok, though! He opened up the small note surrounding the bottle, to read the little message, written in his own handwriting:

Trust Merlin – Completely!

“That’s your handwriting, Rumple!” said Belle, looking over his shoulder. What’s going on?”

“I don’t know, but I took this for a reason! Tell me a few things about the last two weeks. I suspect I wanted to block out a memory or two. Tell me what we did.” The two women recounted their last six weeks, with Rumple asking them to move on when he remembered the same events. It was only when they covered the arrival in New York that his brow raised in surprise. One thing in particular stood out.

“So, Merlin met us all at the airport? You’re sure?”

“I’m certain! He spent ten minutes with you on your own. You asked us to go and have a coffee, and we waited till you’d finished. He left straight after.”

“Interesting. Oh well, I dare say we’ll find out what happened soon enough. Let’s go.” He eased the car back onto the road to complete their drive. No more was said, until the car approached the town line.

As they turned the final bend, before heading over where he knew the line to be, Rumple was met with the sight of three men standing in the middle of the highway, not moving as the car approached and slowed. “What the hell’s going on?” gasped Belle. “What the hell’s Merlin doing standing there?”

“Waiting for me, it would seem. I suspect this is something to do with the forgetting potion I took back there.” He brought the car to a stop. “Ladies, would you kindly stay with Gideon, while I find out what this is about?”

“No chance! I’m coming with you! Ariel, please mind Gideon?” she stepped out the rear door as the same time Rumple left on his side. She was more than surprised to see that Merlin, the Sorcerer, was now flanked either side by Robin Locksley and a younger, dark haired man, who she vaguely recalled was Merlin’s son.
“My apologies for the nature of the welcoming committee, Rumple, but it was planned this way, by both you and I, several days ago.”

“So this is why I took the forgetting potion? If so, I…” but before he could continue, Robin and Charlie Sage had grabbed his hands firmly. As he looked down, they both slapped something around each arm. “A magic controlling bracelet? Is this really necessary?” he started to panic, realising the seriousness of the situation.

“ROBIN, WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?” yelled Belle, annoyed at his treatment.

“I’m sorry Belle! Welcome back, by the way. You’ll see shortly…” was his only reply, as Merlin turned toward the open road and the site of the town line. “Shall we?”

Rumple sighed in resignation, now starting to walk towards whatever reception they had planned. As he stepped forward, he felt a rush of energy enter his entire body. His magic had returned. The power! The Dark One was back! He felt giddy with excitement and sad at its arrival.

As they moved forward, he expected to see more road, with first sight of the town in the distance. However, what he didn’t expect to see was a larger welcoming committee. Directly in front of him stood Jeffersen, his trusted friend, holding a large, new-looking top hat, embroidered with dark red lace. To the man’s sides stood nuns from the convent. Fairies. Roughly a dozen of them, with Reul Ghorm on the left, directing them. Each fairy had their wand raised in the air, as though forming an arch. And now, after many weeks absence, the creature appeared, only visible to him.

“They’ve come to kill you, dearie!” screeched the Dark One. “You’re a stupid fool! They’ve come to kill you! So, you know what you have to do – end them now! Start with the most powerful. End the Sorcerer! Now!”

Rumple couldn’t resist its pull. Despite the joys he’d experienced over the last weeks, the pull of the Dark One, despite his weakness, was just too great! He felt the old powers well up as he prepared his death spell in his mind. "Time to kill! Take out the Sorcerer and the Outlaw first!” But as he raised his hands, he spotted the magic-binding bracelets on his arms. "Damn it!"

Robin and Merlin stood before him, hands raised and firing some sort of spell at him. It blasted him back, but not down. However the energy surrounding him was astonishing. To his right, he saw the young man, Merlin’s son, powering a blast into his side that made him spin and fall. In a daze, he vaguely heard the horrified screams of Belle some way behind as he tried to stand

“Sorry dearie!” the voice within him chirruped in its annoying cackle. “But I’m afraid this is where I love you and leave you! You’ve been a wonderful host, longer than most, but I think I may have overstayed my welcome! You’ll be dead very soon, as I’m pretty sure you won’t survive the next blow! So, do give my regards to all the souls you and I have sent to the Underworld! So long!” With that, Rumple felt a tremendous pain from within his chest as a dark translucent mass seemed to leave his body.

His legs now collapsed underneath him, and as the light started to fade from his eyes, he heard his lover, still screaming, racing over to him. He barely noticed her being restrained from getting any closer by another magical force. The last words he heard were Merlin’s: “CHARLIE! NOW!”
The End for the Dark One?

Chapter Summary

Merlin and Robin, with help from others, attempt to pull the Dark One from within Rumpelstiltskin. Belle is horrified. Regina and Emma aren't happy about their fiance risking his life so close to the wedding. And there's a change of plan for Baelfire!

Chapter Notes

Still with me? Thanks so much if you stuck the course...
Fi xx

Chapter 65

Storybrooke – the Town Line

As it came around the final bend, supposedly close to the Storybrooke border, Belle felt the car brake suddenly. Looking over Ariel’s shoulder from the back seat, she could see three figures standing in the road, recognising one as they drew closer. *Someone they’d seen only three days ago.* “What’s going on? What’s Merlin doing standing there?”

“Waiting for me, it seems. I suspect this is something to do with the forgetting potion I took back there.”

Ariel looked back at her girlfriend, worried, though Rumple tried to sound assuring. “Ladies, would you kindly stay with Gideon, while I find out what this is about?” he said, opening his door.

But Belle couldn’t be put off so easily. “No chance. I’m coming with you! Ariel, please mind Gideon?” she heard the other woman agree without question. As the librarian stepped out of the car, Rumple had already started talking to them, although she calmed a little when she realised one of the men beside him was Robin of Locksley, her son’s godfather. The other man seemed to be the Sorcerer’s son. *Andy? Charlie?*

However, that calm changed the moment she saw the same man take Rumple’s hand forcefully in his own, before twisting some sort of bracelet onto his wrist! The other, younger man did the same to her lover’s other wrist! “ROBIN, WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?” she yelled, angrily.

“Sorry Belle! Welcome back, by the way. You’ll see shortly!” Merlin said something as well, but she didn’t catch it. Almost immediately, all four men turned to face the town, walking swiftly towards the line, almost pulling Rumple with them. It all happened so quickly, she had to rush after them. As they went over the line, Belle was once again shocked to see the landscape change once again, the road continuing but with Storybrooke now visible in the middle distance. She noticed the instant stiffening of her lover as he crossed the now visible road marking. *His magic’s returned. The Dark One’s back!*
However, as she moved closer to her husband, she recognised the bracelets he was wearing. _Magic dampening cuffs! Why the hell would they do that?_ It also took a matter of moments to realise they weren’t alone. There seemed to be at least a dozen of Blue’s fairies divided either side of the road with their wands raised in unison, to form some sort of arch. _What on earth are they doing here?_

Directly in front of Rumple now stood the tall figure of Rumple’s friend Jefferson, his face deadly serious, focusing on her husband. He appeared to be holding one of his hats in front of him, the interior facing away. As Rumple spotted the scene, he seemed to be having some sort of conversation with himself, twitching violently. Belle knew the signs from old. _The darkness is talking to him! Something bad’s going to happen!_

Whatever it was that happened next, happened very quickly. Realising he was in trouble, the Dark One raised his arms in the direction of Robin and Merlin, ready to cast a spell. Then he looked in utter surprise, seeming to have only just spotted the magical cuffs! Belle realised now she was looking at the Dark One. Not Rumple!

However, his reactions weren’t as quick as Robin or Merlin’s. The pair seemed to have fired something back at him, some sort of wave. Even Belle, now standing behind felt its heat! The Dark One was blown back, spinning violently, but still trying to remain on his feet. However, as his head rose again, the young dark-haired man stepped forward, his hands also raised. That’s when she spotted his eyes! Merlin’s son now seemed to have no whites in his eyes whatsoever, merely shiny black discs! He looked seriously terrifying! Belle froze with fear, before moments later letting out the most chilling, blood-curdling scream.

Charles Sage ignored her, muttered a chant, inaudible to everyone around, as a piercing dark grey beam emanated from his hands towards the figure before him. It blasted the Dark One violently sideways, making him spin and land flat on the ground. Belle brought her hands to her mouth, unable to speak. Robin and Merlin quickly stepped forward, casting spells to keep the twitching body down. Within moments, Charles stepped closer, his arms wide and seeming to ask the Dark One to come to him. A dark mass, a creature, human shaped and almost like a shadow in the moonlight, rose from the body towards him. Jefferson, clearly frightened, also stepped forward. Finally, Merlin issued his command. “CHARLES! NOW!”

The creature seemed to twitch violently, as though not sure which direction to go. Moments later, it turned towards the chanting man, racing towards his middle, as though about to attack. However, Jefferson moved the hat, a white light now emanating from it, much closer, making the creature change direction, as though being pulled into the hat by some invisible force. Within seconds, despite trying to resist, the creature disappeared inside!

“Jefferson, the seal! Quickly!” yelled Merlin. The Hatter turned the hat upright with one hand, casting some sort of spell over the top. Charles Sage lifted the hat from him, before placing his own spell over it. His father followed immediately after it with a spell of his own. “It’s contained!” he breathed.

The fairies instantly relaxed at his words, breathing out loudly in relief. Reul Ghorm had already dropped down to where the still body of Rumpelstiltskin lay. She checked his pulse, looking anxiously at the Sorcerer.

“LEAVE HIM ALONE!” screamed Belle, finally finding her voice. “WHAT HAVE YOU DONE! YOU BASTARDS!!” She dropped down to Rumple’s body, pushing Blue aside, desperate to see if he was alive. However, as she moved her hands either side of his face she heard Blue call up to the Sorcerer. “My lord? We need to move fast!” Within seconds, the body disappeared in mist. As did Merlin and Blue, leaving the rest of them behind.
“WHERE HAVE YOU TAKEN HIM? WHERE?” she screamed at Jefferson. “HE WAS YOUR FRIEND! HOW COULD YOU?” Jefferson, more occupied with the hat, looked at her in sympathy but didn’t reply. Instead, he glanced at Merlin’s son, nodding before they too disappeared from the scene in mist, together with the hat. Belle felt a hand on her upper arm. “Belle…if you could just listen for a moment.”

The next second Robin felt the slap. A loud vicious slap across his cheek. “WE TRUSTED YOU! YOU’RE GIDEON’S GODFATHER AND YOU BETRAYED US!” she screamed in his face, flecks of spittle showering him. “I HATE YOU!”

Robin was initially shocked but understood, his cheek starting to sting. “Belle, please listen to me!”

“No! Fuck off, Locksley! I never want to see you ever again!” she turned to a fairy. “Where is he?”

“In the hospital. There’s a team waiting.”

“So, you planned all this? Knowing he almost died last time?” she growled, heading back to the car beyond the line, Ariel still on the other side and the events of the last two minutes unknown to her. Robin followed her.

“Belle, Rumple asked us to do this! To get rid of the darkness. He knew it was weak from your trip!”

“Knowing he was likely to die and leave his son behind? He wouldn’t do that. Leave us alone!”

“Belle? What’s going on? Robin, what are you doing here?” yelled Ariel, now standing beside the car.

“They’ve probably killed Rumple!” Belle yelled, more directed behind her than at her lover. “Get in! We need to get to the hospital!”

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“So, you managed to take the Dark One out of Gold?” David sat with Snow at the farm, their phone on hands-free on the kitchen table. “Is he alive? Where have you put it? Robin, we don’t want that fucking thing coming back! Remember what happened to Emma last time?”

“Jefferson and Charlie Sage trapped it in a hat. They sent the hat to another realm and sealed the realm.”

“So, some other poor innocent souls must deal with it now?” said Snow, “That hardly seems right, Robin!”

“According to Jefferson, it’s not actually an existing realm, but a new one. Something he called a ‘dimension’ with nothing in it! They sealed the hat three times and then sent it there and sealed the single portal. If it does manage to get out of the hat, which Merlin said was nigh on impossible, there’s nowhere to go.”

“And Gold? What’s happened to him? What sort of state is Belle in?”

“Not good! She’s pretty pissed off with me. With all of us. They’ve gone to the hospital. Not the best way to end a six-week vacation, is it? I’m on my way over there now. Blue and the fairies are just taking down the magical tunnel they put up in case the darkness tried to escape, but we’re all done here. How are Emma and Regina?”

your life a week before your wedding? You could have been killed! What were you thinking?"

“It wasn’t as dangerous as that. We had Jefferson. And Merlin. And his son! That Charlie boy is
different, you should have seen his eyes! The Dark One went straight for him!”

Snow shivered. “I don’t want to think about it. But you need to do some serious apologising! My
daughter doesn’t like being left out of things at the best of times, and being excluded from this really
annoyed her, especially knowing you were risking your life. Robin, you have five beautiful children.
They need their father! Now go and sort it out. I don’t want them cancelling the wedding with a
week to go!”

“What Snow is basically saying is you have some serious grovelling to do, Robin” added David,
smirking.

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**Storybrooke Hospital**

“Dad, I may be a Cardiologist, but this one’s got me flummoxed! The heart’s weak, but stable. The
vital signs are all there but his coma’s deep. The way you described it, should this guy even be
alive?” Annabelle Sage stood over Rumple’s body, holding his heart in her hands, having examined
it in detail. *In the world without magic, even attempting to remove his heart would have killed him
instantly but one of the joys of being a magically gifted heart surgeon in a magical world, was the
way she could just reach in and take them out!*

“I’ve seen some of his future, Annabelle, so I know he does get through this! Though how to bring
him back? I’m not sure myself, as I’ve never taken the darkness out of a Dark One before.” He
sighed. “He’s going to be here a while, so perhaps we could ask Victor to get back here. Neurology
is his field, after all…”

Olivia, one of the new nurses, popped her head around the door. “Professor? Doctor? I have Mr.
Gold’s wife and son outside. She doesn’t seem very happy!”

“Hmm. Can’t say I’m surprised. Show her in please, Olivia?” Moments later, the door burst open as
Belle rushed in, before being joined by a slower moving woman carrying a child seat with a baby in
it. “Rumple!” she gasped, on seeing the various tubes coming out of the former Dark One. Then she
spotted Anna holding the heart. “Put that back! My god, what have you done to him?”

“You did this to him! Who the hell do you think you are?”

“I’m somebody who he asked to help him! Somebody who is trying to lift one of the evillest,
controlling forces in the universe. Rumple knew about this. That’s why he took the memory potion –
to avoid the Dark One finding out once he crossed the town line.”

The librarian glared angrily at him, not sure how to react. “You almost killed him! He’s the father of
my child!”

“I am fully aware of that fact. There was a risk, yes, but one your estranged husband was prepared to
take.”

“WE’RE NOT ESTRANGED! WE’RE TOGETHER!” she screamed, her anger returned.
Rumple hadn’t spoken to him properly since before their trip. So that surprised him. “You are? Well that’s good. He’s going to be needing you more in the coming months. He will recover Belle, of that I’m sure. The only question is when he’ll wake? Comas are odd things. It can take days, weeks, months...”

“But you’re CERTAIN he’ll come out of this? Don’t lie to me!”

“I’m as certain as I can be, having seen glimpses of your future. Belle, Rumpelstiltskin isn’t dead.”

“He’s in some sort of sleeping curse?” said Ariel, speaking for the first time. “Like Snow or Aurora?”

“Not really, just a coma.”

Belle moved her hip onto the right of the body, leaning over and whispering. “Rumple...my love! Please come back to me?”

She looked across at the mermaid, who’d come over the other side. “To us! We’ve had such a short time together since...well, since everything. Gideon needs you, my darling. I need you! Please?”

Anna, just within earshot, was also a little surprised when Ariel, leaving the sleeping infant to one side, stepped the other side of the bed, leaning in before adding. “I need you too, Angus. Just like Belle and your beautiful son, I need you too! Please wake up? Please come back?” They watched as Belle placing a gentle kiss on his lips, praying something would happen.

A small blip on the heart monitor. “Dad, look!” said Anna. “He’s reacting.” she stepped around the mermaid, taking his pulse. “Heart beats the same.”

“Do that again.” Instructed Merlin. “I didn’t feel any magic response, but he did react. Do it again, and talk to him? Ariel, I heard what you just said. Perhaps you should too?”

So, they did. The two women leaning over his face, to whisper encouraging words. As they did, Anna gave her father a look, indicating she needed to have one of their little telepathic chats.

‘Dad, do you know if they’re together. The three of them?’

‘Last time I spoke to him, they’d separated. I thought the women were together.’

‘It looks like things have changed then?’

‘Possibly. They won’t wake him this way though. It’s not a sleeping curse.’

‘But if it gets his brain working? Got to try, right?’

“Erm. Ladies?” said the Sorcerer, interrupting. “While this is a coma, not a sleeping curse, Doctor Sage and I wonder of we could try something. Do I take it you both have feelings for Rumpelstiltskin?”

“Of course I do, I love him!” Belle hissed, as though it were the most stupid question ever. Ariel took her hand to calm her temper.
“And you, Ariel. Do you truly love Rumpelstiltskin?”

The mermaid looked up at him, her eyes sad as she decided whether to admit what she felt. “Yes…I do. It’s very new for me but after our trip, I do.”

“Then why don’t you both tell him that? Together.” Belle looked up, confused, before locking eyes with her female lover, who nodded. The librarian moved her hand over Ariel’s, to intertwine their fingers on his chest, whispering over his mouth. “Angus, although I’ve only known you properly these past months, I’ve grown not only to care for your family, but you too! I’ve come to know the wonderful man behind the stories. The real Rumpelstiltskin! Falling in love with Belle was one of the most unexpected events of my life and I’m devoted to her. But I also love you Angus Gold, Rumpelstiltskin. I love Belle and I love you! Come back to me? To us?” She opened her lips slightly to press them gently over his, trying to avoid the breathing tube what came out of his nose. As she did, Belle whispered “I love you, Rumpelstiltskin!” before pressing her lips to his forehead.

A warm pulse, a wave, was felt by all in the room, accompanied by a soft golden light. Merlin and Anna studied the heart monitor for any change. Sure enough, within seconds the bleeping sounds grew in rapidity and volume, all eyes now looking back at the machine. “Is that? Does that mean…” gasped Ariel.

“It means he heard you!” said Anna, smiling down at the pair and waiting for her father’s opinion.

“Well ladies, I can see you both sensed that? And yes, that was a True Love wave! Firstly, it means that Rumpelstiltskin definitely loves you both in return, otherwise that wouldn’t have happened. Secondly, it means his mind is active and will be open to stimuli of all manner.” Ariel and Belle beamed at each other, before the red head turned her head to briefly capture Belle’s lips with her own.

“That’s wonderful. But why hasn’t he woken up?”

“Because, he isn’t under a sleeping curse, he’s in a coma. But the right stimulus will bring him back. He’s a lot more stable because of what you just did, so now we just have to wait. However, I think talking with him regularly will definitely help! I also suggest you bring in his grandson too.”

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Robin had called in at the hospital, to be updated on the situation. He didn’t see the patient, or Belle or Ariel, having been advised of the status by one of the nurses. That’s when he got Henry’s text, telling him that he was expected, by Honour and Margot, to be on time for their little fashion parade at the mansion.

“Shit, is that the time already? Henry how are your mothers?”

Henry sighed loudly. “Still pissed off with you, I'm afraid, but they haven’t told me why! I’m not sure what you’ve done but, they’re being a bit secretive towards me. Just get over here soon, so you don’t upset the girls!”

It was Robin’s turn to sigh. “Yeah. The last thing I need is four angry women, right? I’m at the hospital. Give me ten minutes and I’ll be there.”

“What are you doing there? Will said you were heading towards the town line earlier.”

“I’ll have to tell you later, Henry. Just let them know I’ll be there…”

And so, ten minutes later, Robin now found himself sitting in the middle of the sofa, next to Snow,
as Honour and Margot, in their new fitted dresses for the big day, paraded down the elegant staircase before him, each walking slowly and rather grandly, into the living room. Snow chuckled to herself, knowing they’d obviously been watching the way their older mother purported herself in public.

Margot, coming up from behind Honour, now stood proudly side by side with her sister, waiting for their father’s reaction. Margot was a little more tomboyish than her younger sister but even she relished wearing this beautiful dress. Robin felt his breath hitch at the sight before him.

A month ago, Honour had begged to wear white on the big day, and when her mothers tried to explain calmly why she couldn’t, she had a blue fit worthy Regina! It had been Snow who calmed the girl down, explaining it was reserved only for brides, but she too could wear it one day. She went on to suggest she and her sister wore ivory, the nearest thing. Placated, they’d gone on to choose two matching ivory silk cap-sleeved dresses, with gorgeous flowing skirts and a sequin-embellished bodice.

“My goodness! Girls, you look absolutely stunning! A beautiful vision!” Robin breathed, feeling a lump at the back of his throat, as he remembered how he’d missed the first five years of their precious lives. He held back a tear. “Ladies, may I take a few pictures?” A rather heavy camera appeared in his hands. “I want to remember this, so I can draw you both.”

“You’re going to draw us, papa? Like those pictures of Rollie’s mum?” said Margot, excited.

“I am. An artist needs inspiration. And you, my loves, are one of my biggest inspirations!”

That made the girls both jump up and down with excitement, before leaping at their father, who dropped to his knees to hug them both. The little scene was watched from the landing by Emma and Regina, each holding one of the younger girls. As Emma’s mouth widened at the touching scene below them, her wife breathed in her ear. “Hey, not yet. We’re still annoyed with him, remember?”

“Girls,” Snow stood up. “You look lovely, but we said you’d need to change back, so you don’t get those dresses dirty before the big day. So, come along, spit-spot!” Someone’s been watching Mary Poppins! thought Robin, as his soon-to-be mother-in-law led his girls up the staircase. That’s when he spotted Emma and Regina, at the top, each holding another Locksley girl!

Standing by the door to the kitchen, Henry watched the scene play out, with amusement. Whatever Robin had done, they were clearly still furious with him! Regina cautiously walked down the staircase, carrying Faith in her arm. Emma followed with Hope. At the bottom they put the two infants, now both trying to walk, onto the carpet. Each fourteen-month-old was dressed in a tinier version of Honour and Margot’s bridesmaid dresses. Hope wobbled on her bare feet and at the first sight of her delighted daddy, launched herself straight for him. Robin stepped over immediately in front of them, trying to support them in standing. “Oh, my little babies! My princesses. You look perfect too!” He moved to pretend-bite Faith’s cheek, making her giggle.

”Nice try, Rob!” Thought Henry. Put on a cutey scene in front of mums and watch them melt!

Though he noticed his mothers still wore annoyed stares. Perhaps not? I wonder what he did to make them so mad?

“Well,” Emma was the first to start. “Nice of you to join us - if you weren’t too busy trying not to get yourself killed?”

Henry’s ears pricked up. “Emma…we’ve been through this. You know I had to…” Robin started.

“Had to? I know nothing of the sort! You took a risk, Robin! You have five children and a wedding in a week’s time, yet you know you risked your life! I mean, what the hell?” Emma yelled, directly in front of him as she picked up Faith, who had tumbled.
“Emma, I…”

“You just said they were your inspiration, Robin! These girls, your inspiration? Yet you were determined to do whatever the hell Merlin wanted? All to get rid of the Dark One?”


“Like you wouldn’t have done the same?” Robin fought back. “How many times have you two risked your life? You’ve both done it before! You have the magic, so you use it!”

“To save our family, yes! But not on some bloody wild goose-chase!” Regina joined the attack. “How did you even know you could take him on? How could you…” she didn’t get a chance to finish as Henry yelled over her.

“What the fuck are you three talking about? What the hell’s happened to my grandpa?”

All three turned, shocked at the outburst, Hope now starting to cry. Snow had now come onto the landing hearing the raised voices, even before Henry’s outburst. Robin decided to nip it in the bid.

“Henry, Rumple asked Merlin for help to remove the Dark One from him. He thought it had been weakened to a point we could take it on, and contain it. Merlin asked for my help, along with Jefferson, his son and Blue. An hour ago, we removed it and Rumple’s now in the hospital.

“You killed the Dark One? You can’t kill the Dark One? It’s immortal! It’ll just transfer to somebody else! Somebody who can’t control it like he can! It’s…”

“Currently contained in one of Jefferson’s hats, sealed by three different magical seals, and transported into a newly built realm with nothing else in it! Nothing, no living thing there to attack. That realm has also been sealed up, so nothing can get in or out. It’s over Henry. The Dark One is gone! Rumple’s finally free of him.”

Henry shivered. “But…what about grandpa? It nearly killed him last time!” Regina stepped over to her shaking son, putting a hand on his arm to comfort him.

“HE asked us to do this Henry! Rumple even drafted a letter for you if things had gone wrong. But they haven’t. He’s in a coma but he’s responding to treatment. I just left there. Belle and Ariel are with him now.”

“I need to get over there!” was all he said before a mist swirled around him, leaving them all staring as he transported himself to the hospital.

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Olympus

“So, let’s get this right. You’re telling me both Henry’s mothers, currently married, are going to be getting married to Robin Hood as well? They’re all like, together?”

“It’s true, Baelfire. We have seen the visions for ourselves…” said Mnemosyne, remaining calm.

“And they had even more kids? Emma’s also had a baby girl?” he couldn’t believe his ears. “And they’re a family of nine, including Henry?”
“Indeed,” added Hera, “Regina has given birth to two daughters in total, Emma one, plus of course your son and Robin Hood’s son. He also fathered a child by the Wicked Witch. Six offspring in total. The two youngest will have very strong magic, like their three parents.”

Neal shook his head from side-to-side in disbelief. “And my own dad’s relationship with Belle is back on again after they split? And Triton’s daughter is involved with both of them? This is unbelievable?”

Hera’s tone hardened, a hint of ice in it. “I hope you are not implying we are lying to you, Baelfire. Everything my sister wife and I have told you is true! We are merely preparing you, as Zeus asked.”

“Forgive me, I didn’t mean to imply that, Hera.” Don’t piss them off now, they may not let me go back! “I am just very surprised at the news. I guess it’s a good thing, right? Dad having someone else who cares for him?”

“He has changed a great deal since you last saw him. Love for his wife has helped him to gain at least some control over the darkness, which has not come out during his sabbatical in Europe. The young mermaid has helped, but most importantly, his son Gideon has been the biggest factor in suppressing it.”

“A little brother too! I can’t wait to see them both. And Henry. But you want me to help the Queen of DunBroch first. So, can we go through that again before you send me?”

The wives shared a smile, relieved he had his priorities in order. “Very well, first…” though she was interrupted by the appearance of Themis, as she rushed towards them.

“Stop! All change, I’m afraid! Zeus has just received news on the status of the Dark One!”

Neal bristled. “Dad? What’s happened?” Please don’t say I can’t leave?

“The Dark One has been forcibly removed from his host by the Sorcerer and the Outlaw! Rumpelstiltskin lies unconscious, in a hospital bed as we speak. Zeus has agreed you may go to him first and help resolve the matter before leaving for DunBroch. He sends you best wishes for his recovery.”

“So, when do I leave?”

“Now!” said the three goddesses, in unison, as the mist took him.

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Did You Miss Me?

Chapter Summary

A new arrival in Storybrooke doesn't go unnoticed, while a son meets his father for the first time in eight years.

Chapter 66

Two hours Later - Storybrooke Cemetery

“And Regina, Robin and Emma’s wedding is this Saturday! Everyone’s going to be there, and Merlin and his family, so Killian and Rosie will be coming. Though that’s going to be a bit awkward, what with him and Emma’s history! Still, they’ve all got their own families now, much like me and Dorothy. So, they’re happy. And we’ve even got Queen Elsa and John coming! It’s a bit weird him being a king! He hates us calling him that!” she chuckled. “It’s going to be the biggest event we’ve ever seen around here.”

Ruby Lucas chatted away, as she knelt by the graveside, turning over some of top soil, having spent the last half hour weeding and readying it to plant new bulbs. Dorothy stood nearby, guiding their toddler as he tried to stand and walk around the headstone, a pale granite stone, which simply read:

**Sacred To The Memory Of**

**Eugenia Lucas**

‘Granny’

**Loved By All & Dearly Missed**

**Rest In Peace**

“In fact, the only person we’ll be missing is you! I miss you granny.” The wolf touched the headstone, taking Nathaniel’s hand to prevent him falling over. “Natty’s almost walking now. Fourteen months, can you believe it? You’d love him. I know he’d love you! He’s got Dottie’s gorgeous cheeks and hair. Plus, his dad’s beautiful blue eyes.”

“And your chin and grin! Don’t forget that bit?” added Dorothy as she took the trowel. “And judging by the way he never keeps still, your personality too!” she bent down to kiss her cheek. Ruby continued talking to the grave in the afternoon sun. “You know, Dot and I have been thinking. Now we’ve got a bit more help in the diner and things are looking up, we thought in a year or so, it might be nice to have another one. A little brother or sister for Nat. Merlin gave both of us the magic eggs so, why not? I think I’d like to carry it this time. I’d love a little girl. Perhaps she’d look like my stunning wife?”

“Flattery will get you everywhere, wolfie! Now why don’t I finish this off and you can take-”

Their conversation was broken by a sudden cracking noise above. Looking up into the clear sky, the pair were utterly stunned when an enormous bolt of piercing blue lightning shock out of the sky,
racing to the ground to strike less than two hundred feet away! Within half a second a tremendous thunderclap followed.

“WHOOOOM!”

The noise temporarily deafened the pair and would have been heard by every living soul in Storybrooke. Dorothy froze turned in shock, before instantly dropping to her knees to wrap her arms around their son. Ruby wrapped her arms around the pair from the other side, as Nathaniel now found himself tightly cocooned between his mothers as they clung to each other. Dorothy saw Ruby’s lips move as she obviously said something to her, though the ringing in her ears made it totally inaudible. Ruby turned her head towards where the lightning bolt struck. Why would that happen in a clear blue sky? There were no rain clouds, no storm expected, nothing, except...

She saw them. At the point the lightning hit, there now stood two people she never noticed before. A man and a woman, standing next to a grave with a headstone split in two! From a distance, the man seemed of average height, dark haired and casually dressed. The woman seemed to be slightly taller, with long golden-blonde hair, wearing a flowing blue gown and sash. Whoever they were, this spelled trouble!

“Dot, get Nattie back!” she yelled as she stood. Whether it was due to her usually enhanced hearing or not, her ears were still ringing, though within a few seconds she could pick up the sounds of car and burglar alarms going off in the distance, no doubt triggered by the sonic boom. “Dot, keep him as far away as possible! I don’t like the look of this!” Nathaniel, initially shocked by the boom, was now starting to cry. “Rubes, wait? You don’t know what you’re dealing with!”

But Ruby didn’t wait. Her natural protective instinct kicked in, as she removed her robe. Within seconds she was transformed into the wolf! Dropping to all fours, she turned and started to pad warily around, facing the new arrivals, her head down and a challenging look in her eye! “Rubes, for god’s sake don’t! Come back!”

But she didn’t come back. Her pace increased steadily till she broke into a run, to challenge whatever it was that had just threatened her family. “Rubes!”

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The thunderclap had been heard throughout the town and buildings shook. David Nolan had been in the fields, tending sheep with Fluffy, when he heard it, having seen a bright light in the distance some moments ago. “Jeez, I thought it had been a bit too long! What now?”

Emma had been in the Sheriff’s Department, discussing future rota’s with Hank when she felt it. Not just the thunderclap but an enormous wave of magic, similar to when Merlin had arrived, or when Robin’s magic was released. Whatever it was, it wasn’t good. She immediately phoned Regina, making sure the family was ok.

“Emma? I assume you heard that too? Any idea where it came from?”

“I was indoors, so I didn’t see where the lightning hit, but the thunder came from everywhere! I felt magic too, but couldn’t identify it. Any ideas?”

“None. It was powerful though. I was about to call you and Robin, when you rang. The children are safe, but the babies are crying. We need to start a search and see what the hell we’re dealing with! I’ll call Robin. He should have Roland with him.”

“If he’s even still talking to us? We both chewed him off pretty good, Gina!”
Two hours earlier, after Henry had apparated from them, the pair had used their son’s upset as even more reason to continue yelling at Robin’s insistence on helping Merlin. During what became a rant, Snow had quietly popped down to scoop up Faith and Hope, taking them upstairs to change them out of the bridesmaid dresses. She felt quite sorry for the onslaught Robin was facing from the two women he was supposed to be marrying at the weekend. After a good twenty minutes of them berating him, Robin had finally had enough. His calm demeanour was now gone.

“You finished?” he growled back. “Are you want to keep bitching on, because I did something you two have done here for over a decade? I thought I was doing the right thing and I still do! So, let me know when you’ve calmed down!”

He’d glared at the pair of them before his eyes flickered and he was transported from them in a mist, leaving the pair dumbstruck at his reaction. As the still seething pair then went into the kitchen, Snow finally came in, a baby in each arm. She passed them to their mothers.

“Honour and Margot are playing upstairs. Has Robin gone?”

“Yeah. He kinda went off in a huff…”

“Well I can’t say I blame him, after the way you two treated him! Bit too much, I thought! In my opinion…”

“We don’t want your opinion, Snow! He deserved it. The idiot took a risk with his life!”

“Which you two never did? In the mines? in Camelot? When you were going to troop down to the Underworld alone, Emma? How’s that any different?”

“Because it is! He died once already. I’m not having him do that again! It’s different…”

“But you know he will risk his life, because he’s a hero! A leader. Besides, if I understand it he’s also now an immortal. The risk to him is less than it would be for you two. Besides, he was partly responsible for removing the Dark One from this town. Personally, I think you probably owe him an apology for over reacting.”

“He’ll be fine, Emma. Can you call Henry please, before you do anything else?”

The two women set about their calls. Regina not being too surprised to find Robin’s phone went straight on to voice mail. She then left a brief text message:

Regina: Call me!

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Storybrooke Hospital

Henry had been sitting on the edge of his grandfather’s bed, talking to him for the best part of two
hours. He’d just read the note Rumple left for him, which explained why he’d asked Merlin to help him remove the darkness. Henry felt guilty for the harsh tone he’d taken earlier with Robin, before he disappeared, and was now starting to realise that his future stepfather had been acting in a good cause, as usual.

“So grandpa, you really need to come back to us now. You’re my last link to dad, and I don’t think I can face the wedding without you being there! Everything else is going great, but I can’t help thinking that...” a cracking noise from outside the large window took his attention. “What the fuck?”

Looking out the window, he was just in time to see the bolt of lightning spear from the sky into the ground in the west. As they were four floors up, he guessed it hit somewhere near the church and the cemetery. Within two seconds he heard the resulting thunderclap. BOOM! The thick triple-glazed windows gave a judder and he thought he could hear car and fire alarms going off below. “What the hell?” yelped a nurse adjusting the drip in the patient’s arm. “Only a bit of thunder and lighting, nurse, nothing to worry about...” calmed a slightly older woman as she completed typing updates into her tablet. “Probably rain on the way.”

*That was no storm, that was magic!* He stepped closer to the window to see if anything was different, though as whatever it hit was a good two miles from the building, he couldn’t see.

“Grandpa, something’s happened! I’m just going to check on Ariel and Belle, as they went down to the café to get something to eat half an hour ago. I’ll go talk to them and pop out for a little while. I’m sure they’ll be back up here soon. I’ll be back a little later.”

---

**Ten Minutes later**

Meanwhile, Emma did manage to get through to their son at the first ring:

“Hi ma! I guess you’re calling about that lightning? What do you know?”

“Not a lot. I heard the thunderclap. Your mum’s worried so I’m just checking everyone’s OK before we head off and find out what caused it. Where are you?”

“Outside the church, near the graveyard. I saw the lightning from the hospital, and poofed here a minute ago. I think whatever it was happened close by.”

“Henry, don’t go heading off by yourself like that, you could be putting yourself in danger! Whatever it was wasn’t normal. There’s not a cloud in the sky, nothing. Stay there and give me a minute. I’m coming over.”

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**Ten Minutes earlier – Storybrooke Cemetery**

“One hell of an entrance there, Perse!” said the man standing by the broken headstone. “Not exactly low key or subtle!”

“Don’t look at me, this is Zeus’s doing! He arranged the thunderbolt - I merely came along for the ride!”

“I think we woke the dead coming in like that! Certainly looks like we just bust somebody’s headstone.” He bent to read the name across the two halves:
‘Baelfire’

Neal Cassidy

Beloved Father, Son & True Hero

He Died Saving Storybrooke from Evil

Forever in the Hearts of Those who Loved Him

“Aw, we bust my own grave! Dammit, someone went to a lot of trouble to put that in!”

“You don’t exactly need it, do you?” snarked the goddess, “You want to be dead again?”

“Fair point!” he almost chuckled. “Still, I guess I’d better take it from here, if I can remember the way to the hospital. How many earth years did Hera say I’ve been gone? Eight? I could do with the walk anyway. I want to smell real things like grass, smoke, anything. Perse, are you going to join me or head back?” he placed his hands on her upper arms. The goddess of the underworld had become a close friend to him over the last eight years since he passed, even though it felt like a few months to him. He gave her a short hug and a kiss on the cheek. “It’d be great if you stayed?”

The goddess gave him a wry smile. “You know I can’t do that, Bae. My father has pretty strict rules about gods fraternizing with humans. I need to let you go, even though I can’t bear to!” she wrapped her arms around his neck, looking at him sadly.

“I know,” he said, resigned. She’d already explained it to him on numerous occasions in the underworld. “Although we made a pretty good team, didn’t we? I think that we…Perse? What’s up?” he saw her eyes harden over his shoulder as something caught her eye. Turning to see what it was, he saw a woman kneeling by a grave, clutching a child, presumably scared by the thunderclap. However, in front of her he saw a large creature on all fours, stepping towards them. As it got closer, he saw the creature was some sort of large wolf, now picking up speed and heading straight for them. Before he had a chance to react, Persephone stepped out of his embrace, raising a hand, pointing straight at the closing beast. A short burst of silvery magic later and he wolf was stopped, frozen, less than ten yards from them! “Bad dog!” yelled the goddess, completely unflustered but never taking her eyes away. “Shall I just end her now?”

Neil stepped closer to look. There was something oddly familiar about the creature. He stepped closer, seeing behind it a terrified mother and child screaming a name. “Ruby!”

“No, hold on a minute, Perse, I think this may be a friend! Ruby, is that you?”

The stricken animal now looked terrified as her eyes studied the man, unable to growl or speak. “Could you let her go please?” a moment later the animal collapsed to the ground. A click of the goddess fingers and the wolf transformed itself back to a human being, even without her cloak. Unsure whether it really was the waitress until he got closer, Neal called out, cautiously “Calm down - we’re not going to hurt you! Ruby?”

Ruby, forced to transform back to a human, stayed down as she now found herself naked without her cloak, looking awkward. “Perse, clothes?” said Neal and with another flick, and she now found herself in a large gown to hide her modesty. “Erm, thank you. Do I know you? Who…who are you?”

He chuckled warmly. “Yeah, I guess it’s been a while! Neal, Henry’s dad?”
Ruby’s eyes widened in shock as she made the connection. “Neal? Neal! It’s really you? But you’re dead!”

“Stay away from her!” yelled Dorothy who had now arrived, Nathaniel in her arms. She was unarmed but she couldn’t know what could have forced her wolf back into a human so easily. “Wolfie, you OK?”

“Yeah…it’s fine, Dot. I was just a bit…I know this guy!” Her wife looked up in astonishment, for an answer.

“Sorry for the thunder and lightning, ladies. They used that to get me down here, though it must have spooked this little fella!” he smiled sympathetically, looking at the young toddler in the woman’s arms. “I’m Neil Cassidy, Henry Mill’s father. I’m sorry I don’t think we’ve met?”

“Wait…Henry’s dad? But…but…” mumbled the hero of Oz.

“I died. Yeah, I know this is a bit weird, but Zeus sent me back. Hard to believe, right?” he winked at Ruby, who finally broke into a cautious smile.

“It’s him, Dot. I’d know that annoying smug grin anywhere!” she nervously moved closer. “Neil, this is Dorothy, my wife. And she’s holding our son, Nathaniel.” Her brow rose, waiting to see how the man would take it. Most people had been accepting of them, but even five years later, a few were complete arseholes.

“A wife and a son? I forget how long I’ve been away. Well done, you! Dorothy, it’s nice to meet you, and sorry once again for terrifying your lad,” he offered a hand to shake, which she took. The toddler gave him a small grin. “Handsome young fella you got there, Rubes! He’s even got your smile!”

“I can’t believe you’re back? But after Zeus sent back Robin and Killian, so I suppose…”

“Killian…Killian Jones? Captain Hook! I knew about Robin Hood, but Zeus sent Hook back here too?” How many more?

“Yep. He has two hands now too, so Killian Jones is probably more apt! He’s married to Rosie, one of Merlin’s daughters. They have a son.”

“I’m sorry? Hook…sorry, Jones…has got a son too?” This was getting bizarre!

Ruby considered telling him that the former pirate was also Nathaniel’s father, but thought she’d sown enough confusion already. “Yeah, he’s about a month younger than this one!” And his brother!

Persephone, now standing closely behind Neal, had heard enough. “While this happy reunion is all very interesting, I can detect that people are on their way here, probably to investigate our less-than-subtle arrival! If you wish to waste time greeting them, fine. But I believe your father is a higher priority?”

“Oh, right! Ruby, I need to get over to the hospital, fast, but I can’t seem to remember the way. Can you help?”

“Well, there’s space for one of you in our jeep. It’s a bit tight for two, because of Nat’s child seat, but…”

“No, we need to leave sooner!” said the goddess, growing impatient. She turned to Ruby. “Please
just imagine the place Neal’s talking about. Picture it in your mind, yes? Now take his hand.” The moment she touched it, Persephone grabbed his other side and the four of them, plus the toddler, disappeared in an instant, with no magical smoke or trace.

Less than a minute later, his son apparated in front of the adjacent church, having missed the group leave. Within two minutes, Henry’s mother phoned. Another two minutes and they started a cautious search of the graveyard.

“See anything different, Hen?” Emma asked, as they walked amongst the graves. “Hey, what’s that?” she walked over to the grave of Granny, the famous deceased proprietor, seeing things on the ground nearby. Some bags of flower bulbs, two trowels, a small bag of peat and… a baby buggy?

“Look’s like Nathaniel’s, ma! No sign of Ruby or Dorothy, though. Not the sort of thing you’d leave behind, is it? Looks like they were tidying up Granny’s grave? Perhaps this was…” as he scanned the other graves he saw something. “Oh shit, no!”

“What have you seen, Hen? I couldn’t…” then she saw what he was looking at. At the site of her former soulmate’s grave. “Oh Jeez… Hen…” But he had already started running across to his father’s plot. The ornate headstone which Robin had magically created for him had been split in two!

“Oh Henry, I’m so sorry!” she saw the damage and her son’s crestfallen face. “Give me a second and we’ll fix this!” it was only then she realised the damaged gravestone wasn’t the one she last saw. It had been replaced by something much smarter! The words had been changed.

“This is where the lightning hit, ma!” he said, touching the slightly blackened stone. “It’s still warm!”

“I can see that. When did you change the stone?”

“Last year. Robin did it for me. We thought the other one was a bit shitty!” Emma winced. She chose it!

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**Outside Storybrooke Hospital**

An old lady screamed when the four adults and child apparated onto the lawn in front of the hospital building.

“Shit, I really would like a bit of warning before you do that next time?” gasped Dorothy. “And who the hell are you?” she asked the golden-haired woman with perfect skin, who smirked at her.

“Sorry, I should’ve introduced you,” said Neal with a smirk. “Ladies, allow me to introduce my dear friend Persephone, Goddess of the Underworld.” He said it as though he was connecting mates in a pub. The goddess gave a tiny nod as the pair froze in shock. A goddess? Underworld? Dorothy held Nathaniel a little closer.

“You are in no danger, I assure you.” Persephone smiled. “And I assume this is Captain Jones’s child? He has his eyes…” she looked warmly at the toddler.

“How did you know?” gasped Ruby.

“Killian Jones did spend a little time down there with us. I only met him briefly, though unfortunately my uncle, Hades, used him for entertainment. Very handsome man, I recall. As this one will be. Very handsome. I see he’s a hybrid too? How interesting…”
“He’s Killian’s son?” said Neal, puzzled. “And what do you mean, a hybrid?”

“This little soul has three genetic parents. These two and Killian Jones. Lucky boy. I take it you had help from the Sorcerer?” the two bewildered women just nodded, astonished at her knowledge. “Very good!” A moment later, the child’s buggy, blanket and gardening tools left at the graveside appeared next to them.

“Thank you!” said Ruby. “Neal, I’m not sure why you wanted to come here but I need to tell you something about Emma before you find out for yourself!”

“Ruby, I…”

“She’s married now, Neal! She…” but she was interrupted again. Neal raised his hand.

“Let me guess? Started going out with Hook a week after she buried me, lost him to darkness, tried to get him back, fell in love and married Regina, and the two of them are now getting married to Robin Hood next weekend?”

The wolf was stunned. “How the hell did you know?”

“Well, we ain’t got cable in the Underworld, but we get to see a lot of what happens up here! I get it Rubes, Emma isn’t my true love any more. But I didn’t come back for her. I came back for the two, no make that three, most important people. My son, father and brother. Now my dad’s in there, so if you’ll excuse me?” he turned and walked towards the building’s reception, leaving the dumbfounded pair watching Persephone follow him.

“You’d better call Emma, Rubes. She needs to know.” Said Dorothy.

“Not yet. That’ll be too big a shock. I’ll call Snow first.” She pulled her phone out and speed dialled. Cursing when it went straight to voicemail, she tried someone else. They picked up on three rings.

“David? Yeah, it’s me. Listen, I think you need to get over to the hospital. Fast!”

---

“Oh, for heaven’s sake, Robin! Will you turn your damn phone on?” Regina cursed as her call went to voicemail once again. Although still annoyed at their fiancé’s recklessness, she was starting to regret her earlier outburst. Especially after Emma reminded her of his anger when he’d left them so suddenly. It was so rare of him to flare up like that! She decided to change the tone of her next text, her fourth since he left them.

Regina: Robin, I’m sorry. Please call me?

She’s also tried contacting him telepathically, several times, although she could tell he’d turned that aspect of his powers off temporarily, only confirming he fact he was still angry. So, she added another text:

Regina: I love you. We love you. Please?

Immediately after pressing send, the phone rang, her wife’s picture appearing. “Gina, I’ve got Henry with me. We’re just leaving the cemetery.”
“The cemetery? What on earth are you doing there?”

“The lightning bolt struck a grave. Neal’s grave. I also think somebody arrived with it. Something’s not right. We saw Ruby and Dot’s child buggy and a couple of things near Granny’s grave a couple of minutes ago and…well, they’re not there now.”

“Neal, Henry’s father?”

“Yeah. I’ve rung the station to warn Hank. I’ve no idea what we’re dealing with, but it doesn’t look good. I tried Dad but there’s no answer. Have you spoken to Robin?”

“I’ve left messages. I can’t even mind-link him. I assume he’s still annoyed and doesn’t want to speak to us!”

“Can’t say I blame him! Henry’s going back to the hospital. He decided to walk there, seeing if he can spot anything untoward. I’m going to head over to Sherwood and see if I can track down our sulking fiancé.”

“OK, take care. If you see something, call me! Don’t take chances, unlike a certain annoying man we know!”

“Will do. We haven’t had anything exciting happen like this since the Spencer attack on Sherwood. It’s rather exciting! Love you!”

“Regina rolled her eyes. “I love you too. But I’ll be happier to have you all back here, safe and sound.”

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“Excuse me, which room is Mr. Gold in?”

Becky, the nurse on the reception desk outside the Intensive Care unit, was caught by surprise, looking up from her desktop to see a man and woman staring at her. “Oh! Erm…room six at the end. But nobody’s allowed in there without a doctor’s…” she stopped, seeing as the man just turned and walked towards the door.

“Hey? You can’t just go in there! Stop! I’ll call security!”

“I think you’ll find he can, my dear,” said the tall woman in a blue gown now directly in front of her. “Hush now…or call Merlin if you wish?”

There was no need, as the Sorcerer appeared from a side room, stepping in front of Neal before he entered the room. “Good afternoon, Neal. I’ve been expecting you. I’m pleased to see you made it here in one piece?”

He breathed out on seeing a friendly face. “Hello Merlin. How is he?”

“In a coma. I gather you’ve already been brought up to date before you got here?”

“Yeah. Though we were going to head for DunBroch first, until we got the news. Sorry to be blunt but, can I just go see him and we talk later?”

“Of course. Persephone, a delight as always!” he bowed reverentially to the approaching goddess. Without being asked, he gathered her hand, kissing the back of it.

“Hello Sorcerer,” said the grinning goddess. "Back to one of the older looks, I see? I preferred your
younger, darker-skinned version. Suited you more, I thought.”

“Thank you, though it’s harder to be taken for a medical scholar with four grown up children when you look under thirty! No doubt I’ll change again…”

“And I gather you and the dragon have reconnected? How long ago was that? Nine hundred, a thousand…”

“Guys!” Neal interrupted. “Carry on by all means, but I need to see my father. Now!” He left them, opening the door to the room.

His breath hitched as he saw Rumpelstiltskin in the flesh for the first time in a decade. He now had a breathing tube coming out of his mouth, a drip, a catheter and bag, plus several wires attached to his head and chest as he lay there. A machine to the side beeped monotonously.

“Oh papa!” Stepping immediately around the side of the bed, he hitched himself up and beside his father’s chest, before leaning over and kissing the man’s brow. “You have been in the wars, haven’t you?” His voice was immediately followed by the tone from the heart monitor beeping louder. He heard the others walk into the room behind him, never taking his eyes off the unconscious man.

“Perse, I thought Hera said I’ve got some new magical powers? But I don’t know what to do, Can I fix this?”

“Patience,” said Merlin, coming to stand behind him. “We’ll turn them on soon enough and train you, just like we did Robin and Killian. However, I think your father’s condition needs something a little extra. My lady, could you help us?” The goddess merely nodded, walking over to Rumple’s left before taking the tube from his mouth, and placing her hands on his cheeks. She leaned over, and looked as though she was about to kiss him. Instead, she blew gently over his mouth. In an instant, the monitors on the machine increased in volume.

“Thanks Perse. But he still didn’t wake?”

“What did the Sorcerer just tell you? Have some patience, Bae. Talk to him!”

He sighed. “Papa, I need you to wake up now! I need you to open your eyes. I want to meet my young brother and my son! Come on papa, wake up now!”

It took a few seconds, but very slowly and gradually, Rumple’s eyelids started to twitch. The monitors continued until finally his eyes opened. They became huge at the sight before him. His mouth started to twitch and his eyes moisten as they finally came into focus, seeking the man before him.

“Hi Papa! Missed me?”
Dad...Is it Really You?

Chapter Summary

Father, son and grandson are finally together. Robin and his fiancees get over their lovers' tiff and Emma misjudges her reunion with her former lover...

Chapter 67

Storybrooke Hospital

Rumple’s head swam. So many thoughts and visions racing across his mind, all fluid and seeming to merge into one other. Faces appeared to him, starting with his mother and father, his stepmothers. Faces long forgotten, but now popping in and out. His wife and child, Milah and Baelfire. Belle. Images of happiness, pain and suffering. No linked narrative or structure. Just faces and scenes. Time was abstract and the only thing he could pick up on was the background, which started in darkness and slowly became brighter. At some point he’d heard women’s voices talking to him softly. Even imagined a kiss or two. As his mind came out of this porridge, he heard a deeper voice which seemed to call to him.

“Papa, I need you to wake up now? I need you to open your eyes. I want to meet my young brother and my son! Come on papa, wake up now!”

The voice seemed close. Very close. Sensing bright light, his eyes resisted it, although even behind his eyelids the light still came through. His throat felt like sandpaper as he gingerly, nervously, opened his eyes. As they adjusted to the light, he saw a blurred head, a dark-haired bearded man close to his face. The voice was familiar. Then as the figure finally came into focus, Rumple froze, unable to believe his eyes.

Baelfire?

My Bae! I’m in the Underworld!

He attempted to say his name, but nothing came out. He tried a second time; his lips moved, but only a wheezing, croaking sound. His throat too dry to speak. Clearly, this was some cruel hoax, some preliminary torture as he prepared to face his many enemies. He’d died, and would now face his maker. Too weak to lift his arms, he felt a tear roll down his cheek. The face in front of him, the face of the son who he missed so badly, merely looking at him in some sympathy, before it broke into a huge smile.

“Hi Papa! Miss me?”

The figure took his right, canula-free hand in his own, bringing it to his lips, to place a light kiss on the back. “Yes, it’s really me, papa! It’s Baelfire!”

Still in shock, in Rumple’s peripheral vision, a second figure appeared. Merlin. “Good afternoon, Rumple, Nice to have you back with us! I once told you you’d be reunited with both your sons, didn’t I?”
Twenty minutes later, Henry stepped out of the elevator, on to the top floor. “Hi Joy!” he said to the young nurse on the reception desk of the IC unit. “Me again. I’ll just go through, yeah?” he winked.

She smiled back at him, before realising what he was doing! Merlin specifically asked her to stop all visitors to room six until further notice, apart from Belle and Ariel, who’d left to go home and change. “Henry, no, stop! The professor’s in there, and he’s got visitors! Best wait out here till I check whether you can go through!”

“Visitors? You mean he’s awake?” He instantly turned, ignoring her and heading directly to his grandfather. The door was already ajar when he cautiously stepped in. Directly in front of him, his grandfather was now awake, propped up. The tube into his mouth gone, and his eyes bright. He appeared to be holding hands with a jacketed, dark-haired man who sat on the edge of the bed, his back to Henry.

‘Grandpa, you’re awake!”

“Henry!” he croaked, looking up and smiling. Then a second later, Rumple’s gaze fell to the man in front, a widening smirk on his lips as he slowly nodded at the stranger. The unknown figure slowly pulled himself off the side of the bed, turned and stood to face the newcomer.

“Henry! My, look at you - all big and grown-up!” The man stalled, his mouth opening as he gazed at him with a mix of wonder and trepidation. “I hardly recognise you!”

Henry froze. A face from his distant past. A face he’d only known for two months of his entire life! A face on only two photographs he’d held since he was ten. A face imprinted on his mind. Henry’s jaw dropped, unable to say the words. Unable to say, in case it wasn’t true! Somehow, from within this large twenty-two year old man’s body, came the whisper of a much younger, frightened boy:

“Dad? Is…is it really you?”

It took a few seconds for Neal to get his own words out. Finally, “Yeah Henry, it’s really me!”

He slowly walked around the end of the bed towards him, scared in case the young man turned and fled. Drawing close, he cautiously put his hands on his upper arms, looking up at his son, who was now a good six inches taller than him. “God, I’ve missed you so much!” he whispered, tears now falling down his cheeks.

“DAD!” Henry, now shaking violently, instantly broke into tears, pulling himself into his father and holding on for dear life. Neal, equally overcome, held him tightly in his arms. The son he’d only known about when he was already ten years old. The son he’d only known for two months of his twenty-two years. The son he’d looked upon from the Underworld. The son he’d ached to know. The son now in his arms. They held each other, crying, neither caring to stop.

The cries became sobs until eventually, they separated. Henry pulled back to wipe his face, allowing him to study the older man. He didn’t look a day older than the brief memory he’d had of him, though he knew he was at least three hundred years old!

“How? How did you get back…dad? And more importantly, are you staying?” Please god, let him

Neal chuckled, relieved the initial tension was finally over. “I’m staying. Zeus sent me back, Henry. I did a few things for him. This lady here,” he waved his hand towards a tall, exceptionally beautiful blonde woman Henry hadn’t noticed till now. “Is Persephone…’
“Persephone, the Goddess of the Underworld?” he gasped, his eyes bulging as she offered her hand. He took it nervously, bowing his head in respect. “I’m very honoured to meet you, ma’am!” That seemed to please her. “But I’m not sure how I’m supposed to address a goddess! Your ladyship? Majesty?”

Persephone just smiled. “I’m delighted to meet you too, Author! Persephone will do, though your father keeps calling me ‘Perse’ or ‘Seff, which seems to irritate Zeus! He’s kept a very watchful eye on you since he’s been with us, young man! It is extremely rare for any human to be sent back to earth, let alone three to one realm! Your father’s thought of very highly in Olympus.” Neal’s eyes twinkled at her, taking her hand and kissing it.

“Merlin also said something about you clearing lost souls.” Henry beamed with pride at him. “But I hope you don’t need him any more - I’d really like to have him around from now on?”

“I will be, Henry, I will be. I’ll spend as much time as I can here, though I do have a few things Zeus has asked me to do before I come back. But I’ll always make sure I have time for you! I missed your childhood, so I’m damned if I’m going to miss any of your adulthood!” he smiled, taking his hand, before turning to face Rumple, who had been watching the exchange between his son and grandson with tears in his own eyes.

“Papa, I need to meet my brother! And what’s this about you, Belle and Ariel? You old dog!” he chuckled.

“How did you—” Rumple seemed genuinely shocked at his son knowing about that! He glanced towards Henry.

“Don’t look at me, grandpa, I only just met him!” he said, a warm smile on his face.

“The gods have mirrors too, Rumpelstiltskin!” added Persephone. “As well you know!”

---

Emma had tracked down Robin and Roland to the lake next to Sherwood village, and was surprised to find he’d taken a small fishing boat out on it; just the two of them. As she watched them from the bank, she texted Regina to let her know where they were, before taking a quick photo of the peaceful scene on the lake and sending it to her. She settled at one of the tables Tuck had put out, before ordering a coffee, while waiting patiently for them to return. An hour later, Robin tied the boat to the jetty. Roland walked up it, holding two large fish. “Hi ma! Look what I caught? Papa says we can probably have them tonight, if mum hasn’t already started making something!”

“Brilliant, Ro! Well done. Yes, we can cook those. Can you take them over to Will, so he can gut and wrap them for you? I just need to have a quick word with your dad.” The wild-haired twelve-year-old raced up to the pub to proudly show off his catch, as Robin slowly drew near, a bucket and rods in his hands.

“Hiya, fiancé! Finished sulking yet?” she tried to keep any tone out of her voice.

“Depends. Have you two finished nagging yet?” came the immediate reply.

“We were just worried, OK? Perhaps we went a bit too far…”

“A bit? You think?”

“Look, c’mon. Robin, we’re getting married on Saturday! Can’t we just kiss and make up?” she did her best pout. It wasn’t quite in Regina’s league, but it did bring a loud sigh, and a wry smile, from
“Come here, then!” he called and she stepped into his arms. The moment their lips touched, all was forgotten. “It’s hard to be annoyed with you for very long, and I’m not good at holding a grudge!”

“You’re marrying two women,” she chuckled, “We’re so much better at it - we can hold them for a lifetime!” She dragged his lips onto hers again. “I love you, Robin Locksley!”

“Yeah, but I love you more, Emma Swan-Mills.”

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Knowing Rumple was in good hands, even if he was still in a coma, Belle and Ariel finally decided to go home and change. The decision made easier, by the fact Gideon was now wide awake and needing attention, feeding, bathing and changing urgently. The five-hour drive from the hotel that morning had been tiring enough. Having it followed by the traumatic experience of seeing their trusted friends attack Rumple on the town line, had turned it into a nightmare. And now, as the effects of the day started kicking in, Belle felt wretched. Ariel, shattered herself, did her best to feed and play with Gideon, though as the little tyke finally tired and settled into his cot for another nap, the mermaid collapsed on her own bed. Within minutes Belle had joined her and the pair, lying on top of the sheets, held each other tightly as the tears came, before sleep overwhelmed them.

Two hours later, they woke to Gideon yelling. As one cared for him, the other showered, as they prepared to go back to the hospital. That’s when they got the call.

“Hello, is that Mrs. Gold? This is Nurse Scott, from the hospital…”

Belle gulped. Please god, please say he’s still alive? Don’t say he’s gotten worse?

“Yes nurse, this is Mrs. Gold! How is he? How is my husband?”

“Mr. Gold is awake. He’s asking for you. He also has-” but she was cut off by her screech.

“He’s awake!” she yelled, hearing a loud cheer from Ariel close by.

“Yes. As we wasn’t operated on, he’s had something to eat and drink. But he has visitors. His grandson’s here and Professor Sage has been with him. There’s also a couple of-”

“We’re on our way! Tell him I’ll bring his son and we’ll be there in twenty minutes…”

---

She almost screamed with relief seeing Rumple, sitting upright in bed eating soup. She didn’t even look at his visitors, as she skipped around the bed to wrap her arms around him, almost knocking his soup over. His eyes twinkled in happiness when she lifted his face up to plant a kiss firmly on his lips. Ariel was about to follow on his left side when she saw there were others in the room. Henry seemed more than delighted to see them, standing close to a shorter, dark haired man sporting a big grin. Close to him was a taller long haired woman in a blue gown, somewhat overdressed. “Henry, good to see you back safe and sound!” Ariel grinned at Rumple’s grandson. “And who’s this?” That made Belle finally look up, to see who she was talking to.

“NEAL?” Her jaw dropped, and she felt her legs started shaking. “No, it can’t be!”

“It is. Hello Belle, it’s been a while!” As she felt her legs give out, Ariel rushed to her side to stop her sliding to the floor.
More tears were shed, especially when Ariel lifted Gideon from his buggy to finally introduce him to his big brother. Neal collected him into his arms immediately, a tear falling down his cheek. Henry sat, transfixed at the happy sight, watching the two brothers together for the first time. Having only known his father for two months of his life, Henry was determined not to let him out of his sight!

Not having been operated on, or drugs administered, other than an IV, it wasn’t long before the locum doctor confirmed Rumple was free to leave when he so wished. It was suggested that, as he’d been weakened by the force of the Dark One being extracted from him, he use a wheelchair to the car park. He naturally refused, but Baelfire insisted. “Papa, please do as the doctor’s suggest for once. I’ll push you…”

Persephone stood silently watching them all, before deciding she needed to have a word with Merlin. “I’ll be back soon. You go on ahead. I’ll find you!” she whispered to Neal, before kissing his cheek. Henry and Belle gave each other a look, clearly thinking the same thing: What’s going on between these two? He placed a hand on her arm, stopping her as Neal pushed his father’s wheelchair into the elevator. “Belle, could I have a word?”

She nodded, waving Ariel to go with them to the car. She turned back to Henry, who whispered, “It’s about my dad. And mums. I’m not sure I want to tell them that he’s back - at least not till after the wedding! What do you think?”

“Well, we are all going to be attending. So, don’t you think she’ll be annoyed none of us told her? It’s not like the two of them are together any more, is it?”

“No, of course not! I just don’t want to see her upset. Emma’s a runner when she panics. I just…”

“Talk to your father first. He needs to know exactly what’s happened since he’s been gone! He needs to know your mother is married with children now. And tell him about Robin. If he agrees, then talk to her.”

“What if he’s still got feelings for her, Belle? What if…it’s like when Robin and Killian came back?”

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Downstairs, Neal manouvered the wheelchair out of the elevator and into reception, with Ariel pushing the buggy behind her. He hardly noticed two people, who had been sitting in the seats near the desk, now stand and walk briskly towards them.

“So, it’s true?” said Snow White, a hint of shock in her voice. Neal looked up to see the crop-haired woman standing in the way of the exit, Charming close by, his hands on his hips. “Ruby told us you’re back!”

He saw their worried looks. No doubt wanting to protect Emma. “Hello Snow, David. Yes, Zeus sent me back here this morning. That’s what the thunder and lightning was about. Sorry for that, though I’d much rather we talk about this later, once we’ve got my dad home! Did you think to come see him? No? So, perhaps tomorrow?”

“She’s married now, Neal!” said Snow, ignoring his request. “Emma has more children,” added David.

“I am fully aware of that, David! Now, if you could…” but the royal couple weren’t finished.

“There’s a wedding this weekend! Emma and Regina are ma-”

“Marrying Robin Hood? Yes, I am fully aware of that too, Snow. Now if you could…”
“We’d rather you weren’t there, Neal! All things considered, I-”

“GET OUT THE FUCKING WAY!’ yelled Ariel, irritated at their continued obstruction. “We’re trying to go home!”

That surprised them! Neal and Rumple both smirked at the mermaid’s temper. Neal leaned over to his father, whispering, “I like her, papa! I really like her!” before moving in front of the royal couple to address them, his hands raised.

“David, Snow. I know you’re acting in Emma’s best interests, so let me say this. From time to time, even though I was in other realms, I was given access to see what Henry and my father have been doing. I haven’t kept track of Emma, as frankly, she was less important to me than those two! I knew she’d moved on, only a week after I died. So, not much grieving there, I think?” that got a look of surprise from the royal couple. “I also knew about Killian Jones, and more recently learned about Regina and Emma getting married. Snow, I’ll always love your daughter, mostly because she gave me Henry. But I am NOT in love with Emma! I’m painfully aware that that ship sailed a long time ago. I’m here to be with Henry and my father, and nothing and nobody will stand in my way. I certainly won’t be going to any wedding! Now, if you’ll excuse me?”

Snow and Charming, feeling suitable chastened, stood aside to let the little group pass. As they did, they saw Henry and Belle come out of the elevator. “Grandma? grandpa? Did you see my dad? Brilliant news, huh?”

“Um…yes Henry,” was all Snow could manage. “Have you spoken to your mothers yet?”

“No, Belle and I thought about holding off till after the wedding but, seeing as word’s already getting out and you already know, I guess there’s not much point.” Plus, you’ll tell the whole bloody town anyway, won’t you?

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Mifflin Street – evening

The three lovers had settled their differences with apologies, hugs and kisses. The argument was over as quickly as it had begun, with all agreeing not to bring it up again. The children and babies were all now safely tucked up in bed, although Robin knew he’d have to pop up again soon, to make sure Roland wasn’t still talking with his friends on his computer. They now sat around the coffee table, nursing drinks.

“Henry texted me this afternoon, saying Gold’s awake and they’ve left the hospital,” said Emma. “I should have heard back from him by now, though. We still don’t know what that lightning bolt was about!”

“We definitely have somebody new in Storybrooke - I know what I felt!” agreed Regina. “So, we need to organise a search in the morning. Something’s not right. Has anybody spoken to Merlin?”

“Not since we captured the Dark One this morning,” said Robin. “I tried getting hold of him this afternoon but he’s been in theatre. I sent a couple of texts to Henry, as he went back there, but I haven’t heard back. I think tomorrow I’ll head over to-” He was interrupted by a loud knock on the front door. “I’ll go.”

A minute later, he walked back into the lounge, accompanied by two visitors. Emma was surprised to see them. “Mum? Dad? Where’s Neal? What are you doing here?”

“He’s fine, he’s just with young Philip Briar,” said David, trying to choose his words carefully. “We
needed to have a word with you, Emma. With the three of you!”

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**Rumple’s Mansion**

“So, Ariel, how on earth did you wind up meeting these two?” Neal asked, nursing a glass of scotch as he sat around the dinner table. Henry and Ariel also nursed drinks after they’d all toasted Neal’s return and Rumple’s safe recovery.

Although initially cautious, Ariel had soon warmed to Rumple’s oldest son. She liked his refreshing honesty and bluntness, and before long they were sharing jokes and stories, as though they’d known each other for years. “My husband, Prince Eric, and I had split up. Dad’s not too happy so, I came here to Storybrooke to get away. I first met Belle when you were all in Neverland and we became friends then. So, this time, she let me stay with her in the library after she and your father had separated. I guess things developed from there…”

*That drew a surprised look from Neal.* “So, Belle had finally had enough of you, papa?” he smirked.

“No Neal,” Belle insisted. “Your father threw me out! I’d done something incredibly stupid, that caused us to lose Gideon, and he was probably right to do so! Once Merlin traced where the Black Fairy had taken him, he, Rumple and Robin Locksley went on a mission to get him back. When they succeeded and got your brother safely home, Rumple allowed me to move back in to be with him, even though he didn’t need to…”

Neal grinned warmly at his father, placing a hand on his arm. “You did the right thing, papa! Children should never be separated from their parents, if they can help it. I’m proud of you.” Rumple smiled sadly back at him. “I never should have made her leave in the first place, Bae! But unfortunately, my anger took over, as usual…”

Ariel continued. “Well, to my surprise, as my feelings for Belle, and hers for me, grew, your father seemed to encourage it. He let me move in with her and I moved in a couple of months before we all left for Europe. It was them, on our European trip, I got to know Angus properly and, I fell in love with him too! I’m still not sure how it all happened myself, but…it did. And I’ve never been happier!”

“I’m pleased. For all of you! Though it’s a bit of a surprise. Tell me about my brother? You said he was kidnapped? I never saw that. What happened? I’ve heard about the Black Fairy. She was supposed to be stupidly powerful. How did you get him back, papa?”

Finally Rumple, who’d been quietly listening to the conversation rather than joining in, explained. “Belle had passed Gideon to the Blue moth to get him somewhere safe…from me. I’m afraid the Saviour helped them to block me from getting to him in time.” Belle looked suitably ashamed at that, so the former Dark One took her hand. “Don’t concern yourself Belle, it’s ancient history now. Anyway, Fiona, the Black Fairy, who sadly also happened to be your grandmother, intercepted the moth and kidnapped the child. That was five years ago. Last year, Merlin located where he was kept and we mounted a rescue mission. Robin of Locksley, who now has very significant, powerful magic of his own, joined us. He ultimately killed Fiona.

Neal sighed. “I’m surprised Emma helped you, Belle. You’d have thought that, being an orphan herself most of her life, she would have known better?” He looked at his father with a sad smile. “Still, you got Gideon back.”

“We did. Thanks to Merlin and Locksley. He’s Gideon’s godfather now, Bae. It seemed fitting.”
“He’s become quite a friend since he returned from the Underworld!” added Belle. “Which reminds me, I owe Robin an apology. I punched him in the face!” That drew a surprised look from Rumple. “When they captured you on the town boundary. It looked like they were killing you!”

Rumple chuckled, “I’m sure he’s had worse, Belle. Still, they succeeded. The Dark One has now been banished; held in an empty, sealed realm, hopefully never to return!”

“And how about you, papa?” Neal squeezed his hand a little tighter. “I know we haven’t really talked about it yet, but…you losing the darkness? How does it feel to be finally rid of the Dark One?”

“It’s hard to explain, my boy. I now feel unbelievably tired, which is most unusual for me! I don’t feel particularly weak but…I’m fine for the moment. But seeing you all here with me, well…” he eyes started to water again. “It’s just… I never thought I would have this! My two boys, Henry, Belle, Ariel. I still can’t quite believe it’s happened. I keep thinking I’m going to wake up and you’ll be gone again!”

“Not this time, papa! Once I’ve finished a few missions from Zeus, I intend to stay a lot closer to you and Henry for the foreseeable future…” Neal stood, leaning over to place a kiss on the top of Henry’s head while wrapping a fatherly arm around him. “Hope that doesn’t freak you out, Henry? Though I’ll stay back when you want me to!”

It was Henry’s turn to be teary-eyed. “No, I’d like that dad, I-” Unfortunately, he was interrupted by the loud rapping noise of the front door knocker. “Who the hell? It’s pissing down outside, who’d want to come around at this time of night?”

Henry had recognised the magical wave outside. “I’ll get it – I think it’s my mum!”

Two minutes later, Emma walked into the dining room, having almost barged Henry out of the way. She stood, goggle-eyed, hardly believing who was in front of her.

“So, it’s true? You really are back?”

“Hello Emma!” said Neal, waiting for whatever was to come.

“You told me you were in a better place!”

“I lied. To stop you going down there! Why did you let our son go to the Underworld, Emma? Why did you put his own life at risk, as well as yours?” His voice seemed unnaturally calm, but with something else in it. Anger?

Emma definitely wasn’t expecting that!

“I…I didn’t…he insisted on coming!”

“He insisted? He was fifteen, Emma! You were the parent! It was unbelievably stupid, and it almost cost him his life! I know what they’re capable of down there. You nearly got your entire family killed! And for what? Killian was dead! As it was, it seemed you moved on from him in time, albeit a lot slower than you moved on from me! What was it, a week, two weeks after I died? Good to see you got over me, Emma!” the last sentence delivered in a sarcastic tone.

She felt like she’d been slapped and now stood, completely flustered. She had intended to first find out whether he’d really returned, before telling him she was now taken. Married. “Erm…” But he wasn’t finished yet.

“Well never mind. He’s all safe and grown-up now isn’t he? Congratulations on getting married, too! I always thought you and Regina had an interesting relationship before I passed over. I’m pleased,
for Henry’s sake. It must have been nice having his mums together instead of fighting. I also gather you’re bringing up one of Robin Hood’s children, and then went on to have one of your own by him?”

“You seem to know everything! How?”

“I’ve been keeping track of Henry and my dad, but Zeus’s wives have brought me up to date on you. I gather you’re also both marrying Locksley this weekend?”

She nodded, not sure how to continue. “Erm…can we have a word…alone?”

“Perhaps tomorrow? I’d like to spend some time with my family now. Would you excuse us? You see, I’m back after eight years, Henry’s here and papa’s spent his morning in a coma. So…you understand, don’t you?”

“Er…sure. I guess I’ll see you tomorrow.” She almost whispered, feeling like she definitely wasn’t wanted here.

“Good. Eight at Granny’s then? Henry can join us, if he wants.”
Sleepless Nights & Old Acquaintances

Chapter Summary

Emma's sleep is wrecked, but in the best way. Father and son reunite over coffee.

Neal’s back. But what does that mean for Emma and her family!

Chapter Notes

Still with me? Thanks for your patience!

Two chapters away from the wedding and honeymoon. This one’s a fill-in chapter which sets things up for the next story.

Hope you enjoy. Comments always welcome.

Fi xx

Chapter 68

Mifflin Street

It was gone two in the morning when Emma finally crept into their bedroom, careful not to wake her lovers. Using magic to remove her clothes, replacing them with a silk number from Regina’s wardrobe, which she’d seen her buy in New York. She edged towards the bed.

In the moonlight, Regina could be seen coiled into Robin’s side, her head lying on his chest, his left arm around her shoulder while he gently snored. She smiled at the sight. Sliding carefully between the sheets and into his right, she pulled his arm around her, trying to replicate her wife’s position. She lay her head on his chest, inches from Regina’s.

“Good morning Swan!” whispered the brunette, moving her head closer, careful not to wake Robin. “What happened? Henry texted me, saying you left Gold’s around nine. That’s five hours ago, Emma! I was worried.”

“Sorry. I was upset. I saw Neal. I guess I needed time to think.”

“I rang Henry, after I tried to reach you. You left here in such a hurry, you didn’t take your phone. I tried to reach your mind. What happened, Emma? Where have you been?”

“I spent the last few hours at the docks. I was just sitting on the bench there, thinking. It was the shock of it, I guess! After Killian, and all that. I’m sorry if I worried you.”

“Tell me what happened? I couldn’t sleep, knowing where you were.” She kissed Robin’s chest. “He just got to sleep a little while ago. He said he couldn’t reach you either, but he ‘felt’ that you were upset! I still can’t sleep so - let’s go downstairs? I’ll make us a hot chocolate.” The two
women rose as quietly as they could, meeting at the end of the bed. Emma took her hand, leading her down to the bannister, avoiding switching a light so as not to wake anyone.

Five minutes later they sat together at the kitchen worktop, sipping their hot drinks. Emma looked across at her tired wife, smiling when she saw what the brunette was wearing. “Something amusing you, Swan?”

“Swan-Mills, actually. And yes. You’re wearing my Red Sox top and shorts. You look better in them than me!”

“That’s debatable. You’re wearing my NK iMode chemise before I’ve even had a chance to wear it. And it looks pretty good from where I’m sitting!” she flirted back, making them both giggle. Regina leaned in, placing a kiss on her lips. “You know, Robin was right. We do seem to have grown-in to each other, don’t we?”

“Yep. And I wouldn’t have it any other way. Marrying you was the smartest decision I ever made!” Emma twisted her body and head round to face her, before taking her lips once again. This time, she gently prised the brunette’s mouth open with her own, with no resistance, before sliding her tongue inside, where it was greeted and messaged by Regina’s own. Both women moaned in contentment, enjoying the shared chocolaty taste.

“Hmm,” groaned Regina. “Enjoyable though this is, I want to know what happened? Between you and Henry’s father...”

Emma sighed, loudly. “Well...when mum and dad told me that he was back, I just kind of went into shock. I had to go check. So, I poofed straight there.”

“Emma, do you still have feelings for Henry’s father? I quite understand if you do, especially after Robin and Guyliner came back. I wouldn’t judge you...”

“No. Well, yes and no. Yes, I do, or did, have very strong feelings for him. I can’t quite explain it. Henry has magic now, so I guess what we had, at that time, must have been true love? But I don’t have what you had with Robin. I think I also felt guilty. It wasn’t long after Neal died that I started dating Killian. Henry was really quite nasty about that last year, when I forgot to visit the grave, yet again! I think I was expecting something like when Killian came back, when I had to tell him I was now married to you.”

“So, was he shocked? Surprised? Annoyed?”

“He already knew! Not from Henry, or anyone down here, but from Zeus’s wives, apparently. He even told me off for letting Henry go down to the Underworld with us. He was really pissed off about that! I guess what hit me the most, was that, instead of me telling him I’d moved on, he’d already moved on from me!”

“That’s a good thing, isn’t it? If he’s moved on, you can both get a happy ending, surely?”

“I guess. But it just confirms, yet again, how shit I am at relationships with men. They’ve all either died, or left me, or both. Perhaps I should have become gay from day one?”

“If you had, you wouldn’t have got pregnant, wouldn’t have had Henry or Faith, and wouldn’t be with me! Things are meant to be, Emma. And besides, the man we’re marrying at the weekend might disagree too?”

“Robin’s different - he puts up with all my shit, like you do! I’m sorry I worried you.” She swallowed down the rest of her drink. “You ready to go back up?” she placed another small kiss on
her cheek.

“Hmm…I’m more awake, than sleepy.” Regina raked her fingers through the blonde’s hair, moving them down her back, over the sheer fabric, before sliding them over her tight buttocks. “Besides, I don’t want to wake Robin. So,” she flirted. “how about we put the fire on in the drawing room, and snuggle up on the sofa?”

A few minutes later, they’d magically produced a roaring fire in the hearth, and were now cuddling together under blankets on the sofa. Regina lay back, pulling Emma on top. As they did so often, Emma slowly positioned herself between her wife’s thighs, lowering herself down full-length on top of her, so they could gaze into each other’s eyes. Regina, as usual, wrapping her ankles behind Emma’s calves, pressing her hips up into her. “Hmm…somebody’s not wearing panties?” Emma drove her centre hard against the other woman’s. “Seems you’re not either!” Without another word, Regina seized her head in her hands, pulling her mouth onto her own, before sliding her tongue inside. When they separated to draw breath, Emma started to slowly work her way down, kissing the fabric covering Regina’s breasts, heading lower before Regina stopped her.

“No. I want to see you. I want to look at my wife’s lovely face. Come up here…”

Obeying, She eased herself slowly up her body again, before sliding off and onto her side. The two women now lay side-by-side, pressed together and facing each other. A moment later, Regina gasped as she felt Emma’s fingers work their way into her bed shorts, before roaming over her folds. “You know, I like it when you wear my things, Gina. Makes me feel closer to you in some way.”

Regina reciprocated, letting her hand drift under the chemise to cup Emma’s mound, before letting a single finger drift between the already wet lips. “That’s because they smell of you. Even after a wash, I can tell your scent. I’d know it anywhere!” Emma raised her knee to let her get better access. Regina mirrored her, their other arms holding them together, as the pair started to stroke each other faster, in tandem. It was gentle and comforting and fairly soon Regina felt her body starting to shake, delivering a single, small yet satisfying orgasm, Emma following only seconds behind, as they held each other tightly.

As they stilled and calmed, Regina slowly climbed off the sofa, turning to take her wife’s hands. “Lovely. Now, it’s nearly three and we need sleep. Come on…”

Within minutes, the pair slowly climb back into their bed, either side of their fiancé, still resting on his back in the middle and appearing to be sleeping soundly. At least that’s what they thought, as they rested their heads once again on his chest. However, a low voice rumbled. “Feeling better after that, miladies?”

“Feeling better after that, miladies?” he whispered, to no one in particular.

“We thought you were asleep!” Whispered Emma. “Sorry we woke you.”

“It’s difficult to sleep when your mind’s picking up the feelings of two sexy women orgasming downstairs…”

Regina gasped in surprise. “You heard us?”

“Didn’t hear you - felt you! The experience was more than stimulating. But unfortunately, it means I’ll probably now get bugger all sleep myself thinking about it! Still, never mind. You probably both need yours now…”

Emma, moving tighter in to him, slid her right hand into his boxers, to discover a fairly prominent erection. “Hell, you’re as hard as a rock!” she whispered. Regina slid her left hand in to check for herself, finding Emma’s hand and intertwining their fingers around the impressive stem. “Oh my.
Emma, you’re right!” Robin moaned as the pair grasped him more firmly and moved their hands up and down as one.

“How…that’s nice! I thought you two were supposed to be sleepy?” he groaned. “You really don’t have to…”

“I want to!” breathed Regina. “Now shut up and enjoy it!”

Emma lightly bit a nipple on his exposed chest. “Robin…you remember when you were recovering after hospital…in the guest room? When we…relieved you, when you couldn’t get up?”

“How could I ever forget?”

“Well, lie still. This might be our last chance till Saturday night!”

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Early The Following Morning - Gold's Mansion

Neal was the first to rise. His first morning back in the land of the living, and he needed to do something. Anything! It wasn’t even six yet. As the rest of the house slept, he made himself a pot of coffee and searched through the pantry for something to eat. He was absolutely famished. *You don’t get hungry in the afterlife!* He saw various items in the cupboards that were far too healthy for him. Porridge, granola, fruit. “Jeez, isn’t there anything you couldn’t find off the floor of a birdcage in here?” he muttered to himself. “Must be the effect of him living with Belle and Ariel! Far too many healthy options and no real food!”

As he sat nursing his second large coffee, he heard heavy steps coming down the stairs. His son appeared in front of him, wearing wild hair and a dressing gown. “Henry, Good morning!” he stepped over to pull his boy into a hug. “I couldn’t sleep. Sorry if I woke you?”

“You didn’t - I couldn’t sleep too well either. I guess knowing you’re here…”

“What say we go get ourselves something to eat? Is granny’s still going? She always used to do a decent fry…”

“She died a few years ago, dad. But Ruby and Dorothy run the diner these days. They’re open at seven.”

“I met them yesterday! Unfortunately, I think we scared the shit out of her son with that lightning! Let’s go over there and get something for breakfast your mothers definitely wouldn’t approve of.” He grinned. “I said I’d meet Emma there at eight anyway? You can bring me up to speed on everything, before she gets there?”

“Sounds great; I’ll go change. But shouldn’t we tell grandpa before we go?”

“Henry, if you were lying in bed with two women, after the day he had, would you want to be disturbed?”

His son laughed. “I guess not. Do you think you’re going to have any problem with grandpa and grandma? I saw them in the hospital and they didn’t seem to happy…”

“I truly couldn’t give a damn, Henry! I’m here for you and papa only. I didn’t mean to be curt with Snow, but she just made assumptions. I’m not going to disturb any wedding!”
“Do you still have feelings for me? I heard what you said yesterday, but…”

“Henry, I meant every word! I’ll always love Emma for making you, but I guess I stopped being in love with her when Zeus showed me the mirror, which showed her going on a date with Hook, less than a fortnight after I died. She got over me so quickly, I guess it helped me get over her! That, plus letting you go to the Underworld was just plain crazy…”

“I guess. I must admit I was pissed off when she went after Killian. She never tried doing that with you. She blackmailed grandpa to get there too; said she’d tell Belle his darkness had returned! I saw it in the book…”

“You’ve still got that storybook, huh? Well, having magic makes you do stupid things, Henry. It’s all that power and realizing you can control and manipulate things. That’s why politicians are insane…”

“I guess. You know I have magic too now, right?” he asked cautiously, hoping his father wouldn’t think less of him. “It came in last year. Mum threw me in a locked jail cell for being cheeky. I got angry, my magic came in and I kind of destroyed the place!”

“You did? What happened?”

“Grandpa Gold fixed it. He repaired the jail and threw both my mums back in there, sealing it. He showed me how to let them out; which I did…eventually!”

Neal laughed loudly. “That must have been hilarious! I can’t imagine those two locked up in a cell. Though they probably deserved it. Are you all good with them, now?”

“Yeah, but they still don’t like me being too close to grandpa, as they still don’t trust him. But he’s been great. He not only taught me how to control the magic but also gave me quite a large endowment to help set me up. I owe him a lot, dad, and the trip we just went on was great. Six weeks across Europe! Anyway, enough about me. I want to talk about you. What’s the deal with you and Persephone? I saw the way she was looking at you. You seem quite close?”

“It’s complicated. She is a goddess, so normal rules don’t apply. However, if you’re going to ask me questions like that I need to know about your love life first! Dad’s privilege!”

Henry groaned. “God, not you too? That’s all mums seem to ask me about these days! Who am I dating? Am I taking precautions? Anyone getting serious? It never ends!”

That made him chuckle. “Yeah, and it never will, right up until you’re married and giving them grandchildren! It’s only because they love you, Henry, and they want the best for you. Listen, I may have issues with Emma, but I think the two of them did a great job raising you. One day I’ll thank Regina properly. Now, have you got cash on you? We don’t carry that sort of thing in the Underworld, so, what say you buy your old man a slap-up breakfast?”

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Mifflin Street

Emma groaned loudly when the bedside alarm went off at seven, Regina recoiling under the duvet. “Gina – I thought you switched it off? Rob’s taking them in…” she mumbled.

“He is. He’s up…” she groaned, trying desperately to get back to sleep. She knew it was unfair on Robin, taking care of the children but felt too, too tired. “But you said you had to be at Ruby’s at eight.”
Emma winced, remembering the reason why. “Oh shit. Neal! I said I’d see him at eight! Bollocks, bollocks, bollocks! I wanna stay in bed -I’m knackered!”

“Nice to see you’re picking up Robin’s course language, Emma! Well you shouldn’t have got his motor running this morning, should you? I didn’t get to sleep till gone four. I ache all over…”

“Me? I wasn’t the only one giving him a blow job at three in the morning! That’s what started it…”

Less than four hours earlier, Regina and Emma had given Robin a little treat, which resulting in waking him up fully. The trio had gone on to have a frenetic hour of sex, despite being less than three hours till they had to get up. After, Robin had agreed to take the short straw, being better at rising early (in more ways than one!).

“Hmm. Still…nice, wasn’t it?” breathed Regina, stifling a giggle and earning a tap on the arm from the blonde, who reluctantly climbed out of the bed.

Downstairs, Roland was now at the cooker, making pancakes, while Honour and Robyn helped their father feed the babies, as they sat in high chairs. “Thanks girls. You’re a great help.”

“You look so tired, papa!” said Margot, wiping muesli off Faith’s mouth. “Are you OK?”

He smiled across at her concerned look. “I’m fine, my darling,” her father answered between yawns. “I just woke up early this morning and didn’t get back to sleep.” Woke up to two horny fiancées going down on me, then banging me senseless! He thought to himself. “You have your breakfast, we’ll change these two and then we’ll be off. Your mothers are having a lie-in. I think they-” but he stopped when he saw a befuddled Emma walking down the stairs.

Roland dropped a small batch of pancakes on the dining table as Emma slowly crept into the kitchen, seizing the coffee pot. “Mornin’ ma! You look like crap!”

“ROLAND! Language? That’s no way to talk to your mother,” Robin chided as the sleepy bed-haired blonde in her dressing gown filled her cup. But Emma didn’t seem concerned, just smiled sleepily.

“Yeah, you’re right Ro, I do! I didn’t sleep too well. Sorry Rob, one of us should’ve come down to help. Gina’s gone back to sleep.”

“Don’t worry, love. You come here and get some food. I’ll sort these out. Go back to bed if you want?”

“I can’t. I’ve got to be at the diner at eight to see Neal.”

“Uncle Neal? You’re going to see Neal – mama, can I come?” Honour loved her uncle.

“Not that Neal, Honnie. Henry’s dad!” she groaned, having downed most of her cup as the girls looked confused.

“But Henry’s dad’s dead! We visited his grave, didn’t we, daddy?” said Margot.

“We did, Margie, but Zeus sent him back, like he did with me and Killian. He’s alive again, so Henry wants to spend time with him. Your mum’s going to see him this morning.”

Honour and Margot looked at each other, bewildered, a worried look on the red head’s face. “But he was your True Love? Does that mean you’re going to go and live with him from now on, like daddy did with us?”
Where did that come from? “No, Honnie, of course not! Your mum and I are married, and we’re marrying your dad this weekend! I’m never leaving you all. Neal is part of my past, but you’re my family now - all of you!” she particularly looked at Robin, worried he could possibly be thinking something similar. Robin intervened.

“Mama needs to see Neal, girls. He was a very brave man who died to save a lot of people in this town, long before you were born. He’s Henry’s papa too, and I’m sure he’s missed him lots.” Emma saw even Robin had a concerned look about him. That’s when she realised she hadn’t told him.

“Rob, he already knows about us! He’d already been told about you, me and Gina. I fact, he spent more time telling me off for something else. He’s moved on too…”

Rob knew how that felt! He stepped in front of her. “It’s OK. You should go talk to him, Emma. Everything’s fine. We love you and we’re here for you.” He whispered the last words before lowering his head and placing a kiss on her mouth. “Eugh!” groaned Roland in disgust, while his little sisters just smiled.

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The Diner

“Now that’s what I call breakfast!” sighed Neal, happily, as a huge plate of food was laid in front of him by Ruby. His order had been very specific. A fried breakfast with double bacon, eggs, tomatoes, sausages, mushrooms, beans and fried bread, plus a large mug of black coffee. “Thanks Rubes. A breakfast fit for a man back just from hell!”

“Put too many of those down you and you’ll be going right back there!” quipped Dorothy from the counter, as Ruby laid the second huge plate in front of Henry. “Anything else, guys?”

“Listen, when you’ve just spent the last few years among the dead, and you can’t eat or feel hungry, you can’t taste or smell anything, this is heaven to me!” He groaned in almost sexual delight as the first mouthful of bacon went in. “Mmm, so good!” father and son ploughed into their monumental breakfasts in bliss. As they did so, various people Neal vaguely recognised from his past walked in, some not believing their eyes. Some politely nodded, not wanting to disturb father and son as they ate. Henry told him about some of the things he was doing in Harvard, friends he'd made and recently buying his own flat. Then the recent trip with his grandfather and finally getting on to his more recent trips.

“So, is there anyone special, apart from family, in your life right now?”

“Not really. There’s a girl my age back in Harvard. She’s studying to be a doctor. But we’re casual at the moment. What about you? What about a certain tall goddess?” his son probed. "And please don't deny it - I saw how you were looking at each other!"

He sighed. ‘Well, we are sort of together, but it means something different to the deities. They often have lots of different ‘relationships’, but they don’t tend to settle together like we do. Perse and I are close, but having something more with non-gods is kinda frowned on. So, while Zeus has a good few wives up there, they would frown on him marrying a human! He also won’t like the fact she came down here with me, so she’ll probably have to go back soon. We’re both slightly dreading it but-"

“So, what’s next, dad? You said last night you need to go somewhere. DunBroch?”

“Yeah. Apparently, some problem left by Hades meant there’s some magical nasties there. Queen
Merida can cope with human stuff but demi-gods? He wants me to go help…”

“But what can you do against demi-gods? It’s not like you’ve got…”

“Magic? Apparently, I have now! It seems I’m supposed to go to Merlin to switch it on! Odd right? There’s my papa finally getting rid of his, and I’m getting some now instead!”

“I have too, don’t forget. Perhaps I should come with you?”

“I’d like that, but I lectured Emma last night on taking you to the Underworld! Be a bit rich if I now go take you into whatever the danger might be. No, I think for the moment you’re best here and at University. Once you’ve finished, perhaps we could go on a decent trip of our own?”

Before he could say anything, a figure appeared beside them. “Neal? No, it can’t be!”

“Mulan!” gasped Neal, excited to see his friend. “It’s me! I hardly recognised you!” The former serious-faced warrior now sported a shorter hair, pale grey blouse and a skirt instead of military breeches and jacket. She looked…so different!

Then he spotted the children’s buggy she was pushing.

“Who’s this?” He dropped down to his knees to look at the baby. “Hello, gorgeous – what’s your name?” he asked the grinning almond-eyed girl, clearly her daughter.

“This is my little princess, Li! She’ll be two in November,” Mulan said, proudly. “I’m married now, Neal. You remember Philip and Aurora?” he looked up to see two more faces he recognised step forward. He was slightly confused, unsure what to say for fear of offending them. Had she married Philip? He remembered the guy woke up the princess with a kiss. Had they divorced? “I see your mind’s doing circles, Neal,” said the Mayor, offering his hand. “We BOTH married Mulan last year,” he said, proudly.

“Now that should surprise me, but somehow it doesn’t! I remember when we last met in my dad’s castle. You three seemed pretty close then. So, a marriage of three people, yeah? That seems to be a growing trend in Storybrooke!” The trio looked at each other slightly confused, before Mulan realised what he meant.

“Oh, you mean Robin and the Swan-Mills’s? Yeah, they’re all getting married this weekend,” she stopped herself, remembering his link to Emma “Sorry, I didn’t mean…”

“That’s all in the past, Mulan, whatever it was we had! I’m just really pleased for the three of you, though. Congratulations. Phil, it’s lucky your little girl here looks like your wives and not you, eh!” he sniggered.

The mayor frowned. “You’re not the first person to say that! I’m starting to take it personally!”

Aurora came to his sides, laughing and placing a kiss on his cheek.

The next half hour passed easily. After demolishing their breakfasts, the group hung around them as Neal was asked numerous questions about his time in the Underworld. He recounted lots of stories and drew quite the little audience around their table, including several dwarves, the Briars and the Lucas’s. Henry hung back, smiling and laughing with them at his father’s unique tales, impressed at what a wit and raconteur the man had become, and realising what he’d been missing all these years. His dad.

It was a little after half eight when Emma finally walked through the front door. “Coffee please,
Rubes.” She yawned.

“Hell Emma, you look shagged! Those two proving a bit much for you?” she winked.

*Oh, you’ve no idea!* Emma blushed. “I only got about two hours sleep.” *But god it was worth it!*

“They’re at the table at the back. They’ve both had a coronary special already. You want something?”

“Just coffee for now, thanks. I’m not sure how long I’ll be here.” *Depends on how he acts!*

She walked to the back, noticing a small group surrounding her son and Neal. Dorothy was sitting beside Henry on the long back bench, her feet up in Neal’s lap! He seemed to be stroking her feet, massaging between the big and second toe of her right foot. “So, slide your finger right in between them and this area affects pain in the middle of your right shoulder. Five minutes should do it!” The Hero of Oz had her head tilted back and her eyes shut, clearly enjoying herself! “Same place on the left foot affects the left shoulder.” *He sounded like a masseur rather than a…well, whatever he was!*

“I’ll try it on you tonight, Rory,” said Mulan, watching closely. “Thanks!”

“Sorry am I interrupting?” said the Saviour as she approached them. “New career beckoning for you, now you’re back?”

“Just something I picked up from a very clever lady in the Underworld. There were quite a few living people trapped down there over the centuries. They suffered. Can you imagine a century-old woman trapped down there? Arthritis is just one problem…” He answered, not bothering to look up at her.

Now she felt awkward, seeing everyone gathered around her former lover. “Neal, can we talk… alone please?”

Neal sighed, and Emma felt saddened at how he didn’t even seem even remotely pleased to see her! “Yeah, sure. Dorothy, thanks for the offer - I’d love to come over tonight! Six o’clock – so I get a chance to meet your Nathaniel?”

“Perfect,” she said, getting up. “Henry, you’re more than welcome to join us. And you of course, Emma!” she added the Saviour almost as an afterthought. It wasn’t lost on her!

“Erm, thanks Dot, but I’m a bit tied up tonight!” she looked down at her son. “Henry, would you mind if your dad and I had a word alone please?” he nodded silently, standing up and tapping his father on the shoulder as he moved to the other end of the diner, stepping away and leaving them alone. The Briars got the hint too, stepping up and walking away, finally leaving Emma and Neal alone for the first time in eight years.

“Soooo…you’re back?” Emma started, now unsure of herself. *Why is it so hard to talk to him, after everything they’d been through?*

“I am,” he said, not feeling any need to help her. “Though you don’t seem thrilled. Do you have a problem with that, Emma?” his brown eyes now focused on hers, waiting for a response and sensing her discomfort.

“Me? No, why should I?”

“Well, normally I’d expect at least a little smile, or a hint of happiness that a former murdered lover and father to her son is now alive again! But you? Last night you seemed almost irritated I’d come
back and now, you’re as nervous and stern as you were when we were fighting the green bitch. I know you stopped loving me a long time ago, Emma, but I didn’t think you actually hated me? I’m beginning to think you preferred me dead!”

“I DON’T HATE YOU!” her yell was even picked up by Henry at the other side of the diner. “It’s just a bit of a shock, OK? It’s just…this is the last thing I expected…”

“Yeah, I’m sure. Like when you came and found me in New York. It was a ‘bit of a shock’ then…”

At the mention of that horrible time, all the old memories came flooding back. “You’d abandoned me, Neal! You stitched me up and I got sent to jail. I was pregnant! I still, even now, can’t believe you did that. I had no choice but give Henry up for adoption! That was your fault!”

“You still on about that? OK, one thing you do get when you help out the gods is access to a lot of information about the past. You wanna know who tipped off the police? August Booth! You wanna know why I left you? Because he knew who I was and said you had to break the curse! If you hadn’t done that, you’d never have known who you really were. You’d never have been reunited with your parents! Is that what you’d have preferred? You’d never have met Hook, Regina or your husband-to-be! You’d never have your daughter! You prefer that?” she was about to bark back but he wasn’t done.

“You want to know what your mate August also did? I found out the wooden bastard tipped off the police with my description and told ‘em I’d try to get to you in prison, so they’d know to expect me! I’d already sold the watches and given him the cash. I sold my bike and the lock-up and gave him the whole lot!”

“But I never got any money! I never even saw him until Storybrooke ten years later.”

“That’s because he took it and ran. He started pissing it up the wall in Bangkok and Nepal, on hookers and god knows what! He stole it. But I did give it - for you!”

Emma seethed. “How do you even know all this?”

“Zeus, Hera, Mnemosyne and a bunch of others. They’ve got all the records…”

A silence hung in the air as Emma took it all in. She sighed. “Last night. What you said about Killian? I didn’t just get over you, Neal. I did mourn you…”

“I saw. Two weeks, I believe? What was it for the pirate - three years?” Emma squirmed, avoiding his stare. “But I get it. You were sort of interested in him in Neverland, so it wasn’t that big a surprise…”

“That’s not fair Neal,” she looked at him, guilt on her eyes. “He was just…there for me.”

“I guess. Still, we had our own time. It was good while it lasted, and besides, we got Henry out of it, right?” he placed a warm hand over her own, that were still clenched tightly together.

“Yeah. Yeah, we did. I’m sorry…” her words almost a whisper.

“Me too. Sorry I sniped at you last night. Don’t feel too bad. I think seeing you on that date with him kinda helped me get over you. I haven’t been alone either. So, then he died and then…you and Regina, huh?”
“Yeah. Me and Regina. She lost Robin about the time I lost Killian. We both went downhill and eventually found something in each other. You shocked by that? Me and the Evil Queen - me and another woman?”

“Nah, not really. I had a feeling you probably swung both ways! Still, with Regina though?”

“Why do people keep saying that?” she hissed. “I was straight, right up until I got to know her. And anyway, why not Regina?”

“Fairly obvious, isn’t it? She spent half her life trying to murder your mother! She killed hundreds who stood in her way. I’ve no idea what she’s like now, but she was a malevolent, unhinged psychopath before. Anyone else doing what she did would be behind bars for life or in an electric chair – no matter how sorry she is now.”

“She’s not like that now! You have no idea what she faced. Her mother even killed her first lover in front of her! That’s got to send anybody over the edge. But she’s changed! She’s done a lot of good here…”

“Tell that to the poor bastards I met still stuck in the Underworld. Their lives are over. Still, she’s probably a bloody saint compared to her mother – now that vile bitch really deserved what she got…”

“Cora? Why, what happened to her…”

“She got judged, of course! The Celestial Court found her guilty of countless crimes and she’s spending eternity in pain and suffering. Quite right too! She never regretted what she did, never atoned for it, so the Court gave no mercy…”

“Gina does regret what she did! Even my mum and dad have forgiven her! Henry changed her Neal. If you could only see her with him. There’s so much I could tell you about her. Robin changed her even more.”

“Yeah, but you’re smitten, Emma. That clouds your judgment. Anyway, speaking of Hood, they told me he got sent back here by Zeus too? And Hook? What’s that all about?”

“Robin and Regina were an item five years ago. He’s her true Love. Then straight after we got back from the Underworld, from trying to save Killian, he was killed by Hades, sacrificing himself to save her. I guess Zeus thought he deserved it!”

“Greater love hath no man, than he lay down his life for those he loves’. Yeah, the gods love that stuff!”

“He also sent him back with stupidly-strong magic. Even your dad would have a problem taking him on!”

“You said he was Regina’s True Love before? You must’ve been seriously pissed off he came back?”

Henry watched his birth mother and father talking from the other end of the diner, with a mix of confusion and hope. He knew they’d never be back together as a couple but if they could at least be friends again? The conversation seemed to be tense as they seemed to be settling old scores. She’d even yelled out that she didn’t hate him. Not sure what that was about? Over the next half hour, they seemed to calm and settle. At one point he even saw his father draw her into a hug, as we appeared to weep on his shoulder. Henry thought best to stand back and watch from afar.
Eventually, the former lovers rose from their bench and walked back towards their son. Even Neal seemed to have shed a couple of tears, judging by his red eyes. They stepped close, an arm behind each other’s back. They looked admiringly at their boy. “Emma, how the hell did he get so big? My dad’s a shorty, and I’m only five ten! Hen, what are they feeding you on? I thought university food was beer and pasta?”

Henry chuckled. “Well, mum’s dad’s six three and I’m only six four; you make me sound like a circus freak!”

Emma mouth split into a huge grin as she moved in to hug him. He automatically pulled her in to his arms. “Well, I think you’re just perfect!” It was the first time he’d seen her so happy for days. He looked over his shoulder at his smiling father. “So, are we all good now? You two, I mean…”

Emma looked up at him. “Yeah Hen, we both had a lot to say, and we cleared the air. We’re good now…”

“She’s right, Henry,” Neal pulled himself into the hug, wrapping his arms around both. “Although we’ll never be a couple together, we both love you and will still be a family for you. When you need us.”

The bell above the front door clanged, as the three hugged tightly together. Over Neal’s shoulder, Emma saw a tall, long-haired blonde woman walk in. A stranger. She wore a flamboyant long pale blue gown, almost like a roman toga. Her hair draped over her shoulder, she strode in confidently and towards them. Emma’s senses tingled, realising this woman had immensely powerful, but different, magic!

The stranger looked up at them. She was beautiful. Stunningly beautiful! Her rich blonde hair framing the clearest of skin, and the most perfect warm brown eyes. Emma felt rather intimidated by the vision. She felt Neal separate himself from their group hug.

“Hi babe!” he said to the stranger, moving towards the stranger who now smiled warmly at him. “Neal,” she breathed, before he placed a soft kiss on her lips. “Seff, let me introduce you. You met Henry, my boy, last night. This here’s Emma. She’s-”

“The Saviour. Yes, I recognise her from the visions. Hello, Henry.” The Author stepped forward, nodding slightly before kissing the back of her hand. Emma felt confused at the scene.

“Emma, this is Persephone, Guardian of the Underworld and a close friend. She’s come with me to help me get acquainted with everything. She’s-“

“A close friend?” Emma couldn’t stop the words coming out, but the woman knew what she was getting at.

“Neal and I are lovers, if that is what is what you are wondering?” The goddess said it simply and unashamedly. Neal gave a shy smile back. “Though I will be heading back, and Neal will continue his life here…”

Shit, he really has traded up! She thought, looking over the woman, I’ve never seen anyone so hot! As she looked again at the goddess’s eyes, she saw her smile back. “Why thank you, Mrs Swan-Mills, I’ll take that as a compliment. You’re rather easy on the eye yourself! I understand you will be getting married again very shortly. To one rather attractive famous outlaw?” she fluttered her eyes at the blonde.

“Erm…yes…sorry,” she mumbled, embarrassed at having been caught eyeing up the woman. “It’s
not every day I meet a goddess! Yes, to Robin of Locksley. This Saturday."

“Such a handsome man! I’d like to meet him before I go back. I have some news about his passed wife. A lovely lady. She made quite the impression on us…” Persephone stood rather close to Emma now, making her feel a little intimidated as she was clearly eyeing her up too.

“Perse, must you flirt with everyone you meet?” Neal sniggered. “You’re making the woman feel awkward!”

“What can I say? I like what I see!” she flirted, making Emma feel a hot flush. In another time and another life Emma could imagine being willingly seduced…no, fucked…by the vision in front of her. Straight or gay, she couldn’t imagine anyone refusing her. “Though I think her first lover was head and shoulder above the pirate…” she turned to place a quick peck on his lips. “Shall we go back and see your father? I came to tell you the Sorcerer has arrived…”

“Yeah, let’s do that. Emma, good luck with the wedding. I’ll see you around. You coming, Henry?”

“Not just now thanks, dad! I’ll stay a little with mum. My other mum’s coming over, so I need to spend some time with them. See you at grandpa’s tonight, yeah?”

Neal nodded pulling his son into a quick hug before stepping back and taking Persephone’s hand. “Shall we?” A moment later, a short swirl of mist whisked them out of sight. Emma stood, her mouth open.

“What the hell just happened then?”

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It's Back!

Chapter Summary

Rumple, recovering from his coma, gets an unexpected surprise. Snow suggests something for the pre-wedding girls' night out. Ruby and Dorothy have a special request of the Captain and Persephone discovers Chinese take out.

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone!

Hurtling ever closer to the end of this, my first story (though I'll be opening up a follow-on one). I've thrown something a little odd into the mix and have some reservations, now I've raised it. Should the next chapter move straight to the wedding day (probably divided over two chapters) or do I pause, to cover more detail on the interesting afternoon spent by the Lucas and Jones family on board the Jolly Roger, plus the girls' night out? Would welcome your thoughts!

Once again, thank you for sticking with this! Comments gratefully received. Fi xx

Chapter 69

Gold’s Mansion

“This is ridiculous!” said Neal as he suspended the cushion in mid-air. All he’d done was imagine it floating, as instructed - and here it is - floating! “I can’t believe this. I’m really doing it? You guys are able to do this just by thinking about it? I mean, what the hell...”

Merlin had taken the block from his magic a few minutes earlier. He’d felt a little faint at first, so the Sorcerer had decided to start his induction with soft objects incapable of harming anyone. “That’s very good, Mr. Cassidy! It normally takes a little longer for someone to grasp the idea that you can do this. Only by force of will, can you make this happen! Now, why don’t you try imagining it lowering itself, slowly, onto your lap?”

The cushion slowly moved across the room, until it levitated just above his knees, before slowly lowering itself onto his knees. As it settled, Ariel, Belle and Henry all politely applauded, as he looked up at Persephone.

“You must think this is nursery school stuff?” he winked at the goddess, standing back from them.

“Everyone has to start somewhere, Neal! Magic isn’t natural to the human world,” she comforted, smiling at his simple feat. “You’ve only had it a few minutes. Small steps…”

"Yeah, they won't know what hit 'em in DunBroch, when I start lobbing scatter cushions at 'em!" That made them all laugh.
The Sorcerer grinned. "I'll be giving you the lessons shortly. It'll be a mind link, so it shouldn’t take long. After that, you just need coaching. Perhaps your father could help?"

Rumple had sat in his armchair, silently looking on, as his precious returned son received his first induction. A day after waking from the coma, he still hadn’t fully come to terms with the reality of him being here. Coming out of his daze, he realised all eyes were now on him! “Sorry, did you say something?”

“I suggested you could coach your son in the use of his new magic, Rumple?”

“Oh!” he looked sadly at the group. “I’d love nothing more than to help my boy, but I'm somewhat ‘depleted’ on the magic front, as you’ll no doubt be aware!”

“What do you mean?” said Merlin.

“I've no magic! You saw to that yesterday!” Need he rub in the fact that he was now useless?

The Sorcerer looked down at him, confused, then realised what he was getting at. “My dear fellow, we removed the Dark One from you. You still have magic, just…white magic!”

“Nonsense!” growled Rumple, irritated at his being patronised. “I assure you, I would know! had magic for the best part of three centuries. I’d know…”

Persephone stepped forward. “Rumpelstiltskin, when you brought about a spell before, what did you focus on before you cast it? What was the thought that made it happen?”

He looked at her sternly, considering the question. He’d usually thought of a memory that brought back hatred. The abandonment by his father. His stepmothers making him spin for them, refusing him food if he refused. Milah and her deceitfulness and betrayal with the pirate. The witch and her causing his son’s death!

“I think of something that caused me intense emotion, as you’re well aware!”

“You need to think of something hateful, don’t you? A memory that brought you pain? Well instead, try looking at something that inspires happiness! Look at your sons, your grandson, your wife? Think of what you now have, Rumpelstiltskin. Think what they mean to you…”

Rumple looked over at Belle and Ariel, who were now standing side-by-side, backs resting against one of the cupboards, looking at him, concerned. Belle had that sad, resigned smile on her face, knowing her husband was feeling weak and powerless. He looked at Ariel, who mouthed back to him silently ‘I love you!’. At Baelfire, who had dropped to his knees, picking up a soft toy his little brother had dropped as he chewed on a teething ring, handing it back. My boys, finally back! At Henry, who sat looking at him intensely, with a sad smile of his own.

“See the love, for you, in this room Rumpelstiltskin, and tell me you don’t feel it?”

“I…” he hesitated, feeling choked. “I know, I just can’t…” he could hardly get the words out.

“I love you, papa! We all do…” said Neal, encouraging him, knowing the goddess’s intention. Henry, Ariel and Belle all nodded.

“NOW – CATCH!” yelled Persephone, quickly curling a hand behind the half-empty blue teapot sitting on the table, launching it, and its contents directly at the former Dark One’s head!

It took a moment for Rumple to look up from the yell, seeing something blue racing towards him!
His left hand rose from his lap, flattening itself in an instant to deal with the danger. In milliseconds, the entire teapot, now on its side with the lid off and contents starting to spill, was frozen in mid-air, as though time had stopped! The rest of the room stood aghast.

Rumple’s jaw dropped in astonishment. “I…I have it back?” he breathed, incredulous. “My magic's returned?”

“It never left, Rumple! It merely…changed. Now return the teapot to the teatray, without spilling!” the Sorcerer instructed. A moment later it appeared in its rightful place. “The darkness is gone, but from the moment it took over your mind, it put magic in your bones! That remains.”

“You’re a white magician now, grandpa!” grinned Henry.

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That afternoon – The Jolly Roger

“I can’t believe he’s back?” said Killian Jones, astonished at the news. Henry’s father, the man who he knew, and betrayed, as a boy, had returned from death! “How did Emma take it?”

“She seemed nervous, at first. We left them alone and they talked it out. I don’t think Robin and Regina have anything to worry about though. I get the impression Neal’s moved on too!” sighed Dorothy.

“Yeah, with a certain hot goddess, by the look of it!” said Ruby, sniggering, but seeing her wife raise a brow at her. “Aw, c’mon Dot – like you’d kick her out of bed?”

“Aye Persephone was…is…immensely beautiful. Not as beautiful as you mind, Rosie!” he cautiously added, seeing his wife’s face. “I met her in Hades’ crypt. She tried to restrain that foul bastard from his baser instincts, but he was not too be swayed!” he grimaced, remembering his torture at the hands of the devil’s apprentice.

“Still, it must be a bit odd for Emma, Killian. Henry’s father coming back three days before her wedding? Especially after you did!”

“Aye love. Still, I’d best pay him a social call. I still owe him an apology. Still, onto happier things. You said you had something to ask us?”

“Er, yes.” Dorothy coughed, moving to grab Ruby’s hand in her own, now looking nervous. “Ruby and I had something we wanted to ask you both. It’s a little bit…sensitive.”

Rosie stepped across, dropping to her knee to take Dorothy’s other hand. “Come on girls, it can’t be that bad! We’re friends, remember? Hell, we’re family now. Nattie and Liam are brothers, after all. So, come on…” she encouraged the pair.

“It’s nothing bad, Rosie. It’s just…embarrassing. It’s about Killian’s sample.”

“His sperm sample? The one he left two years ago?”

“Yeah. Well, here’s the thing. Nattie’s about fifteen months old now, and we figured that, as neither of us are getting any younger, we’d like to give him another brother or sister sooner than later. Having Liam around is great, but you’re going to be travelling and, well, Ruby told me she’d also like to give birth to the next one, if she could!”

“Well, if you still want to use my sample, it should be straightforward enough, shouldn’t it? I
recall Rosie's father saying something about freezing it until you’re ready?” he looked across at Rosie, who already knew all the details. Plus, the fact that, despite leaving the sperm sample, they’d used the old, reliable method!

“There was a power failure at the hospital! About three months ago. All the samples in storage, and some donated blood, were all ruined. One of the doctors rang to tell us…”

“Okay,” said Rosie, realising what the couple were trying to ask. “So, what you’re saying is Killian’s sperm sample was ruined. And, as he’s got magical ability, which you need to successfully conceive after my dad’s melding of your eggs, you need him to give you another sample?” she looked across at her husband. The other women nodded.

The three women stayed silent for a moment, waiting for Killian’s thoughts. The Captain looked at his wife, waiting for her to go first. So, she did.

“Killie, we’d never even met when you helped them before. You told me all about it once we started going out together. I went to see Ruby and Dot straight after and I told them that, although we were just dating at the time, I had no problem with them continuing and using your sample. And if they wanted more children, or they weren’t successful at first, they should continue…”

“Aye love. But we’re married and have Liam now. I’ll give you my thoughts, but I need to hear yours, first.”

“Well, as I said, we’re not just friends with Dot and Rubes, we’re best friends! And family, linked forever by our children. I have no problem with it. In fact, I think it’s a good idea. We already know they’re fantastic mothers,” The Lucas couple blushed at her compliment, “and that way, their son or daughter gets two great brothers and a pretty brilliant dad! But it has to be your decision, Killian. It’s your body. Your sperm!”

Killian stayed silent for a minute, absorbing his wife’s words. This was a serious decision, not to be taken lightly. Though he’d already fallen in love with Nathaniel and regarding him as just as much a son as Liam. As he looked up, he saw not just two anxious women staring at him, waiting for his thoughts, but three.

“Well. I can’t argue with any of her points. You two have proven to be excellent mothers to our son. Plus, you’ve never let me feel that I wasn’t a part of his life, so hopefully I’d be part of another little one’s too! As Rosie’s given us her blessing, I guess I’d be honoured to help you give him a sibling…”

Ruby gasped with relief, jumping up and moving over to Killian to pull him into a tight hug. “Thank you, thank you, thank you!” she yelled. Dorothy had similarly stood to pull Rosalind into her arms, hugging her. “Thank you too, Rosie! You have no idea what it means to us!”

“You two! You’re just…the best!” said Ruby, tearfully putting her hands on the Captain’s face and a quick kiss on his lips. Seeing the surprised look on Dorothy and Rosie’s faces, she pinked slightly. “Erm…sorry?”

Dorothy looked into Rosie’s eyes, smirking. “She’s right though – you two are!” before briefly dropping her own lips onto Rosie’s, then whispering, “thank you!” Killian’s wife didn’t seem flustered. In fact, to ease the slight tension between the four, she leaned back and said, “Don’t I get one from you too, Rubes?”

“I guess!” said the wolf, moving into the place vacated by her wife and wrapping her arms around Rosie as Dorothy now did the same to Killian. “Thank you – for letting this happen!” Now feeling
less awkward, Ruby pressed her lips into Rosie’s, for just a little bit longer, as Dorothy now did something similar to Killian. Rosie pulled her head back, to see her husband now clearly enjoying his own kiss with the former Hero of Oz. So, with a wicked smirk, she leaned forward to give Ruby a second, rather more enthusiastic kiss. Out of the corner of his eye, Killian saw what she’d done. *Two can play that game!* So, with an evil smirk, drove his own lips down onto Dorothy’s.

*My, how the mood changed in a matter of seconds!* As the two hugging couples turned to look at their respective partners, Rosie then said something that changed the mood completely. “You know…I seem to recall that you never got around to actually using Killian’s sample, did you? Dot got pregnant by the usual method, didn’t she?” *She enjoyed how both the wolf and the other woman’s cheeks almost went scarlet at the reminder.* “How about we try that method first?”

The other three looked at her as though she’d gone quite mad! “Are you suggesting…?” Dorothy smirked, unable to finish the sentence.

“Why not? After all, you had a nice little threesome, didn’t you. I know you enjoyed yourselves. How about we upgrade to four?”

Dorothy and Ruby stared at each other, open-mouthed. Killian’s jaw could’ve hit the floor!

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*Same Afternoon – Mifflin Street*

“What? said David, wondering what was bothering her. Neal had been gently practising some early tunes and seemed to be keeping to himself. Although seeing Snow’s brow raised, she clearly wanted to discuss something alone with the women. “Er, yeah ok, I’ll take him…” he looked with disbelief at his daughter. Emma glanced at her own wife, holding her hand, indicating she needed to mind-link her thoughts as father and son left the room.

“Ok then…” the crop-haired brunette started. “I know Robin and his friends were planning to go to Sherwood on Thursday night, but I wanted us to have a girls’ night out, too. Ruby and the girls are up for it…”

“Sorry, didn’t hear that mum! Say again…”

“David? Could you take Neal into the dining room with that thing? It’s starting to give me a headache.”

“For heaven’s sake, mum, Gina’s right! Robin lives here now. We’ve been sharing a home with him for the best part of two years, I hardly think it’s essential he’s nowhere near us for two whole days!”

The imminent brides sat around the coffee table, Emma’s parents on the other side while Neal fiddled with his new obsession, a guitar. It had been a birthday present from his parents, after endless requests, and it hadn’t left his side for nearly two weeks. David sat beside Snow, rolling his eyes at the latest minor detail his wife seems to insist on for the weekend wedding.

“I disagree. Robin’s rather sensibly moved his bachelor party back to Thursday night, to allow everyone time to recover if some people become too ‘refreshed’. He’ll be out that night anyway, so staying in Sherwood Friday night too shouldn’t make much difference. Besides…” the woman’s voice went silent as she mouthed something incoherent to the other two.

“Snow, it really isn’t necessary - he won’t even be seeing the dresses till the wedding anyway!” she moaned, irritated at the woman’s obsession with minor details. “He doesn’t need to move out beforehand!”

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“David? Could you take Neal into the dining room with that thing? It’s starting to give me a headache.”

“What?” said David, wondering what was bothering her. Neal had been gently practising some early tunes and seemed to be keeping to himself. Although seeing Snow’s brow raised, she clearly wanted to discuss something alone with the women. “Er, yeah ok, I’ll take him…” he looked with disbelief at his daughter. Emma glanced at her own wife, holding her hand, indicating she needed to mind-link her thoughts as father and son left the room.

“Ok then…” the crop-haired brunette started. “I know Robin and his friends were planning to go to Sherwood on Thursday night, but I wanted us to have a girls’ night out, too. Ruby and the girls are up for it…”
“Is that all? Why all the secrecy? Why did you need to send Neal out of the room?” groaned Regina.

“Well, I just thought…there’s some entertainment I’ve provisionally booked. I thought I’d check with you first…I can always cancel.”

“Entertainment? What sort of entertainment?”

“Well…” Snow hesitated, “Some dancers. Malcolm and some of the health club guys were planning to put on a bit of a show. I just thought…” she pulled a leaflet out of her back, showing several topless, oiled young men, several of whom they barely recognised.

“Snow, are you seriously suggesting we hire male strippers for a hen night, two days before the wedding?” Regina glared at her mother-in-law. “Because I hardly think-.”

“I’m game!” interrupted Emma, looking at the front cover. “Haven’t done something like that for a while, and certainly not in Storybrooke. Could be fun!”

“Emma, you can’t be serious?” her wife admonished, as the blonde handed her the leaflet. “I hardly think seeing grown men taking their…Ooh, I say! He’s rather nice! Erm, taking their clothes off in…are those jeans sprayed on? Sorry, taking their clothes off and…that’s more an eight-pack then a six-pack! Er…where was I?”

Emma and Snow laughed loudly as Regina blushed. “I think you can take it that Gina’s game too, mum!”

“Good!” said Snow. “I’ll confirm and let the girls know. Now then, for Friday, I thought we could just have a quiet dinner at the farm.” Regina wasn’t really listening now, looking to her wife to telepathically say something:

‘Emma, I’m going to be horny as hell after that! It’d be nice if Robin was home too…’

‘Are you saying I won’t be enough? Or you for me?’

‘Don’t be silly! You know exactly what I mean!’

‘Yeah, but I know how randy you get when you’ve been deprived, even for a few days! Robin’s like that, too. It’ll just make the wedding night even hotter, won’t it?’

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**That evening – The Diner**

“Sorry we had to order take out, guys! The time just flew!” apologised Ruby as she served up the Chinese food laid out on the table in their dining room. Neal and Persephone had immediately noticed, on arriving, just how exhausted Ruby and Dorothy were.

“Yeah. Ruby and I didn’t leave the Jolly till gone six! We didn’t have a chance to prepare dinner, so I hope you don’t mind too much? More lemon chicken for you, Persephone?”

The goddess, now sitting at the opposite side of the table with Neal, gave Dorothy a knowing smirk. *That's when they realised – she knew!* “Yes please, Mrs. Lucas. It’s no problem - I’m sure it’ll be delicious!”

“Please just call me Ruby? You’re letting me call you by your first name, after all!”

“You seem like you’ve had a really long day, you two?” said Neal. “You know, if you were too
tired for this, all you had to do was say so. We could have left it for another day or brought something in for everyone.”

“Persephone, I hope you don’t mind me asking,” said Dorothy, cautiously, “but if you’ve been around for thousands and thousands of years, you must have seen and done just about everything, eaten just about everything and been just about everywhere. We must all seem so boring! Is anything new to you?”

The goddess smirked. “You might think so, but you’d be quite wrong. All of this is new! This food, the smells, so many things. I’ve spent most of my existence on or near Olympus, having only come to the human world twice before. Thousands of your years are but a short span to us! My interactions with humankind have been limited to those departing for judgment and other realms. Unfortunately, my departed brother Hades made that process much harder. However, this man here,” she stroked his hand before closing it in her own, “has taught me much about you all in my brief time with him…”

“Does that mean you’re both together? Like boyfriend and girlfriend?” asked Ruby. Neal jumped in.

“The gods think differently to us, Rubes. For example, they could never marry us humans. It’s strictly forbidden by Zeus. But they do often take lovers. Perse will need to go home soon, which I’m still getting used to, and we won’t be reunited till I die, or gets herself attached to the nearest passing lightning bolt!”

“That’s horrible! So, it could be years till you see each other again? That seems so sad!”

“Years in your time, but moments in the afterlife,” said the goddess, “For me, it won’t be long before I get to be with this rogue again!” she leaned in taking Neal’s lips in hers.

“So basically, no more partners for you till you die then, Neal?”

“On the contrary, Neal is free to find and fall in love and commit to anyone in the land of the living! Humans find it hard to understand this, but after judgment, if you have been granted the ‘better life’ rather than damnation, your soul becomes divisible. You are able to spend as much time as you wish, with all those you care for or love, at the same time, without any jealousy. So, if Dorothy here had multiple true loves during her life, she can be with all of them, and you, concurrently and without any form of jealousy. Same goes for you!”

“Sounds like heaven!” gasped Ruby.

“That’s because it is!” said Neal, returning his lover’s kiss. “Now less talking, more eating!”

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**Thursday night – Mifflin Street**

Emma sat on the living room sofa as Emily, the teenage daughter of one of their friends, played on the floor with Faith, who happily burbled while Hope chewed one of her numerous dolls. “So, Emily, before we leave, do you want to run through everything again?”

“I think I’ve got it. You’ll be settling these two in bed before you leave. Honour and Margot need to go to bed before eight, even if they object…” the child-minder looked over at the blonde girl, who seemed to be sulking near the window. “The babies shouldn’t need feeding, but if one of them wakes up, the bottles are in the fridge. There’re numbers for you, your wife and Mr. Locksley. Or failing that, call Mr. Nolan if I get stuck?”
“Absolutely correct, Emily!” said a voice from the stairs as Regina came down the final steps. “Normally we’d also give you a list of other friends who can help, but all of them seem to be out tonight. So, thank you for being available for you. And don’t forget, if you still need help—”

“I’ll be fine, Mrs. Swan-Mills,” she assured the slightly nervous older woman. “And so will your girls. You know my friend Rebecca Whitehand is coming to join me in an hour, so we’ll be just fine. You go and enjoy yourselves and relax. I’ll text you from time to time, so don’t go worrying. You both look lovely by the way! Where are you all off to tonight?”

Regina wore a black and green knee-length cocktail dress which showed her legs and rear to perfection. “Thank you, my dear. We’re off to the Rabbit Hole for a little pre-wedding girls’ night. I’ll leave my phone on…”

“Oh, you’re going to the Male Stripper Night?” she smirked. “You’ll bump in to Rebecca’s mum there. She’s going!” That made Regina’s cheeks pink as Emma just laughed.

“Strippers? Really?” she attempted the lie, but couldn’t carry on as Emma carried on giggling. “Well…”

“I saw all the posters and we tried to get tickets, but they’re all gone! Someone bought up a whole shedload of them. I think half the married women in Storybrooke are going to be there with you. I’m dead jealous!”

“She got you there, Gina!” Emma continued giggling, earning a glare from Regina that slowly dissolved into a chuckle and an “Oh do shut up, Swan!” before a key was heard jingling in the front door as Robin appeared.

“Hi, mi ‘ladies! Just thought I’d drop by before we’re all heading out.” Then he spotted the cocktail dresses his fiancées were wearing. “Hey, you two look ravishing - perhaps I should be joining the pair of you tonight? Oh, hi Emily – didn’t see you there!”

Just as well, as I was about to suggest what I’d like to do to said fiancées!

“Oh, I hardly think you’d enjoy a night out with just a lot of women talking, Rob! You’d hate all that…” said Emma, now noticing what he was wearing. The classic styled black dinner jacket and trousers hung on him perfectly, with a crisp white shirt and dark red bow tie making him look sexier than she’d ever seen him! The Saviour stood, walking over to him before sliding a hand into the jacket and over his chest. “Hmm. You’ve scrubbed up rather nicely too!” she breathed, leaning in and placing a brief, yet open-mouthed kiss on his lips, enjoying the brief scrape of his light beard on her cheek.

Regina watched the little moment. Two years ago, her wife hated the outlaw. Now it was obvious throughout Storybrooke and Sherwood that Emma loved her man just as much as she did. Nonetheless, seeing Robin take Emma into his arms never failed to induce a little thrill in her, as it did now. “Hey, you two, we need to get going!” Regina tried to walk past them to get her coat, but Robin’s left arm swung out to gently pull his brunette fiancée close to them.

“Not until I get a goodbye kiss from both of you. This is our last chance before we wed! Two nights without my loves. How will I survive?” The three were now wedged together in their familiar cuddle, or thruddle. Emma looked across at the child-minder, her arms still wrapped around the others. “Emily, you may want to look away for this bit – we don’t want to make you uncomfortable!”

“Oh please,” said Emily, unabashed “you guys are renowned for snogging in public; don’t mind me!”
“You heard the lady!” said Robin, dropping his lips onto Regina’s as Emma kissed his cheek, quickly followed by Regina to Emma then finally Emma to Robin. Their practised demonstration of their love. “Even now, I still can’t believe I’m really going to be marrying you two. Regina Maria and Emma Ruth Swan-Mills, I love and always will love you!” The little trio continued hugging and whispering sweet nothings before finally separating.

“Ok. I will see you on Saturday. Enjoy your girls’ night out. Oh, and mi’ ladies?” Emma and Regina both nodded, waiting for him to continue. “Try not to take photos of the strippers. Those younger, leaner, fitter lads might make an old codger like me very insecure…”

“I shouldn’t worry,” whispered Emma, smirking. “You may be an old codger, but you have got a big todger!”

“Emma! Please!” gasped her wife, while the other two burst out laughing.
Chapter Summary

Two years after Robin returned from death, the day of the Royal Wedding has finally arrived. What awaits the Swan-Mills-Locksley trio?

Chapter Notes

Seventy chapters and five months later, after so many twists and turns, we're finally at the wedding! It'll be split over about three chapters and I guess, with an epilogue, we'll be looking at around 75 chapters eventually.

Thank you to everyone who took their valuable time to read my little excursion so far. Some have written to me with some really constructive feedback and ideas, which I really appreciate.

Love you all,

Fi xx

Chapter 70

Royal Wedding Day – Part I

Dawn broke over the forest at a quarter past four in the morning, a slither of piercing golden sunlight bursting from the darkness and over the horizon. It was to be a perfect August day in the small village, with no cloud in the sky. A perfect day for a royal wedding.

In the large coaching inn, that had become the centre of their community since being built just over two years ago, the former outlaw, the proprietor of the Earl of Locksley, woke to the sensation of a heavy lump beside him under the covers. Remembering their talk last night, Robin looked down lovingly at his still sleeping son, remembering how, as a toddler, the boy often used to climb into his bed first thing of a morning. Now, he savoured this rare event.

Roland had stayed in Sherwood last night, as his father went off to his final night celebration downstairs with his friends. His father’s stag night had been the previous evening, so this was a quieter affair. Nonetheless, many old friends had showed up, some having missed the previous night, to give him their best wishes on his forthcoming marriage.

Despite having gone to bed at a decent time, the noise of all the roistering down below had woken Roland around eleven o’clock. He’d sneaked out to find out what all the commotion was about, only to discover his father and friends singing loudly, beers in their hands, as various people stepped up to a hastily prepared stage, to make speeches he couldn’t quite hear, and raising their glasses to toast him. Somebody spotted him at the top of the stairs and yelled. “Guys, it’s Roland! Come on down, mate!” There was a loud cheer from the largish crowd gathered around his father, all
recognising the boy immediately. Robin looked up to see his son, dressed in his pyjamas. He’d had around five pints of ale and now felt reasonably tiddly, though not too inebriated. Filled with love at the sight of his boy, he yelled up. “Come on down then, Roland!”

“You know Rob,” said Little John, who’d come from Arendelle especially for the wedding, “He’s almost a teenager. What say we give him his first ever pint, in celebration? A special one-off?” Robin had been too comfy to argue, though still had some sense about him to say “Gilbert, could you water one down, please?”

Roland had beamed at his father, delighted to be treated as something more than a child. The next hour had been a new experience for him, seeing the men tell fairly risqué stories and tales from their past, often including his father in various plots. He never ceased to be amazed at how many people loved his dad, the hero.

An hour later, the overtired boy had taken himself to bed. However, as the crowd dispersed downstairs, Robin checked in on him. “You OK?”

“I can’t sleep. I was just thinking; everything changes tomorrow, doesn’t it? For you and me...”

“How do you mean?”

“Well, now we’re just us, the Locksley men and the Swan-Mills family. Once you’re married, it’ll change...”

“I don’t see why? Do you regard Margot as your sister? She’s not a Swan-Mills...”

“Of course I do! She’s different though.”

“How so? Because she has a different birth mother? Or what about Honour? She adores you as her big brother! Or Faith or Hope? Don’t you think they’re a part of your family?”

Sorry dad, I guess I’m not explaining this very well. I love them all and I’ve got no problem. It’s just, I keep thinking about my real mum. Marian. About not wanting to forget her. Technically, if she were to come back, like you did, you’d still be married. I guess I just...I dunno...just wish I’d had a chance to get to know her. I heard Henry’s dad came back a few days ago? It just reminded me...”

Robin climbed onto the edge of his son’s bed, wrapping an arm around his back. “Roland, I know we don’t often talk about your birth mum. That’s my fault, because losing her was one of the most painful episodes of my life! She was my true love then, just as much as Regina and Emma are now. And being with her gave me one of the most precious things of my life. You. And just know that my Marian will be looking down on us, from somewhere, and she’ll be wanting you and I to be happy. I grieved badly for her for so long, yet I trust Merlin that we’ll see her again one day. Now, why don’t you come and share my bed tonight, and I’ll tell you a few things about my Marian? Or are you too big a man these days to snuggle up with your old dad?”

The dimple-cheeked boy grinned, “Never, papa! Never.”

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That was last night, his last night as a bachelor, and his last night as a widower. As he looked down on his son’s sleepy features, his mind raced back to Roland’s birth, in that little woodland cottage. He thought of his long departed love.

Marian, I hope wherever you are, you can see this? Our beautiful boy. He’ll be a man soon, yet he still reminds me so much of you. I’ve tried my best raising him the way we agreed. He’s wonderful.
Today I’m going to be marrying not just one, but two people who’ve loved him and protected him when we couldn’t. I love them, Marian, but never think that means I ever stopped loving you! There’ll always be a large piece of you in my heart and I just hope Merlin’s right. That we do get a chance to be with all our loved ones in the future. I pray we’ll meet again!

The boy started waking, groaning and rolling his body away from the golden light piercing through the windows. As his vision cleared, he smacked his lips. “Dad? Wassa time?”

“Time for you to have another hour in bed, my boy! You sleep. I’ll bring some tea up soon.”

Hmm, thanks. You were up watching the sunrise, again?”

It was his second-favourite time of Robin’s day, sitting in woodland watching dawn break. His favourite was climbing in to bed with Emma and Regina, but he certainly wasn’t going to think about that now! “Yes, my lovely. I’m just going to check a few things downstairs. You rest.”

“This is really it, isn’t it? The big day! You worried?”

He smiled down, stroking the back of his head. “Absolutely terrified! But I’ll survive...”

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Mifflin Street

It was another two hours before the alarm went off next to Emma, following by her usual groan at being rudely woken. Under the sheets, latched to her side, Regina said something incoherent. It was their second night without Robin in their bed and, somehow, as with Emma when she worked her night shift, it never feel complete. Like a part of them was missing. It took a minute before Regina’s brain clicked in, remembering why they’d set an early alarm. Their getting married!

“Mmff. Coffee!” she groaned. “Robin, plleeasseee?” she called, before remembering he wasn’t there. And more importantly, the reason why. “Emma, we need to get up before the children. Come on, we’ve lots to do!”

“Relax. We’ve got...let’s see...five and a half hours? Loads of time.” The blonde moaned. However, they hadn’t factored in Honour running into their room screaming at them in excitement. “Mummy, mamma, get up!” A moment later, she’d jumped on the bed. “Wedding day! You’re going to be marrying daddy today!”

“Yes, darling,” gasped Regina. “But please give us a chance to wake up first! Mamma here’s getting older and needs her beauty sleep!”

“Oi, bit...loving wife!” the blonde rasped, her throat dry. “I’m awake. Honnie, did Henry come home?”

“No. He stayed with Mister Gold, mamma. And Roland’s with daddy. Is Henry’s daddy going to be coming to the wedding?”

God, I bloody hope not! I didn’t invite him! Emma thought. “Henry is, but I don’t think his father’s coming. There’s not enough seats, for a start...” she prayed the youngster wouldn’t ask any more questions. Fortunately, a loud rap on the door knocker stopped them. At this hour? Who the hell? Regina rose, put her dressing gown on and went to answer it.

“You took your time!” said Snow White, standing on the porch, having already put two large boxes and holdalls on the steps. “I’ve another one in the car.”
“Snow, it’s not even six thirty, what are you doing here so early?”

“We’ve a lot to do! David’s gone to Sherwood to meet Roch, as his team gets there at seven. I’ve got the salon girls arriving here at nine-thirty to get your hair and make-up done, and the limousine will be here at eleven thirty…”

“Nine-thirty, that’s three hours away! Why on earth would you…”

“We need to bathe and change all the girls, so I came a little earlier to help, especially seeing as we’ll have the wedding breakfast in an hour…”

“Snow, what are you talking about? Wedding breakfast?”

“You’ve forgotten? What happens on wedding mornings back home? All the women of the combined families gather and breakfast together, before everything starts. Surely you remember your first wedding?”

“I try to put that one out of my mind! I married under duress, unless you’d forgotten? And no, I didn’t have a wedding breakfast, as you put it, mainly because my mother kept me locked up until the service!” she seethed.

Snow winced at her stupid faux-pas. “I’m sorry Regina, really! I seem to remember your mother said you were feeling sickly, probably due to your nerves. I didn’t realise…”

Regina rolled her eyes. “It’s in the past, where it should remain! So, who can we expect at this ‘breakfast’? Is it here? Am I expected to cook?”

“Of course not, I’m cooking! Nothing much, just heating up some croissants, pain au chocolate and a few things Pierre Roch sent us yesterday. Plus, a little champagne and orange juice. I invited Robin’s sister and cousin to join us. Plus Zelena, of course, though she said she couldn’t make it.” Regina’s sister had returned from California yesterday and Regina had, after checking with Robin first thing, dropped Margot off so she could spend some time with her birth mother. She was grateful Robin wouldn’t be around to see the former Wicked Witch in his home!

“Pierre Roch has actually made us a wedding breakfast?”

“He did. Robin asked him to put something together for all of us, as a surprise, though I’m not quite sure what’s in it. It’s all in one of the boxes in the car. I’ll bring it in…”

Up in the bedroom, Emma could hear her mother’s voice downstairs. However, before she opened her eyes, preparing to get out of bed, she heard another, deeper voice now getting louder in her mind. Robin?

‘Morning, my love! You hearing me OK?’

‘Rob, that you?’ Emma was still a little uncomfortable using telepathy to talk to her lovers.

‘It’s me. Where are you? What are you doing?’

‘Lying in bed, just where I should be at this time of the morning! Gina’s downstairs, and it sounds like mum’s just arrived. You?’

‘Up since four. Just checking in with you both, and making sure my lovely brides-to-be aren’t having second thoughts? I’m not used to waking up without either of you these days. Roland’s quite a snorer…’
She chuckled. ‘Takes after his father! I’m missing you too, babe. Still, we’ll make up for it tonight, if we’re not too shattered!’

‘I can’t wait. Tell me what you’re wearing right now?’

‘Wow, well that was a change of topic, Locksley! Gina’s purple nightie. That short, silky one.’

‘Ooh, that knee length one? I like you in that. Shows off your legs. Perhaps I should just poof over and get a closer look?’

Emma chuckled, now enjoying this weird mental ‘flirting’. To an outsider, it would look just like she was lying in bed, with her eyes closed.

‘I’d like that, but with mum downstairs and the girls milling around, we might have a problem! Shame though. Guess what I’ve got on under the nightie?’

‘I know you too well. Absolutely nothing! Au naturel?’

‘Right again,’ a mischievous grin on her face. ‘And do you know what I’m planning to do to myself right now, as you and Gina aren’t here?’ Her breathing grew heavier as her right hand moved down between her thighs, her fingers stroking around her bud.

Robin’s telepathic sense could tell she wasn’t pretending!

‘You’re a very bad girl, Emma Swan-Mills! How dare you arouse your fiancé, when he’s in a public place with no…chance of relief? You’ll have to be punished later…’

Emma’s mind raced to that fierce love-making session they’d shared two weeks ago, when he’d smacked her soundly on the bottom, several times, at the request of Regina, who had revealed a little-known, carefully hidden aspect of Emma. Namely, that she occasionally liked rough treatment, and rather enjoyed being a submissive from time to time. Or a dom. Or hell, anything that involved having sex with her two loves!

‘Promises, promises. I’ll hold you to that!’ she teased. ‘Anything else you’d like to do...after the wedding?’

‘I’d like to do everything. I want to make love to you, while you’re still in your wedding dresses! I want you screaming!’

‘You want us still in our dresses, huh? Another little fantasy of yours, Mr. Locksley? Banging the virginal brides? Who says we’re both going to be wearing dresses? Perhaps I’m going to be wearing a tux! Perhaps, I don’t want to be made love to? Perhaps I just want to be fucked senseless till I’m brain dead? Perhaps I want to—’

‘CAN YOU TWO PUT A SOCK IN IT?’ the voice of Regina now loud in their minds. ‘I’VE GOT SNOW-FUCKING-WHITE STANDING HERE! She’s in the kitchen with me, no doubt wondering why I’ve suddenly stopped talking, gone red in the face, with my eyes closed and gripping the ruddy worktop!’

Robin sniggered loudly while Emma desperately tried to stop herself laughing. ‘Good morning to you too, my queen! Only you could yell silently! My apologies, but you know, you really do need to keep that wife of yours in order! She’s quite the dirty minx…’

‘May I remind you, thief, she’ll be your wife too in a few hours’ time? And I don’t need you two putting smutty thoughts in my head while I’m trying to talk to this annoying woman down here! Did
you know your sister and cousin are coming over in an hour? I didn’t! Emma, kindly take a shower, cold preferably, get dressed, and come downstairs please. Quickly! And stop making Robin horny! At least…not until tonight!’

‘Gina, you said you had a red face?’ asked Robin, smiling to himself. ‘So she was making you horny too!’

He felt the Saviour snigger.

‘Oh, do shut up thief!’

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The Jolly Roger – One hour later

“So, you’re definitely staying here, sulking, instead of going to the wedding?” Rosie sounded exasperated, “are you sure you still don’t have feelings for her?”

“Quite sure, thank you, love. I may no longer have feelings for her, but my attending would be a distraction. You may have received the invite from your sister but I’m certain that, as far as I am concerned, Snow White was merely being polite. You should go. Your father and your family are anyway, but I am more than happy to stay here and look after my boys. Ruby’s dropping Nathaniel off around ten thirty. Some of the men have volunteered to help me, anyway. We’ll be fine, so you go with Ruby and Dorothy and enjoy yourself.”

“You sure? I do kinda want to spend some time with Annabelle and Charlie, but I don’t want to… FUCK!” she gasped in shock, as an unexpected magic swirl suddenly appeared on the foredeck, quickly dissipating to reveal an excited man and a woman, less than twenty feet away.

“Wooo, shit! So need to get used to that!” yelled Neal, wobbly on his feet as the mist disappeared.

“Baelfire? What the bloody hell?” gasped Killian. “I heard you’re back, though it’s normally thought good form to ask a captain’s permission, before you board his ship!”

“Apologies, Hook!” Neal chuckled, clearly not sorry, “Sorry, Captain Two-Hands, but I’m trying out new magic here and haven’t quite mastered this apparating stuff yet! I’m just grateful we didn’t wind up in the drink over there,” he pointed to the side. “Sorry Seff!” he said to his companion, who just seemed to shrug it off. Then he spotted Rosie. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to disturb you, Miss…”

“Mrs. Jones. Neal, this is my wife, Rosalind! Rosie, this ‘surprise’ guest is Neal Cassidy, otherwise known as Baelfire, otherwise known as the father of Emma’s son Henry, and himself the son of the Dark One!”

“Ex-Dark One, Jones!” said the tall woman in blue standing next to Neal. “You seem to be unaware of recent events.” She looked at Rosie. “And you must be one of the Sorcerer’s daughters? I can tell by the eyes…”

“You know my father?” Rosie asked the amazingly stunning brunette, feeling slightly intimidated.

“Do not be alarmed. Yes, I know Merlin very well indeed. I even met your mother once. A remarkable woman. You share her look too…”

Killian stepped forward. “Rosie, this is Persephone, the Goddess of the Underworld. Perse, I hadn’t
expected to see you here? I assume you came with this rogue?”

“I did, Mr. Jones. I came with Neal to assist him before I have to go back. I’m sure my father will insist…”

“Well, you certainly don’t do house calls, love. I assume it’s for a reason?”

“It is,” Neal jumped in. “I need to travel to another realm. Merlin suggested we talk. I’m surprised you’re even here, although I did get to meet young Nathaniel the other day…”

‘Aye, mate. Much has changed since you departed. I’ve two sons. Nathaniel, who you met, and Liam, asleep downstairs. So, to which realm do you need to travel?’

“DunBroch, on the Sceptered Isle. It’s a coastal city in need of some…assistance.”

“I know it. The home of Queen Merida? I vaguely recall her father, a ferocious man but a decent cove. How soon do you need to travel? Why you, and for how long?”

“It’s a request from Zeus…” as though that explained everything.

"Perhaps we could discuss this after the wedding?” Rosie pleaded. “If we were to go, it could be very disruptive to Liam? Let’s think it through…”

“Aye, lass, though as I said before, you should go to this wedding today. Your family's going to be there, anyway. I intend to stay back here. I would merely be a distraction.”

“You’re taking about Emma’s wedding, right?” asked Neal. “I’m with you there. I may be Henry’s dad, but I don’t think I’ll be exactly welcome, even though my papa and his…friends are invited. I’ll stay here, if you don’t mind? Perse, what about you?”

“You two need some time to catch up. However, in all my years, I've never attended a marriage between three people. So, as this good lady is planning to go to the event, perhaps I could join you, Rosie?”

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**The Earl of Locksley – around Ten Thirty**

“Wow, Roland, you look so…grown up!” said Mulan, pulling her favourite merry man in for a hug, kissing his forehead. Robin’s son wore a navy-blue morning suit, with white shirt and bow tie, grey waistcoat and trousers. “You’re looking more like your father every day.”

“Well I see a lot of Marian in him!” said Little John, turning him to straighten his bow tie. “She’d be proud!”

It was then Robin appeared, walking down the inn’s staircase into the main bar area. He beamed with pride at his son, before walking over to join them. “Indeed, she would John. And seeing him like this, she’d be as choked as I am right now!” he wound an arm around his son’s back, kissing the top of his head.

“You both look very distinguished!” added Mulan.

The former outlaw looked at his closest female friend, after his fiancées of course. “I guess you’re the only one around here who knows what it’s like Mu, marrying two people. Any tips for me?”

“Apart from the obvious one, none. Love them and respect them equally. You know the rest…”
“I do. I saw Phil in the park yesterday, playing with your Li. He’s proud as punch she’s trying to talk already! Quite the impressive young lady.”

“She takes after Rory,” she smiled happily. “She’s forever talking to her; and now she’s walking, she’s quite the handful. I see your little mites are changing too?”

‘They are. Hope seems to be the talker and Faith the walker. I think they and your Li will be quite the naughty little coven in the future.”

“Dad,” Roland interrupted. “What time are we leaving for the service?”

“Soon enough. I need to talk to a certain French chef and make sure things are on track. You go with Elsa’s sister. John and I will see you by the lakeside. John, where on earth is Anna?” his tone starting to betray his nerves.

Mulan rested a hand on his arm. “You feeling nervous?”

“Honestly? I’m bloody terrified, Mu! The last time I did this was a little ceremony in the middle of the Enchanted Forest. But for this, everyone’s turning up! I just hope Gina and Emma do too!”

The former warrior grinned before kissing him on the cheek. “They will. You’re worth it…”

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Sherwood Lake – One hour later

With half an hour to go before the service, Robin and Little John, now resplendent in their morning suits, left the inn and walked across to the large manicured lawn in front of the lake.

Merlin had clearly been busy! A raised white stage now stood by the water’s edge, surrounded by a semicircle of raised platforms, forming a large temporary amphitheatre, so all the several hundred guests could see the wedding service from above, rather than just the giant TV monitor which now stood nearby, for other members of the public to easily see the entire thing. Several hundred people had already gathered, as a large cheer went up at the arrival of the groom and best man. Bloody hell! thought Robin.

Quite a few of them came forward to slap him on the back and wish him well. Some he hadn’t seen in a long time, greeted him as they stepped up onto the walkway leading to the stage. Robin felt humbled by the experience, that so many could think enough of them to show up. Cheers continued as guests recognised him and the pair stepped among them to be greeted with handshakes, hugs and kisses from so many. As he reached the altar, Archie Hopper stepped forward, greeting him with a warm handshake.

“A wonderful day for a wedding, Robin! And hello, your Majesty!” he greeted John, with a deferential nod.

"None of that nonsense, Archie, I’m just John to you! Otherwise, you’ll have to keep calling Rob here 'Your Lordship' until he gets spliced, and then it’ll be 'Your Majesty' afterwards. And we both know he hates all that stuff!” The conscience of the town grinned back at him with a nod, taking the groom’s hand to shake.

“Thanks for doing this, Archie! I have to confess I’m feeling a little overwhelmed here. We’ve got quite the crowd already.”

“Yes. And quite a few arriving. The stands here should take about three hundred, and the lawn over
there about the same. A lot of people have a great deal of affection for you three these days, and they just wish you well. So, don’t feel too uncomfortable. You’re among friends now…”

The three heard another loud cheer go up from the crowd. Looking down the ramp, Robin saw Snow White, accompanied by Prince Neal, steadily walking up and towards them, stopping to greet everyone they recognised, until eventually reaching the nearest guest seats to the stage, reserved for family. Neal was, like Roland, wearing a full morning suit while Snow wore an elegant eggshell blue knee length dress with matching dress coat, forgoing the hat but in its place, a tiara. Robin stepped forward to greet her.

“Good morning, Snow. I have to say, you look beautiful!” before placing a small kiss on his future mother-in-law’s cheek.

“Thanks,” she blushed. "And you’ve scrubbed up rather well yourself, I must say!” she looked admiringly at his suit.

He leaned over to her, to whisper in her ear. "Any last words? Any sage pearls of advice?"

“Just love them, Robin. Love them till the end of your days!” She whispered back, as another cheer went up. He looked across to see the Sorcerer and his family make their way forward, this time with his daughter Annabelle on his arm. Immediately behind them walked two women, with their arms linked. One he recognised as Rosalind, Annabelle’s sister and wife of Killian Jones. Although he didn't recognise the other one, an astonishingly beautiful taller brunette woman, who, unlike the other women, seemed to be wearing some sort of pale blue long gown. “Who on earth?” he muttered, as Snow turned to see where he was staring.

“That’s Persephone, goddess of the Underworld!” whispered Snow, “She came down with Henry’s father, but don’t be concerned, apparently she and Neal are an item now!”

“A goddess attending our wedding? What the hell…”

A minute later, after Merlin and Anna greeted the groom and best man, Rosie and Persephone stepped forward, Rosie greeting him with a hug. “Hi Robin. I hope you don’t mind us attending? Killian and Neal both thought coming here would be a distraction, all things considered, so Perse kindly agreed to partner me!”

“Plus, despite my age, I’ve never actually witnessed a polyamorous wedding before,” said the goddess, offering her hand to Robin. “I hope you don’t mind?” The goddess seems to flirt with him, a not altogether unpleasant experience.

Robin gave a polite short bow, placing a small kiss on the back of her hand. “No, not at all! We’re very honoured to have you here, Persephone.” The elegant woman in front of him was astonishingly beautiful and it was obvious to him she had massive magical powers. “Please do take a seat and make yourself comfortable. You’re very welcome to join us for the wedding lunch afterwards? I’m sure my brides won’t mind…”

As the pair moved aside, he then saw someone he instantly recognised. Charlie Sage was slowly escorting an older gentleman up to the stage. The same silver-haired, twinkly-eyed old man he thought there was a fair chance he would never get to meet in the flesh again. He felt his throat dry up.

“G-grandpa?”

“Surprise!” said the genteel, rather dignified man with the walking stick. “Didn’t think I’d miss a
Locksley wedding now, did you Robbie?” said Christian Locksley, the current Earl of Locksley, the grandfather he’d met when he and Roland had travelled to England last year. Robin rushed up to him, taking him in his arms, hugging him tightly, a tear rolling down his cheek.

“Grandpa, it’s wonderful you’re here! But how? When?”

“This morning. An hour ago, by portal, courtesy of Merlin and this remarkable young man here, who collected me!” He winked at Charlie over Robin’s shoulder. “Your Emma wanted it to be a surprise!”

“It most definitely is!” Robin sniffled, hugging him tightly once again as Snow stepped closer. “Robin, I think Lord Christian should sit next to David and I, don’t you? As our Guest of Honour?”

"Thanks Snow," he beamed with happiness at the old man. "We have so much to talk about, grandpa!"

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As Robin and John continued to greet new guests, another loud cheer was heard in the distance as several black limousines pulled up near the front of the inn. Looking over the crowd, John saw Alan a’ Dale wave his arms to send a message in semaphore. “Right, Merry Men - the bridal party’s arriving. To positions, everyone!”

Out of sight of the groom and the crowd, the first long, black limousine pulled up onto the lawn outside the inn, directly in front of the doors. Maria and Caroline Locksley were there to greet them. Out of the first vehicle stepped Queen Elsa of Arendelle, and from the other side, Maleficent, the former Mistress of All Evil. The pair wore matching ivory, mermaid-style, off-the-shoulder satin bridesmaid dresses, clearly bespoke. “You two look magnificent!” gasped Caroline in admiration.

“Thank you, darling,” said Maleficent in her husky accent. “You know, it’s the first time I’ve ever allowed myself to wear matching outfits with another woman. They are rather wonderful. In another time, seeing her in that, I’d be quite keen to seduce young Elsa here myself!” she said, smirking as the queen blushed, giggling. “But you need to see our brides. They are truly a vision!”

Behind them, out from the car stepped Margot and Honour, resplendent in their younger bridesmaid dresses, of similar colours to the older women, but in a different, suitably discrete style, earning various ‘oohs’ and ‘aahs’ from the women gathered nearby. “Over here, my dears,” said Maleficent, so they could make way for the bridal car.

The second, longer limousine pulled up, it’s windows darkened to prevent passengers being seen. Opening the front passenger door, Prince Charming stepped out, resplendent in his own morning suit. He’d been tempted to wear his old military uniform, until Snow advised this was to be a modern ceremony. David opened the nearest rear door, whispering something inside before the figure of Emma Locksley-Mills carefully turned to manoeuvre herself out, without damaging her train. David bent down to half lift her out, as she held it carefully. Once clear, she straightened, turning to see Regina exiting from the other side, with Henry appearing to assist her too. As she also straightened and carefully walked around to stand next to her wife, Maria looked in awe at the pair of them. “You two look utterly fantastic!”

It was only then she noticed they were both wearing nearly identical wedding dresses, with only minor details separating them. They also each wore a silver crown and tiara, the only symbol of their royal status. “Wait...you both chose to wear the same dress?”

“Yes,” said Regina, looking with pride at Emma. “We are already married, after all! It was originally
an idea of Snow’s. A symbol of our unity.”

“Yeah, and the fact this is the only dress we both fell in love with, and neither of us wanted to part
with it!” added Emma, with a chuckle.

“Well I think the pair of you look divine,” said Caroline. “My cousin’s clearly going to have a heart
attack when he sees you!”

“I certainly hope not, It’d put a real damper on the wedding night!” countered Emma, with a wink.
Just then Will Scarlett and his wife, Queen Anastasia, stepped out from inside the inn, holding Hope
and Faith in their arms, both one-year-olds looking seriously cute in their baby bridesmaid outfits.

David checked his watch. Stepping closer to Emma, he placed his hands on her upper arms, and
gently pulling her into his embrace, careful not to mess up her makeup, before placing a warm kiss
on her forehead. “My darling girl. I may have missed out the first time,” he said, looking across to
Regina, “but I’d always hoped and prayed that one day I would get the chance to walk my brave,
wonderful daughter down the aisle. You have no idea how proud I am to be your father! I love
you…”

Well, that choked Emma right up! Even Regina had tears in her eyes! Emma placed her head against
his chest, savouring the moment. “I love you too, daddy! But, I’ll still give you hell if you ruin my
makeup through crying!”

“Ditto!” added Regina, sniffing, before smiling at the pair. David released his girl, before
surprisingly, moving in front of Regina, pulling her in for a similar hug. “And as for you, lady -
we’ve had an interesting past, haven’t we? But I can honestly say you’re the best daughter-in-law I
could ever want. I love you too, Regina!” he kissed the top of her head, the safest place not to affect
her makeup. Regina stayed silent, merely relishing in his warm embrace. After that, he stepped back
and looked at the watch again.

“Right then, ladies, we’ve one minute to go. Let’s get this show on the road, shall we?”

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Chapter Summary

The Royal Wedding's finally here. Emma and Regina take Robin to be their husband. Snow planned it all meticulously. What could go wrong?

Chapter Notes

Sorry I kept you all waiting for this chapter, but my coursework for this year's finals had to take priority! I can't believe it's been nearly a month! This, my first ever published story, was intended to be a twenty-chapter short story that ran away with me. many thanks to those of you who stuck with it! I got a few criticisms (on FF.net, on which I haven't even published anything), saying that this poly relationship wasn't realistic (like a magical land, fairies, evil queens and saviours, is?) or from the usual single-ship obsessed types. The idea is to suspend belief and just enjoy it. If you don't like it, don't read it. That's OK by me...

So, on with the wedding. There's a smutty bit at the end, so be warned anybody who's a bit sensitive about that sort of thing. But for those who stuck with it so far, I love you! Fi xx

Chapter 71

The Royal Wedding Day – Part II

Among all the kerfuffle surrounding the wedding, hardly anyone had noticed the orchestra of some twenty musicians sitting in the small dugout immediately behind the stage. At least, they hadn't noticed them, until Archie, having spotted the bridal party heading toward them, nodded for them to start.

Seeing two brides in similar white dresses, the crowd started stirring, cheering and waving enthusiastically. Robin deliberately kept his eyes forward, waiting for the surprise to come. As they gradually reached the ramp, the orchestra struck up, silencing the crowd immediately. First onto the aisle were Princesses Honour and Margot, drawing admiring looks and sighs from all the guests as, each holding a basket of red and white rose petals, they started to walk slowly up the wide aisle, dropping the petals onto the path, as they headed towards their father at the front, as their mothers had instructed.

Robin sighed at the sight of his little angels and, ignoring tradition, turned, dropping onto his knees in the centre of the aisle to await them, with a proud grin on his face. They finally arrived, both with beaming smiles as he swooped them into his arms, placing a loud kiss on each of their cheeks. "Well done, girls. You were brilliant!" As he released them, Snow appeared discretely at his side to guide them to their seats nearby.

Next came Princesses Hope and Faith, sixteen months old, and wobbling along on unsteady feet,
holding tiny baskets, but quite unsure what to do. Caroline and Maria gently guided them as they attempted to walk, laughing with the crowd as the infants kept stopping, Faith to sit and chew on some petals she’d just found on the floor, and Hope to burble incoherently at some of the guests she’d recognised. The crowd, watching the monitor, found the pair utterly adorable, many chuckling, wet-eyed, at their little display. Eventually Maria and Caroline scooped them up to save time, before bringing them to Robin for a quick hug and kiss, Faith then showing a hint of temper at being taken away from her papa.

Now came the brides, seen first by the video camera on the lawn, as they gathered at the back, Elsa and Maleficent straightening out their bridal trains. Regina, with Maleficent holding onto hers, gripped Henry's arm for dear life, as she stepped onto the platform. Close behind her stepped Emma, her arm in her father’s and Queen Elsa behind. The royal group arranged themselves, with the two brides in the middle. Various gasps were heard from the women in the crowd on the lawn, as the large monitor showed Regina and Emma, admiring their hair and stunning dresses, in all of their glory, as they prepared to walk up the aisle.

George Handel’s The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba, burst forth from six violinists, among them Henry’s first love, Violet, rapidly followed by the oboes. One of the non-magical world’s most famous works stilled the crowd instantly, as Emma and Regina Swan-Mills slowly walked towards the next stage of their eventful lives. Regina, looking anxiously at her wife, entwined their fingers, biting her lower lip as she tried to hide her nerves.

Hearing the orchestra and seeing the big grin on Archie’s face, Robin slowly turned to stand in the middle, facing the new arrivals. As he saw their matching wedding dresses, and nervous smiles of his brides as they looked at each other, he gulped. They were perfection, complementing each other magnificently. He couldn’t hide the broad smile that crept onto his face, as the two most beautiful women in his world walked steadily toward him. How the hell could I ever imagine myself worthy of these two?

Regina was the first to spot Robin’s cheesy grin, which relaxed her, just a little. Emma followed momentarily, blowing a silent kiss to their imminent husband.

Just before they finally reached him, the brunette squeezed her wife’s hand, stopping to do something they’d already agreed. The rest of the audience surprised as the brides turned as a pair, seeming to face Snow and David but actually, the elderly grey-haired gentleman with the twinkly blue eyes, now standing on Snow’s left. Together, Emma and Regina gave a slow, elegant curtsy to the man, who beamed with happiness in response, bowing back at them.

“Your Grace!” whispered Regina, “so pleased they got you here on time!”

“Hi, Lord Chris,” said Emma, a little louder, “Loads to catch up on! See you later…”

“Your Majesties!” said Christopher, the current Earl of Locksley. “I’m looking forward to it!”

Finally, they reached the front and, as the music faded, David stepped forward from beside his daughter, shaking hands with Robin, before pulling him into a brief hug and whispering something, unheard by the others, which made Robin laugh. Henry did something similar with Robin, before stepping back and placing a kiss on both mothers’ cheeks, before moving aside to his seat. Robin gathered Emma’s left and Regina’s right hands in his own, delivering a small kiss on each as he looked both in their eyes, whispering. “Perfect. There are no words…” Regina stared at him, transfixed. To her, her fiancé looked a million dollars in his bespoke morning suit, which accentuated his large shoulders and lean torso to perfection. Emma’s eyes flickered over him, looking him up and down, admiring the view. She just couldn’t help herself when she sent him a quick mind-message, heard only by Regina:
‘Hmm. Nice suit! Rather nice body inside it, too…’ she grinned, silently.

‘I was just thinking things about you two that I REALLY shouldn’t be thinking about right now!’ he winked at Regina.

‘Plenty of time for all that later, you two! Patience…’ Regina added, herself pinking under her makeup.

‘Is that a promise, my lady?’ he looked almost predatory at that moment.

‘That is most definitely a promise! But only if you both…focus!’

Archie could tell something had just passed between the grinning trio, but wisely chose to ignore it. After welcoming them, he stood in the centre, to address the crowd, his voice echoing over the tannoy. “Good afternoon, everyone. It’s a glorious day, isn’t it? There’s not a cloud in the sky, and we’re gathered here today, at this beautiful location, to witness a wonderful event. A union between not two, but three of our most illustrious heroes. A commitment, a promise between all of them, to come together in marriage. Marriage is a spiritual, sacred and legal bond; a lifelong commitment, not to be taken lightly.” He stopped, turning slightly to face the trio, his face now serious. “So, I call upon all those present to witness and bless this union. And I ask the three of you – do you all consent to this marriage willingly?”

Each of them confirmed in turn. “I do!”

He gave them a little smile, before continuing. “Excellent. Now, our ceremony will be a little different today. As most of you know, our brides, Regina and Emma Swan-Mills, are already married some three years now. But they will today be taking Robin of Locksley into their union. So, Robin will be making his commitment to each of them individually. And they, as a couple, to him. Now, before we proceed, I understand the brides and groom have statements they wish to make to each other. Regina, would you like to start?”

The former Evil Queen and mayor of Storybrooke nodded, nervously changing places with their fiancé, stepping into the centre, before taking a deep breath and turning to address him.

“Robin, you died seven years ago, sacrificing your own life, just to save mine! It was by far the worst day of my life, and I was left utterly broken. What I suffered as a result wasn’t just depression, it was a complete physical and mental breakdown. At my lowest point, I even once attempted to take my own life.” Several large gasps were heard from around the audience, many of whom hadn’t heard that part of her story! “However, I was saved by so many people, even though, knowing my past, I didn’t deserve it! My darling son Henry of course; you, Archie…” she smiled up at her now close friend and therapist, “Little John, Will and the men. So many of you…” she hesitated, gulping, with tears trying to form in her eyes. She resisted, focusing on matters in hand. “But amongst all of you, was Emma.” She looked adoringly at her beloved wife. “Emma suffered, just as much as me with Loss of her own. But somehow, we clung to one another through those first terrible months.” Emma stepped forward, to try and comfort the slightly trembling brunette. Regina shook her head a fraction, letting her know she was OK to continue. “Robin, I discovered after you’d died, that you’d also left me with one of the greatest gifts of my life. You left me pregnant! Honour was born six months later. She, and Roland when we got him back, helped me through the next few painful years. I love them all, and I’ll forever be grateful for being blessed with them. However, I still grieved over your passing, and as Emma and I drew closer, we slowly realised our feelings were becoming more than just friendship. I came to love her, and we finally married three years ago, at a little ceremony in New York…” A short flick of magic produced a hankie, which she used to dab her eyes, their audience and the larger crowd nearby staying silent as they felt the raw emotion in her voice.
“Emma, I love you with all my heart. I use this opportunity in front of everyone here to renew that vow I made you three years ago, and pledge my undying love and faithfulness to you, my darling.” Emma smiled lovingly back, trying to hold back a tear.

Regina’s eyes now focused on Robin. “Then YOU came back!” she said it with a smirk, captured by the camera, which in turn made quite a few people in the congregation chuckle, including Emma. “The man who died to save me! My soulmate! You can imagine my torment. However, once again Emma became my saviour; the one who proposed another way, just as she had with Henry. A way I could have both of you in my life. And the result? Three months later, not only did I discover I was pregnant, but Emma was too!”

*She meant it merely as an explanation for what she had to say next. But hearing the loud chuckles, guffaws and a few cheers from the crowd, she realised now she could have phrased it very differently!* Hearing some bawdy comments from the crowd, (“Yay, plenty o’ lead in yer pencil there, Rob!”, “You go, my son!”, and one unnecessary “Never thought you had it in you – but they certainly did!” – the last one earning a scowl at the crowd from Snow...and Robin), her cheeks reddened. Then she noticed Emma’s had too, as both women finally broke into embarrassed laughter themselves! As the crowd slowly calmed, her regal manner returned:

“Before we were so rudely interrupted, I meant to say that it brought Hope and Faith into our lives! With the result that this once lonely Evil Queen now has six wonderful, beautiful children and her own queen in her life! Robin, I love you. I’ve been in love with you for a very long time. If you will take me, a deeply-flawed woman with a terrible past, to be your wife, I will devote my life to you, and Emma, and our entire family and I’ll do my undying best to be the best mother and wife I can be to you all.”

Robin’s silly grin never left his face as he heard a few sniffles nearby. *No doubt Snow being one of them!* He so wanted to take Regina in his arms to kiss her, but knew he’d have to hang on just a little longer. Now it was Emma’s turn to speak. She stepped up to her wife, placing a quick chaste kiss on her lips *Well they’re already married, so what the hell?* before composing herself.

“Robin, I never really got to know you before you died. However, your death soon made me realise what you meant to so many people. You were, are, a legend and your name is known, even throughout the non-magical world. You’ve led men and women to do good for those around them, with no magic, and no titles or wealth. So many were devastated by your cruel murder, not just Regina. You were a thief, but you used the money stolen from the rich and undeserving, only for the good of others. So, when Zeus sent you back to us, I remember everyone around her was overjoyed. Except me! I thought you were a pain in the ass, or ‘arse’ as you’d say!”

That brought laughter from most of the crowd, and Emma smiled back at her target, who just grinned back. “Well come on, think about it? I’d married Regina, then the very guy who got killed saving her, comes back! Her True Love! Then we find you came back with magic as well! And to make matters worse, I discovered that the guy is the most honourable, decent and honest man I’ve ever met! How annoying is that?” Emma had really been speaking to the audience, but now she turned her attention to him.

“But then I got to know you, Robin Hood! I got to know the real man behind all the legends and stuff, and I got to realise why Regina fell for you; because I was starting to myself, even back then! In that clinic just over there, during that siege, it was finally my turn to be killed. I was shot and it appears, I died. Yet...yet, you brought me back. You brought me back from death with a kiss! Even after all that, it still took me weeks to admit I’d fallen in love with you. Three months after your return, just like Regina, I found out I was pregnant with Hope! What can I say – this is meant to be.” A few cheers rang out from around the crowd. “The last year and a half has been the busiest, most
stressful, but I have to say the happiest of my life. I’ve got you, I’ve got Regina, and I’ve got a huge family. And a large part of it’s down to you! So like her, I vow to you to be the best mother and best wife I can be, devoting my life to my family, always. I love you.” A polite clap came from the audience followed, as Robin brought her hands to his lips, placing a small kiss.

“Robin, I believe you also wish to say something?” asked Archie, earning a silent nod from the former outlaw as he switched places with Emma, to face them. Unusually nervous, for him, he gave a very long sigh, gathering his thoughts.

“Two years ago, Zeus sent me back. What for me, was a gap of weeks down there, was over five years up here! So the world I’d left behind changed completely. I’d grieved the loss of my family, feeling guilt over Roland having already lost his mother, god rest her soul. It was only natural that Regina, and the town, had moved on. The fairies said she was my soulmate, my True Love. But they didn’t need to tell me anything, because I knew I was already deeply in love. Discovering she’d now found love with Emma, the Saviour, was initially a bitter pill to swallow. My losing Regina was bad, though the joy of discovering I had yet another daughter, my little Honour, and that Margot and Roland were safe and well, helped me cope. My family is my life, the centre of my universe. I never stopped loving you Regina, though knowing you were now loved by Emma Swan, somehow made my loss a little more bearable.” He looked across to the blonde.

“Emma, you and I hardly knew each other before my death, but even back then, I knew you and Regina were important to each other. Not just for Henry, not just for the town, but for each other. As a support against all the craziness coming into this place. You supported and loved her, when I couldn’t. You helped her raise Honour from birth, went to recover Roland, and looked after them both. I knew there was something special about you, but I had no idea just how special! That you could accept me back into Regina’s life, and your own, is truly astonishing and after that first date we had all those months ago, it didn’t take long before I realised I also had feelings for you, too. Yet it took your dying in front of me, to realise just what those feelings were. I love you, Emma Swan!”

Both women beamed at him as he gathered a hand from each, bringing them together within his own. “You’ve both asked me to join your marriage, and I do so willingly. I vow today to support, love, honour and cherish you both, and this family with everything that I have, and everything that I am.” He had, almost unnoticed, stepped close to them both, the world beyond them seeming invisible as the love they held poured out from them.

Archie interrupted the moment. “Now, where’s our ring bearer?”

‘Here!” yelled Roland, appearing from somewhere behind John. He stepped forward, holding a burgundy cushion with three rings lightly sown onto it, to stop them from falling off. Regina grinned, bending to kiss his cheek, before picking up the largest ring. Archie thanked him silently, also handing a small card to the brunette. “Regina, could you please repeat what it says on the card?”

She stepped in front of Robin, to read aloud. “With the consent of my wife Emma, I call upon these persons here present, to witness that I, Regina Maria Swan-Mills, do take thee Robin Christian Locksley, to be my lawfully wedded husband. To have and to hold, from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love honour and cherish, till death us do part.” She kissed the ring, before handing it carefully to Emma, who took her turn:

“With the lawful consent of my wife Regina, I call upon these persons here present, to witness that I, Emma Ruth Swan-Mills, do take thee Robin Christian Locksley, to be my lawfully wedded husband. To have and to hold…” she went on, intoning the same vow as Regina.

When she’d finished, Regina raised Robin’s left hand, holding it steady as Emma lined up the ring to place on his finger. Then, in unison, the women declared:
“With this ring, we thee wed, a symbol of our love, honour, devotion and faithfulness, for the rest of our days.” Emma gently worked the three-banded gold ring onto his finger, giving him a nervous grin as he smiled adoringly at them both. Turning, the collected the two remaining rings from Roland’s cushion, kissing the top of his head and facing the brides. “With these rings, I thee wed, a symbol of my love, honour, devotion and faithfulness, for the rest of my days.” Emma raised Regina’s left hand with her own, offering it to Robin as he lined up the ring. “No – the other one!” whispered the blonde, “I’ve got slimmer fingers than her!” which earned a smirk. He quickly palmed the first ring, easing the second one onto her finger before kissing the band. Regina, with a Cheshire cat grin, moved to raise and offer Emma’s left hand, Robin placing the second ring onto her finger, kissing that, too. She gave him a coy grin as Archie stepped up.

“I am delighted to declare the three of you duly married. Congratulations. You may now kiss your brides and groom.” A resounding cheer rang out as the three pulled into each other, attempting a short meeting of three pairs of lips, before they went into their odd little ritual of kissing in sequence, ensuring nobody got left out. In the audience, Mulan gave Aurora a coy grin, remembering that moment from their own wedding two years ago.

“I can’t believe we’ve done it?” whispered Emma, pulling her lovers in tight. “I can’t really believe I’ve got a wife, and a husband at the same time!”

“Till death do us part…” breathed Robin, before Regina whispered, “Please don’t mention death, Robin. Not now.”

However, their tight little huddle was brought to a quick halt when everyone heard a loud sonic ‘BOOM’ in the distance! Looking up and fearing the worst, they instead saw a large ball of piercing light racing up into the air, having come from somewhere near the lake. The ball appeared to stop a good half-mile above their heads, before silently exploding into a huge silver and white glittery cloud. Robin looked across the lake to see where it had come from, calming when he saw the Sorcerer nearby, now standing to one side with arms raised, seeming to coordinate it. “Relax, it’s Merlin’s doing! We’re safe…”

As the large white cloud gently dispersed, tiny silver droplets rained down from the sky towards the entire crowd, as the forgotten orchestra behind the stage struck up with another work. Jeremiah Clarke’s classical wedding piece, The Prince of Denmark’s March, sounding gently as the crowd calmed. As everybody looked up, expecting to become wet, instead the entire display stopped, hovering a couple of hundred feet above their heads, starting to change shape. “What on earth?” exclaimed Emma, now looking towards the Sorcerer to see what he had planned. Fine silver and white droplets started to morph together, changing shape, until the image of a beautiful white and silver swan appeared, striking against the clear blue sky! The shapes above the swan now morphed into a regal crown, which slowly lowered itself just over the swan’s head. Below the swan, a quiver slowly formed, the shape of several arrows within. The swan now appeared to be holding another arrow in its beak as a large bow appeared behind the entire vision. As everything sharpened into focus, loud applause was heard from the guests and crowd, nearly all of them recognising the symbols in the sky. A swan, a queen, and now an archer!

Emma laughed, turning to face a grinning Merlin, still with his hands raised. “Now that’s just showing off!”

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The image in the sky was visible even from the port, two miles away, as two men sat at a small table on board a ship’s deck, contentedly chatting in the sun, drinking rum. “Hmm. Looks like something you’d see in the sky above Gotham City!” said Neal. “Though I thought they were marrying
Robin…not Batman?"

"Gotham City? Never heard of it. And who the hell’s ‘Batman’?" asked the former pirate, realising what the white image in the sky meant.

"Nothing important. Captain, how about a toast? To a former love and mother of my son. May she enjoy a long and happy life!"

"Yeah, I guess I can drink to that!" The men clinked glasses. "To Emma Swan!"

After clinking glasses, Neal picked up the bottle to pour another. "So, will you take me?"

"To DunBroch? Aye, I’ll take you. But not sure how long I’ll stay. I need to speak to Rosie first. I’m a husband and father now, remember?"

"I remember. Have to admit I was a little surprised. The former Captain Hook, scourge of the high seas, now married to Merlin’s daughter, with a son? Who’d have thought it?"

"Two sons, actually. Ruby and Dorothy’s child, young Nathaniel, is mine too."

"So, I guess you’ll be staying in Storybrooke from now on? No more high seas adventures for you?"

"I didn’t say that, lad. Zeus still throws me requests from time to time. When a god asks a favour, I’ve found it’s best to grant it. As it seems our lord of Olympus also wishes a favour from yourself, it seems foolish to resist. So, will his beautiful daughter be joining us?"

"I wish! No, Persephone will be heading back soon enough. I’m gonna miss her…"

"Must be odd, having a goddess as a girlfriend? Will she be coming back?"

"Nope. Basically, I probably won’t see her again till I die! Weird for us, but quite normal for them. So I’ve just got to restart my life. Most important thing right now is Henry. Even if he is all grown up and doesn’t need me."

Killian smiled sympathetically, "Before I died, I got to know that young man fairly well. I can assure you he missed you more than you could ever know. Give him time he never had. So, I guess you’re also going to be based around here when you get back?"

"Unlikely. Though I guess that depends on Henry. I’ll come back from time to time to see my papa, but I’ll probably make a base in New York or Boston. Apart from those two, there’s nothing for me here…"

Killian eyed him cautiously. "I already heard they got rid of the Dark One without killing him. He created the curse that created everything around here, all so he could find you. I can’t imagine he’s going to let you go now. What sort of state is he in?"

"Surprisingly good. He did a trip with Henry to Europe, got his wife back. And a girlfriend too!"

"Girlfriend? Who on earth?" he gasped in disbelief.

"Ariel. You remember the mermaid? The three of them are together. Something like Emma and her ‘trio’.

"I can’t believe it! What is wrong with this ruddy town? You’ve got Mayor Phil and his little m é nage-à- trois going on; Locksley with Emma and the queen over there; and now the bloody Dark One’s at it!"
Neal merely chuckled. “Don’t be like that! He’s no longer the Dark One and I’ve never seen the guy so happy. It’s like he’s got his life all over again. Now the darkness has been lifted, he’s talking about going off on a world tour. Henry wants to go with him but I’m telling him to get through university first. If I get this stuff in DunBroch nailed, I may even try to go with them…”

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Back in Sherwood, Robin held his new wives’ hands proudly, all of them grinning stupidly as they slowly walked back down the aisle, continually stopping to talk to family and friends, everyone giving their congratulations. Once again, the two brides stopped in front of Christian Locksley, curtseying before him. “Your Grace!” said Regina, grinning. Robin also joined them with a low bow.

“Oh, do stop making such a fuss, you three! It’s Christian, Chris or even Grandpa to you lot! Come here!” the older man pulled Robin into a tight hug as the outlaw kissed his cheek, a tear in his eyes. “I’m so very proud of you my boy! There’s so few of us Locksley’s left these days…” his mind recalling the deaths of his sons, one of them Robin’s father, in harsher times.

As Robin stepped back, Emma grinned at the old man, going in for her own hug. “I have to disagree with you Chris, you happen to be looking at two more Locksleys right now. Emma and Regina Locksley, in fact!” she hugged him tight, kissing his cheek. As he slowly realised what she’d said, Emma stepped back, a tear in his eye as Regina quickly took her place to hug him. “Really?”

“Really,” said the brunette, cuddling him and kissing his opposite cheek. “Emma and I decided some time ago. ‘Locksley-Swan-Mills’ seems a bit of a mouthful. What do you think of that…great grandpa?”

Nearby, Henry looked on, Violet now appearing by his side. “You know, you’re looking seriously fit in that suit, Hen?” said his first -ever girlfriend. “Who’s the old guy they’re hugging? The one they curtsied to?”

“Robin’s grandfather. Back in England, he’s the real-life Earl of Locksley. Roland and Robin went over and met him last year…”

“So, he’s your new step-great-grandad then? Seems a nice old guy. Grace told me your dad’s also back from the dead too? Is he here?”

“Yeah, he’s back, but no, he thought it’d be too awkward. I’m going to be spending some time with him…”

She smoothed her hands slowly over the lapels of his jacket. “I’m really pleased for you. I remember how you used to talk about him a lot. Are you staying over just for the wedding before going back to Harvard, or do you have a few days? I thought perhaps we could get together? Dad’s planning on us leaving Storybrooke soon, so I just thought…we may not be seeing each other for quite a while.”

“Sure, I’d like that. I’ve got a few days. Come to my grandpa Gold’s tomorrow, and I’ll introduce you to dad…”

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After stopping for numerous congratulations, hugs and kisses, the wedding party finally left the stage, to see a guard of honour awaiting them, creating a path across to the inn. At least twenty of the Merry Men stood either side of the path, their bows and arrows raised in salute, forming a triumphal arch through which to walk. Past them, in a similar pattern with wands raised, stood a number of
Blue’s fairies. And after them, a good two dozen of the part-time Storybrooke militia, courtesy of
Prince Philip, with their swords raised. Walking through, they finally reached the crowd on the
lawns, where a photographer was waiting to take numerous pictures of the occasion. It was a good
hour before they finally reached the inn, settling down for dinner.

“I’m completely shattered already!” said Regina, turning to kiss her wife’s cheek.

“And I’m bloody starving!” replied Emma, pulling Robin closer to her left.

“You’re always starving, wife of mine!” added Robin, pecking her cheek.

“Well you’d better feed me then, husband of mine!”

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The wedding banquet didn’t disappoint. Pierre Roch lived up to his reputation with a culinary feast
fit for a queen. Well, for two queens and a king. The two hundred invited guests dined on a sublime
lobster bisque, followed by poached quails eggs on tiny pieces of toast, beef wrapped in pate and
light pastry (the little menu provided said it was ‘Boeuf en Croute’, though Robin’s grandfather
pointed out it was actually an earlier British dish called ‘Beef Wellington’), followed by a light-as-a-
feather chocolate and lemon syllabub, cheese and biscuits and finally, port. Everyone was now
completely replete from all the food and drink as a rather prim, pompous-looking man (probably
hired by Snow, thought Regina) appeared in front of the royal table, wearing a long frock coat, with
a little gold gong, which he rang to get everyone’s attention. He coughed loudly, indicating it was
now time for the diners to pay attention.

“Your Majesties; your Royal Highnesses; your Grace; my lords, ladies, gentlemen and children. Pray
silence please, for his gracious Majesty, King John of Arendelle!” An enormous cheer went up from
the guests, some laughing, as nearly all of them knew Little John hated his recent royal title!

As the large man stood, he looked to his side, Queen Elsa blowing him an encouraging kiss. Regina,
Emma and Robin applauding him. “All right, all right! Settle down, you ‘orrible lot!” he said to more
cheers, as one of the most loved men in the realm pulled up sheets of paper. “Now, before I tell you
all lovely things about Regina and Emma ‘ere, let me tell you a few ‘ome truths about Robin Hood!
Why they’d marry ‘im, I’ll never know!”

The next ten minutes ran with John recounting fairly embarrassing incidents and tales, mostly at
Robin’s expense. The guests laughed heartily at his recounting, stopping occasionally to toast absent
friends, including Marian. Some adventures he’d shared with the men and some pointed jokes, but
nothing too risqué, with children present. Robin had rolled his eyes repeatedly, though after the mild
ribbing, John’s voice took a more serious tone. “But having said all that, Robin here has always been
a lodestone to us all. A true leader who I know most of you, like me, would still follow to the ends of
the earth! And the most ‘onourable man I’ve ever met. I love you, old friend!” As Robin’s eyes
reddened at his sincere praise, he felt Regina take his hand in her own, squeezing tightly, as she
whispered. “Can’t argue there!” John went on to talk about meeting Regina for the first time, then
Emma and the way they’d saved so many, lost so much on the way and finally came through. Unlike
his jokey references to Robin, he spoke of their sheer courage and strength in overcoming so much,
particularly over the last seven years. “So, I’m going to shut up now!” another cheer and giggles
from the guests. “But not before proposing a toast. So, please be upstanding, and raise a glass to my
dearest friends, Regina, Emma & Robin. Ladies and gentlemen - the brides and groom!”

Everyone stood, cheering and applauding the newly-marrieds and a great speech. Although most
expected David, as father of one the brides to speak next, Snow White stood instead, making a short,
typically emotional speech extolling the virtues of her daughter and daughter-in-law. She thanked the
bridesmaids and everyone who helped make the day special; a special cheer rang out when she introduced and thanked Pierre Roch, for his superb food. The little Frenchman beamed with happiness at his heroine. After Snow came Regina, long experienced in public speaking. But even she seemed nervous. As Emma watched their wife give a heartfelt eulogy on her two loves, Henry and their family, she suddenly felt a warm hand on her thigh, massaging it gently as it moved slowly higher, under the table and out of sight. She looked to her side as Robin, the culprit, looked straight ahead passively, as though nothing was going on. She felt a warm magical wave slowly lift the skirt of her wedding dress up to allow his hand to slip under. As he slowly moved towards his target, his breath hitched when he realised… “No panties?” he whispered., bringing his hand to cup her, unbeknown to their guests. “You, my lady, are a very bad girl indeed!”

“You wouldn’t have it any other way…” she whispered back. Feeling herself starting to flush as his fingers worked down below, she gave him a devilish smirk. Well two can play at that game… she thought, sliding her right hand slowly under the table while keeping her eyes firmly on Regina. Once hidden, it moved swiftly over his cock, grasping it firmly through his trousers while looking nonchalantly into space. She was pleased to find he was already half-erect, the fabric on his pants already starting to tent. Though that wouldn’t be the case when she’d finished! As she massaged his member firmly, she couldn’t help but admire the way his handsome face remained completely neutral in front of the guests. In less than half a minute, as Robin continued working his fingers on her entrance, Emma was delighted to find he was now fully erect. That’s when a truly evil idea came to her! As Regina wound up her speech, and the audience applauded, Emma called out:

“Gina, Robin wants to stand and say a few words too!” making Robin almost spit his wine out! Now looking intensely at her, he sent the now giggling blonde beside him, a telepathic message:

‘Emma, You utter cow - I’m as stiff as a brick! How can I stand like this?’

‘Shouldn’t go getting a girl worked up then, should you?’ she sent back.

Robin looked up at his beautiful brunette wife. “That’s fine, Gina! I changed my mind. You and Snow said it all that needs to be said!” Regina saw the quirky look on his face, and Emma’s now almost uncontrollable laughter as her shoulders heaved, unable to look up. What the hell’s going on? To make matters worse for Robin, several of the Merry Men nearby, Mulan included, were yelling “Speech, speech, speech!”

Despite his obvious discomfort, Robin could still see the funny side. “I’ll truly make you pay for that, Emma Locksley!” he whispered, carefully grabbing one of the menus off the table as he slowly stood, strategically holding it in front of him with both hands as his throbbing member reduced. “Ladies and gentlemen, I think my lovely wife has probably said it all, so I just want to add…”

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After the toasts and speeches, the married trio had spent the next hour circulating with their guests. They’d split up to have a chance to talk to everybody, catching up on all the gossip. After a little while, the toastmaster Snow had hired announced there would be a short interlude of an hour before the dancing began. Regina had used the break to head back to their daughters’ rooms, where the hired babysitters for the afternoon had been playing with them, letting the babies take a nap when needed. All the girls seemed more than happy with the arrangements, so the former mayor used the short time available to head back to her own room, hoping for a chance to put her feet up for half an hour.

As she stepped into the large, ornate bedroom, she was surprised to see Emma now lying on the middle of the bed, shoes off but still wearing her bridal dress. “Oh - I didn’t know you came back?”
“Just putting my feet up. I’m knackered! Probably need to let all the food and wine go down. Old Pierre really knows how to put on a spread, doesn’t he? I know I was full, but that was so good, I couldn’t stop eating!” she groaned, massaging her belly.

“I noticed,” Regina chuckled, “where on earth you put it all, Emma, I’ll never know.” She climbed onto the sheets to lie next to her, careful not to crease their dresses too much. “So, dancing next, it seems? But I definitely need a break too. Mind if I join you?” She turned on her side to face Emma, draping an arm around her waist. As so often, the blonde mirrored her, pulling her a little closer as they now lay, on their sides, nose to nose. “Never.”

“So, what was all that with Robin? About him making a speech? He seemed surprised, to say the least!” The moment she mentioned it, Emma burst out laughing again, telling her wife what had happened, and the brunette also roared. As they calmed, Emma looked deep into those chocolate-brown eyes. “God, you know, I love it when you laugh! You’re so beautiful…”

“Thinking much the same about you; I love you, my Swan.” Regina softly fastened her mouth onto Emma’s, prizing it open with her lips before driving her tongue gently past the Saviour’s teeth, to massage her own in their long-familiar dance. “Mmm,” they groaned together. Emma felt her wife’s hand gradually hitch up the long white silk of the dress, knowing where she was headed. As warm fingers now moved down around her belly, then lower, to cup her, Emma sighed. “Mmm – definitely not complaining, but I thought you said you needed a rest?”

“Not from you. Never from you,” she moaned, as Emma responded with her own kiss, pulling her in tighter.

Robin had been downstairs during the break, pressing the flesh with most of the guests. He’d chatted with Belle, Ariel and Rumpelstiltskin, the librarian apologising for hitting him. He assured her he understood, and it was forgotten as far as he was concerned, just pleased the removal of the Dark One had been successful. They’d spoken of Neal’s return and his forthcoming trip. Robin had then gone on to Merlin’s table, reacquainting himself with Rosie and Anna. He’d been surprised to find his sister perched on Charlie Sage’s knee, though on being told by Maria that he had formally proposed that morning, and they were now engaged, he congratulated them warmly, hoping and praying that she wouldn’t travel too far away. Maleficent and Lily were also sat at the Sorcerer’s table, the latter chatting animatedly with his sister.

As he accepted hugs and handshakes, the dragon stood to face him. “Congratulations, Locksley,” said an unusually smiling Maleficent, a warning brow raised but seeming lighter and happier than her usual brooding self. “I hope you’ll be taking care around my girl from now on? She was an absolute wreck the last time you died. Do that again and I’ll have to kill you myself!”

He ignored the mild threat, instead just grinning and pulling her into a hug. “Hello, Mal. As stunningly beautiful, whilst threatening, as always! You seem a lot happier too.” He quickly released her, looking across to the Sorcerer. “And I suppose I should be congratulating you too? Seeing as you’ve not only your daughter back, but found her father as well? How come we haven’t seen much of you?”

She seemed surprised. “I thought Merlin had already told you? I was trapped; shackled in one of the Black Fairy’s caves. I wasn’t even aware you’d killed her. Merlin found me by accident when he came back months later, to search for any children who hadn’t been rescued. Otherwise, I’d still be down there…” she looked over at her rescuer, who now had Lily on his arm.

“I’m happy for you Mal, truly, but I’m confused. Lily seems about the same age as Rosie there.
When were you and Merlin together?” Then he realised what he’d just said. “Sorry, forgive me? That was too personal and absolutely none of my business! Perhaps I…”

“Dragons gestate much longer than humans. Merlin, or Draco as I knew him, knew me before he even met his last wife. It’s complicated to explain, but we’ve come in and out of each other’s lives several times. He even took a dragon form when we were last…together. Remember, we’re both immortal, an issue he tells me you may have to face in the future!”

“I’ve much to learn; perhaps you’d be willing to help me? I know Regina’s missed you and would love to see more of you.” Robin chose his words carefully, aware of his new wife’s past with the dragon. She looked up at him quizzically. “Perhaps, though I’m not sure your other wife would be too keen. I found her rather territorial, and I’m not sure I have her trust. But…Merlin’s told me about your new powers,” She winked, almost flirtatiously. “Perhaps we have something to learn from each other…”

_It was while Robin was talking to the dragon, that he felt it again. That odd, but familiar sensation. He was feeling aroused, horny, even! It couldn’t be due to the woman in front of him? Maleficent was certainly beautiful, but he had no wish to be anything other than friends with her. But that sensation? Then, realising the feelings were in his mind, not his groin, he looked across the room for his wives, seeing neither. Closing his eyes and concentrating on their thoughts, he soon realised why! You devils – starting without me!_

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A few minutes later, after excusing himself and hurrying to their master bedroom, he felt that familiar magical barrier across the door, as he stepped in. Emma’s magical barrier, passable only by him and Regina! Reasonably sure what he’d find inside, the scene that presented itself nevertheless blew him away! Regina, still in full wedding dress and tiara, lay back on the centre of the large bed, her head propped up against the headboard, cushions behind her. Her long white silk dress hitched up to her waist, with her legs parted. Emma, equally attired, though her tiara laying on a side table, lay within them, her blonde hair just visible beneath the silk, as she was clearly going down on the brunette with gusto. Regina’s eyes were tightly closed in bliss, moaning, clearly savouring every moment as she held Emma’s head to her. The lusty image clearly had an immediate effect on Robin, his trousers stiffening and breath increasing. “Er, hope I’m not disturbing?” he breathed, heavily.

Emma, hearing his voice, tilted her head to one side, grinning, her lips wet and shiny. “What kept you?” before turning to push her face back over Regina’s centre, her mouth closing over the clit, fastening on and sucking to draw a loud hiss from the brunette. “Haah! Em-ma, don’t…don’t stop… please, don’t stop!” she yelled, clearly close to coming. He’d clearly interrupted at just the wrong moment, as Regina arched her back, the orgasm overwhelming her. “Hnnnngggg!” she growled, between gritted teeth, before her back lowered and she breathed again. “Ooooh…so good!”

Emma pulled her head out from under the dress, wiping her mouth before falling onto her back beside Regina, who lifted her hand to kiss the back of it. “Thanks, my love. Much better. Now…we need to freshen up!”

Robin stood, looking at the reclining women in white, feeling he’d just become invisible. “Oh. Well, we’ve got at least half an hour!” His erection was still raging at what he’d seen. “We’ve got enough time for…”

“I’m rather tired, Robin,” moaned Regina. “Emma’s just shattered me. After that, I need a bit of a rest! You go back down. I’ll follow you shortly…” she started yawning, loudly, which seemed to set Emma off to do the same.
Robin was crestfallen. *After seeing his two wives like that, he was horny as hell!* “Emma, how about you?”

“Gina just made me come twice before you got here! Frankly, I’m a little pooped too…”

The pair looked at the sad pout. *He was almost sulking! He’d clearly picked up tips from Honour!*

“I see! Very well, if that’s how you both feel…I’ll leave you to freshen up. See you downstairs…”

He turned away from them, moving towards the door. As he touched the door handle, a loud cackle erupted from the pair on the bed. He turned to find Regina, now giggling uncontrollably, her face buried in Emma’s shoulder as the Saviour laughed. “Haa, your face! So that’s where Honnie gets it from!”

*Robin wasn’t sure what he should be feeling. Slighted? Rejected? His new wives had just been making love without him and now weren’t even interested in continuing. Either way, he felt hurt, and not a little angry!*

“I’m glad you find something amusing…your majesties! Anyway, I’ll be off…” he opened the door to step outside. However, the moment he moved, he felt a magical swirl, and as the door opened fully, Regina was now stood directly in front of him. “Somebody can’t take a joke?” she glared back.

“Gina? What…”

“Do you seriously think we’d let our brand, shiny, spanking new husband, leave our bedroom without consummating our marriage?” said the former mayor, moving forward, placing her hands on his chest. Emma now also appeared, right beside him, moving in front to join her wife.

“We’re winding you up, you fool! Now come back to bed. As Gina said, we’ve only got half an hour!”

His pout quickly turned into a resigned smirk, realising they’d played him, and he’d fallen for it! The two women pushed him backwards towards the bed, before Emma deliberately clipped the back of his calf, tripping him so he fell backwards onto the mattress. “On your back, big boy!” growled the Saviour, looking hungry. “And unless you’d forgotten, this time Gina’s in charge!”

He wasn’t going to argue! The sight of his two beautiful brides looking at him lustily, like he was prey, had an immediate effect. “I am indeed,” said Regina, moving to his trouser belt, loosening it deftly before pulling down the zip. Emma had already clambered onto the edge of the bed, lowering her mouth onto his, in an almost angry kiss, watched by Regina, her excitement mounting. “Sorry for using magic in the bedroom, when we said we wouldn’t, but this’ll save time!” with a flick of her fingers, Robin’s suit trousers, and underwear, instantly disappeared, reappearing neatly folded on the back of a side chair, next to two pairs of white panties & tights. His already heavily-swollen cock now bounced free from its confines. Suitably impressed, Regina wrapped a hand around the shaft, quickly lowering her mouth over the head to give the brim a brief, yet hard, suck. “Hmm, impressive! Now Emma, as It’s my turn in charge, I want you to go first. I want to see you consummate this marriage…right now.”

Robin was enjoying jousting tongues with Emma. *She still tastes of Regina.* Lifting her head up, she grinned at him, Regina’s head replacing hers within moments. He slid his hands around the sides of her head, pulling her down onto his mouth to give to her something of what Emma had given him. The Saviour had already moved over the top of him, grasping his cock firmly to line herself up. “Emma, are you actually ready for me?” he cautioned, not wanting to drive up into her until she was good and wet, no matter how much he ached. *However, what she did next was one of the most erotic things he’d ever seen!*
“Almost…just a sec…” she panted. “Gina, may I?” she moved her hand up and under the kneeling brunette’s dress, flicking the silk onto her back to gently ease two fingers between her legs and inside the still very wet core, making Regina hitch her breath in surprise. She looked back to see Emma withdrawing two very moist fingers from within her, before smearing the slick coating across Robin’s helmet, watched by her two lovers. “Now I’m ready,” she said as she lowered herself onto him. The small but incredibly intimate act seemed to make Robin even more aroused. “Gina…I need to taste you. Move over me?” Without further ado, she raised herself to squat over his face. It was Robin’s turn to use magic, a short burst making the brunette float an inch over him, allowing him to get to her while still breathing. How long he could last, he wasn’t sure.

As Emma slid slowly down his shaft, Robin sighed with utter pleasure as he felt her tight hole slowly ease to fit him. Seeing Regina’s moist entrance above him, he flattened his tongue to wipe over her, savouring the familiar taste, before working it around the small pink bud above, drawing a loud hiss. “Ooh – easy! I’m a bit tender…” she groaned, “But for heaven’s sake, don’t stop!”

He wasn’t going to!

It wasn’t long before all three were thoroughly worked up and nearing their own peaks. Robin was determined to help them reach theirs, before him. Emma leant over, into Regina’s waiting arms, latching their lips together passionately. Underneath all the folds of white silk, he felt Regina’s thighs start shaking against him as Emma tightened around his cock. They were clearly both about to come, within seconds of each other! That thought triggered his own, and he felt his balls tighten automatically, past the point of no return. As he thrust harder up into Emma, he heard her moan something inaudible at Regina, the latter mumbling something that sounded like “Me too!” Above him, Emma, riding him as he repeatedly rammed himself up into her depths, felt the familiar wave, the surge from deep inside. “Gina. So close! I’m about to…to…” she gasped, looking straight into the wild bulging eyes of her lover. “Me too!” she groaned. “Together?” Emma nodded back, before fastening her lips onto Regina’s in an open-mouthed kiss, ploughing her tongue inside, as she felt the brunette’s slide past ad into her. At that moment, Robin felt her squeeze his penis tightly within. Moving his thumb down onto the sensitive bud, forking his tongue to drive straight inside the entrance, as deep as he could get.

He climaxed at that moment, his cock embedded in Emma, his tongue inside Regina, their tongues inside each other’s mouths. He came. Regina came. Emma came. All three together, the first time ever! They all felt the magic, not sure where it started. Emma would’ve sworn she felt it enter her from Robin, rising up through her torso, into her mouth, and into Regina. Regina felt it enter her from Emma, down her spine, down onto Robin’s mouth. Robin felt it start from Regina, then out and into Emma. It didn’t matter. They all felt it. The magic of True Love! Unable to draw breath, Emma pulsed her lips back and screamed in orgasmic ecstasy, her voice going several pitches higher than normal. Regina yelled back at her with equal venom, going through her own spasm and now grateful to draw breath. They were loud. Very loud - thank god for silencing charms! Robin growled, not quite so loud from under Regina, though the volume was slightly muffled by her body above.

As Regina, now gasping, rolled off him and onto her side, they heard a loud cheer and laughing from some of the crowd outside the large window!

She looked anxiously across at Emma, now also dismounted from Robin, who also seemed nervous. “Dear god! Please say you also used a silencing charm, Emma?”

“You said you were going to!” the blonde replied, open-mouthed in shock.
Chapter Summary

The royal wedding is well underway, and there’s a big surprise for Ariel...

Chapter 72

The Royal Wedding Day – Part III

Emma cringed, her face in her hands, realising the likelihood their screams had been heard downstairs, and outside. Regina jumped up off the bed, her face almost scarlet with embarrassment. Robin lay still, his jacket, shirt and tie a little crumpled, but still entirely naked from the waist down as he softened. Despite his state, he curled up into a foetal position, his body starting to shake as he erupted into laughter.

“It’s not bloody funny, Rob!” yelled Emma. “Our kids are downstairs! What if they’d heard us…”

“Robin, stop laughing!” growled Regina. “Everybody’s down there! We have to face them. Oh, hell, the dance! I can’t. I can’t possibly go downstairs. Not after that! Hell Robin, will you stop laughing like a hyena? This is serious!”

The outlaw calmed. “Embarrassing certainly, but hardly serious?”

“Everybody we know has probably heard us screaming through an orgasm! How the hell is that not serious?”

“Well…we’ve just got married, after all! We have children together, and everybody knows we probably have a love life. We’ve merely confirmed it. As for the children, is it so bad them finding out their parents have a healthy sex drive? As I said, embarrassing, but nothing to worry about, surely?”

“It’s alright for you,” countered Emma. “Your yelling got buried in Gina’s cooch! God, Henry’s down there! How can I even look him in the face? Dad too!”

“Ok, let’s try to stay calm. I think I added another barrier as I came in. Hang on a minute…” he twirled his fingers, focusing on the door and trying to detect his own magic. “Yup…it seems to be in place. We’re good.”

“Well why didn’t you say that in the first place?” growled Regina. “I was worried sick…”

“And if they didn’t cheer us, what the hell’s the noise outside then?”

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The trio freshened up quickly, Robin re-dressing, before walking together arm-in-arm-in-arm down the elegant staircase into the main bar area. Seeing the new, updated royal family, a loud cheer and applause broke out. Regina, much calmer than a few minutes ago, beamed happily at the welcome.

As they reached the bottom steps, Snow stepped forward, putting her hand on Emma’s arm. “You
OK, my girl? Had a nice rest, all of you?” she asked, an odd expression on her face.

“What do you mean by that?” Emma instantly reacted, a little harsher than intended. Seeing the surprised look on her mother’s face, the blonde instantly regretted it, realising she’d misinterpreted.

“Oh. Well…it’s been a very stressful day…for all of you. I just assumed you had a lie down?”

“We did, thank you Snow.” Said Robin, distracting her. “What was all the screaming and cheering we heard a little while ago?”

“Oh, that was just Emma’s brother, playing to the crowd and showing off with his magic! Neal did some tricks when I went to the bathroom. I came back to find half the party guests outside floating in the air like those ruddy sheep he did it to, back at the farm! They were all screaming and laughing but a few of the children were frightened. I’m still annoyed David didn’t do anything to stop him, except laugh! I tore a strip off the pair of them after he finally put them all down. That boy just loves an audience…”

Regina chuckled at the thought. God, she loved little Neal. “His magic is surprising powerful, for someone his age. Make me wonder what you’d have been like, Emma, if you’d come into yours so early…”

“Well I wouldn’t have been…wait a minute. Mum, did you say people floating? Like outside the windows upstairs?”

“I guess. There were well over a hundred of them floating up there. Why?”

Emma prayed nobody had looked in their bedroom window half an hour ago.

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The wedding resumed with music, dancing and drinks until the early evening. Snow had hired a band? How did she know so many people? And the trio seemed to dance with everyone all afternoon. Regina had stopped to pay particularly close attention when Elsa asked Emma to dance, knowing that the two blondes had once shared a moment. The pair were chatting animatedly as they swirled around the dance floor.

“That’s a fantastic dress, Emma, you look great – Regina too. You know, she’s never taken her eyes off you since we got up here? It must be love!” she chuckled into the Saviour’s ear, as the taller woman twirled under her arm.

“Possibly, or more likely she’s watching you! I told her we’d made out all those years ago, and she’s quite territorial…”

“You told her?” Elsa gasped in shock. "What - why would you even do that?"

Emma sniggered. “We had a truth thing going on, and she told me she’d done something similar to you and me, with Maleficent. You know, the other bridesmaid?”

“I do - that woman even made a blatant pass at me, and I'm now happily married!” They turned to see Regina, now coming onto the dance floor, being led by Charming, the pair cackling with laughter about something he’d said, as they started to sway easily together. “You know, your dad’s a really good dancer. I saw him dancing with my sister Anna earlier. I think she knew him from years ago. They seem quite close.”
“Yeah, I noticed that. Dad first taught Regina to dance in Camelot, and he’s been teaching me too. I only know modern dance, not all this formal ball stuff!” Emma looked with pride at her father, before her eye caught Snow, dancing closely with Princess Anna, in some sort of waltz, in a little world of their own as they chatted. Remembering what she’d said in New York, and what she’d seen at her friend’s wedding, she still wondered whether something more than just friendship had previously passed between her parents and Elsa’s sister. “Your sister seems to know my mum well, too…”

As Regina and David waltzed closer to Emma and Elsa, the brunette called “Mrs. Locksley, fancing meeting you here?” to her in passing, a coy grin on her face. Emma smiled back, “and you too, Mrs. Locksley! Looking good!” However, something seemed to have instantly distracted Regina, making her stare hard across the room. Following her gaze, Emma saw what had piqued her interest. Robin, on the other side of the dance floor, was currently twirling Maleficent, both laughing as he coiled her, pulling her into his chest as a part of some sort of routine. Regina’s brow raised as he appeared to whisper something in her ear, which made the former Mistress of Evil roar with laughter. Maleficent? Laughing? I’ve certainly never seen that before! The tall woman seemed to be positively glowing, beaming at him, quite flirtatiously! The two brides shared a concerned look, as the music slowed to its conclusion, all dancers stepping back to curtsy or bow to their partners, before leaving the floor.

At the other side of the dance floor, Maleficent was now curtsying as Robin bowed back. “Thanks Mal, I enjoyed that!” And he had. He’d learned so much about one of his wives from one of her oldest friends. “You’re welcome. So, it seems I need to stop calling you ‘thief’ from now on? Merlin tells me you’re from the nobility, after all…”

“That’s never stopped Regina! And I’d much prefer ‘thief’ to ‘My Lord’. I’ve always hated titles. Stupid things."

"Speaking of which, her eyes haven’t left you since she saw us dancing. Quite the possessive queen, that one! I see she’s on her way over here, with your other bride. Don’t look up! Probably making sure I’m not trying to seduce you or some such thing. Act casual…"

Sure enough, the two almost-matching brides appeared, side-by-side, a look of concern on Regina’s face. “Mal?”

“Yes, kitten?” she purred, knowing Regina always blushed with embarrassment whenever she used that term. “Enjoying your big day?”

“Yes thank you. And you? You seemed to be enjoying dancing…with our husband?”

Robin smiled when he saw the possessive flash on his bride’s face. “We were, Gina. I’m afraid I rather monopolized her just now. I’ve learned quite a bit!”

“Oh?” asked Emma, “About what?”

“Well, Regina of course!” Mal replied, a face of calm, “And a bit about you too, Saviour.” She turned back to Robin. “Thank you for the dance…My Lord,” she smirked back at him as he frowned back, the band starting to play a slower number. “Now then. Emma dear, I don’t believe you and I have had the pleasure? Would you join me for this one? I believe Regina is quite keen to dance with your shiny new husband…” Surprised, Emma looked to her partners before nodding. “Erm…sure. Though I’m not as practised at this ballroom stuff, as Robin here…”

“No problem. I’ll lead. Come…” with that she gently but firmly pulled Emma back to the centre of the dance floor, leaving Regina open-mouthed. “She’s quite the incorrigible flirt, isn’t she?” whispered Robin.
“Well you’d know!” she retorted. “I saw the pair of you. Quite the cosy chat, was it?”

“It was. And mostly about you! I suspect she’s still pretty much in love with you. You didn’t mind her flirting with me, surely?”

Regina pinked, sighing. Robin had already known about their make out session years ago. “Not really, providing you don’t encourage her too much. Until Arendelle, I’d always thought she was only into women. So, seeing her with Merlin two weeks ago, and now coming onto you, was a surprise. I don’t think I’ve ever seen anyone make her laugh like that!”

“She wasn’t really coming onto me. We were joking about having two highly-sexed wives. She’d guessed what we’d been up to earlier, and she said if I ever felt that I needed ‘help’, I should give her a call. I then did a Rumple impression, and made a very inappropriate comment…”

“She really said that? God, that woman…”

“…Used to be your best friend in difficult times. She’s missed you as much as, I suspect, you’ve missed her. There’s no need to be a stranger to her, Regina. Not because of me or Emma.”

“So, you trust her? Even though you know we were once…close?”

“Yes, but it’s of no importance, because I trust you.” That drew a smile from the raven-haired beauty, as he leaned down to capture her lips. “Now then, I’ve danced with Emma, but I don’t believe you and I have yet had the pleasure, milady?” taking her arm, he escorted her back onto the dance floor.

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After working the room and catching up with everybody, Henry and Grace walked over to his grandfather’s table, where Belle now sat, nursing a glass of wine. He’d already spotted Rumple on the dance floor several times, which had really thrown him! The old limp had gone completely, and in addition to Belle and Ariel, he’d also been asked to dance by Merlin’s daughter Annabelle and even Robin’s sister, Maria. As he took to the floor once again, this time with Ariel, the former Dark One’s grandson stood looking in amazement. “It’s like that limp of his never existed! That operation really did the trick, didn’t it?” he asked his step-grandmother.

The librarian looked up at him, nodding, a tired smile on her face. “He’s like a new man, Henry - I’d never have believed it! Taking the darkness away has given him a whole new life. I’ve danced so much tonight. I’m exhausted!” They watched as the music, supplied by a DJ having now taken over once the band had left, played more modern tunes. A Bee Gees number, How Deep is Your Love, started playing as Rumple brought Ariel close to his chest, her head resting on his shoulder in an open display of affection, surprising a number of people who’d noticed, still wary of the former Dark One.

“He seems happy. How are you doing, Belle? The three of you, I mean?” It was now no secret that the mermaid was living with them, and Belle knew her husband confided in the young man.

“Honestly? I’ve never been happier,” she looked at her two lovers, huddled together, Rumple placing a kiss on the redhead’s cheek, albeit in full view of the other couples. “He’s got Neal back, and Gideon. I still can’t believe this is all real…”

“He’s also got you! And I’d say after nearly three centuries, he deserves his happy ending. You all do…”

Belle looked up at the young man, who seemed to still get bigger by the day. “What about you? You
finally graduate next year. What are your plans?"

“Well…until a few days ago, I was planning on going to study in Oxford next year. But now dad’s back, I’m not so sure. He’s telling me I should still finish my postgrad over there, but I’ve spent almost my whole life without him! I’ve only had him for about two months of my entire life, and don’t want to lose any more time; so, I figure I’ll go travelling around with him once he’s back. I really wish he wasn’t off to DunBroch next week, but he said he really has to…” He looked down at his step-grandmother who, although nodding, seeming to have a sad expression. “I know you said you were happy, Belle, but I can see something’s bothering you by the expression on your face! Care to talk about it?”

Belle sighed loudly. “It’s that obvious, huh? I guess it also has something to do with your dad coming back. Don’t get me wrong, I’m thrilled he’s back for you both! But…I know what your grandfather’s like. You know how much he’s missed Neal, and I’m worried Rumple’s going to insist on travelling with him when he leaves. He’s not going to leave Gideon behind so…” she deflated at the thought.

“Have you talked to him about it? I’m sure grandpa wouldn’t take him to somewhere dangerous!”

“I…no, I haven’t. Everything’s been so good these last few days, what with the Dark One gone, Neal back and everything, I didn’t want to upset anything…”

“Would you like me to have a word with him? Or dad? I’m sure grandpa wouldn’t take him to somewhere dangerous!”

“Have you talked to him about it? I’m sure grandpa wouldn’t take him to somewhere dangerous!”

“I…no, I haven’t. Everything’s been so good these last few days, what with the Dark One gone, Neal back and everything, I didn’t want to upset anything…”

“Would you like me to have a word with him? Or dad? I’m sure he could…” he stopped, spotting his grandfather and Ariel now returning to the table, slightly puffed from dancing.

“Henry, Grace…” said the mermaid. “I’m exhausted! Not sure where this guy gets the energy?” she thumbed behind her to Rumple, who had now joined them, wrapping an arm around Henry’s shoulder. “I need a sit down. Belle, is that a new bottle of champagne? Wouldn’t mind a bit more of that…” she said, picking up the bottle to replenish her glass. “Belle, perhaps you and Angus should dance while I rest?”

Before he could answer, Merlin appeared at their table, smiling down on the group. “Good evening again, Gold family! Sorry to see Neal decided not to come, though I quite understand, given the circumstances. Belle, your looking well! And Ariel, you…” he paused abruptly, seeing something different about the now sitting mermaid, which he’d never noticed before. “Er…Ariel, I wonder whether you would allow me the pleasure of a dance?”

“What? Well sure, though perhaps in a few minutes? I’ve only just sat down again…”

_Rumple sensed something was odd, when the Sorcerer merely stepped forward to sit himself next to the redhead. “Oh well…perhaps I could join you in a glass of that, while Belle and Rumple dance? You and I haven’t spoken in a while…”_

Rumple frowned, not sure what the Sorcerer was thinking “Aye, well…Belle, shall we dance? He took his wife’s hand to encourage her to the dance floor. Henry also got the hint, leading Grace away too. _Ariel looked curiously at Merlin, unsure of what had just happened. He seemed to be studying her very intensely._

“Merlin, you wanted to talk? Something wrong?”

“Hmm… ‘wrong’ isn’t the word I would use. It’s about something I’ve only just noticed, moments ago…”
At the other end of the room, at the long bridal table, Emma sat slumped in a chair, with her legs raised, resting on Robin’s lap as he sat, massaging his bride’s toes and soles with dextrous fingers. Regina sat opposite, talking with Tinker Bell, the friends catching up on gossip from the world outside Storybrooke. “Ooh, that’s lovely Rob, my feet were killing me. Give me a good jog and I’m happy, but dancing in those bloody heels? You guys have no idea! Give me flats, any day.”

“You seemed to be doing just fine on the dance floor, my love. After me, Gina and your parents, you never left the floor. August, Henry, Ruby, Mal, Lily. Considering you said last month you couldn’t dance, I thought you were in your element. Mind you, that dance you did with Charlie Sage just seemed weird…and flirtatious! Not sure what Maria would have thought…”

Emma sniggered, “Bit too modern for you, old man? Still, you seemed to be having a fair old time yourself! I saw you back there…with the goddess!”

“Persephone is…a fascinating woman, if you can call a goddess a woman.”

“I agree with Emma, she seemed quite smitten with you!” added Regina, an eyebrow raised “I noticed. Normally, I’d fry anyone who looked at you like that. But with her powers that…would be unwise.”

Robin smiled, enjoying the possessiveness of his brides. “I assure you, my ladies, her interest lies not in me, but in Henry’s father. Besides, what interest would I have, when I have not one, but two, goddesses of my own?”

“Nice recovery…it if a little bit crawley!” Emma retorted, earning a wry smile and wink from her wife.

“If you carry on being beastly to me, on our wedding day and all, you hardly deserve a foot massage!” he took his hands away, pushing her feet off, to collect his wine glass, glugging back the contents.

“No, I was enjoying that! Keep going! I’m sorry, you know I’m kidding!” she again flipped her feet onto his lap. “Besides, with hands like yours, you could always give up all that boring village-management stuff and become a reflexologist!” she groaned, as he started kneading a finger between her two largest toes.

“Not exactly a fulfilling career,” said Regina. Looking up at the clock, she groaned. “Robin - it’s just gone nine. We really need to round up the children now, put them to bed and say our goodbyes to everyone!” They’d already planned for Honour and Margot to stay upstairs, where their little sisters now slept, with Maria, Will and Caroline minding them overnight, while the wedded trio spent the wedding night back at the mansion.

“Actually, about that,” said David, appearing behind Emma to place his large warm hands on her shoulders, kissing the top of her head “There’s been a slight change of plan…”

“Oh?” glared Regina. “And who exactly changed this ‘plan’?”

“Your husband,” he replied, looking at Robin. “You’re going, and the children are staying, but you three aren’t going home. It’s all set, and your chauffeur’s waiting outside. So, when you’re ready…”

“Going where?” Emma and Regina replied, almost in unison, Regina’s brow raised to maximum stretch.

“L’Auberge Cachée,” their husband replied. “You said you wanted to go there, after Emma and I went last year. There’s also a little house by the lake, which Pierre is giving us for the weekend. Sort of a good luck gesture. We’ve got the place to ourselves. As Emma knows, the food’s pretty good
too…”

His wives looked at each other in surprise, Regina’s lips slowly morphing into a huge smile. She stood, walking around the table, and bending to place a full, wet kiss on his lips, completely ignoring their guests, making Tink chuckle. “Marrying you was, without doubt, one of the best decisions I have ever made!”

He smiled back at her before he felt a warm pair of hands turn his face to one side as Emma now kissed him just as enthusiastically. “Correction. Best decision WE have ever made!”

“Robin, wonderful surprise though it is, we need to go home to get some overnight things. Unless you hadn’t noticed, Emma and I are still in our wedding dresses?”

“All taken care of!” said Snow, now appearing beside them, arm-in-arm with Princess Anna. “There’s a large case in the limousine with your clothes, undies and all the things you’ll need for a couple of nights away.”

Regina bristled, realising something. “Undies? So, who pray, has been allowed to enter our house and rifle through my…our clothes and underwear drawers? There was nothing in the limousine when we got out of it earlier…”

“That would be me, madam!” said a clipped English voice from behind her. She turned to see a fully-suited Robin-doppelganger, dressed as a chauffeur. “Apologies for raiding your bedroom, Lady Locksley, but under the circumstances, your husband here thought it would be appropriate? I swear I didn’t peek…too much! In fact, when I got to the ‘interesting drawers’, I kept my eyes firmly shut, just as he requested!” That brought a loud chuckle from the rest of them, and a wry smile from the former mayor.

“I hope not!” said Emma, also laughing. “I hate to think what you’ve got us to wear in the morning!”

“Well, my lady, that ghastly Guns N’ Roses T-shirt of yours, your jogging bottoms and those multi-holed jeans you seem to favour, were left out, I’m afraid!” As per parents, and Regina, continued laughing, that was all the reminder Emma needed that real-Robin was really in charge of him, even if it was a supposedly autonomous doppelganger! So, with a look of sheer devilment, she turned to her husband, whispering:

“Well…under the circumstances, as he’s taking us there, perhaps chauffeur-Robin would also like to join us…tonight? And keep his hat on…” Robin’s stared back at her, open-mouthed.

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While they danced, holding each other tightly, Rumple and Belle continued to regularly glance over their shoulders, back to Ariel, who remained at their table, deep in conversation with Merlin. “She looks worried, Rumple! What’s he saying? You can use magic to listen in. What’s going on?”

“If I use magic, the Sorcerer will be able to tell, instantly. But I agree, she does seem anxious! We’ll just have to wait till he’s finished before asking…”

Fortunately, they didn’t have to wait long. When Rosie appeared at her father’s side, letting him know she and Persephone were planning to leave just after the brides and groom, Merlin nodded back, before patting the mermaid’s hand. “So, give it a day or so and come see Anna, or myself, at the hospital?” He stood, leaving her white-faced. In a matter of moments, Belle appeared, dropping down to the seat beside her. “Ariel, what is it? You look like you’ve seen a ghost. What’s wrong?”

The mermaid seemed out of it. “Um…Belle? Angus? Sorry, I was miles away. What did you say?”
“You’ve gone very pale, dearie!” said Rumple, now sitting down on her opposite side. “What did Merlin have to say, to cause such a change?”

“He said he thinks I’m pregnant!”
Trouble with The Parents

Chapter Summary

Ariel's mother and father were never the most calm, balanced parents. So what happens when they find out their daughter is pregnant by the Dark One? Oh dear...

Chapter Notes

Hi again!

Another one of those fill-in chapters, adjusting plot lines as we work towards the end.
Thanks for reading!

Fi xx

Chapter 73 - Trouble with Her Parents

It was late Monday afternoon when the limousine rolled back over the Storybrooke town line. The newly married thruple had just spent two blissful, relaxing days, two passionate mornings and one extremely passionate night, at Pierre Roche’s legendary retreat. Enjoying lakeside walks, the pool, massages and body treatments during the day, along with the best meals they had ever tasted, they’d been truly pampered. Regina had also, at her request, been allowed to work alongside her gastronomic hero in the kitchen, where he’d introduced her to a whole world of new tastes, dishes and techniques. What, to Emma and Robin, seemed too much like hot, sweaty work was, to Regina, a joy from which her lovers would no doubt benefit in the years to come.

They’d arrived in the sleepy lakeside hotel late on Saturday evening, having driven directly from the wedding reception. The newly-married trio were much too exhausted to do anything other than fall asleep that first night, with Regina wedged tightly between her spouses. However, the following Sunday morning, after waking fully refreshed and a shared shower, Robin and his wives returned to bed, before finally making love passionately and with such vigour that all three needed a second shower before heading down for breakfast. Sunday night, following a sumptuous dinner cooked by the master-chef himself, they’d retired to their bed to once again continue with the reaffirmation of their love for one another. It had been a heavenly break.

And now, two days later, they crossed the Storybrooke line. They all felt the sudden burst of energy from the return of their magic, as Emma lay across one of the bench seats, her head resting on Robin’s lap. “I can’t believe it’s all over. I never wanted it to end…”

“Well, only for a week till we start the honeymoon!” added Robin, “Bit too used to the high life, my love?”

“Hardly. Mind you, if we ate like that every day, I’d soon be the size of a horse! It was lovely, though. Best.wedding.ever…” she sighed, as Robin gently rubbed his fingers through her scalp.
“Well, sorry to burst your bubble, my darlings, but the real world awaits,” said Regina, sitting opposite. “Henry just texted me. He said he’s taken Roland and Honour to Gold’s to meet his father. Apparently, Honour was asking to meet Neal, having only seen his grave before. Margot’s at the inn having an archery lesson with Alan, and Faith and Hope are there with Maria minding them till we get back.”

“Hmm. Not sure I’m comfortable with them spending time with Gold. I know they say he’s not the Dark One anymore, but I still don’t trust him!”

“Well Roland does. He’s become quite friendly with Rumple,” defended Robin. “And don’t forget, Gideon is my godson. Honour seems to like Ariel too. She was playing with her at the party…”

“Speaking of which,” said Regina, “Did either of you see the mermaid and Gold dancing on Saturday? Seems they were making no secret of the fact they’re together! It was quite blatant. Even Belle and Ariel were smooching more like a couple! Seems Henry’s right, the three of them are together…”

“Good. A third poly thruple in town, after us and the Briars. I think they’re well suited! Though as we left there seemed to be some sort of problem. Ariel did seem a bit stressed out. Perhaps we should invite them over for a drink sometime?” The two women groaned at that. Why did their damn husband always have to be so nice?

Emma joined in. “Speaking of the Briars, I did kinda also invite my new boss to join us for an evening, when we get back from the honeymoon. As I take on the Sheriff job straight after, it would be good to get to know them a little better…”

“Good idea,” her husband agreed. “We should have a ‘poly evening’ for the three couples! Perhaps we could invite them for drinks at the pub.”

“Well…perhaps could we hold off on the Golds, until we’ve had a chance to meet Rumple separately?” cautioned Regina. “Like Emma, I’m not sure how far I trust the imp, even if he isn’t the Dark One anymore. However, Mulan is one of your closest friends, Robin, so let’s start with them. That’s six of us, after all…”

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The Gold Mansion

Following Merlin’s revelation to Ariel on Saturday, Belle rang the hospital first thing Monday morning, to book an appointment for a pregnancy test. Annabelle Sage had been primed by her father, so she saw the two women herself, two hours later. After taking blood and urine tests, she’d confirmed that the former mermaid was indeed pregnant, but less than a month gone, so details were sketchy. The two of them absorbed the news, wishing now they’d also brought Rumple to the clinic with them.

“So, would this be a normal pregnancy, or are there any issues we need to know about? What with Ariel not being born human?” asked Belle, as the other woman stared silently out of the window. “Will she be safe?”

“My father would be best placed to answer that, plus the fact he’s also the obs-gynae around here. From what I can tell, if Ariel is human now, it shouldn’t be an issue.”

“Well, she is, and she isn’t! She’s under a magical ‘holding’ spell, even now. When she goes into water, her tail and gills return, when she takes her bracelet off…” Belle stopped, seeing Ariel
shudder as she stared out the window.

“Again, you need to talk to Professor Sage, as I have no idea on the magical implications. Did your husband say anything about it? I’m assuming he’s the father?”

The question brought Ariel back into the conversation, nodding. “He’s changed. He’s hardly said anything since we found out Saturday night. Angus spent yesterday in his library, researching something, then this morning he left early, said he had to meet someone urgently. He seems worried, probably because of this…”

“I’m sorry. Look, let’s get my father in here…”

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**Storybrooke Harbour – Monday morning**

It was shortly after dawn. The former Dark One stood at the water’s edge, holding a large conch shell trumpet in one hand, his dagger, his name now removed, in the other. As he looked over the horizon, his heart felt heavy. *Will this even work without the Dark One? Only one way to find out...*

Taking the dagger, he sliced the blade across his palm, wincing as his skin opening up easily, blood starting to flow. Large drops hit the water as he held the conch shell and blew a long sonorous note across the water. It took less than a minute for the waters to begin foaming, a whirlpool appearing close by. Eventually the foam divided, as a large figure rose, morphing into the entity Rumple hadn’t seen for many years. The figure slowly transformed into a man, bare chested, with long flowing grey hard and beard, with eyes as dark as coal as they bore into his soul.

“Rumpelstiltskin! It’s been a while…” said the Sea King.”

“It has indeed, Your Majesty. We need to talk…”

“About my daughter, I presume? I was planning to take her home fairly soon.”

“I think you need to reconsider.”

“It is no concern of yours! Her marriage is over, and with it my binding contract with her prince. As I said, I intend to take her back to her family.”

“Even if she's unwilling to go? Are you aware of her current situation?”

“Of her relationship with your estranged wife? I am. Having that sort of deviant relationship with another female? It is an abomination, an anomaly, and clearly the result of her spending too much time around human kind. She's lost her way. My mind’s made up, and that is my final decision on the matter!”

“I was hoping you wouldn’t say that. Oh well. In that case, I need to collect on a deal I made with…”

“I MADE NO DEAL WITH YOU, DARK ONE! I would NEVER make a deal with you!”

“You didn’t, but I’m afraid your wife did! Bring her to me, or there will be consequences...”

The Sea King’s fury was swift. “WHAT? Athena would never-”

“She made a deal! And you know as well as anyone, NOBODY, including a goddess, reneges on a deal with me…”
“What kind of deal would Athena have with you?” his voice was contemptuous. “Why would she? And what interest do you have in Ariel? Why do you even care? Is this about your ex-wife and my daughter? Are you trying to punish Ariel in some way?”

“Belle is my wife, not my ex-wife! Despite issues, we are now fully reconciled and happy. Ariel is safe and well and will remain so, living with us for as long as she chooses. You do not need to know the details, until she is willing and ready to discuss them with you. I suggest you summon Athena, or the consequences may be…considerable.”

“Don’t threaten me, Dark One!” he thundered. Oh at least word hasn’t reached him yet! “Or I swear you will regret it!”

“I haven’t threatened you, Triton, I’m merely stating a fact. A deal was made many years ago, which now requires settlement. Have you forgotten how dark magic works? You remember your contract with Ursula for the return of Belle’s voice? How reneging on it transformed you, until your daughter corrected it? Now bring Athena!”

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“Mummies! Papa!” screamed Margot, charging over the lawn from the lake in her bathing costume. “I missed you!” The petite, almost eight-year-old redhead charged into Emma’s legs, clutching her tightly. “Woah, kid. Slow down, there!” she chuckled. Ever since Robin moved in over a year and a half ago, Emma had become more accepted by the children, alongside Regina in the motherhood stakes, not just as per partner. Even Roland treated her differently and to all she was now ‘Ma’ and not ‘Emma’. And she loved it!

Regina dropped to her knees to take her into a hug. “Henry told me you were doing archery with Tuck. When did you start swimming?”

“We did archery earlier, but Maria’s been teaching me how to swim! It’s brilliant…”

“I know Honour’s with Henry, but where are your little sisters?” asked Robin, now on his knees and also pulling her in for a hug. Margot just smiled and pointed towards the lake, where Maria and another woman could be seen pushing the double buggy towards them. As they reached them, Emma and Regina bent down to collect their little girls, Hope having already fallen asleep in the sun. Emma snuggled Faith, kissing her little plump cheeks as Regina did the same to Hope.

“Hi, newlyweds!” called Maria Locksley, moving to hug her older brother. “Had fun? Hope you behaved yourself on your wedding night? On second thoughts, best not to tell me!”

Robin sniggered. “I thoroughly agree with the last sentence!” If he’d admitted to all three of them falling asleep early, completely exhausted by the end of the first day, she’d never let him live it down! “Now, Marge, how about some ice-cream till they get over here?”

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**Storybrooke Harbour**

It took less than a half-hour for Triton to return to the shore, accompanied by his wife, the goddess. Rumple had expected more of a fight to persuade the Sea King to fetch her. As Athena stepped from the sea onto the harbour pier, he couldn’t help but admire her striking beauty. She appeared before him dressed in full golden armour, helmet and a long ivory dress. Which Rumple presumed she wore to intimidate. The daughter of Zeus and his first wife Metis, Athena had the most unusual pale grey eyes, almost white, her golden-yellow hair draped across a shoulder. “Dark One? It’s been some time. Or should I be calling you Rumpelstiltskin now?”
Word’s already started to spread, it seems! “Good afternoon, Athena. Yes, you should now. The rumours are true. The darkness has been lifted from me!”

“Yet you choose to summon me and threaten my husband? That sort of insolence toward a god is usually punishable by death, spinner, as I’m sure you’re aware?”

“I’m aware. But I think in this case you will be overlooking the fact…” He bluffed.

“You seem very sure of yourself…Rumpelstiltskin! Considering you know longer have the leverage of the Dark One, what makes you think I won’t just kill you where you stand?”

“Because we had a deal. An agreement which directly affects your husband and your children, if you recall?” As he explained calmly, he noticed Triton’s look of suspicion. Though it was directed, not at him but at Athena!

“Any deal I had was with the Dark One! Who I understand…has disappeared.”

“Afraid not, dearie. Take a closer look!” A roll of parchment magically appeared in his hand, rolling itself open to reveal two signatures at the bottom. Athena and…Rumpelstiltskin! “The contract stands!”

The Goddess of Wisdom and War groaned, knowing it was incontestable. Breaking it would put her on the opposite side of the magical laws, and the gods themselves. Only she and the man in front of her knew the bitter truth. An open-ended deal she had made to save the lives of her husband and daughters.

“What do you want? If it’s the life of any one of my children, I would sooner perish myself!”

“You always were so dramatic, dearie! Fortunately, for you, I am no longer the Dark One. However, a deal is a deal and I am now insisting upon repayment. My terms concern Ariel. I wish you and your aggressive husband to give her the freedom to make her own choice…”

“Ariel? What have you done to her?” Triton raged. “Zeus help me, deal or no deal, if you have harmed her in any way…”

“I have done nothing of the sort! She currently resides with my wife and I and seems happy. She has the freedom to come and go as she so pleases. However, your taking her away threatens that, and quite possibly, my own happiness. So, I need you to relinquish and rescind all controls on her mermaid status. Let her come and go freely and without hindrance. I will not interfere.”

Athena was deeply suspicious. “You’re controlling her in some way! I need to see her!”

“I vow on the lives of my sons, I am doing no such thing. Everything I have said is true…”

“Then bring her to us. I will not agree until I’ve spoken with her!”

“Then we have no deal! May I remind you of the reversing curse that was built into it? On either my death at the hands of either of you, or the reneging of the deal, the curse unravels. The powers will be transferred back to Ursula and you will be transformed back into…polyps.”

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It was gone well past nine o’clock in the evening when Henry finally showed up at Mifflin Street with Honour and Roland. The toddlers were both being crotchety, unwilling to settle. Hope was teething a little earlier than Faith, which didn’t help. Robin and Emma had brought them back
downstairs and were settling them with medicine and warm milk when her eldest son walked in. “Henry, what time do you call this? It may be fine for you, and possibly Roland, but Honour’s got school in the morning!”

“Sorry mum, we got distracted! Hi guys! We were going to leave at six when August turned up. He just got back from the Far East. He’s bought a new Harley.”

“Yeah!” said Roland, charging back from the kitchen, a piece of cake in his hand, from which he was about to take a bite. “Roland, lovely to see you too! Go get a plate. Don’t set your sisters a bad example!” The wild haired boy grinned, heading back to the kitchen. “And a piece of that for me too please, Rollie!” Emma yelled after him. Meanwhile, Regina had dropped to her knees in front of the group, now hugging Honour and Margot close, kissing each on the cheek. “Well, you’re here now, safe and sound. I’ve got all four of my girls together – that’s all that matters…”

“Gee, thanks!” said Roland, now coming back in with two plates, handing one to Emma. “Good to know we’re appreciated, eh Henry?” he said sarcastically, looking up at his big brother. “Guess we boys don’t matter…”

“Don’t be like that, Roland, you know exactly what I meant!” chided Regina, looking at her wife.

“Are you saying you also need a bit of a kiss and cuddle, Ro?” said Emma. “Cos we can do that!” The blonde sat Faith next to Robin, stood and quickly moved over to the wild-haired twelve-year-old, forcefully wrapping him in her arms. Regina was already up, moving to his other side, both women now surrounding him, holding him tightly before raining kisses all over his head and cheeks, trying not to laugh. Roland now squirmed, wincing slightly as they made fun of him.

“Muuuummmsss! Gerroff! Dad, do you really have to put up with this?”

“Constantly. The difference is – I like it!”

Honour stepped up, placing a kiss on Robin’s cheek. “We had a great time, papa. Henry’s dad Neal is really funny! He told us some stories about Ma, before you all knew her, then Perse gave us a flying lesson, and Miss Belle gave us tea. Ariel was feeling a little poorly so stayed upstairs. Then, when Mr. Booth arrived, Henry went for a ride on his motorbike!” garbled the excited blonde.

Regina glared at Henry, while still speaking to her. “Did he? That sounds fun! Henry, you know what I think about those things. They’re death traps. What were you thinking? What if you’d fallen off?”

Henry huffed. “Mum, August was riding, I was only the passenger. He’s been using them for years; it was fine. Still, I quite fancy having one myself. Good getting around Boston in the rush hour!”

“Henry, no. Please! I’ll be worried sick…”

“He’s a man now, Gina. He’s bound to want to try it…” said Robin, trying to calm her, but failing dismally.

“What did Neal say…about me?” asked Emma. She prayed he didn’t talk about prison, or their thieving days.

“Nothing bad mum…honestly. Just about you. What you were like when you were young…erm, younger.”

Neal said you pretended to be French to get into a free party where you weren’t allowed in! That you once sang and played the guitar on stage. And that you could burp the alphabet!” added Honour, smirking. “Can you still do that, ma?”
Emma winced, her cheeks reddening. *Oh great - thank you Neal!* She thought, seeing the smirk on Robin’s face. “I didn’t know that! I’d like to hear you play, Emma. And sing,” he added. “Though perhaps not the burping…” That made Regina chuckle, nodding in agreement.

Roland also grinned. “Good trick, ma! Can you fart at will, like dad can?”

“Hey!” It was Robin’s turn to be embarrassed as both his wives sniggered, “I wish John had never told you about that! It was a long time ago…”


“Well at least Rob and I don’t fart in our sleep!” said Emma, her brow raised. That earned a roar of laughter from Henry, Roland and Margot, and an embarrassed, annoyed glare from the brunette.

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It was shortly after eight the following morning, when they again assembled at the dockside. The previous evening, Rumple had told Ariel and Belle all about his history with Ariel’s parents. How, long before her birth, Athena had begged the Dark One for help to save her family, which had been magically transformed into polyps by Ursula the Witch. How she had agreed an open-ended deal, which had yet to be reconciled. How, hearing through his network how Triton was intending to take his daughter back. And finally, his conversation with her mother and father. How, until then, he had been sworn to secrecy.

That worried Ariel! “So, you’re saying my father is insisting I go home with them? Angus, you know he won’t be persuaded!”

“I do. His stubbornness is renowned. Hence the reason I sought your mother. Unlike him, Athena is honour-bound to repay any debt to the Dark One. Well actually, to me, as it’s in my name. I told them that the repayment will come in the form of their releasing you, granting you the freedom to choose.”

“Have you told them about…this?” she said, stroking over her still washboard-flat stomach.

“I thought I’d leave that to you, dearie!” he released her hand as the waters parted, their visitors arriving.

“Ariel!” Triton’s voice croaked at the sight of his favourite daughter. She stepped forward to embrace him.

“Papa, I’ve missed you!” the redhead replied, accepting his hug. Then, seeing the tall figure behind him emerge from the waters. “Mamma?”

The pale-grey eyes looked at her, smiling but with a lot less warmth than her father. ‘Ariel, you’ve been away too long.’ Looking her up and down, it took but a few seconds for the goddess to then discover something her husband had clearly missed. “You…you’re with child?” *The mermaid should have guessed that, with her magic, she would have been able to tell instantly.* Triton looked up in surprise.

“Yes. About six weeks. I only found out a few days ago.”


This time, Ariel refused to be cowed by her father. “Of course not, papa! You already know we split
over three months ago! It's not his...

Triton and Athena stared at each other, stunned by the revelation. “Then who?” Triton saw his daughter’s eyes briefly look up at Rumpelstiltskin, a look unfortunately seen by her father! “YOU?”

A moment later, Rumple felt himself being forcefully lifted into the air by his throat, an invisible force tightening across his windpipe. “You’ll pay for this with your life!”

Seeing her husband being strangled, Belle, who had stayed in the background till now, screamed. “NO!”

As Rumple lost the ability to breath, he felt a strong magical field appear close by him. From the corner of his eye, he saw two figures emerge from the mist.

“PUT HIM DOWN, COUSIN!” growled Persephone, “KILL HIM AND YOUR ENTIRE FAMILY PERISHES!”

“Sister?” gasped Athena. “What are you doing here?”

“Preventing your blundering husband from making a catastrophic error! That man you are killing is NOT the Dark One! But if his life ends at your hands, his spell unwinds and your husband, and all your children, including Ariel, go the way of Hades. You want that?”

Athena couldn’t take the risk. “Triton, release him…please.”

As Rumple fell to the ground, trying to catch his breath, the second figure stepped forward, dropping to his knees to attend to him. “You really must learn to control that temper of yours, Triton! That’s what got you into your mess in the first place!”

“Merlin, what in hell’s name are you doing here? This is none of your concern!”

“You forget I see the future, Sea King! I see what will happen to your line if you harm this man and it is not good. Athena, you need to make your choice, quickly. Do you accept Rumple’s deal or not? Will you allow your daughter to decide her own future for herself, or will you continue to control her, causing death all around?”

The goddess looked down at Rumple, who now had an anxious Belle and Ariel either side of him, trying to help him sit up. Despite her anger, she knew full well the eternal bind of a deal with the Dark One. An end to her line? Is that even possible? “Oh, very well. Ariel, what is it you want to do?”

“I want to have this baby! I want to care for it with the two people I’ve fallen in love with. I want it to know its father and brothers, and its other mother,” she smiled at Belle, who took her hand. “But I also want it to know my own parents. I want you in its life, mamma. I want it to know its aunts. I don’t want to lose you, but I want to be with Belle and Angus. To bring up our children together, without worrying constantly about it all being taken away by a father that cannot control his temper!” she glared at Triton. “I love you, father, but this is too much!”

As Rumple now stood, recovering, Athena stepped closer, her cold grey eyes boring into him. “And if I grant this, there are no sub-clauses? No hidden terms trapping my daughter here?”

“As I’ve told you already, settlement is to be Athena’s freedom. She is free to come and go as she pleases, with no hindrance whatsoever. I have no problem with her spending her time with you as much or as little as she desires. That’s the whole point. She will be free!”

“And you, Ariel? Is this what you truly wish for? A life with…them?”
“It is. I wish to bring up my child, our child, with Rumple and Belle.”

“But you’ll come home to Atlantica…to us, and your sisters,” her father still seemed wary.

“This is my home now, father. I’ll come to visit my family, but on one condition. Namely, that you stop treating my love for Belle and Rumple as some sort of disease! If you don’t accept them, I cannot accept you! Your choice!”
She Called Me a Freak!

Chapter Summary

Emma goes back to work in the Sheriff's Department, little Neal has a falling out with his mother and Regina gets a surprise visitor.

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone! Sorry my updates have been a bit sporadic but I'm getting to a key stage in my finals, so that had to come first. We're into the final chapters now, so after this I'm going to be fast forwarding to key events in the future for the Locksley family, giving an update on what happens to Baelfire (lining things up for a follow on story) before an epilogue. Hard to believe it's been seven months since I started this, my first posting.

As ever, thank you so much to those who have stuck with me and been encouraging.
Love Fi xx

Mifflin Street

The following morning, the Locksley's gathered for breakfast. Henry had stayed over for the first night since his father had returned from the underworld. As Robin stood at the cooker, making ever more pancakes, Regina sat at the head of the now extended table, Emma to her right, sipping steaming hot black coffee as she looked with satisfaction at her entire family. The pair smiled contentedly at the domestic scene. Hope and Faith sat in their highchairs, with plastic beakers and plates, happily chewing pancakes along with everyone else.

“Look at them all, Gina?” said a still sleepy Emma. “Hard to believe there’s six of them now. Nine including us! We did this. I’ve been alone most of my life. I never imagined in a million years I’d have all this."

Her wife smiled, looking at all their children, and Henry, who sat at the opposite end of the table. She rested her hand on Emma’s thigh. “Me neither. Are you ready to don the Sheriff badge once again tomorrow?"

“Sort of. Though strictly speaking, I don’t become Sheriff until Hank steps down, after we get back from the honeymoon. He’s going to go over all the rotas and changes tomorrow. Apparently, we’ve got a couple of new starters, but he’s still short of decent night shift cover. I might even ask dad to help. We’re going to go see Mayor Phil together and see if we can get more budget. I’m still a little unsure about going full-time. I kinda got used to this…” she looked at the toddlers. “Not sure I can leave them that long…”

“I know what you mean. I’m still deciding whether I want to take on managing the stables and riding school, like your father wants, or getting started on the paramedic course.”

“Phil’s looking for a Deputy Mayor. You’d be a shoe-in for the top job when he stands down. You
“No. I definitely don’t want that again. I was mayor a long time, without even an election. I remember that meeting when Spencer was forced out. Philip won the first fair election by a landslide and I think he’s done a remarkable job, considering his background. I know he wants to stand down, but I don’t think he should. As for me, I remember what Merlin said. About atoning for my past? I think I want to get on with that, instead.”

“Well I think you’d make a brilliant paramedic!” said Robin, appearing beside them with another plate of freshly made pancakes. “You’ve got very warm hands, after all!” he followed it with a quick peck on her lips, earning a groan from the boys and a smirk from Emma.

“Robin, how about you standing for Mayor next time around?” asked Regina. “You seem to have no enemies, after all…”

“ME, a politician?” he laughed. “You’ve got to be kidding? No, I’ve got a village of my own to run…”

“Hardly. the guys seem to do it for you, they-” Emma stopped, hearing the loud pounding drumbeat of a motorcycle pulling up outside the front. “what on earth…?”

“That’s August’s motorbike!” said Honour, excitedly jumping off her chair to look out the front window.

“At this hour? Honour, come back to the table. Why would he be coming here so early, making that racket? I…” but Emma had already stood, heading for the front door, opening it to go out and blast him for disturbing their peaceful breakfast. When she got closer, August had already stopped and hitched the bike, and was now helping his passenger off from behind him. As she drew nearer she called, “Oi, Booth! Turn off that bloody thing off! It’s too early-” She stopped the moment she saw who the passenger, now taking his helmet off, was. Robin’s grandfather? “Christian? What on earth are you doing here? And on that thing?”

“Hello, Emma my dear!” said the elderly, but sprightly, man, chuckling. August helped him collect a sizeable bag from the back pannier. “My, I enjoyed that! It’s been a while. Thank you, young August, that was tremendous fun!” August finally leaned across and killed the engine, smiling back at the women.

“Grandpa, not that it isn’t lovely to see you, but what on earth are you doing here so early?” said Robin, with a chuckle, as the family came out to join Emma. He wrapped his paternal grandfather in a hug.

“And good morning to you all, young Locksleys! How wonderful it is to see you all together. Sorry to arrive so early and unannounced, but Maria and your cousin are arriving here in a couple of minutes in the truck. They’re taking me on a sightseeing trip to Boston and New York for a couple of days, but I wanted to drop off a few things here first. Just a few presents. Young August here arrived at the inn yesterday, and I’ve been itching to go on his new motorcycle since he arrived. You know, when I first lived in England I used to ride one myself but sadly, the old arthritis no longer allows it. That, and the fact they won’t let me on the road anymore…”

“I’m not surprised,” chuckled August. “This guy kept asking me to open her up! He’s a speed freak, Robin!”

Regina stepped in front of him, kissing him on the cheek. “Well it’s lovely to see you, Christian. I’m sorry we left straight after the reception. We never really had a chance to catch up, what with
“Breakfast sounds lovely. My granddaughter’s been showing me around. I got to meet all the Merry Men too. As I said, Maria’s bringing over some presents I brought for the children. And you newly-weds of course! And I haven’t had a proper chance to meet little Hope and Faith yet. They were asleep most of.”

“BUMPA!” yelled Roland, seeing his great-grandfather standing outside with his family. The almost thirteen-year-old ran over, the older man embracing him. “Hello, young Ro! I was in the bar and was going to come over and talk to you yesterday, but you seemed rather occupied with a certain young lady? I didn’t want to interrupt…” he winked at the boy.

Roland cringed, knowing his mothers and father would start asking all sorts of awkward questions. Oh god, what did he see? Well, best do what dad does… deflect. “Hi, August, you’re here too! Can I have a ride on the back of your motorbike?”

“NO!” said Robin, Emma and Regina, as one. Just as he intended.

August grinned, giving him a wry look, suspecting what he was up to. “Sorry, fella. Your parents have spoken! Maybe when you’re a little older. You know, Henry’s dad Neal is going to New York this week to buy himself a motor trike? That’s a bit safer than this one. Maybe your folks will let you ride on that one…”

“Neal’s buying a trike?” gasped Emma. “Like… why? Midlife crisis? I thought Henry said he was going somewhere else?”

“He is, ma,” said their eldest son, looking slightly guilty. “I never had a chance to tell you since you got back. Dad’s going off with Killian to DunBroch in a week’s time. He’s on a mission for Zeus. Though meanwhile he’s going to be looking for some clothes and wheels. I thought I might go with him, as I’ve got to go back to university anyway…”

“You’re leaving again?” whined Regina. “Henry, we’ve hardly seen you anything of you and most of the time you’ve been staying at Gold’s! I know your father’s only been back a few days but are we so horrible you can’t stay? she didn’t want to plead, but she’d missed him so much.

He looked down at her, with a sigh and a resigned smile. “Mum, don’t be daft. There’s nothing horrible about any of you. Dad’s only been back for a few days and he’s disappearing again. Don’t forget he didn’t even know I existed until I was ten, then I lost him again! Come on, be fair…”

But she wasn’t in the mood to be fair. She gave an affronted shrug. “I suppose this is all his idea? Is this how it’s going to be from now on? What’s next – not finishing your education so you can spend more time with him?”

Henry rolled his eyes. “Actually, dad said he wants me to stick with Harvard and complete the degree. He also said he wants to come over here and meet you. And Robin. If it’s not too awkward…”

“Me? Why on earth would he want to talk to me?” She felt a gentle hand on her shoulder.

“He probably wants to clear the air regarding Henry, love. It’s been a while since I saw him back in Rumple’s castle, but Neal’s a good man

. And he is Henry’s father. I think we should invite him over.” The pair looked at Emma for her thoughts.
Emma signed. “Erm, yeah fine, I guess. We kind of cleared the air before the wedding. He’s over me, and I’m over him, but, I’d rather not be here for it. Silly I know, it’s just…”

“Just that you still have some residual feelings for him?” offered Robin, sympathetically. “It’s understandable, Emma. I could just imagine if my Marian appeared again. Or Regina if it was Daniel. You loved each other once, after all…” he put a warm hand on her shoulder. “Gina and I’ll talk to him…”

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As Christian Locksley breakfasted with his grandson’s family, Maria and Caroline turned up, bringing various gifts he’d bought from England. Regina had immediately spotted the engagement ring on her finger, and Maria had blushed, admitting that Charlie Sage had proposed only the night before. The adults all rose to hug, kiss and congratulate her. Although Merlin’s son had academies in London, Paris, New York and Rio de Janeiro, they had decided to buy a home in Long Island, close to his father’s US home and, much to Robin’s relief, was a realistic drive away from Storybrooke.

Their cousin Caroline also had news. Apparently, her fiancé Victor had recently passed his senior medical examinations and was now registered in the system as a fully qualified neurologist. With Merlin’s help he was already assigned to two hospitals close to New York. However, as Caroline didn’t want to leave Sherwood, they agreed to add it, and Storybrooke, to his medical bases. They also decided to come back to Sherwood for their wedding and invitations would be sent out shortly.

“That’s wonderful news, Carrie,” said Regina, taking the woman’s hand. “And I have to say, I’m relieved. You’ve become a very dear friend. I’d hate to lose you!”

“I feel the same about you too, Regina.” She squeezed the brunette’s hand in response. “Added to which, now Maria’s going to be a Sage, we Locksleys need to stick together…”

Aw, don’t say that,” said her cousin, “I may be getting married, but I’ll always be a Locksley!”

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*The Gold Mansion*

Ariel woke up early to the dawn light, comfortably ensconced by two warm bodies, front and back, happy, even though she now felt pins and needles in her left arm, as it lay frozen under Belle’s neck. She didn’t want to wake her, instead enjoying the delicious feel of her naked girlfriend’s backside curled into her equally naked lap. Her right arm lay over the librarian’s midriff, her hand curling gently under her left breast. Ariel was herself curled into Rumple’s lap, his arm reaching out over the two of them as they lay snoozing. She shuddered, feeling his semi-hard cock resting between her buttocks. Last night had been the first time the three of them had made love together since returning from Europe, and it had been a welcome release for all.

For the first five nights back in Storybrooke, Neal had slept in his father’s house, Persephone surprising them by deciding to stay and share his bed prior to his, and her, departure. However, as he’d planned to be up early to work through the logistics for his DunBroch trip with Jones, yesterday he’d decided to spend the night on the Jolly Roger. Henry had also decided to spend the night at his mothers’ house, and so, for the first time since their return from London, Rumple, Belle and Ariel had the house to themselves, now Gideon was asleep.

“I was surprised your parents consented to the deal,” said Belle to her girlfriend, as Rumple walked back into the lounge with a tray of hot chocolate drinks. “After the way your father reacted, I was certain they’d refuse!”
“Me too, especially when he grabbed Angus’s throat like that! I thought he was going to kill him!”

“That’s why Persephone stepped in,” added Rumple. “They knew what would happen if I died. I may not be the Dark One anymore, but the contract with Athena was already tied into a curse. Not honouring it, or allowing her own husband to try to assist in reneging on it, would have caused its reversal. All those souls originally saved, would have been reverted back to their original state, forever. Including your father. Forever.”

“I knew a little bit about it, but I’d always thought my mother had saved them with an enchanted staff?”

“But WHO provided Athena with the staff? The Dark One…”

Ariel gulped. “So, without the original curse, I’d have no father, no sisters, no grandparents and no…me?”

“Aye. Your family was already cursed into that state by the Sea Witch. The curse merely reversed it.”

“So, in a way, you saved my life, Angus. And his, before I even knew you. Without you, I wouldn’t be here.”

“A rare, but happy by-product of dark magic.” He smiled warmly back at her. “How are you feeling? Tired?”

A mischievous smirk appeared on the mermaid’s lips. “No, not at all. I’ve taken it easy all day and now I just want to do something. We’ve got the house to ourselves, right?”

“Uh huh,” the librarian responded. “What are you thinking?”

“Well… I never got to see you wear that racy little red number you bought in Florence. I did a little shopping in Venice, too, remember?” she flickered her eyelashes at her girl. “What say we give each other, and Angus, a little fashion show?”

Rumple saw the look the two women exchanged. Sitting in his armchair, nursing a scotch, his mind went back to that first time back in Rome, when all three of them had accepted their new ‘relationship’. When the mermaid looked at her in a certain way, he could almost see Belle melt. It was a look of lust, but also intense love. A look reciprocated by the redhead. At that moment he could almost be invisible to them, and he didn’t care one bit. Just being in the presence of these extraordinary women was…well, extraordinary.

“Rumple, we’re going upstairs. Could you give us ten minutes?”

“The way you’re looking at each other, dearie, perhaps you need an hour…or two?”

“No, Angus.” Rebuked Ariel, now sending him a look that hardened him instantly. “Ten minutes. No longer…”

And now, ten minutes later, he knocked on the bedroom door politely before entering. Neither woman was in the room, though he heard noises from the adjoining bathroom. Rumple walked around the bed, sitting himself on the small sofa, and as the door opened, he gasped as Belle stepped slowly into the room. Not so much stepped, as glided. She appeared to be wearing a short, but clearly pricey, blood-red baby doll night gown, the length of which barely covered the matching sheer panties. The almost, but not quite see-through silk seemed to pour over her natural curves, accentuating wonderful hips. “Well?” she asked, now feeling a little insecure in the skimpy fabric.
“What do you think?”

“I think I need a cushion, Belle. And not for my back…” he said smiling, crossing his right leg over his left, trying not to make his prominent bulge even more prominent. “You look rather… enchanting.”

“Well, I was hoping for the word ‘sexy’, but ‘enchanting’ will have to do, I suppose!” she smirked.

“It’s not a word I choose to use, because you have always looked, ‘sexy’. Irresistible? Stunning? Captivating? Bewitching? None seem to do you justice.”

She sniggered, about to comment when the door to the landing opened, Ariel walking in, having changed in the spare bedroom. She wore a pure ivory white satin chemise, which flowed over her body like liquid paint. Lace trim around the cups and waist exposed her upper body to perfection as she nervously walked around the large bed to her girlfriend. Rumple’s mouth watered as Belle looked her up and down, her eyes widening before whispering. “Hell - now that’s what I call ‘sexy’!”

“What do you think?” he croaked, his mouth drying by the second, unsure whether to move. “I feel I’m not worthy to witness such beauty. Like I’m some sort of perverted voyeur.”

Ariel sniggered. “Well we can’t have that now, can we? Best you get over here then, Angus!”

“No,” a playful, teasing look came over the older woman when she saw his lustful gaze. “Best he stays over there a while. And rest. He can always…watch.”

That produced a sly grin from the former Dark One. “As you wish…” He knew the game she was playing, and, judging by the feeling in his trousers, knew it was also going to be painful to watch. His breathing increased, as the stunning pair to turn to face each other, Belle’s arms wrapping around the redhead’s waist, pulling her closer. Ariel’s hands moved to the sides of her head, running fingers through dark locks before pulling her down into a slow, heated kiss. Rumple could only gaze in wonder.

As lips separated, Ariel pulled herself in tighter, enjoying the warmth of her girlfriend’s body clamped to her own, separated only by the thin fabric. “Lovely,” she whispered, turning her head to again take Belle lips in her own, the kiss eagerly returned. “Do you remember the first time he walked in on us?”

“How could I forget?” she whispered, turning her lover’s back towards the bed. Ariel eased herself onto it, lying down. Moments later, Belle was upon her, nudging knees apart with her own, before positioning and lowering herself full length onto her. Rumple watched with bated breath, desperately trying to avoid touching himself as he watched them whispering, kissing and stroking. As Belle rolled off to her side, hands went lower, and their groaning increased. After a good few minutes, it became clear to Rumple that in their heated exchange, he had been quite forgotten. Invisible. He wasn’t hurt, just resigned and, deciding that the beautiful image in front of him wasn’t worth the discomfort he was now feeling, stood to leave. Stepping silently towards the door, he’d almost opened it before he heard the mermaid’s voice.

“And where do you think you’re going?”
“Well…you both seem rather…occupied. I thought best to just leave you to it.”

“Angus, shut up and get over here!” she breathed, lustily, spotting and pointing at the now prominent bulge. “And for heaven’s sake, get those clothes off! This beauty over here is definitely going to need that beast down there!”

The next two hours had been a sensuous frenzy, as all three lovers sated themselves on each other to the point of exhaustion. And now, in the morning light, laying tightly snuggled between her two lovers, Ariel felt Rumple start to wake, stretching behind her. She moaned gently. “Do you know, I just love waking up to the smell of you two? Were you really going to just walk out on us last night?”

“What?” he groaned as his mind slowly woke. “Oh, that. Well…you did both seem very invested in each other. I just didn’t want to disturb. She is rather irresistible, after all. Plus, watching you was becoming quite painful.”

She rolled over, facing him. Even after a night’s lovemaking, feeling her naked body rolling against him made his body react. “I’m sorry. You only had to say, Angus. We were just teasing, you know?” she giggled, placing a chaste kiss on his lips. “What say I make it up to you?” her lips left his, moving to his cheek before bending to kiss his chest, working slowly lower under the sheets, peppering his belly with kisses, and quite obvious where she was heading.

“Well…I can be quite forgiving. Given the right…ooh that’s nice…incentive!”

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The following morning – Mifflin Street

It had been an early start for all of them. Robin had risen early to take Roland and the girls to Sherwood for a school-organised bushcraft course. Henry had disappeared to the docks early to meet his father, and now, as the toddlers played with toys on the living room rug, Emma gave herself a final check over in the mirror, before leaving for work. “It’s funny, seeing you back in that red jacket and the cream sweater,” said Regina, appearing beside her and stroking the blonde’s hair from her shoulders. “Reminds me of the first time we met. When you brought Henry back.”

“Yeah,” she said, brushing a stray lock back behind Regina’s ear, before turning and placing her hands on the brunette’s hips. “Come a long way, haven’t we?”

“We certainly have,” she said, leaning in and placing a brief peck on her lips. “A very long way. I’ll pour the coffees.” The pair stepped into the kitchen. Making the drinks and handing one to Emma, Regina looked at the wall calendar. “So…you’re going to be finished at the station around five. I’ll be trying out Ella’s nursery with these two and Robin will be bringing the children back after school. I suggest we-”

“She was interrupted by a sudden burst of pure white magical mist that spiralled in the kitchen. “SHIT!” yelled Emma, stepping back in shock and splashing scalding hot coffee all over her sweater. “WHAT THE FUCK?” The mist thinned and disappeared, leaving the equally shocked figure of Neal, Emma’s brother, in front of them.

“NEAL! YOU FUCKING IDIOT!” his sister screamed. “You just burnt me! What the hell were you thinking?”

The nine-year old looked up, already visibly distressed, with tears in his eyes. “I’m…I’m sorry! I never meant it! I just…” before either woman had a chance to react, he disapparated again.
“The bloody moron!” growled Emma as he left, furious and looking down at her ruined sweater. “How did he learn to apparate? We never taught him that yet!”

“Emma, calm,” her wife urged. “He seemed as shocked as you were and I also think he’s already been crying! I think his emotions may have made him lose control. We need to find out what’s happened…” Regina loved her little brother-in-law dearly and seeing him distressed was upsetting.

Seeing her wife’s reaction made her feel guilty for overreacting. “Um…yeah, all right. I’ll go change again. Give me a minute and I’ll call mum and dad to try to find out what they know.” However, it took a matter of seconds before Emma’s cell phone rang; her father’s image showing.

“How did he learn to apparate? We never taught him that yet!”

“Emma, calm,” her wife urged. “He seemed as shocked as you were and I also think he’s already been crying! I think his emotions may have made him lose control. We need to find out what’s happened…” Regina loved her little brother-in-law dearly and seeing him distressed was upsetting.

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“Hi dad! I was just about to call you.”

“Emma, have you seen Neal? He just disappeared!” he sounded worried.

“Yeah. He was here just a minute ago! He used magic. Poofed in, then poofed straight out again after I…well, it’s not important. Dad, what’s going on?”

“He had a bust up with your mum. They argued, then she screamed something at him. Something which I think he took the wrong way.” Charming sounded almost tearful. “She didn’t mean it, but I think it really hurt him!”

Emma winced, imagining what she’d said. “Did he take his phone, dad? You remember the tracker we put on it?”

“I already tried. I think he’s taken it off!”

“David,” Regina interrupted, “Emma needs to go to work. I’ll go looking for him! I can get Tinker Bell over here to mind the girls. I’m not involved, and whatever was said, I think Neal trusts me…”

They heard the loud sigh at the other end of the line. David knew that his son and Regina were close. “I guess you’re right. OK, thank you, Regina. Just…when you find him, tell him…tell him his mother is truly sorry for what she said, and she really does love him!”

The women looked at each other anxiously, wondering what had happened to cause such a reaction. As the call ended, Emma looked guiltily at her wife. “And tell him his sister loves him, too! And that I’m really sorry I yelled at him and called him an idiot…”

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Back on the Nolan’s farm, David turned off the phone, looking down at his distraught wife, who sat, hunched up and sobbing on the sofa, her knees tucked under her. “Regina’s going to go looking for him! It’ll be OK Snow. He’s just a bit upset but he’ll get over it…”

Snow twitched at the news, but barely moved, disgusted with herself. “How could I have said that, David? To my own son! I called him a…a…I can’t even bear to say it! I’m a horrible mother, David!”

“No, you’re not! Snow, you were just upset and shocked and…perhaps a bit hormonal? Hardly surprising, under the circumstances. He’ll come around…”

“I CALLED HIM A FREAK, DAVID!” she wailed. “How could any mother do that?”

David sat down next to his true love, wrapping his arm around her back and pulling her close. “To
be fair, you used that word to cover all people with magic. He frightened you, and you were emotional. Once you apologise to him, I’m sure he’ll understand. Just let him spend a little bit of time with the girls. Though it might be a good idea to tell him about your condition?”

Snow nodded, though continued sobbing into her knees.

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While waiting for Tinker Belle to come over, Regina started ringing around the town, trying to track down Emma’s brother before she used magic to get to him. She checked with the school, with Ruby at the diner, with Archie and even with Sheriff Hank Morgan before Emma arrived for her shift.

But after an hour’s calls, nobody had seen sight nor sound of Neal Nolan. When Tink arrived, she told her what had happened, and she immediately started using her own fairy telepathy powers to tell the other fairies to look out for the boy. “He can’t have gone too far, Regina. As he has magic, I’m sure we can pick up his trace and go to him.”

Another hour passed and still no news of Emma’s brother. As she looked at a map of the town, considering where to start her own physical search, a large rapping noise was heard from the front door. Walking over and opening it, she immediately gave a loud sigh of relief when she saw the missing boy, standing beside somebody and looking guilty. “Neal! Where on earth have you been? We’ve been worried sick!” It was only then she looked up to see who had accompanied him back.

“You! What on earth are you doing with my…with Neal?” she asked the boy’s namesake, who merely smirked.

“And hello to you too, Mrs. Swan-Mills! Or should that be Locksley-Swan-Mills?”

“It’s just ‘Locksley’, thank you!” she huffed. “Henry said you wanted to speak to Robin and myself, though I hardly expected you to just arrive unannounced?”

“Nor me. However, I was standing on the Jolly Roger and found this young man sitting on his own on the pier. We got talking, and he seemed more than a bit glum. So, we gave him some breakfast, and had a nice chat before he was ready to come back. He asked to come here, rather than his parent’s place.”

“Oh, Neal!” She looked at the boy, with a mix of sadness, pity and concern. “Well, whatever’s happened, he has a big sister, mother and father who are all worried for his whereabouts. And I’m sure his mother and sister want to apologise to him.” Now, if you…”

“She called me a freak!” yelled the boy, still holding onto his namesake. “She said I wasn’t right in the head!”

“You mother said that?” Regina could hardly believe her ears! Snow would actually say that?

“She said magic was bad! That it killed her mum and dad and that it ruins everything!”

Neal Senior chipped in. “You know, I used to think that. But I then realised that it’s only when people do stupid or evil things with it that it’s bad.”

Young Neal looked up at him. “But it killed you, didn’t it? I heard about that. You died saving Storybrooke and that’s why mum and dad named me after you. But it was magic that killed you! Magic, like mine!”

He couldn’t argue with the kid’s logic, though he was about, when Regina intervened. “No, Neal. I
learned from Henry a long time ago that magic just gives people like you and me the power to do bad things. But you don’t have to do them. Look at your sister. She’s not bad, is she?”

“She called me an idiot. A moron…”

“Because you scared her, and she scalded herself with the coffee as a result! She shouldn’t have said that but she just spoke out of anger. There’s no harm done. Now, come on inside and I’ll let people know you’re safe.” She saw how he still clung tightly to Gold’s son. “Er…Mr. Cassidy, would you like to come in for a coffee?”

“Sure, thanks. But just call me Neal.” Then looking down at the boy named after him, “On second thoughts, just call me Baelfire, or Bae.”

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After making a hot chocolate for Neal, and a black coffee for Henry’s father, Regina sent a quick text to Emma and Robin, letting them know the boy was safe, now with her, and asking Emma to tell her parents and everyone else to stand down the alarm. She didn’t mention the older man’s involvement.

“Nice place you have her, Mrs. Locksley,” said Baelfire, admiring the grand staircase and room.

“Call me Regina,” she looked at the young Nolan, who was now asleep on the sofa. “Considering my…our son…is spending so much time with you. What was it you were wanting to talk to me about?”

“It was nothing important. But…after getting some sort of life back with Henry again I guess I was wanting to, erm, start by thanking you.”

“Thanking me? For what?”

“For raising our son so well when I didn’t even know he existed! For looking after him, loving him, protecting him. He’s a wonderful guy and I’m painfully aware I’ve only been in his life for two months out of the last twenty-two years. I know Emma’s also been here a while, but he only had you for so many of those precious years. You did a brilliant job, so I just wanted to thank you for it. And assure you I’ve no intention of trying to keep him away from his mothers. I’m going to be travelling at the end of the week, though I’m going to be coming back to get to know him properly. So, I think it’s important that you and I, and Emma, find a way to get on. He may be a young man now, but he still needs his mothers, even if he pretends otherwise!”

Regina smiled, with a hint of sadness in her eyes. “He’s a lot more independent than you think! He’s changed. Challenging us all the time. Arguing…”

“Sounds a bit like his other mother!” he chuckled, “She was always a bit stroppy!”

“Can’t argue with that!” she agreed. “Plus, he’s inherited some of my temper. That doesn’t help.”

“Well either way, the pair of you have done a brilliant job turning him into the astonishing man he is today. So again, I wanted to thank you. He speaks so highly of you. Both of you. He still loves you very much, even if he pretends otherwise!”

Regina knew he was being sincere, warming towards him. He was still a handsome man, and she couldn’t help but study his face, for signs of anything misleading. There was nothing. But she could see what Emma had seen in him all those years ago. Plus a definite look of Henry in the eyes. “He speaks highly of you too. He’s been rather critical in the past when Emma forgot the date of your
death. He was rather nasty at times…”

“Yeah, he told me. Said he was horrible, and you didn’t deserve it. He still loves you both…very much.”

She smiled back at him for the first time. “Would you like to see some pictures of him…growing up?

“I’d love that. If you have the time?”

---

It was gone five in the afternoon when Emma got home from duty. Opening the door, taking her boots and jacket off and walking through the house, the was more than surprised to see the sight before her. Regina was sat on the floor, surrounded by open boxes of photographs, some distributed across the floor. Her young brother-in-law was sat between her knees, holding two photos. “And this is when Henry was two. I had to potty train him early, because he used to keep racing off without a diaper, or before I had a chance to clean him properly!”

Young Neal chuckled at the chubby bare bottom of his now grown up nephew. He handed it to a previously unnoticed older man, sitting close by. Emma jolted in surprise.

“Neal? What are you doing here?”

“Hi. Regina’s pulled out her family albums. She’s been showing me some pictures of Henry. I so gotta get copies of some of these. They’re brilliant!” Neal held a photo of his son, smeared in baby food, in his highchair. “And this one too, please? Or I can take them and get them copied by Frank.”

“That’s OK.” said Regina. “Just leave the ones you want copies of in that separate pile. I’ll organise it for when you get back.”

Seeing her former lover talking warmly with her wife, made Emma feel decidedly odd. “How long have you been here?”

"He arrived a few hours ago, my love,” said Regina, on his behalf. “Bae dropped Neal around here this afternoon. We’ve had a little chat and he’s been helping me find some old photographs and pictures of Henry for his father. We’ve had a nice time, haven’t we?” She rested a hand on the boy’s shoulder, kissing the top of his head.

It was then Emma realised that her brother was studiously ignoring her, as he passed photos up to his namesake. “Hi, baby bro! You feeling better?” But he didn’t even look up, just continued to shun her, as he passed another photo across to Baelfire. “He’s nude again in this one, too!”

The blonde shared a resigned look with her wife. “Neal…look, I’m sorry!” but he still ignored her. So, she dropped to her knees, directly in front of him. “Neal! Please talk to me? I’m really sorry I lashed out at you!” The boy refused to look at her, though he did stop what he was doing and stared at the carpet.

“You called me an idiot,” his young voice contained a hint of anger. “And a moron!”

The blonde winced at the reminder. “And that makes me an idiot and a moron for doing so! I was angry because when you appeared like that, I was so shocked that I spilt hot coffee on to my new top. I over-reacted and I shouldn’t have done! You’re no idiot, little brother and I love you. Please?” She opened her arms, an open invitation for a hug. The boy finally looked up at her, and she could see the red, watery eyes. “Can you forgive your stupid, big sister, who should know better?”
After a moment’s hesitation, Neal knelt up to face her. “I guess,” and stepped into her arms, to the relief of both women and a smile from the man. Though as he sobbed quietly onto her chest, he said, “Mum says I’m a freak. And not right in the head!”

*That made Emma wince, knowing how much that comment must have hurt. And seeing the look on Regina’s face, she knew she was thinking the same thing! She…she really said that? Neal, I can’t believe she meant it. Mum must have just been very upset about something. What happened?” she continued to hug him.*

“I magicked Fluffy into the house, at the bottom of the stairs, just before she came down. Mum tripped and fell over him and suddenly got angry. Not like normal angry, but really, really angry! She said she hated magic in the house. That it was evil and made me do stupid stuff, just to show off. I shouted back and said she should have looked where she was going, but that just made her even more mad! That’s when she called me a freak. I’m not a freak, am I Auntie Gina?”

“No, of course you’re not, my love. You’re an intelligent young man, learning how to use his new powers. Your sister and I didn’t even know we had magic when we were eight, so I can’t imagine what it’s like for you!”

“Yeah, bro,” Emma added, “You apparated and disapparated this morning like a pro! I couldn’t have done that. I’m sure mum didn’t mean it. She probably just lashed out, like I did.”

“But I keep making her mad because of my magic. I can’t always control it, though. She said magic’s bad!”

Baelfire had listened, “You know Neal, all my life I always thought magic was evil! My dad used to be the Dark One, after all! But before he sent me back here, Zeus gave me some magical powers of my own, which I’m only just learning how to use now. So, you are way ahead of me, kid. But Merlin’s got a funny way of teaching me how to use and control them. Sort of by touching my head so a lot goes in. Perhaps you should come and talk to him before we go away this weekend? He might be able to help…”

The boy smiled up at him. “I’d like that.” Regina noticed there seemed a natural affinity between them.

Emma heard the familiar blip that indicated a new text message had arrived. Pulling out her phone, she saw there were at least ten of them, mostly from her father but two pleading ones from her mother. “Come on, Neal, mum and dad want you home! I’m coming with you as I need to have a word with them too…”

Neal groaned, “I don’t really want to go back just yet. Can’t I stay the night here?”

“Sorry, no can do. Dad’s orders. Besides, you also have school in the morning. So come on…”

The boy stood slowly, shoulder hunched in resignation. “OK. Thanks Aunt Gina. And thank you too, Neal, for lunch and everything! You were great. I’m really glad for Henry that you’re back. He’s lucky…” The boy stepped in for a quick man-hug with Baelfire. “No problem, bud. I’d better get going myself. I’ll see you around, yeah?”

Emma watched him hug her brother, before he gave her wife a peck on the cheek, and a hug. “And thank you too, Regina. I really enjoyed this afternoon. Enjoy your honeymoon…”

“Thank you and you’re very welcome. Good luck in DunBroch.”
It was a matter of moments before the siblings, Emma holding Neal’s hand, apparated just far enough from the farmhouse to avoid causing a disturbance. “You did it!” said a delighted sister. “You see? Just picture where you’re going to poof as though it was in the short distance, not right in front of you. That way, there’s no nasty surprises. Was that the first time you apparated somebody else apart from yourself?”

“Yeah. I’ve done it with Flossy and some of the sheep, but this was a first. Thanks, sis.”

The front door of the farmhouse opened, as though in expectation. “Hi guys,” said their father, stepping outside to greet them. “Neal, c’mere.” He wrapped his long arms around the boys shoulders pulling him in before snaking out a left arm to lasso Emma into the hug too. “I’ve been worried about you…”

The next hour proved to be very emotional, for all the family. Judging from her haunted face, it was clear to Emma that her mother had spent a fair bit of the day crying. Even now she seemed far more emotional than usual. She’d started off hugging her son tightly, apologising again and again and again for her outburst earlier that day. She swore to her children that she no longer thought magic was bad and repeatedly told Neal that, far from being a moron, he was highly intelligent, and she was so very proud of him, and Emma, for what they were. When the ‘freak’ word was mentioned, she again dissolved into tears, begging for forgiveness and repeating her early assurances that nothing could be further from the truth. Neal had sat silently throughout, though had accepted the hugs gratefully. David had stayed out of the room, feeling this had to be Snow’s moment.

It was only when David, now having penned the sheep for the night, came back in to join his family, that Emma spotted an odd look between her parents, her father clearly wanting his wife to say something. Emma sat beside her brother on the sofa, her mother opposite.

“Mum? Dad? What’s wrong? My superpower’s on overdrive and I’m sensing there’s something you’re not telling us. What’s going on?”

Snow sighed, looking up at her true love, who dropped down beside her to take her hand. “Er…yes, Emma. I suppose there is something. I wasn’t going to tell you just yet, but perhaps under the circumstances I should. Neal, do you remember from your life science classes what being hormonal means?

“Yes. It’s something to do with when our bodies change as we get older. About boys getting hair and stiffies, and girls getting boobs, periods and bleeding, and stuff.” David and his daughter winced at the rather crude description

“Yes, well, in a way that’s all part of it. But do you remember when Nurse Foster told you about feeling very emotional when you’re going through those changes? About feeling angry, or teary, or very sad?”

“Yeah. Is that why you were so angry today? Why you did all that screaming and swearing? Is it because you’re on your period?” Emma smirked. Boys could be so very obtuse sometimes.

“Not quite. Yes, all those feelings are caused by chemicals in our bodies called hormones. They can make us feel very strange and react to things differently. And I am very, very hormonal and emotional right now but, no, I am not on my period at the moment.” David squeezed her hand, reassuring her to continue. That’s when Emma finally realised what may have exacerbated her falling out with Neal.

“I went to the hospital yesterday. I’ve just found out I’m pregnant.”
How Could You do that to Killian?

Chapter Summary

Robin takes up drawing again, to Emma and Regina's delight. Neal and Killian set off for DunBroch, to discover a stowaway on board.

And Sheriff Morgan is given a send-off, while Regina and Emma discover something surprising about Killian’s wife!

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone. Another chapter on and many thanks for all the positive feedback. A couple of single-ship obsessed comments were less than flattering, but never mind. There’s tons of other stuff they could read, anyway.

All constructive feedback gratefully received, as always.

Love Fi xx

Chapter 75

Mifflin Street

The following morning, though the sun had only just risen over the horizon, Emma woke to the light sound of scratching from somewhere in the bedroom. Mice? We have an infestation? Barely opening an eyelid to face the sunlight, she lay with her head almost under the covers in the middle of the bed, Regina snuggled into her, as per usual, with her head resting on her chest. But there was an empty space on her right. It wasn’t unusual for Robin to wake early, getting up before either of them, often to make them coffees. However, the continued scratching noise was definitely an annoying distraction in the otherwise peaceful silence of the morning.

Peeking over the sheets, her eyes slowly adjusted to the light, finally focusing on the sight of her husband sitting, in his dressing gown, on the little cocktail chair in the corner of the room, one knee raised and doing something with his hands in his lap.

“What’re you doing?” she slurred, sleepily.

“Hmm? Oh, good morning, darling.” He whispered back, to avoid waking Regina. “Sorry, did I wake you? It’s early. You just go back to sleep.”

“Well I’m awake now,” she whispered back. “What are you doing over there? Was it you making that scratching noise?”

“Sorry, love. Just doing some drawing. No need for you to get up. You fancy a coffee?”

“You’re drawing? What, drawing us?” As her mind focused, she remembered just how good some
of his pictures of Marian and the Men were. How there were also several of them on the walls downstairs. She recalled Alan saying he’d put down his brushes and charcoals shortly after Marian had been murdered, never to draw again. But he’s drawing again. Drawing us!

“Yes. I woke early and got myself a coffee, but then I saw the pair of you lying there. You remind me of a couple of dormice snuggled tightly into each other, fast asleep. I couldn’t resist trying to capture it.”

She smiled lovingly. “May I see?”

“In a minute. Let me get a little further with it first. Shouldn’t take long…”

“Is this the first time you’ve drawn…since Marian?”

“Not quite. I picked up the charcoals first on Sunday night, just you after you both fell asleep. I did a couple of sketches and then came back to bed. That’s why I didn’t get up too early!”

“Sunday? At the lodge? You mean after we…” her mind went back. “You drew us asleep? In the nude?”

Robin felt guilty, realizing he should have asked them first, rather than just capturing them, au naturel! The two quick sketches he made were on the spur, but seeing his loves lying there, he hadn’t been able to help himself. “I’m…I’m sorry. I didn’t think. It’s just…seeing you there…”

“It’s fine. Provided those sorts of drawings are just for us, and nobody else is going to see them. Gina wouldn’t mind either…”

“Wouldn’t mind what?” groaned the brunette resting on her chest, now waking. “What’s going on?”

“Robin’s been drawing us,” she replied, kissing her wife’s forehead. “Come on Picasso, let’s have a look…”

He blushed. “Well…they were just quick sketches! Nothing too detailed.” However, seeing the pout on Emma’s face, “Oh, all right. Just a minute.” He stood, walking around the left side of the bed, the side he slept on more often, and opened the bottom drawer of the side table, pulling out a long folder.

“Come back to bed,” Emma pleaded, patting to her side on the mattress.

He lay beside her, resting his back against the headboard and cushions, opening up the folder. Pulling out two medium-sized cards, he hesitated, putting one back, resting the first on his lap. “I couldn’t sleep after we made love. I took a couple of portraits of the pair of you asleep, and then…I think I got a bit carried away…”

She took the card in her right hand, her left arm still wrapped around Regina. She smiled when she saw the detail in the drawing. It was clearly of the pair of them, though this time Regina was the one lying in the middle of the bed, her head asleep on the pillow, side-on, with a peaceful, beatific smile on her face. Emma was lying behind her, her head resting against Regina’s cheek, looking equally relaxed and serene, even if she though so herself. She was cuddling tightly into her from behind, her right arm wrapped under her, and her left over her chest, in a possessive, yet loving hold. Their shoulders were exposed over the sheets, showing the pair were most likely naked underneath, although Robin had carefully avoided showing their breasts exposed in any way. Emma’s mind cast back to Sunday night and she guessed it must have been drawn an hour or two after the three of them had made love.

“It’s lovely,” said the voice next to her. “You’ve caught her cheeks perfectly. I love it!” Regina
purred. Emma twisted her head around to peck her on the lips. “You said you did a couple of sketches? What about the other one?”

Now he seemed embarrassed. “I did, but the other one was more…based on memory. This one is the better of the two…”

Emma raised an eyebrow, looking at her wife, who sported the same suspicious look. “Robin? What are you hiding? Come on…” Not waiting for his response, she slid a hand into the folder, pulling out another card carefully, turning it for both women to see. “Oh!”

The next sketch was very different to the first. It was of both of them, again in bed, but very much awake. This time, Regina was shown lying on her back, clearly naked, with the sheets pulled back. Emma was lying directly on top of her, resting hip-to-hip with her long legs between the former mayor’s, whose calves now rested behind and over the back of the Sheriff’s. Emma’s muscled body lay full length over the other woman’s and the pair were gazing into each other’s eyes. It was rather erotic, but what really stunned Regina was the look Emma was giving her, as Regina’s hand appeared to be brushing long blonde hair over the other’s shoulder. Even though it was a black and white drawing, the heat conveyed in Emma’s eyes as she gazed in wonder down on her wife was astonishing. It was a look of primal lust. Like she was going to devour her! As Regina was looking up and slightly away from the artist, there was less to see. But the edge of her mouth, showing teeth bared, signaled expectation.

“My goodness!” gasped Regina, taking the sketch from Emma to look more closely. “You’ve got her brilliantly. You’ve got her just as I see her. How we see her. It’s wonderful!”

It was Emma’s turn to blush. “It’s great, though it’s the first time I’ve ever seen my own bare ass in a picture, even if it is from the side and above! You’ve kept everything else hidden, thank goodness. We didn’t pose, though. What made you think Of doing this?”

“It's how I see you,” he said, unabashed. “Whenever the three of us make love, you two often start off like this, just silently gazing into each other’s eyes, for some time. It’s a lustful look you give each other, but it’s also an incredibly loving one. As an outsider, it’s quite something. I remember it right back to when I first saw it, in the new inn that first night.”

“Outsider? Is that how you think of yourself?” Emma asked, concerned. "Locked out?"

He smiled at her, before lowering himself to place a kiss on her lips. “Not any more. But I admit, I could happily sit watching the pair of you, with each other, for hours.”

“Well, I for one am going to treasure this, though we’ll have to make sure it never falls into anyone else’s hands! Now, Van Gogh, it’s still early and there are plenty of other things you could do with those talented hands…”

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\textit{Storybrooke Harbour – four days later}

A small crowd gathered around the Jolly early on the Saturday morning, to wish the travelers Bon Voyage. Despite only having returned from the dead a week earlier, Neal Cassidy, or Bae as some called him now, had become quite the local celebrity, and popular in the small town. Mulan, remembering him from his days trying to get back to Neverland to rescue Henry, had brought along her family to wish him well.

“How long do you think you’ll be away?” asked the deputy sheriff and former warrior.
“Difficult to know, exactly. There’s a war going on over there. But Merlin tells me once we get things figured out with Queen Merida, he should be able to do a time-jump thing when we come back, so it can bring me back here quite quickly, as though I’ve hardly been gone! That’s the theory, but I can’t pretend I understand it too well. Either way, I don’t want to be gone too long. I’ve missed all of Henry’s childhood; I don’t intend to miss the rest…”

“You said a war? You know I trained Merida to fight, alongside Ruby? I could help. You’re quite sure you don’t need some military assistance?” As she offered, Neal couldn’t help but notice the worried, slightly annoyed, look on Aurora’s face. They’re going to have a blazing row later, I can feel it!

However, before Neal could say anything, a figure stepped into the little group. An olive skinned man, slim, in his late thirties with close cropped black hair. “Unfortunately, Mulan, this time we’re dealing with a magical threat, not a military one. Your battle skills are renowned, but we’re dealing with something quite extraordinary over there. Besides, there’s matters in your own family that will require your attention…”

“Have we met? Who are you and what business is this of yours?” Mulan was irritated, feeling she was being patronized by a stranger, who had dismissed her offer. Was it because she was a woman?

The stranger looked surprised at her terse response, before Neal nudged him. “Merlin? The look?”

“The strangers brows went up, reality dawning on him. “Oh. Silly me, I forgot!” A moment later the stranger transformed himself from the darker skinned man into a light-skinned, taller, grey-bearded man the town had come to know. “Does this help?”

“Merlin?” gasped Mulan, at the twinkly-eyed older man. “I thought the voice seemed familiar! Why on earth did you…”

“I met Queen Merida and her brothers when I was in my other, younger, Camelot image. So, I thought it would help to familiarize myself with it again. But on second thoughts, I’ll just stay like this till we sail…”

The warrior looked him up and down. “I’m sorry I was curt, but I thought you were being patronizing. I’ve fought magical beings before, as you well know. But what did you mean about ‘my family’?”

“I apologise if it came out the wrong way. I meant nothing by it. However, like someone else very recently, my magic has detected something.” He looked up at her wife, a small smile playing on his lips, which the shorter woman picked up on. Realising they needed privacy, Neal whispered “I’ll just be over here if you need me,” before walking away.

“Merlin, what’s going on?” she asked, but the Sorcerer didn’t answer, stepping up to an anxious Aurora instead, lowering his voice.

“Your Highness, your suspicions are correct. I believe you are indeed pregnant! I suggest you make an appointment with the hospital.”

Aurora’s jaw dropped in shock, as did Mulan’s.

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For the next hour, various people arrived to wish them a safe trip. Ruby and Dorothy had joined Rosie, bringing a wide variety of food from the diner for them to store. Neal grinned as he watched
Killian Jones, former scourge of the high seas, playing with his two young boys on the deck like a lovesick puppy, watched by their mothers. He stepped over to Rosie. “Killian tells me you won’t be joining us for this trip?”

“Yeah. Dad advised me not to go on this one and Killian agrees. If I go, Liam has to come and apparently, it’s going to be a bit riskier this time. I just hope you both keep an eye on Killian for me? Dad may be an immortal, but he isn’t. He’s just lucky!”

“We will, I promise. I’m mortal too, and I want to get out of there in one piece, for Henry. Are you staying at the convent?”

“No, I’m moving into the diner till he gets back. Means I can share the mothering load with Ruby and Dorothy. Plus, Liam gets to spend time with his brother.”

“So, one big happy family, then?” he smirked. Rosie wondered if Killian had said something to him.

“Yeah, it works for us. Rubes and Dot are great. He gets three mothers and I get a rest. What about you? I haven’t seen a certain stunning goddess around these last few days…”

“Persephone? She’s around. She’s coming with us for a bit, though she’ll go back home fairly soon. I’m certainly going to miss her.”

“Well I’m sure you won’t stay single for too long,” she winked at him. “Now, keep a close eye on my man!”

The next visitors to arrive on the pier were Robin and Regina. Neal hadn’t seen the outlaw since his days in the Enchanted Forest, when they’d used his son Roland as bait to get a ride on Pan’s shadow. “Permission to come aboard?” yelled Robin, hearing a ‘Permission granted!’ yelled back. As they stepped up the gangplank, Neil was already there to meet them.

“Regina? Robin? This is a surprise.”

“Hello Neal. It’s good to see you back. Gina said you came over to Mifflin Street the other day? All ready to sail?” The men went on to exchange the usual pleasantries, but it was decidedly odd for Neal, talking to the kindly man who had not only seized his former lover’s heart, but the queen’s too.

“Baelfire,” said Regina, offering him a small cardboard box and a smile. “Here’s the copies of Henry’s pictures you asked for. Where is my son, by the way? He said he’d be here?”

“Thanks so much, Regina. I loved them!” he pulled her into a hug, which was a surprise to Robin. “Henry’s here somewhere. I saw him half an hour ago. He’d better hurry back, because Jones needs to sail in the next half hour, to catch the tide. We can’t wait…”

Last visitors on deck were Ruby and Dorothy, once again. As the crew prepared to sail, they stayed close as Rosalind and Killian hugged each other tightly, Rosie with tears in her eyes. “You better come back safe and sound, mister, or there’ll be hell to pay!” she sniffed. The captain kissed her cheek tenderly. “I’ll be back before you know it, love. Especially if your father’s magical time travel beans are anything like he claimed.” He lifted her face to press his lips against hers. He’d already cuddled and kissed Liam and Nathaniel, now being held by the other women.

“Ladies, please take good care of my girl and our boys? This is the first trip we’ve been apart, after all.”

“We promise, Kill,” said Ruby, “She’s our family now. We’ll take good care of her. Just come back
safe!” As the three women carefully left the ship to stand by the side, letting his boatswain cast off, he saw the tears rain down his wife’s cheeks, as she blew him farewell kisses. He even shed a few of his own!

The magnificent ship slowly eased back from the dock, as sails started to rise. Killian, now flanked by Neal and Merlin, with Persephone sitting close by, waved back. “Hard leaving family behind, isn’t it?” said Neal.

“Aye, it is. Did you see Henry then?”

“About an hour ago. Don’t know where he disappeared. Probably some girl in town. Still, my papa came over…”

“I saw. I hardly recognised him, what with all the new clothing and all! Seems younger, somewhat. Must be the doing of the bookworm and the mermaid, it appears…”

“Yeah. And having a new girlfriend in New York with a chain of clothes shops, I guess.”

The brigantine slowly maneuvered out of the port, and the figures on the dock side started to become smaller. Killian smiled when he saw Ruby and Dorothy each wrap an arm around his wife, to comfort her. Both men glanced up at the nearly hill, to see a familiar blonde, wearing her trademark red leather jacket, standing quite alone, watching them. Killian nodded in her direction. “Remarkable woman, that one. Odd how fate works sometimes, isn’t it?”

Neal could only agree. He caught a glimpse from Persephone behind him. “Perhaps.”

On the hill, Emma stood in the gentle breeze, watching the beautiful sailing ship below. Her mind was racing with so many thoughts. She still felt guilty over how she’d come in to and affected the lives of the two men she could see on board. Neal, her first love, and the man who gave her Henry. His gentle cockiness and wily, easy nature belied an extremely crafty and intelligent mind. She had truly loved Neal and his knowing how quickly she’d moved on after his death, as he told her, had hurt her more than she realized. Then there was Killian. Her pirate. The man who had once given up his ship for her and put his own life on the line several times. The man she’d grieved over, far, far more more than Neal. Almost to her own destruction, as she’d drunk herself into a coma. Both men had sacrificed their lives for her, and in her heart she felt she was unworthy. Both of them deserved more than her.

But somehow she had moved on. With her queen and her outlaw. And she now had a wonderful family. But realizing both the men on that ship had also managed to move on, still hurt. Killian now had a wife and child. Two, if you included Dorothy’s. And Neal? He was alone. Or was he? A goddess for a girlfriend? Either way, he seemed to be more than happy to be alive, and definitely happy to have moved on from one Emma Swan.

As the ship entered open waters, she heard Killian yelling instructions on the breeze. He seemed to throw something overboard. Within moments, a large whirlpool opened up beside them, the ship manoeuvring into it. In a matter of seconds, the vessel tilted down into its depths, to be followed by a large magical flash and a jolt of thunder. Moments later, the waters had calmed. The Jolly Roger, and her crew, had jumped realms!
It was only two days till they were due to leave for their honeymoon, just over a week after since the wedding. Mayor Briar had organized a farewell party for his departing sheriff Hank Morgan and his fiancée, at the Rabbit Hole, and, even though it had been a long day, a tired soon-to-be-sheriff Emma Locksley felt honour-bound to buy her predecessor a drink and wish the couple well. Robin had suggested Regina go with her, their first break since the wedding, while he stayed back with the children. The women were surprised just how many people had come out to wish them farewell.

“So, Hank. Connecticut? I remember you said you still got family out there? What’s the plan?” Emma asked the former Knight of the Round Table.

“We’re setting up a riding school. Plus, there’s a forge and saddlery we’re taking over as well. Laura’s had some help from Merlin to set things up. It’s going to be crazy busy. But I’m still going to miss all this!” he said, taking a long pull on his pint.

“What about Violet?” asked Regina. “I hardly had a chance to speak to her at the wedding, although I saw her, Grace and Henry talking. Is she going too?”

“Perhaps. She’s planning to live in Boston with a friend. But she’s only a couple of hours drive away.”

Emma remembered overhearing her son’s talk with Robin last year, when he told him the sheriff’s only daughter wanted something more ‘casual’ on the romantic front, whereas Henry was looking for something more…serious. “A friend?” she probed.

“A girlfriend. I’ve no idea whether they’re ‘together’ or not. Frankly, she seems to constantly hang around with all sorts of men and women, so it’s hard to know what she’s up to these days. I was sad when she and Henry split up. I rather like your boy!” he seemed genuinely sad. “Still – children, eh?”

As Hank and Regina continuing talking, Emma’s mind drifted off, and she looked around at all the various people who had come out for the evening to wish Hank well. Her eyes fell on a small red sofa in the corner of the room, where two tall brunette women sat talking, their drinks on a small table in front of them. She was a little surprised when she recognised who the taller of the women was. Rosie, Killian’s wife? She was sitting close to Dorothy Sage, chatting animatedly, and whispering comments and giggling like two schoolgirls. Before he’d gone missing, Henry had said something to them about Rosie Jones staying behind, instead of going on Neal’s voyage? It was rare to see Dorothy out for an evening without Ruby, so she presumed The wolf was the one taking care of their son back at the diner, while her wife had the evening out. The two women seemed close and Emma couldn’t help but notice the elegantly striking beauty of Killian’s wife and mother to his child.

Her thoughts were distracted, when she felt a light hand on her shoulder. “Sheriff Locksley? May I buy you a drink?” She looked up to see the warm hazel eyes of Philip Briar staring at her. “Oh, Mister Mayor? Sorry Phil, I was absolutely miles away! Sorry, yes, I’ll take a pint of the IPA please? How are you?”

Philip smiled back at her. “Excellent, thanks. Rory wasn’t feeling too good though, so she’s taking care of the little ones. Mulan’s on night shift as you know, so it’s my night off. Everything good with you? I heard about Henry...”

Emma rolled her eyes in frustration. “Yeah, you heard about that? After the Jolly sailed last week, Gina and I found a message to say he was gonna hide on board, till they left port! They got themselves a stowaway! I bet Neal felt like killing him when he found out!” Henry had been
determined to join his father on the trip to DunBroch. But when he’d refused, saying it wasn’t safe, the Author had hidden himself away. “He wrote that Merlin would be able to time-travel him back out, so he wouldn’t miss anything at uni. Regina was absolutely furious with him and I was spitting blood! Honestly, that boy!”

“I can understand why you’re so upset, but at least he has Merlin and his father with him! They’ll keep him safe, though I wouldn’t like to be in his shoes when he has to face both his mothers! Have you checked up to find out how he is?”

“Checked up? He’s in another realm!”

“With Merlin. Doesn’t he have that mind-link thing with his daughters?” Philip explained, as though it was obvious. “Couldn’t you ask Anna or Rosie to talk to their father, and find out about him?”

In their panic at seeing Henry’s letter last weekend, they’d completely forgotten about the Sorcerer’s daughters being able to communicate with their father; like she and Regina could with Robin. “Of course - how stupid of me. We’ll ask Rosie! Phil, I could kiss you!” she pulled herself up to place a loud smacker on his cheek, drawing her wife’s attention. “Gina, Phil’s had a great idea – about Henry!” She went on to tell her wife what they’d been talking about. “That’s an excellent idea, Philip. Well there’s no time to waste. Let’s talk to Rosalind. I saw her sitting over there with Dorothy Lucas a few minutes ago…”

Regina glanced across. “Well finish your drink first. I just saw them leave. I’ll just pop in the ladies…”

A few minutes later, after their farewells to Hank and Laura, the women left the bar, for the taxi they’d ordered as neither of them ever poofed after drinking alcohol. As they walked across the parking area, Emma heard a stifled groan coming from behind one of the shaded trees. Suspicious, Emma’s police instincts kicked in. “Hang on Gina, something’s going on over there…” she whispered. “Give me a second.”

Walking cautiously around the edge, Emma was surprised to see two figures in the shade, clearly making out, quite aggressively, with one seeming to be pressing the other one’s back into the tree. Oh well nothing wrong with that. I’ll tiptoe away. Then on closer inspection, she realized the two were both wearing cocktail dresses. Two women, hiding from view. It was Dorothy and Rosie! Killian’s wife was making out with another woman! With Ruby’s wife! “Shit!”

“What’s going on?” said Regina, arriving by her side and seeing the other pair moving out from behind the trees, looking guilty. “What the hell were you two doing back there?” they didn’t reply.

“Gina, she had her tongue halfway down her throat!” said a disgusted Emma, pointing at Rosie. “You’re married, for god’s sake! Both of you! What the hell were you thinking?”

“It’s not what you think, we…” started Ruby’s wife, looking suitably ashamed. “We…”

“YOU’RE MARRIED!” she yelled once again. “HOW COULD YOU DO THAT TO KILLIAN? TO RUBY?”

Regina joined in. “I’m surprised at the pair of you! You have children!”

“Regina, you don’t understand…” Rosie tried to explain, but Emma wasn’t having any of it!

“He’s only been away a week! How could you?”
This time Rosie’s attitude changed from one of embarrassment to anger. “WILL YOU SHUT THE FUCK UP AND LISTEN? YOU KNOW NOTHING!”

“Oh? So, I didn’t see two women, married to our friends, playing tongue hockey behind a tree back there?” growled Emma.

“Finished?” said Rosie, stepping closer to them. *Emma was quickly reminded just how much taller than her Merlin’s daughter was. She could feel the magical aura given off And how intimidating she now appeared!*

“Yes, Dorothy and I were…making out…just now.”

It was Regina’s turn as she used her famous glare on them. “And you think that behavior is somehow acceptable? If I were to ring up this woman’s wife right now, what do you think she would say?”

“Go ahead, do it! Do it right now?” Rosie answered, nonplussed. “Or shall I do it? I have her on speed-dial!” Although she was very confident, Dorothy just seemed…embarrassed.

“Killian is the father of your child! Doesn’t that mean anything to you?” growled Emma.

“Indeed it does. I love and adore my husband, who also happens to be the father of Dorothy and Ruby’s child. And before you do something stupid and make wild accusations and spread all manner of shit around the town, you should know that Killian and Ruby are fully aware. And they approve…”

“Approve? So what - this is some sort of weird wife-swapping thing?”

“No, Mrs. Locksley” said Dorothy, speaking up for the first time. “This is not some sort of ‘weird wife-swapping thing’, this is some sort of ‘polyamorous thing’. The four of us are in a form of relationship. I’m with all three of them, as they are with each other. We share a link through our children. We had no intention of broadcasting it, because we’re happy as we are. Rosie and Killian are their own couple, and may travel sometimes with their son, or we may all be together. As I said, we are happy…”

Regina huffed, realizing they’d overreacted. “Then...we’re sorry to have made assumptions. I apologise. Emma, let’s go home…” It was the turn of the sheriff to be embarrassed. *She definitely wanted to come back at them but...with what? She turned to walk away, looking down.*

*BUT Dorothy wasn’t done.* “Your apology is accepted, Regina. Didn’t hear one from your wife though?”

Emma mumbled something incomprehensible.

“Still, when she makes one, Ruby and I will be sure to welcome her back at the diner! NOT before…”

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When they got home, they told Robin what had happened at the bar. “Ooh, awkward! Still, you thought you were protecting your friends. So if you go in offering a humble apology and explain that, I’m sure they’ll understand!”

“That’s not the worst of it,” sighed Regina. “We were going to ask Merlin’s daughter to mind-link with him on the ship. Apparently, he can reach across realms to speak to his children. We could have
asked about Henry!

“Oh. Well how about Anna? I’ll ask her to check. If I tell her you both are under tremendous strain, worried about Henry absconding to a dangerous place. That way, even if Rosie has already spoken to her, she’ll understand and help. Failing that, I’ll get Maria to talk to her…”

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An hour after Robin spoke to her, Anna called back. Robin put the call on speakerphone. “OK. I managed to reach dad. He said that your Henry suddenly appeared, an hour after the Jolly jumped through the portal. Apparently, he’d been hiding in the brig! Killian laughed about it, but it seems Neal was absolutely livid! He said he may be a man now, but he was going to ‘bloody well obey your father when your life’s at stake!’”

Regina smiled at that. “At least someone’s taking this seriously!”

“Yes. Apparently, he insisted Killian stick him back in the brig, and seal it, till he’s learned his lesson.”

“They put my son in a ship’s prison?”

“Yup. With food, drink, a blanket and a bucket!”

That made Emma chuckle, remembering her time in prison, at Gold’s hand, over a year ago. “A bucket? Good. The bugger deserved it!”

“Anyway. They let him out after a night in the cell, once he’d apologized and promised to obey the rules. Neal was going to make him stay on the ship, but my dad said he and Perse will take him under their wing now they’re on land. So, a goddess and a sorcerer protecting him, plus a pirate and an over-protective dad, he should be safe.”

“You said they’re on land? They’re already in DunBroch?”

“They’ve been there a few days, apparently. Magic portals? Time? Anyway, it seems after a bit of local difficulty, it seems they met Queen Merida, and she’s become rather keen on Neal. VERY keen, according to dad…”

“Cassidy and the queen? Surely not!” gasped Regina.

“Yeah, a queen and a thief. Who’d have thought it?” said Robin, grinning. Regina rolled her eyes at him, trying to hide a smirk. Then they looked at Emma, who had stayed silent at the news. “Emma, you OK?”

“Emma,” said Robin, cautiously. “He is allowed to move on too, you know?”

“I know! It’s just odd! In one night, I learned that my first real boyfriend is getting it on with a queen. Then Killian’s shagging other women! It’s bizarre!” she stopped, immediately realizing what she’d just said, and who was at the other end over the phone!

There was a moment’s silence, until:

“Killian? Rosie’s Killian? What did you just say?” said Annabelle, Killian’s sister-in-law!

‘SHIT!’ the blonde mouthed silently to her wife and husband.

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Chapter Summary

Unable to sleep and worried about her latest pregnancy, Snow White takes an early morning walk. A friend gives her some surprising news. Emma needs to make an apology for a blunder last night...

Chapter 76

Storybrooke Park - the following morning.

Ruby had had a restless night. She’d woken shortly after four, to a tired cry from her son. Nathaniel had been sharing the nursery with his half-brother and, anxious not to have him wake Liam, she’d rushed in to comfort him, though the increasing volume made her decide to whisk the toddler downstairs before he woke everyone else. Even at eighteen months, the boy enjoyed a warm bottle of milk, one of the few things to settle him.

Dorothy and Rosalind had only come home from their night out, after she’d fallen asleep. Her true love now lay asleep in her bed, snoring like a trooper, and she assumed Rosie was similarly unconscious in the guest bedroom. It was rare for Dorothy to go out of an evening, and Ruby had pushed her to do so. The relationship between the two married couples had changed dramatically only six weeks ago, partly spurred on by Ruby’s driving wish to give birth to a child herself, and Rosie’s willingness for them to father it by Nat’s father, Killian. It was complicated though without pressure, although the first night the two couples shared a bed had been astonishing. There was something building between the four of them, but nobody wanted to put a label on it, should they decided to use Rosie’s term, ‘friends with benefits’ to describe their unusual situation. Though how would that change after what Merlin had to say last week.

An hour of trying to settle him, Nathaniel was still being fractious. So, after various attempts to lull him back to sleep, she decided to take him, as quietly as she could, out in the buggy. Ruby always loved early runs in the woods and forest and, were she alone, she could quite easily morph into her wolf form and race through the woods and into forest. However, tied to this little one, she dressed him quickly and took him to the park. Nathaniel loved being outdoors. Being one quarter wolf himself, he was happiest in the cold and fresh air so, realizing his mother was dressing him to go outside, he calmed in expectation. And so, it was barely twenty minutes later that, just after six in the morning, she trundled the now snoozing boy through the main park, and along the path surrounding the lake. Various smells assailed her super-strong senses, with the lilac wafting from the recently manicured flowerbeds. Who’d have thought Happy would turn out to be such a fantastic gardener? Hints of tulip and recent cut grass also combined with the sea breeze, had an instantly calming effect on the pair of them. It was unusual to see any other early morning risers out in the park at this time. Occasionally Mulan could be seen taking an early morning jog, or even more seldom Robin. Probably because they were used to rising in the dawn light as a result of sleeping in the woods under canvas. However, the last person she expected to see was Snow White!

Her best friend, former princess and rightful queen of the Enchanted Forest was rarely seen this
early, even more so now she lived a couple of miles away at the farm. Trundling the buggy over to the woman, now sitting silently, looking into the distance. “Snow? You’re up early! Couldn’t sleep?”

“Hmm?” she answered, coming out of her thought and lifting her head up to the distraction. “Oh, Rubes! Hi…” she muttered, less than enthusiastically.

First thing she spotted was the red rings around her eyes, and the worn, tired, expression. “Snow, my goodness, what’s wrong?” she immediately sat down beside her, dropping a hand onto her friend’s.

“It’s…it’s nothing! I just couldn’t sleep…” she looked down onto their now interlocked fingers.

“Nope, not good enough! Nowhere near good enough! Best friends, remember? We tell each other everything! So, tell me what’s up. Is it Emma again - has she or Regina said something stupid?”

“No, no…Emma and I are fine. After that blow-up before the wedding, we’re all good…”

“Neal, then? I know he’s been a handful for you recently. I can’t imagine what it’s like having a nine-year-old with magic! After those tricks at the wedding and the floating condoms. Was bloody funny though…”

Snow didn’t smile. Just looked up at her, the tears threatening again. “Oh, come on Snow! I’m your best mate,” her friend pulled her in, kissing her forehead. “There’s nothing you can’t tell me. How many times have you told me that? So, come on, out with it. You know I’ll nag you to death till you do!”

The princess sniffled, trying to hold back the tears. She’d cried too much the last few days. “It’s not Neal either, though his behavior recently hasn’t helped. It’s me. I said some horrible things to him last week and…well, you know what he’s like. He sulks, like Emma. I’m not entirely sure he’s forgiven me…”

“Oh Snow, we all say things we don’t mean!” She pulled her in tighter. “He’s a good lad. I’m sure he knows you didn’t mean it…”

“But I did at the time! I called him a freak, Ruby! A magical freak! Emma brought him back but…I think she was hurt by it too. I was nasty, Ruby, really nasty. And I think it’s because I’m…I’m pregnant!”

“You’re pregnant? But…does David know?”

“Of course. I’d never hold anything back from him! I had to tell Neal and Emma, after. I used it as a poor excuse for my stupid behavior. I said it was hormones. But Rubes…that’s no excuse!”

“Well it is, and it isn’t. Let’s face it, it’ll make you emotional, won’t it? How far along are you?”

“We went to the clinic two days ago and they confirmed it. I’m only about six weeks, so we don’t want to say anything publicly till I’m three months gone, just to be safe. But please don’t tell anyone, apart from Dorothy, just yet.”

Ruby sighed. “Of course, babe. I’ll wait till you’re ready. In fact, you’ve confided in me, so as best mates, I’m going to confide in you. Funny enough, I also went to the clinic. Yesterday. You’re not the only one who’s pregnant!”

“You too? But I didn’t even know you were trying. And Dorothy’s happy about it? Who’s the father…”
“Killian. We asked him to father this one too, as he’s already Nattie’s dad. Dot’s delighted! You remember me telling you about our eggs being fused by Merlin? So, she’s a genetic mother of this one too…”

“That’s wonderful Ruby. But if Killian is the father…well…he’s married now! And with his own child. What’s his wife going to say? Does she even know you asked him?” Snow had now forgotten her own problems, immersing herself in her best friend’s news.

“Rosie knows, but Killian doesn’t yet, as he’s travelling with Neal. She’s staying with us till he gets back. She’s really happy for us!”

“Odd. If David had been a sperm donor to help another woman have a baby, I can’t imagine what I’d be like, once I found out she got pregnant. I certainly couldn’t imagine myself letting her stay with us!”

Ruby had lectured Snow on confiding in her. So perhaps this was finally the time.

“The night Killian came to their room, nearly two years ago, ostensibly to give them a sperm sample, was when it started. Still single, they’d wanted a baby. Merlin told them how, and Killian was to be the magical donor. It all seemed straightforward, though the nerves were the problem. As the situation was tense, Ruby decided drinks might help the three of them prepare for what was to come. In theory, Killian would go into the bathroom, pleasure himself and produce a sample into three little containers, which they would transfer to a flask they’d been given by Merlin. They’d then take it to the clinic, where some would be injected into one of them, whichever decided to carry the child.

That was the theory! However, after a few drinks, they’d loosened up and started talking. About life, death and their histories. They’d relaxed, and soon the ridiculousness of their situation made them laugh. Ruby told him about her love life in the town, and about all the stupid rumours, regarding men and women, which were entirely untrue. Killian had spoken of past loves over the past century, including several men (which was a big surprise but explained why he was so relaxed about two women becoming a couple). About having a reputation as a womanizer and rogue, which he felt was entirely undeserved. Then Dorothy threw in the surprise that, before meeting Ruby, she was a virgin. Killian made some light comment about being a virgin mother. They talked on so many things and Dorothy had admitted she, even now, found herself attracted to a few men as well as women; just that she’d never had the experience of being with one…intimately. “Something I’ll never know now. I’m more than happy with this one!” she’d said, squeezing Ruby.

“Probably no great loss, Dot,” said Killian. “We men can be fairly grotesque creatures sometimes. I mean, look at me? I’m going to be romancing these little cups at some point this evening – and I haven’t even bought them a drink or asked them out for dinner!” They’d chuckled and giggled. They’d even spoken about who they fancied in the magical town. Ruby confessed she’d always found herself attracted to Belle when they became friends. And Victor Whale had something mysteriously attractive about him. Dorothy laughed, and said “So, you’re not going to admit to someone else you’d always said you wouldn’t kick out of bed? A certain pirate?” Ruby had almost spilt her beer at that, blushing furiously!

“Well I’m flattered, Miss Gale! You know, there’s quite a few people in this town, including me, who had a big crush on your good fiancée! Our Ruby here, was much talked about before she gave her heart to you. Even the then Emma Swan thought she had the best legs in the realm!”

That made Ruby cackle. “And now they only open for me!” which made Killian roar with laughter.
and Ruby give her a filthy, slightly annoyed look. “Sorry babe. Couldn’t resist it!”

She couldn’t remember how it happened, but after another drink, Killian had said any more, and he wouldn’t be able to ‘romance my cup’, adding, somewhat unenthusiastically, “Should I give it a name before I do the deed?”. More giggles followed and, for some reason she’d never understand to this day, it had been a horny Ruby who suggested perhaps Killian could provide his first sample, without the cup, directly. “After all, why not? We’re all adults. I know you fancy him, Dot. I do too. He’s single, and you could lose your man-cherry and it could be fun! It’s in a good cause to get one of us pregnant, after all. And besides, he’s admitted he’s still got a think for leggy brunettes. How about it?”

It was most definitely the drink talking, but somehow, over the next half hour, the tone of the evening changed completely. After much giggling and fooling around, the kissing began. And Killian definitely didn’t disappoint, apparently much more enthusiastic about this option than ‘wanking in a cup’, as he called it. The light-heartedness turned into something very different. Something heated; and it wasn’t long before all three found themselves in bed, entirely naked. After that, animal passions took over.

At the end of a fun hour, Killian, still only back from the Underworld a matter of days, left them to go to the bathroom, taking the weird, silver flask and cup with him. After taking longer than he would prefer, he finally managed to release himself into the container, sealing it, before heading back into their bedroom. Ruby, now in a dressing gown, was ready for him. “Here, let me,” she said, taking the little flask to put in the fridge.

It had been a wonderful experience for all three of them, but Killian was under no illusion as the primary reason for it. He moved to collect his jacket, Dorothy still lying in the centre of the bed. “Well, ladies, it’s been a rather delightful experience for me. I hope it was enjoyable for you both and, for you Dorothy, not too traumatic? I’d best be on my way. Obviously, I can assure you of my discretion.”

As he moved to leave, Dorothy called him back. “Killian? Before you go, I just want to say thank you! I know we all had fun, but I’m so grateful you’re helping us have a child. It’s no small matter and we were being completely honest when we said you were welcome, should we be successful, to have you in our child’s life!”

“He too, Kill!” said Ruby. “Thanks once again.”

He blushed slightly. “Well I have to say, that’s a first. I’ve never been thanked before for doing this!”

“And just for the record,” added Dorothy, “I enjoyed my first threesome, enormously! I know you’ll find somebody special for yourself one day. You deserve it!”

Little did Ruby know just how true that was; and how soon a woman worthy of him entered his life. In the form of Merlin’s own daughter, Rosalind.

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And now, two years later, in the early-morning breeze, Ruby looked down with pride on their precious sleeping bundle in the buggy. The son the three of them had created in that one single night. Nathaniel Killian Lucas. Their son who would, hopefully, be joined next year by a little brother or sister. Snow smiled down on the boy. “That mixed-DNA thing must be working. Now he’s a little older, I can see more of you in him, He’s got your cheeks and chin, Rubes. Even your grin when he’s sleeping.” She leaned over to pull the blanket a little higher around him. “Sorry, I interrupted
you. You were saying about Killian’s wife? That she approves of you using him as a donor?"

“Erm…yeah, she does,” there’s no need to tell her the specifics, is there? “We all love having Liam around, being Nattie’s together as brothers. We’ve got close to Rosie and Killian over the last couple of years, Snow. When I said I wanted another one, Rosie thought Killian’s…sample…was the best option, even before he did! They’re wonderful. Though I must admit, I’m still terrified about giving birth myself! It was bad enough watching Dot go through it!”

The princess smiled, taking her hand, now having forgotten her own woes. “You and me both, Rubes! Well, it looks like we’ll be going through this together. But…what was that you were saying before? It must be weird for Rosie, surely? Knowing her husband’s making babies with two other women? Even if they’re as gorgeous as this one!”

If only you knew just how weird! How do you explain to your best friend that you and your wife have been having a sexual relationship with another couple? “Not really. It just kind of works. Still, enough about me, we were talking about you! So, what’s terrifying you about this pregnancy, more than the other ones? The ones where you had either an evil queen or a wicked witch threatening to take your babies? You may be in your forties in this realm, but you’re still as fit as a flea. So, what’s the problem?”

Snow sighed. “It’s nothing specific, I’m just…tired, Ruby. I’m finding the school a bit much these days, and Neal’s just exhausting to be around. He’s always up to something and I realise Emma must have been the same at that age, if I’d known her. David’s been so supportive but it’s not as though we have much time for each other. Emma, Regina and Robin are taking their honeymoon in a few days and we’re going to be looking after the girls, so that’s going to be tiring. And now, finding out we’re going to have another one next year, is kinda freaking me out too!”

“Sounds like the baby blues before you have the baby! What about taking a holiday? Just the two of you?”

“There’s the farm to manage. I can’t see anyone looking after that for a week!”

“Have you asked? What about Robin’s men? They deal with livestock too. I’m sure they could help. Talk to your son-in-law. Failing that, take a long weekend. Just the two of you. You remember you told me about that cool club in New York where you spent the night? Take David there!”

Snow brightened a little, wiping a small tear from her cheek. “I guess I could do that. I’ll talk to Robin.”

“Good. Now then, do you want to hear a bit of gossip?” Her friend nodded. Ruby always had her wolf hearing switched on in the diner. “Aurora pregnant too! I found out when Mulan and Phil were chatting yesterday. Apparently, Merlin told her last weekend and she had no idea! They’re dead pleased. And…you’re never going to guess who else was in the pre-natal unit this week?”

“No idea. But please don’t tell me it’s Emma or Regina! Their place is way too busy these days…”

“Ariel! She and Belle were in there. Josie told me. She’s about two months gone…”

“Ariel? You’ve got to be kidding me? She’s living with them. She’s-”

“In a poly relationship, just like your daughter. Just like Aurora! It would have happened when they were travelling around Europe with Henry. Adding to the marriage seems to be a fashion around here these days.”

Snow sighed, before it turned into a yawn. “You know, I thought it was weird when Mulan married
the Briars; then, when Emma told me they were doing the same with Robin, I thought it was just wrong. But now, seeing how happy they all seem together, it seems I was the wrong one. And now, after the couple of weeks I’ve had, I think I’d love nothing more than sharing the load with another wife. Be a blessed relief!”

“Aw, Snow,” the wolf sniggered, pulling her into her shoulder for a hug. “You should have said! I would have married you two in the Enchanted Forest instead! Or perhaps you need to add another husband to the mix?”

For the first time that morning, Snow laughed. “Well I’m sure that would be fun in the bedroom, but wouldn’t help much with Neal and the normal stuff, would it? And my David can be quite… possessive!”

“Yay, I made you smile! Come on, I’m buying you a coffee. It’s getting cold out here…”

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**Mifflin Street – Same morning**

Learning last night that Henry was safe, despite absconding on the Jolly Roger, Regina had just woken from the best sleep she’d had in over a week. However, she was alone. Missing the warmth and familiar smells of her loves, she groaned, reluctantly getting up when she saw the clock and realized it was past seven thirty. She was surprised Emma had risen, knowing she wasn’t on duty today. Reluctantly getting up and putting on a dressing gown, she’d gone downstairs to find Robin making breakfast for the children.

“Morning, lovely! Fancy some bacon? Coffees just made…” he kissed her cheek as she listlessly walked past.

“Mm, yes please. Where’s Emma? I thought she was off today?”

“She is. She said she wanted a jog to clear her head. She’s then going to go to the diner and apologise to Dorothy. Said she needed to clear the air quickly. Should be back before ten.” He twisted to the side, kissing her cheek.

“Robin,” she groaned,” you should have stopped her! At least till one of us went with her! You know what she’s like. Her mouth’s going to run away with her and she’ll say something inappropriate. Then it’ll be even more awkward.”

“Have a little more faith, Gina. She’s not stupid and more importantly, she’s sincere. She’ll be fine. Anyway, come sit yourself down and I’ll get your breakfast.” Stepping behind her, he wrapped his arms around her shoulders, pulling her into his chest. “Eat. Then you and I are going to pack for the honeymoon!”

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**The Diner – a little later**

After finishing her first decent jog in over a week, from the house, around the docks and back into town, Emma finally stopped outside the front of Grannies Diner, hesitating whether to go inside or not. Unfortunately, the decision was made for her as two women walking behind her came closer.

“Emma?”

“Oh, hi mum!” Then she saw the other woman pushing a child buggy. “You’re up early! Hi Ruby. I won’t hug the both, as I’m sweaty from the run.”
“I’m your mum. I’ll live,” said her mother, stepping up and hugging her anyway. “Come for breakfast?”

“Sorry mum, I haven’t got time, I was just stopping after a run and I need to get back to get packing for the trip.” Seeing Ruby there, she really didn’t want to face her and Dorothy together. “I kinda need to go…”

“Well at least have a little coffee with me? We haven’t had a proper chat since the wedding. And you did say we’d spend more time together? Just the two of us. You did say…” Emotional blackmail, typical. Thanks mum!

“You must have ten minutes, Emma? Come on, Mike’s working front of house for the first time, as we’ve got our new guy, Tony, working in the kitchen, so we can have a catch up too.”

Reluctantly, she agreed, stepping into the diner to hold the door for the buggy, just in time to hear a rather heated conversation between Ruby’s new business partner and an old woman at the counter.

“So, Miss Green, let’s try that again, shall we?” said Mike to a tall, young blonde woman.

“I said coffee! Black! You deaf or something?” she growled back.

“No, young lady, I’m quite capable of hearing, thank you. But you seem to be missing a word? A little word?”

“What? I’m a customer! Just gimme a damn coffee!”

“No. Unless you learn to learn to ask politely, you may not have a coffee! Or anything else in this place for that matter. So, let’s try again. Good morning, young lady. How may I help you?”

“Lucas and her wife don’t treat me like this!” she wasn’t done yet.

“Where the hell is she?”

“Right behind you!” he replied, looking over her shoulder at his business partner. “And I have to say, as I work in the kitchen, I often overhear my lovely colleagues being spoken to by customers as though they were servants. They are not! They are skilled, intelligent people who should be respected. If they are not, as their new partner, I will be more than happy to turn them away, for good if need be! If our sheriff, mayor and even the former Dark One himself can ask politely, I’m sure you can too. So, for the LAST time, I will ask you. What can I do for you this fine morning…Miss Green?”

The surly woman looked over to see Ruby listening in silently, her brow raised, waiting for the response. Knowing she could just walk out, but with the risk she’d never be allowed back in again, she sighed. “Um, sorry. May I have a black coffee, to go…please?”

“Certainly, madam. Coming right up. And any pastries or cakes from our most excellent bakery next door, which opened today? I recommend the bear claws or croissants, always popular with our more famous customers.” Ruby sniggered silently when he winked at Emma. All right, Mike, don’t go overboard!

“Err…no…thank you.”

When the slightly embarrassed woman was served and left, Mike turned his attention to Leroy, who sported his early morning grouch. He gave him a look that just dared him to be anything less than polite. “I hate bad manners, don’t you, Leroy? ‘Manners maketh man’, my old dad used to say! Now…what can I do for you this morning, sir?”
“Pot of coffee and a Granny Special fry…please Mike?” It was the first time anyone had heard that in the diner!

“Certainly, sir. You go make yourself comfortable, and I’ll bring it right over.”

After he’d gone to sit, Ruby stepped to the counter, grinning. “Laying the law down early, Mike?”

“Yeah, sorry about that! I really hate bad manners and it really niggles me sometimes when you and the girls get talked to like you do, just cause you’re serving. Must be my age, I guess…”

“And the fact you’ve got daughters,” added Snow. “But you’re right, Michael, people should show better manners to you all. May Emma and I have two coffees please?”

“Certainly, princess. And congrats on the Sheriff role again, Emma. Sit yourselves down and I’ll bring ‘em over.”

As they sat, the blonde seemed nervous. “Something wrong, Emma? You’re twitchy!”

It was clear Dorothy hadn’t told her wife about their little disagreement last night. About her making out with Killian’s wife behind a tree. Would she? Was she bluffing about the two couples? Either way, Emma wasn’t going to open that can of worms, just in case. But she was still, in theory, banned from the place, till she apologized. “Eh? Oh um…sorry. Is Dorothy in? There’s something I need to talk to her about.”

“Anything I can help with?” asked Ruby, studying the nervous woman.

“Er…no, it’s fine. Perhaps I’ll call back later.” She stood to leave, Snow now anxiously wondering why Emma was acting skittish. However, a voice called from the back of the room. “Wolfie, good, you’re back!” Dorothy appeared, stepping up to the table and about to peck her wife on the lips when she saw who one of the other customers was. “Emma,” she said, her voice betraying no emotion. Now Emma felt awkward!

“Dorothy…um, can we talk? Perhaps somewhere quieter?”

The Hero of Oz looked down on her, realizing who was present. “Erm…yes, perhaps that’s best. Come into the back room. Ruby, can you stay here a minute while we talk?”

The wolf saw the awkwardness between them. “Why? Dot…Emma…what’s going on?”

“Give us a few minutes, Ruby, and I’ll tell you everything. You were already asleep when Rosie and I got home, and I didn’t want to wake you. Just let me and…Mrs. Locksley, talk.”

“No. If there’s something’s happened, I want to know. Now! Snow’s my best mate. Nobody else can hear us.”

“Ruby, I…”

“Now, Dot! What’s going on?” Ruby’s hackles were up. The pair never held secrets from each other.

Dorothy’s shoulders slumped. “Something happened last night. Just after we left the bar. Emma saw something. She saw Rosie and me…”

It took a moment for Ruby to realise what they were saying. “When you say Rosie and you. You mean…” It was when she saw Dorothy nod slowly to her wife, Emma realized what she’d said last
night was true!

“I assumed something, based on what I saw. I accused them both, thinking they were betraying you and Killian. We argued. But I made a wrongful assumption and I came over to apologise. I’m sorry, Dorothy. It’s just…seeing you both together like that, with Killian’s wife. I imagined…”

“It’s all right, Emma,” Dorothy stopped her. “I can imagine what you thought! Never mind. I forgive you…”

“You made out with Rosie in public?” Ruby was aghast. “Dot, when we agreed it was OK to do this with them, I didn’t mean in the middle of a fucking nightclub! It’ll be all over town by now! What the hell were you thinking?”

“It wasn’t in the club, Ruby.” Emma tried to defend her from something she’d started. “It was outside, in an unlit area on the edge of the woods. I just sorta…stumbled across them.”

Ruby calmed, but only slightly. “But even then, if Emma hadn’t spotted you, someone else could have! We were going to keep this private, Kansas!” she seethed. “If the rest of the town-”

“I’m sorry, Wolfie. I guess with all the drinks, we just got a bit carried away…” she looked up, apologetically. Nobody said a word. Emma, looking down, feeling guilty for partly being the cause. Finally, a voice piped up.

“So, Ruby, let me get this right. You and Dorothy are in some sort of intimate relationship with Rosie?” said Snow, dumbfounded. “Nattie and Liam are Killian’s children, and now you’re pregnant by him too?”

“He’s got you pregnant too?” gasped Emma. “What’s he building for god’s sake, a fucking harem?” That earned a scowl from all.

"Emma!" chided her mother. "Killian's a sperm donor for them, because they needed someone with magic to help them! I think it's rather admirable."

_I know I called him a wanker a few times. Guess this confirms it! _"I'm sorry. It's just...seeing him like that. Knowing what we were..."

"What you were, Emma! What you _were_. You moved on. With a wife, a husband, and children. He's done the same thing. Just...differently..."
Wake Up Now, My Girl!

Chapter Summary

The stowaway returns, with his father in tow, plus an unexpected royal family, worried for their queen...

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone, sorry to have kept you waiting!

I've some serious exams due on 19th and prep has taken so much time. Still, I managed to thrash out and typo this chapter, so I'd love your thoughts...

Fi xx

Chapter 77

Mifflin Street

The Locksley family were gathered around the breakfast table, when Regina’s cellphone rang. She’d normally ignore it, having lectured the rest of them about use of phones at the table. However, recognizing Henry’s ringtone, she was up and in the kitchen in an instant, racing to answer it.

“Henry?” Their eldest son had been gone five days, and they’d already postponed the honeymoon till they knew he was back safe. Her original anger at his behavior, stowing himself away on the pirate’s ship, had now passed, replaced by anxiety. “Henry! Where are you?”

“Hi mum!” his voice sounded guilty. ‘I’m at Storybrooke Hospital. Dad’s with me…”

“The hospital! Why? Are you hurt?” her raised voice already alerting Robin and Emma, who came into the kitchen to find out what was happening. Regina put it on speakerphone.

“I’m fine. We brought people back with us from DunBroch. Some are badly injured. Merlin couldn’t treat them there, so we came back. Dad’s in there now…”

“Your dad’s hurt?” asked Emma, anxiously. “What happened?”

“Hi, ma! No, dad’s OK. It’s Queen Merida. She took an arrow to the head. She needs surgery, urgently. We got back through a portal early this morning. Some of her family’s with her, including her mum. One of her brothers got badly hurt too. Merlin says she needs some serious surgery, so he’s already called Whale to get him down from New York.”

Regina was aghast. “You were in a war zone?” Henry, what the hell were you thinking? You could have been killed!”
“Yeah, well. It’s complicated. I’m just having my arm checked over and then I’ll come home, OK?”

“Your arm? You said you were fine! Just wait there, young man! I’m coming over. Just stay there!” She cut the phone, looking up at her husband and equally anxious wife.

“Go,” said Robin. “I’ll take care of the children. Just text me to let me know what’s happening, OK?” He gave her a short hug, kissing her cheek.

Regina nodded, already seeking out her bag and keys. “I’m going too,” said Emma. “I’ve been worried sick all week. That boy needs a serious talking to!”

“Emma,” said Robin, picking up a slice of buttered toast from the table, handing it to his blonde wife. “Take this. You think better when you’re not hungry!” he smirked as she scowled. “I know it’s hard, but try to remember Henry isn’t a boy any more. He’s a proud, twenty-two-year-old man, who won’t take kindly to being lectured. Even more so if you do it in front of others. I promise you, it’ll backfire if you do!”

She glared back, knowing he was probably right. She nodded, giving their wife a knowing look. Within seconds, the mist engulfed them, and his wives were gone.

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**Storybrooke Hospital – seconds later**

After apparating onto the hospital lawn, the pair stormed into reception, where a collection of oddly-dressed men and women in battle armour and forest gear seemed to have gathered. Emma recognised a young nurse, a friend of Henry’s, corralling the group into a side room. “Janie, you seen Henry?”

“Eh? Oh, hi, Emma! Could you just give me a second?” she yelled in exasperation, before turning to a large bear-like man with wild red hair. “Look, I’m sorry sir! But I can’t understand what you’re saying! Please speak English, or at least more slowly?”

“AH’M NO ENGLISH!” he roared, as though he’d been offended. Louder, but slower, he spoke. “I’m askin’ where ya tekin’ ma mither? She’s no hurt!”

Janice, trying to stay calm, finally figured out what he was saying. “As I have told your friend over there, several times, the doctors have taken three people into surgery. One, a red-haired lady, is seriously injured and currently in the operating theatre with Professor Sage! An older lady, who said she was her mother, is waiting in their waiting area. Another two men are in surgery as we speak. We only have two doctors on this morning, so if you’ll please be patient and wait here, I’ll let you know as soon as I have news…”

This clearly wasn’t enough for the rowdy group of four irritated men, one of whom started insisting he see them. Janie rolled her eyes, knowing she was losing it with these people! Emma was about to step in and help her calm them, as a woman appeared from a side door, walking straight up to the group.

“HAMISH! I CAN HEAR YE BACK THERE! LOWER YER VOICE, YE BLITHERIN’ IDIOT! AN’ SHUT UP THE LOT OF YE - THERE’S SICK PEOPLE HERE!”

“Sorry…mama.” The bear of a man calmed in an instant.

“Sorry…majesty!” said another.

“That’s better! Now, you heard Merlin! They are trying to save your sister’s life in there, an’ they
don’t need you lot makin’ any more trouble. Sit yerselves down, like the good nurse told you to…”

Regina, stepping closer, was impressed how the men instantly complied. “Excuse me. I believe my son’s in here somewhere? Someone said ‘majesty’? I’m a former queen myself, of the Enchanted Forest. And you are…?”

The woman looked her up and down, calming as she recognised the look of another anxious mother. “Eleanor, Dowager Queen of DunBroch. Ye said, ‘yer son’?”

“Henry. He travelled to DunBroch with his father. He said you all arrived this morning?”

“Ye’re Henry’s mother? That young man damn well saved my Hubert’s life! I owe him! Not as much as I owe his father, mind! You should be very proud of them. Without yer man, my Merida would be deed by now!”

“Oh…Neal isn’t actually my-” but Emma interrupted her.

“You’re Merida’s mother? I remember her…In Camelot!”

“Aye, well,” her mother’s eyes started to glaze. “If she survives the night, she may remember ye too! But…it’s a slim chance. Yon Merlin brought us here to see a brain man. Should be wi’ us tonight. If he canna fix her…” a tear slid down her cheek, quickly wiped away. Emma stepped up closer, putting a gentle hand on her arm in an attempt at comforting her. But Eleanor quickly pulled back.

“Nae, lassie, dinna comfort me now! If ye do, I’ll cry. Then I’ll never stop!”

“We’re sorry…your majesty. Can you tell me where Henry is now?” said Regina.

Two minutes later, the wives stepped into a small reception area next to one of the operating theatres, where Henry sat nursing a coffee. “Henry!”

“Oh, hi mums!” he had that guilty look on his face. “I wondered when you’d come.”

“You said you were hurt? Your arm?”

“Oh that! Yeah, Anna Sage used magic to fix it just now. I took an arrow to it, as we were getting out.”

“An arrow? Henry, what were you thinking, going there in the first place? Your father specifically forbade it, as I would have done too! What happened to you being protected by Merlin and Persephone?”

“Ah…well, that’s the thing. Nobody realized that some piece of shit called the Black Knight had contained all magic over there. So, nobody had magic, except him! Dad got Perse out of there quick, then he, Merlin and Killian had to fight the old-fashioned way, or Merida and her family would have been slaughtered. I couldn’t just sit by…”

“Where is your father now?”

“Waiting outside Merida’s operating theatre, I think. She got hurt the worst of all. She got an arrow to the back of her head and she’s been unconscious ever since. I’m waiting here to see how Hubert’s doing. He got sliced pretty bad by the Black Knight. Merlin decided we all needed to get out of there quick, as there’s no way she’d survive back there. He sent a message to Anna, asking to get Professor Whale to come back to Storybrooke. Apparently magic can’t fix a brain issue.”
“And what about Killian? Is he back too?” asked Emma.

“Yeah. He’s back with the Jolly. He got hurt too, but Merlin patched him up when he got his magic back.”

Regina rolled her eyes, sighing but remembering Robin’s last words before they left home. “Henry, your mother and I have been worried sick! Why on earth did you do that?”

“I’m sorry, mums. I know it was stupid. It’s just…I thought what with Dad, Merlin and Perse around, I’d be safe! I just wanted to be with him! I hid down below deck and came out after we went through the portal. Dad was spitting blood when he found out! He kind of locked me in the brig for a night…”

Emma gave him a sad smile. “Good. You deserved that, after what you put us through! We knew. Merlin’s daughter told us what happened. Henry, I know you’re all grown up now, but…please don’t do that again? We’ve hardly slept all week!”

“All week? We’ve been gone a month! I guess what Merlin said about the time portal’s true! That means I won’t have missed any Uni time if I go tomorrow. Um…shouldn’t you be on your honeymoon right now?”

“We should be! But somebody decided to disappear off to another realm, didn’t’ they?” Regina’s tone acquired an annoyed, steely edge. "We couldn’t go on a holiday while our son’s in danger now, could we?”

Finally, Henry realized the full extent of the problem he’d caused!

“Sorry, mums. I should have thought…"

“Yes, you should have! You’ve really messed a lot of people around this time, Hen,” added his blonde mother. “As well as giving us sleepless nights and making us miss our honeymoon, you could have put your dad in even more danger as he had one more person to protect! I was quite prepared to give you a first-class ‘bollocking’, to quote Robin! It’s only him reminding me you’re supposed to be a man now, that stopped me! Henry, you really screwed up!”

Even though he was nearly a foot taller than either woman, he hung his head in shame, staying silent. The awkwardness finally being broken by a door clattering open, Neal stepping out. “Dad, over here!” he called, relieved for the distraction. “How’s Merida?”

Neal caught sight of his former lover and her wife. “Hi Emma. Regina. She’s still in a coma, Henry! They did an X ray and there’s nothing much to be done till Whale gets here. We don’t know whether she’ll make it or not.”

“I’m sorry, dad. I know you’re close. Queen Eleanor and her family are downstairs. Should I go down and tell them?”

“No thanks, son. Probably best if I do it.”

“What happened?” asked Regina. “After you all left here?”

“You mean after I found out that this pillock…” he put a hand on their son’s shoulder, “…smuggled himself aboard the ship? Well, it took us another three days to reach DunBroch…” he proceeded to explain how they landed, to discover how nobody’s magic, including Merlin’s, worked any more. Then how they discovered someone called Emeris, or The Black Knight, a renegade outlawed by King Arthur of Camelot, had acquired his own magic somehow, and was using it to suppress not just anyone else’s, but the small kingdom. How dozens of the queen’s finest troops had been slaughtered...
in battle. How Merida’s brothers had been taken hostage, under threat of slaughter. He described how he and Merida had then managed to break into the Knight’s castle in the dead of night, rescuing her brothers from the dungeons.

“However, we’d almost got back to the ship when Emeris’ guard counterattacked and during the fight, Merida got an arrow to the back of the head. Most of us got scratches and bruises, but her brother Hubert got cut quite badly. “Henry saved his life, but they both got hurt. I think Anna’s still working on him in theatre.”

“Henry was in the middle of the fighting? Why didn’t you keep him out of it, back on the safety of the ship? He could have been killed!”

“The ship was compromised, so we couldn’t take the risk of leaving him behind. Remember, we were facing somebody with magic where we had none, so best we stayed together. I would never knowingly put him in harm’s way!”

“But he WAS in harm’s way, Neal!” growled Emma. “Anna mind-read with Merlin. She said you got Persephone out of there, so why didn’t you do the same for Henry?”

“Because where she went, would have killed him! Nobody but a god could survive on Olympus. We had no choice but to have him close. Still, I found out he’s good in a scrap!”

“Mum, I know I worried you, and I’m sorry, but how many times have you two risked your lives for me or the family? Besides, Robin’s right. I’m an adult now, and I can make my own decisions!”

“Henry, that’s as may be, your mums were right to be worried!” Neal’s tone was serious. “Merlin, Killian or I couldn’t be sure what we were going to be facing down there. Remember when I gave Emma hell for letting you go down to the Underworld when you were a teenager? Well imagine what they’d be doing to me right now if it was you in theatre, instead of Merida?”

---

It was another five hours before Professor Victor Whale, now a qualified neurologist, accompanied by his fiancee Caroline, arrived in Storybrooke. Thanks to the influence of Professor Sage, he’d managed to bring a small truck back from New York, full of loaned specialist neurological operating equipment. Merlin had been there to meet the exhausted surgeon and briefed him on what had happened. With Victor’s consent, he also cast an energizing spell on him to combat the travel fatigue and freshen him up, before he went in to examine the patient.

After operating on his broken collar, Hubert had been healed magically by Anna Sage, before being discharged, and much to his mother’s relief, even though she was desperately worried for her only daughter. After a request for assistance from Merlin, Blue had organized rooms at the convent for the DunBroch royal family, though Merida’s mother refused to leave until she knew her girl was safe, instructing the family to follow the orders of the fairy to the letter.

Neal Cassidy never left the hospital either, waiting and pacing endlessly outside the operating theatre. Finally, Eleanor broke:

“Will ye no sit down, man?” she yelled in frustration. “Ye’re makin’ me feel quite giddy!”

“What? Oh…I’m sorry. I’m just…nervous, I guess. I’m better when I keep moving.”

“Ah can see that! Ooh…what the hell’s takin’ him so long? The man’s been in there hours…”

Neal looked down at the queen’s mother, who’d been wringing her hands continuously. “It’s
complicated. The head’s the most difficult part of the body to work on. Merlin said he trusts him, so…”

“So, we have ta wait here and do nothin’? My gurly could die! An’ a feel so…so hopeless!” She looked into his eyes, desperate to hold back her tears. She could see the worry reflected in his own. “Ye care for ma Merida, don’t ye? Dinna deny it!”

He felt her voice, almost breaking with emotion. This powerful former queen. So strong. So wise. Yet at this moment so utterly afraid she may lose her only daughter. “I…I do. I’ve only known her three weeks but…”

“Aye. I saw the look. I saw her givin’ it to! I never seen ma gurly look at any man, that way before! Ah’m sorry ma boys gave ye such a hard time. They were just bein’…”

“Brothers? It’s fine, they were just protecting their sister. Though from what I saw, she rarely needs it! I saw what she can do with a bow and arrow. There’s an archer around here who she could give a run for his money!”

The dowager queen stood, facing him. “Aye, she’s guid in combat, like her father before her. Oh, he would have been so proud, but she’s also bloody pigheaded, just like him! Storming intae a fight without a blind thought who’s got her back. It’s nae wonder she has nae—” she was interrupted by the door from the operating theatre opening, two men now coming out, still in surgical gowns.

“DOCTOR!” Eleanor turned immediately, stepping up to him. “How is she?” She desperately tried to read the medic’s eyes, to see whether he was a bringer of good news.

“Erm. Perhaps we can go into an office? Somewhere private, your majesty?”

“Just tell me! I need to know, man!” As she yelled, Merlin came to stand by her, removing his theatre cap.

“Well, she’s lucky to be alive. Another half inch and she would have been lost!” he took her trembling hands in her own. “I carried out a CT scan, and…”

“A what? I dinna understand…”

“It’s like a photograph, a picture, Eleanor,” added Neal, to help the confused woman. “Of the inside of her head. The doctor can see what’s going on in there, so they can figure out what to do…”

Victor nodded, silently thanking him. “Yes, a picture of her brain to be precise. We can see what damage is there before we operate. Fortunately, the arrow doesn’t seem to have penetrated her spine or spinal roots…” He could see her looking confused again. “So, provided we can operate successfully, she will still be able to walk and use her body normally. But…” he thought how to explain it carefully and clearly without building up her hopes…or dashing them. “We’ll need to remove the arrow very, very slowly. We won’t know if there’s any permanent damage until she wakes up. It’s still too early to say…”

“So, what are ye waitin’ for, man?”

Victor looked across at Merlin, both knowing this was going to be a very long night…

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*The Diner – The following morning*
“We really do need another place around here to have breakfast!” muttered Regina as she, Emma and Henry stepped into the diner. The previous afternoon, Blue and the fairies had arrived to take care of the DunBroch royal family and news had spread of their new visitors. Robin was due to join them shortly, after dropping the older girls and Roland off at school, and they’d agreed to meet for their own breakfast at the café.

As the pair looked for a free table, Emma groaned, seeing Killian Jones sitting at one of the back tables, with Ruby’s son on his knee, and the wolf sitting close. Has she already told him about the nightclub incident? As she tried to direct them to one of the larger tables near the door, as far as possible from her former lover, Henry had already called out to him. “Hi Rubes, hi Killian!”

The former pirate looked up at him, with a wry grin. “Well, if it isn’t my stowaway! What’s the news from the hospital? Does the queen live?” before looking across at the two women nearer the door.

“Still too early to tell as she’s still in a coma. Dad’s still there…”

Ruby had just joined him from the back rooms. She’d worked long hours yesterday and was unaware of the news. “What…the queen…you mean Merida? She’s hurt?”

“Aye, lass. I thought you heard? The young queen got an arrow to her skull. That’s why we brought the family back with us. Life or death. Henry said she’s lying in a hospital bed right now.”

Ruby’s mind went right back to her time in their realm. When a local witch had cursed her to remain in wolf form. When she and a certain warrior came to her aid. “Merida’s there, now? I knew her. She and I helped…well, it doesn’t matter now. I’d best call Mulan,” she stood quickly. “Could you take care of Nattie a little longer, Kill?”

“No problem, love. Me and my boy here will be just fine.” Ruby mouthed a silent ‘thank you’ back. Without thinking and having forgotten Henry, she lowered herself to place a quick peck on the toddler’s cheek, before switching across to give Killian the same. As she did, his head turned to the side, their lips touching in the lightest of kisses. Brief, but intimate. Henry spotted it but said nothing.

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**Storybrooke Hospital**

It was a completely and utterly drained Victor Whale who almost crawled out of the operating theatre that morning. He’d been working flat out, hunched over his patient, using his microsurgery spectacles and the finest of small tools as he operated deep within the young queen’s brain, for over nine hours. The smallest slip could result in instant brain damage or paralysis, so the utmost concentration had to be maintained throughout. Caroline and their best nurses and trained medics kept a close eye on proceedings, ready to help the exhausted man.

“Victor go sit down over there,” said his fiancée, lovingly. “You’re absolutely shattered.”

However, seeing two worried people walking toward him, he sighed. “I will, Carrie. Just give me a minute…”

“Well?” said Eleanor, looking almost as drained as him. “How is she?”

“Still in the coma, but better. I removed the arrow and repaired all the damaged tissue. Her brain functions are now stable, and the prognosis is good. There appears to be no spinal nerve damage either. But it may take a while for her to wake…”

Neal saw the confused look on the mother’s face, so he took her hands in his own, facing her. “He’s
saying she’s more likely to recover now. She’s over the worst…”

At the first bit of positive news since Merida had almost been killed, the stately Dowager Queen of DunBroch just seemed to melt before them, the tears and pent-up worry she’d held back for so long, finally breaking. “Oh, thank the gods!” she wailed before pulling herself into Neal, sobbing loudly into his shoulder. “Mah poor wee gurly!”

He held her tightly as she released all of it, soaking his shirt. Even he was shedding a few tears of relief.

A figure stepped up beside them. “It was an extremely difficult operation, Eleanor. Our professor here did a quite magnificent job. I’ve no doubt that without his labours, your young queen would have been lost to us!”

At Merlin’s words, Eleanor lifted herself from Neal and forcibly pulled the former Doctor Frankenstein into a bear hug. “Thank ye! Ye’ll have no idea what this means to me! To mah family. Ye’ll always have a place of honour in DunBroch, ye wonderful man!”

Caroline, returning with his coffee, saw the embrace, smiled across at the slightly embarrassed medic. “Yes, he is, isn’t he? Shame so very few people seem to realize it!”

---

Several more hours passed, as Neal and Eleanor sat either side of the unconscious queen. As Neal held her hand, Eleanor looked at the way he studied her daughter’s face for any sign of movement, as the odd beeping noise from the strange machine nearby continued. “So…what are yer intentions?”

“I’m sorry – what?”

“Yer intentions; towards ma Merida? I told ye yesterday, I never saw her as much as look at another man. Fergus and I tried to find a suitable suitor, but she’d have none of it! Feisty young thing, mah gurly. It’s either her way, or no way! Just like her fatha.”

“That’s what I like about her,” he said, “She’s got so much spirit and passion. Like nothing’s gonna stop her…”

“Oh, passion now is it?” she glared, suspiciously. “I trust ye’ve been a gentleman?”

Neal didn’t answer, instead looking down at the patient. “I’ve barely known her three weeks…”

An awkward silence hung in the air, broken again by the woman. “So…Merlin told me you were sent back…from death? By the god o’ the gods himself?”

“Yeah. It was Zeus who wanted me to come to DunBroch. Said he owed King Fergus a debt…”

“Aye, well he’d think it more than repaid if ma Merida gets to live. Ye know, I asked Merlin about yer history. But he said nowt, only to talk to ye direct. So…what’s the story? I saw the way that blonde lassie looked at ye. Emilia, was it? When she came in with that woman who said she was queen. You have history with her?”

He studied her look. She knows more than she’s letting on! Not sure just how much the Sorcerer had told her, he decided honesty was probably the best policy. “Emma. She’s Henry’s birth mother. The other one’s Regina, his adopted mother. And she’s also Emma’s wife…”
“Her wife? Two women? That’s allowed? Well, I’ll be! So, there’s nothin’ between the two of ye now?”

“Only the fact we share Henry. No, we were together once, but Emma and I were over a long time ago. I didn’t even know Henry existed, till he was eleven. She told him I’d died. I’ll always care for her though.”

“And her wife really was queen of the Enchanted Forest? And Emma’s really Snow White’s daughter?” That confirmed it. She knew a lot more than she was letting on!

“And her dad’s Prince Charming! Oh, it gets a lot weirder than that!” he chuckled. “A little while ago Emma and Regina married Robin Hood, and they have children together.”

“Robin Hood - the Prince of Thieves? Even I’ve heard of him! He was one of Merida’s heroes from the storybooks. I met one of his Merry ‘Men’ too. A young asian lassie. He’s here? And I guess you’re royalty too?”

He laughed, “Hardly. My background’s far humbler. Son of a spinner…”

“So, you didnae think it worth mentioning that yer own fatha was the Dark One? Or that yer grandmother was the Black Fairy? Even I’ve heard of those two…creatures!”

“I suspected someone had been doing her homework! Well, if you know that already, then you might’ve also learnt that Peter Pan is, or was, my grandfather…”

“Pan - that bastard? Excuse ma language, but…how the hell did ye come out the way ye did!”

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Storybrooke Hospital – two days earlier

“Well your baby seems to be well established. I don’t see anything untoward,” said Chloë, one of the specialist nurses, as she printed off several copies of the scan. “From the measurements here, I’d say you were a shade under two months. Heartbeat’s nice and strong too. How many copies?”

Belle squeezed her girlfriend’s hand as she helped wiped the gel from her belly. “Thanks, Chloë. Four please.”

“Would you like to know the sex?”

Ariel had been too stunned to speak as she studied the little photograph, amazed at the clarity. “You can tell that, at two months?”

“Sure. The machines are great these days. Once the Prof got here, he got hold of all the latest stuff. Heck, sometimes we can even see the eyebrows! So, do you want to know?” The women looked at each other sporting silly grins. Ariel nodded.

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Another five hours passed in the hospital recovery room. Neal brought numerous teas in for Eleanor, each taking it in turns to guard over their precious patient. After an initial short sleep, Professor Whale had returned, checking over the unconscious woman. He had also warned them that, even though he believed she would wake, there was no guarantee that her mind wouldn’t have been
affected, Or her memory. Or even her personality. Neal had already prepared her mother for this possible eventuality. Eleanor was stoic, assuming this would be a real possibility but nonetheless prayed for it not to be the case.

Neal watched as Eleanor slowly and meticulously weaved her hands through her daughter’s bright red hair, carefully separating some of the matted tangles. “She’s got fantastic hair,” he breathed, voice low. “It was the first thing I noticed about her. I’m pleased Whale didn’t need to shave her head before the operation.” He’d spotted only a minor shaved patch at the back, from where they’d removed the arrow.

“Aye. She got that from ma Fergus, just like her temper,” she smiled down on her precious girl. “Big red mane, he had. And a bright red bushy beard to match. My mamma said it looked like he’d eaten half a badger and left the other half hangin’ oot!”

Neal laughed. “She talks about him a lot. Seems they were very close?”

“They were joined at the hip some days! He understood her. We still miss him dearly. He tried to stop her going in to battle with them, and she refused, like he would. She’d always been grand wi’ a bow an’ arrow but shite wi’ a sword, so…he hired the best swordswoman and fighter he could find to train her properly. Someone from the east. Dour lass, she was, but—” she was interrupted by a sudden change in the constant beeping noise coming from the machine, which now sped up rapidly.

“What’s that? What’s going on?” the pair standing to look over the patient.

“That’s coming from the EEG! That’s the brain monitoring thingy!” said Neal, “I’ll get the—”

“No need!” said an older nurse, hurrying into the room, followed by a younger woman. “I heard it, too! Jen, could you kindly page Professor Hope? I’d like him to check before we call Professor Whale. He was up all night and I don’t want to wake him unnecessarily—”

Within minutes the figure of Merlin appeared in the room, followed by a junior doctor. He examined the read outs from the machine, lifted the patient’s eyelids, checked her heart using his magic and lifted her hands to press under her nails. “Well, it would appear young Merida is no longer in a coma, even if she is still unconscious. That’s very good news. It means she can react to stimuli!”

“React? You mean she can hear us?” asked Neal.

“Yes. I suggest you start talking to her! I believe she’ll wake, though I have no idea when, but talking to her, reading to her, stimulating her mind, can only help. When she does, we can assess her properly. Professor Whale will no doubt want to check on her a little later.”

---

And so, for the next few hours, Neal and Eleanor stayed by her bedside, nagging each other to go get some rest while they other stayed. Finally, Eleanor tried a different tack. “Listen, ye know...ye’ve been here two days without bathin’. An’ I’m sorry ta say...ye’re startin’ to smell awfy bad, man! I dinna want my Merida facin’ that pong when she wakes! So, go get yerself cleaned up and I’ll stay an mind her!”

Neal chuckled, knowing her game. “OK, I’ll go. But on one condition, namely you promise you go and take a break as soon as I’m back here? No buts. You could do with a change of clothes too…”
“Are you sayin’ I smell too, young man?” she responded in mock offence.

“Perhaaps I aaamm, yer maaajesty!” he replied, giving a terrible impersonation of her highland accent.

“Less cheek from ye, young man! Now go. Bugger off!” She said it with a smirk, though Neal finally stood, knowing she just wanted a chance to talk to her daughter in private. But before he left, he leaned over, kissing Merida’s forehead, whispering. “I’m just going home to get changed. I’ll be back soon…my love!”

The moment his lips touched, Eleanor’s eyes were drawn to the large spike on the strange map on the little measuring device, accompanied by the sound of several large beeps. Clearly Neal hadn’t noticed, as silver mist encompassed him seconds later, disapparating him away. “Neal…look!” But it was too late. He was gone!

Eleanor smiled too herself as she now stood over her daughter. “I saw that, hinny! Ye like him, don’t’cha? I know he likes ye too, my gurl.”

---

A few seconds later, Neal apparated directly in front of the kitchen stove of his father’s kitchen. “SHIT!” screamed Ariel, at the sudden burst of mist appearing in front of her, making her freeze, dropping a dinner plate in shock. “WHAT THE HELL?” she shook in fear, stepping back.

“Um…Ariel?” Neal saw the stricken woman. “It’s me! Sorry. I’m not really used to this poofing lark! I didn’t mean to frighten you, I just-” he was interrupted by his father bursting into the kitchen, closely followed by Belle.

“Belle?” he rushed across to her, collecting her hands. “You screamed!”

“Papa? Sorry, it’s my fault! I just poofed directly in front of her. I didn’t think…” he mumbled his apology. Rumple looked up at him in surprise, delighted to see him but more concerned for his lover.

“Bae? What happened?” He pulled the now sniffling mermaid into his arms, trying to calm her. Neal had already rung his father as soon as he’d returned, though explained he needed to stay in the hospital for...someone.

“Merida’s still unconscious. I just popped home to change, but I thought it’d be quicker if I just apparated here. I aimed for the lawn outside, but I missed. Sorry again, Ariel! I’m still a beginner at this poofing magic stuff…”

The mermaid, still sniffling, pulled back. “It’s OK, Angus, I’m fine now! Just a bit silly and emotional; ignore me.” Neal noticed how her hands went to her stomach, as though protecting it. “It’s alright Neal, you just caught me by surprise; but it’s lovely to see you back! Don’t worry about me, I’ll be fine. I’m just…” she stopped, noticing his eyes, looking down at how she was holding herself. He had a quizzical look. As his eyes lifted to look at her face, she realized then, he’d already guessed! She nodded back silently, with a small grin.

“You’re…you’re pregnant?” he breathed, staring, his face slowly breaking into a grin when she nodded.

“About two months. We were going to keep it quiet, just to be on the safe side, till after three…”

He stepped in front of her, taking her hands. “That’s wonderful news, Ariel. Congratulations!” before pulling her cautiously into a gentle hug. “From what I’ve seen with and Gideon, you’ll make
a wonderful mother.” She almost melted at his kind words, as she’d worried what people would think. Getting pregnant by an already married man, with whose wife she was already in a relationship.

“Thanks, I’ve been a bit scared about people finding out!”

Belle and Rumple had been watching the exchange, relieved at how easily Rumple’s son had accepted the mermaid and her relationship with his father. But what he said next was the most unexpected.

“Don’t be. Fingers crossed, I can’t wait to have another brother or sister!”

“Sister. I’m carrying a girl.”

“A sister? Bloody marvelous! Belle, dad, it sounds like you need to make an honest woman of this lady! Seems to be a trend in Storybrooke these days, after all…”

---

Freshly showered and changed, and less than an hour later, Neal apparated himself back to the hospital, being careful to focus specifically on the lawn outside the front, and not in the building itself. Fortunately, nobody was outside apart from a startled cat, this time! As he walked back into Merida’s room, he saw Eleanor was now joined by Merlin and Whale, both leaning over the still unconscious, supine queen.

“Any change? Is she OK?”

“As well as can be expected, considering she’s had rather invasive surgery,” answered Whale, calmly. “We still won’t know till she wakes. This lady here,” then looking at Eleanor, “said there was a spike on the EEG over there when he spoke to her?”

“Aye, an when he kissed her heid! I saw it!” added Eleanor.

“Well whatever happened, she’s in a lighter state than when I left her. Perhaps you should keep doing whatever you did?”

Neal looked at the pair of them, quizzically. “You’re not suggesting this is some sort of sleeping curse, are you?”

Merlin spoke for the first time. “Absolutely not, but it couldn’t do any harm. She seemed to like you, I recall…”

Whale moved back, offering Neal his place at the queen’s side, while he studied the monitor. “Please talk to her, Mr. Cassidy. I’d like to see if she responds.”

He stepped closer, lifting himself onto the side of the bed, lowering himself to speak softly into her ear. “Hi, lovely! About time you woke up, don’t you think? Your mum’s here and your brothers are nearby. They’ve missed you and need you back. So…”

Merlin and Whale were unable to hear his words, but definitely noticed the jump in the little graph on the machine nearby! So, had Eleanor, who’d had the machine’s function explained to her minutes earlier. “Summat’s happenin’!” she gasped. Neal continued whispering softly to her.

“I’ve missed you too! I’ve missed that wicked grin of yours. I even missed you swearing at me, even if I didn’t understand half of what you were saying!” The needle on the graph became even more
animated. Neal looked at it, alerted by the beeping rate increasing. “But you know what I missed most? Your lips! I may have only known you a few weeks, but nobody’s ever kissed me like that…”

The graph spiked dramatically, causing Eleanor to look up in alarm. Merlin placed a calming hand on her shoulder. “Don’t worry. It means a part of her can hear him. She’s reacting to him…”

Seeing him continue whispering, Eleanor had had enough. If Merida was reacting just to the tone of his voice, perhaps she just needed a little nudge to wake up! “Heavens above, will ye no kiss her, man? I know ye want you…so just get on with it!” her eyes pleaded as he nodded back.

“So, come back. Come back and shout and swear at me! I want to run my hands through her hair again. I want to cuddle up with you like we did before when we snuck away from your brothers. You remember that? I do! Something else I remember—” he paused, moving his mouth up to place a slow kiss on the centre of her forehead. The graph continued racing, though the heart monitor continued as before. He was about to resume whispering when a voice called.

“Call that a kiss?” complained Eleanor, earning a wry smile from the Sorcerer. “Jings, that peck’s what I’d give my own fatha! Do ye not know how to kiss a girl, man?”

He chuckled to himself. “Can you believe this? I’m being ordered by your own mother to kiss you! Well…if I have her permission, what can I do? Good job I brushed my teeth just now! Just as well I love you…” he gently lowered his lips over the queen’s own before pressing down to seal them together, praying it would make some sort of difference. The beeping noise increased dramatically, though the little graph the other three had been studying intensely suddenly seemed to change to a single white flat line, which made Neal jerk up. “Shit! Is that bad?”

Whale’s expression slowly transformed from an intense frown to a broad smile. “No, Mr. Cassidy. It’s quite the opposite. The EEG’s just overloaded. I think she’s starting to come around!”

His words made Eleanor immediately jump up, darting across to Neal’s side to nervously look down at her daughter. Although her eyes remained closed, she could see some sort of movement under the lids and her chest start to rise and fall.

"Come on, ma gurl! Ye wake up now! If ye do, I'll make the man gi' ye another of those kisses, or there'll be hell ta pay!"
You Promised to Kiss it Better!

Chapter Summary

Belle asks Rumple about his feelings for Ariel. Merida finally wakes up in a strange world. Killian is the last to know he has a child on the way. And Robin sustains a nasty knock in the worst place to knock him!

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone,

Here again with another rambling chapter! It's more of a positioning one for what comes later, but I hope you enjoy...

My big exam is this Wednesday, so if that's let my concentration wander on the details, I apologise but this was put together during a particularly sleepless night...

Thank you to those who have continued reading and I love your feedback (mainly - apart from the nasty ones).

Love Fi xx

Chapter 78

Gold’s Mansion

Neal had only returned to his father’s home less than an hour, to shower and change, before heading back to the hospital. But the impression he’d left, on each of them, had been considerable. Ariel beamed with happiness at how easily her lover’s oldest son had accepted her pregnancy. *How he’d said how much he loved the idea of a sister! Like he regards me as just one of his family! Me, pregnant by his married father!* Belle was thinking about another of his comments: “*Belle, dad, it sounds like you need to make an honest woman of this lady!*” Was he serious? Her husband seemed to be locked up in his own thoughts, as he sat playing on the living room floor, with Gideon and the boy’s little red fire truck. After a while Ariel announced she wanted some fresh air, suggesting a walk down to the park. “I’ll take Gideon. He loves it down there so much. Do either of you want to come?”

Rumple declined, wanting time to his thoughts. “Not this time, dearie, I’ve a few things to do for the rents next week. But Gideon would love it, I’m sure. Belle, perhaps you’d like to go with her?”

Sensing he wanted to talk, Belle looked up at Ariel. “Actually, I need to get the laundry sorted, as it’s my turn. I’ll stay back, if it’s OK with you, babe?”

“No problem. I’ll be back in an hour…”
Within a few minutes, she’d left, taking Gideon in the buggy, leaving them to their thoughts, until eventually, Belle sat down by the kitchen table, facing him. “Rumple?”

“Something bothering you, dearie?”

“Ariel moved in here just over four months ago; and now, well…so much has changed between the three of us since then. Since the trip. And now she’s pregnant! We haven’t really discussed it but…something Neal said made think. You know how I feel about her, but…what are your feelings for her?”

Rumple’s brow went up. “I thought you already knew? After the last few months. Our talks…”

“Yes but…things have changed, haven’t they? She’s carrying your daughter. This is…important.”

“As you carried our son. I’m not sure I’m following you.”

“Those divorce papers. The ones you drew up for me to sign. Could you bring them to me?”

He frowned, wondering where this was leading.

However, he demurred, holding out his hand as a twenty-page document magically appeared in it. “I signed my half; I left it for you to sign should you ever wish.”

She held the document in her hands, not bothering to look inside. “Can you see yourself ever wanting this?”

“Of course not. But the decision was left for you, so you could have your own life…unencumbered.”

“Well, as I’ve told you on numerous occasions these last few months, I love you, Rumpelstiltskin! I love you, and I want to remain your wife. Always!” With that, she took the agreement and ripped it in half in front of him, then into quarters, putting it down. “There now, that’s one thing out of the way! So…about Ariel?”

Rumple brightened, seeing the look she gave him, “She’s taken quite the place in our hearts, hasn’t she? A truly extraordinary being. What about her?” _Typical Rumple, answering a question with a question!

“Do YOU love her? Are YOU in love with her?”

“You already know the answer to that, dearie. Yes, to both. I was, even before we knew she was pregnant.”

“And now she’s carrying your child. Your daughter…”

“Our child, Belle. Our daughter!”

“Yes. Yours and Ariel’s. Just as Gideon is yours and mine.

“And your point being?” He knew where she was going, but still needed her to say it. To know it was mutual.

“I want to be a mother to your daughter. Just as I want Ariel to be a mother to our son.”

His brow arched, but the smile held. “You want me to draw up the necessary documents to share custody? It shouldn’t be any difficulty…”

It was the slight smirk that irritated her. “Rumple, are you deliberately being obtuse? You know full
well what I’m trying to say!”

He placed a warm hand over hers as she gripped her cup even tighter. “Then try harder, Belle! Words have meaning. I should know, given my history. Tell me, what precisely, do you want?”

She sighed, knowing that if he wasn’t in agreement, it could all backfire badly. “I am in love with you and I am in love with her! The last few months have been the happiest of my life. Yes, a big part of that was getting Gideon back. But it’s more than that. It’s you. And Ariel. I’m in love…and I want us all to be together. Forever.”

“You’d like to put things on a more…legal basis? You want to marry Ariel?”

“I want US to marry Ariel, together, if she’ll have us! I want what the Briars have! I want our son and daughter to have the love, and security of all three of us. Have you seen Mulan these days? She’s a different person. And Robin, with Emma and Regina? Am I asking too much in wanting something like that for us?”

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Storybrooke Hospital

It was shortly after six in the morning when Queen Merida finally opened her eyes. Her breath hitched as she started to panic, sights before her slowly coming into focus. She found herself lying on some sort of bedding, in a cream, dimly-lit room, with various strange objects making even stranger noises. As she realized there was something stuck down her throat, she gagged repeatedly. Moments later, she heard a soft, calm female voice close by. She whispered as loud as she could without waking others in the room.

“Stay still! You’re OK. You’re lying in a hospital bed with a tube down your throat! It’s been helping you breath. Now stay very still, while I pull it out…” Warm, confident hands lifted her chin up and she felt a slithery object being pulled out of her throat, causing her to gag once again.

“There now!” said the soothing voice.

She sucked on the cloth as instructed, but her thoughts raced back to her family. To the battle with the Dark Knight. “My…my…” she croaked.

“My name’s Chloë, and I’m a nurse here. Your mum and Neal are just over there,” she pointed. “They’ve been watching over you ever since you arrived…”
“Mamma’s here?” she croaked again, trying to move her head to look around. What the hell happened? how did they get here?

“Just rest your throat a few minutes. We had to strap your head down after the operation, but I’ll take them off in a moment. I’m whispering because your mum and Mr. Cassidy are asleep in the couch just over there! They’ve been awake all night, and I didn’t want to wake them just yet, till I saw how you were. Relax and we’ll answer all your questions when you’re ready.”

There was something very settling about the young nurse, so Merida calmed, waiting as Chloë seemed to fiddle with something behind her. Moments later, she felt her head become less rigid, so she rolled it to one side. The first thing she saw almost took her breath away. On a small blue couch, sat two adults, slumped together. Neal was half laying back, clearly deep in sleep, with her mother resting against him, her head slumped across his chest, also asleep. Neal’s arm lay around her shoulder, as if comforting her. The sight nearly broke her heart as she thought what she may have just put them all through. They’ve been here the whole time!

“Mamma?” she croaked, a little louder. Thought her throat felt like it had a dagger in it!

Eleanor’s eyes slowly flickered open, everything a blur. Looking down, she saw a small patch of dribble she seemed to have left on the man currently holding her as she nuzzled into him. Looking up slowly, her eyes refocused on the most wonderful sight she would ever see. Her Merida! Alive!

“MERIDA!” she gasped. “YE’RE AWAKE!” The yell bringing Neal out of his own sleep. “OOH, THE GODS’S, YOU’RE AWAKE!” Her eyes instantly filling with tears as her daughter’s face slowly grew into a smile.

“Hi mamma! Miss me?” she wheezed, as her mother instantly stood, dashing across. Seeing her girl lying still, she lowered herself to press a warm kiss on her cheek and a hand on her arm.

“Ye have no idea, child! I thought we’d lost ye! We nearly did!” she pressed more kisses to her cheek and her forehead, being carefully not to go near the injuries. Merida saw the tears rolling down her cheek.

“Ye canna get rid of me that easily, mamma!” she whispered. “An’ I see ye brought that wasterel along!” she said, smiling at seeing Neal approaching the bed, his face a huge, relieved grin.

“Hi Ginge!” he said, knowing his nickname for her, slightly irritated her. “How’s the head? Personally, I always recommend stopping arrows with shields! It’s a lot less painful…” he moved beside Eleanor, leaning down to place a warm kiss on the very edge of her mouth, making her grin.

“Keep callin’ me Ginge, an’ I’ll try using yer arse instead!” she croaked, making him cackle.

“I like Ginger! Definitely my favourite colour on a lion...or a queen!” He bent down as she scowled, stealing another kiss, which she welcomed, but wasn’t going to tell him that! “Your throat sounds too dry, queenie! Try not to talk till you’ve had a drink…”

She gave him a tired smile, but tried to speak regardless. “Ma head hurts like hell!”

“OK, Chloë just popped out, so let me go find a nurse or someone.” He placed his hands gently on her cheeks to deliver a third, warm kiss, this time on the mouth. “Try not to run away…” he grinned, before stepping back to go find someone.

“Like I can do that, ye barn pot!” she rolled her eyes at his departing form. Her mother moved back into his space.
Eleanor smiled at their interaction, leaning over. “Ye know, he’s been around, ever since they brought ye in here! Day and night, he’s no left - until I finally sent him away to change!”

“He has?” she gave a tired smile.

“Aye. He seems awfy keen, ma gurl! Ye could do a lot worse…”

"Now don't go startin' matchmakin', momma!” at least not yet!

---

Word soon went around that the DunBroch queen had been saved. Merida’s brothers raced back to be with their sister and before long the hospital was once again rowdy, this time in happy relief rather than despair. After a busy hour in her room, Professors Sage and Whale came to visit the patient.

“My ma tells me you’re the man I owe my life to, Professor Whale?”

“Just call me Victor. It’s kind of you to say but, I think the people here getting you back so quickly is what really saved your life. But it was certainly a close thing! Now then, I do need to examine you, Merida. So perhaps the rest of these people could step outside till I’m finished?”

“Ye heard the man!” yelled Eleanor, taking control. “Everybody oot! Ye can all see her again tomorrow!” amid groans, the reluctant family marched out, already agreeing to hold some sort of celebration party that night.

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The examination was brief, and Merida went back to sleep for a good two hours before she woke to find Neal, once again, sitting on the couch. A slight knock on the door and a nurse popped her head in, to say there were two visitors outside, who’d been waiting patiently till she woke. When Neal asked who, she said:

“Mrs. Lucas and Mrs. Briar. They say they knew the patient some years ago. They say they’re friends.”

Lucas and Briar? The last names meant nothing to Merida, though when she nodded and the nurse let them in, her face broadened into a huge grin when she instantly recognised her old friends. “Ruby? Mulan?”

“Hiya, Meri…sorry, Your Majesty!” Ruby stepped towards her, giving the briefest of curtseys as Mulan gave a small, respectful bow.

“Stop! I’ll have none of that - I’m just Merida to you two. You can call me anything…anything but ‘Ginge!’ she glared at Neal, who’d been sitting down, grinning. She poked a tongue out at him. “It’s wonderful to see the pair of ye! I’ve missed ye both since we took on the witch. So, you’re both ‘Mrs.’ now? Who’re the lucky guys?”

“Well, in my case, it’s a lucky girl,” answered Ruby. “I have a wife now. She’s called Dorothy, and we wed two years ago. We also have a son.”

“Two lassies wedding each other? Well I never! Mind, that sounds very sensible, if ye ask me; especially with some of the daft buggers that pass for men these days!” she looked right back at Neal, who quietly chuckled. “And what about you, Mulan?”

“I also have a wife. And a husband! I married them both the same day Ruby wed Dorothy. We have
a son, and a daughter, and my Aurora’s just found out she’s pregnant again.”

“She is?” said Neal, now standing and walking over to the pair. “That’s fantastic news! Congratulations to both of you.” He took Ruby into a gentle, short hug before doing the same to Mulan. “It seems everybody’s getting pregnant these days. I just found out Ariel’s having one by my dad, too!”

"She is?" Ruby tried to act surprised, and was so tempted to one-up on him, by telling him about Snow White’s condition, but remembering her promise to her friend, she held back. Neal looked lovingly down at Merida, whose brow went up. “Hey, don’t you go lookin’ at me like that, Cassidy! I’m no’ ready to have bairns yet! I’ve a country to reclaim!”

His eyes twinkled. “You said ‘yet’! So…you’d like to have children…one day?”

*She recognised that look. And the hint of lust behind it. Yes, she could picture herself raising a child with him. “Aye. One day…”*

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**The Jolly Roger**

The two couples sat over lunch in the ship’s dining quarters. “So, let me get this right,” his face bore no hint of emotion as the wolf told him. “Emma and her wife, spotted your wife and my wife, *in flagrante*, behind a tree outside the Rabbit Hole?”

“We weren’t actually having sex, Killian!” protested Rosie at the way he worded it. “We were just kissing and cuddling. Nothing more!” She looked into her husband’s eyes, now wary of his reaction. “We’d all agreed this was OK before you left, if you recall?”

The captain stared into his wife’s eyes, saying nothing for a moment but seeing her nervousness. He looked up at Dorothy Lucas, who also seemed anxious, chewing on her lip. “Aye love, we did. I’m not upset. After all, the four of us have been…*intimate* with one other. I guess my only concern is that, with our situation being known publicly, whether it will affect our sons’ upbringing in this place, in any way?”

“I don’t see why,” said Ruby, now on her knees alongside Liam, playing with a toy sailing ship. “We’re all happy and it’s our business after all! We don’t answer to anyone. Do you…not want this to continue?”

“I do. But I’m the only man in this…relationship. If my beloved wife is happy for this to continue, then so am I. But we do have Liam and Nathaniel to consider.”

“I’m more than happy!” said Rosie. “And if some other people don’t like it, well fuck ‘em’! Killian, what we have here is special. You’re my soulmate, my first love, and my husband. You’re everything to me and what we have with Liam is wonderful. But we’ve gained something ‘extra’ with Ruby and Dot, which is also special. It’s a lot more than just sex. At least it is to me…” she looked cautiously at the other couple, nervous for their reactions.

Dorothy placed a soft hand over Rosie’s as it clenched her napkin a little too tightly. “It is for me, too. You two have given us something amazing, and I’m not just taking about Nattie. I want you both in our lives. Even more so, now with Ruby…” she stopped, realizing she was about to say too much. “Ruby?”

The wolf nodded, getting up from her knees to approach the table, before sitting next to Killian. Rosie smiled, also giving her an encouraging nod. “I meant to tell you something important...
yesterday, when you got back from DunBroch. But what with Merida injured, and all that stuff, it slipped my mind completely.” She rose again, to stand close to him, before lifting his restored left hand, placing it against her abdomen.

Killian’s eyes bulged in astonishment. “You…you’re pregnant?” he gasped as Ruby nodded back. He turned to gauge Rosie and Dorothy’s reaction, finding both women beaming at him.

“Yeah. It’s early days yet. The clinic think I’m about six weeks gone. I was trying to keep it quiet but…well, Snow and Emma know.”

Realising the three of them all seemed to be happy with the outcome, he stood, to slowly wrap his arms around the pregnant woman. “Well that’s just marvelous, Rubes!” before placing his lips gently on her own in a warm, light kiss. “Congratulations.”

“You seem to have very powerful swimmers, Captain Jones,” said Rosie, standing to move to his right side. “It appears, just like me and Dorothy, that she conceived almost at the first attempt! Congratulations once again…mummy and daddy!”

“Mummies and daddy!” said Ruby, stepping back from Killian to take Rosie into her own arms, delivering a short kiss to her own lips. “Three mummies! You were in at the start, remember? Without your permission, this wouldn’t even be happening. I’ll never forget this, Rosie. It may be Killian, Dot’s and my DNA, but I regard you as another mummy, an honorary one, to this one too, if you’d like to be?”

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**Mifflin Street**

Philip and Regina stood side-by-side at the kitchen sink, coffees in hand, watching all the others playing on the back lawn. On one side, Mulan was play-fighting with Roland and Philip Junior (or Pip, as everybody called him) using wooden swords. On the other side of the lawn, Emma and Margot were breaking into the little wooden fort containing Robin and Honour. In a peaceful corner away from the noisy adults, Aurora was playing in a Wendy House with Faith, Hope and her daughter Li.

“How on earth do you cope?” asked the mayor.

“Hmm? Cope with what?” replied Regina, looking back at him.

“With five kids. How do you cope? We’ve only got two, between three adults, and we’re still shattered at the end of the week. Yet you lot seem to have got it all…sorted.”

She chuckled. “Looks can be deceptive, Mr. Mayor! You should see the three of us most Saturday nights, after the children have run us ragged! Believe me, the difference between raising two and three isn’t that much…” She raised her brow at him, giving him a knowing look.

“Ah. So you’ve heard something? No doubt through the Storybrooke grapevine?”

“There have been…rumours. Plus, the Prenatal Unit at Storybrooke Hospital has been busier than normal…”

Philip laughed, happily. “I had a feeling it would get around! Yes, it’s true. Aurora’s expecting.”

“Good for you!” she clinked her cup against his. “And congratulations. We need more new life here and Emma and I have definitely done more than our bit!”
“No argument there. With five kids, plus Henry, you’ll never be lonely, Regina!”

That made her giggle. “You can count him in – Henry’s recently proving to be the biggest ‘kid’ of all!”

“And quite a hit with the young ladies around here, so I’m told. I’m almost starting to feel quite jealous of him!” he grinned. She was about to give a sarky retort about having two wives, not one, when a loud yell came from the garden. Emma had leapt onto Robin’s back, while Honour crept under his legs. They watched from the window as Robin suddenly yelped in pain. It seemed Honour had lifted her head up, and accidentally caught him rather awkwardly between the legs. He clutched at his crotch as he dropped to his knees. Emma felt him drop down, but couldn’t resist laughing, much like her wife, looking from the window.

“Ooh - right in the nuts! You’re right, Regina, you’re definitely not having any more kids! You’ve no idea what that feels like!”

"Nothing compared to giving birth, Philip, I assure you!"

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“So, Sheriff Locksley, how does it feel being back in the job?” asked Philip, as Robin and Regina passed the salad bowls and other food around the dining table. The two large families gathered around the extended table as Emma started to pour wine. Aurora politely declined, moving to pick up the bottled water. “They know already Rory,” Philip added, looking towards her abdomen. Aurora looked up, with a shy smile, nodding, as the remaining adults wished the trio good luck in her pregnancy.

“Mu, you’re slowing up with the sword these days!” joked Robin, passing her the plate of meat. “It’s not like you to be taken down by a couple of youngsters like Roland and Pip, even at your ripe old age!”

The former warrior chuckled at her best friend. “Old age? You can talk, old man! One little knock in the dangly bits from Honour here, and you went down like a sack of spuds!” The rest of the table guffawed with laughter at the memory, Robin wincing.

“Too true!” he agreed. “I could hardly breath when she did that; not helped by Emma jumping on my back, mind! It still hurts, even now…” he looked to his wives, trying to elicit at least a little sympathy. There was none.

Emma gave a wicked grin, before leaning across to whisper in his ear. “Never mind, I’ll kiss it better tonight!” earning a look of surprise from Robin and a suspicious glare from Regina. “What was that, Emma?”

_Unfortunately, Emma didn’t realise she’d been overheard until Margot’s voice piped up._ “Ma said ‘Never mind, I’ll kiss it better tonight’, mamma!”

At that, Robin and the Briars roared with laughter, Regina choked on her food, Emma’s cheeks went scarlet, and the children didn’t know what all the fuss was about!

“Mamma, why’s everyone laughing?” said a confused Honour.

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_Later that evening_
After a surprisingly lively, pleasant afternoon and early evening with the Briar family, Henry appeared unexpectedly, to the delight of his mothers, at the mansion. “Sorry, I’ve been spending so much time away, what with dad, DunBroch and everything! I’ve missed you guys! Mind if I stay until I go back to New York?”

All previous annoyance with his recent actions forgiven, Robin smiled as he watched Emma and Regina latch onto their eldest in a tight maternal hug. “You should know you never need to ask that question, Henry! This is your home…” said Regina.

“She’s right, Hen,” added Emma. Though you should know by now, there’s a price to pay for going away like that. Namely, you’re going to be reading the bedtime stories till then!” That produced a loud cheer from the girls.

“I guess I can do that.” At his words, Honour and Margot dragged their beloved eldest brother, pulling him from them to take him upstairs, so he could read to them and tell them about his recent adventure. “I want to know about Merida!” asked Margot. “I saw Brave last week! is she as good with a bow as daddy?” Henry chuntered up the stairs with his little sisters either side, to the blessed relief of his parents.

“You mean Queen Merida, my dad’s girlfriend?” he grinned. That produced a gasp from the little redhead, dragging him into their room for the details.

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Robin was the last to change and prepare for bed, having decided to go for a long soak in the bath, stealing some of Regina’s favourite bath oil in the process. He’d yelled for his wives to join him, but both felt too tired. After brushing his teeth, he finally emerged into the bedroom in his dressing gown, to find both Regina and Emma sitting upright on either side, books in front of them, their reading glasses on. He breathed a happy sigh. “You know, with those glasses, you look like a couple of wise owls! Two extremely sexy, wise owls, mind…”

“I don’t know whether to be insulted, disgusted or flattered by that, Locksley!” said Emma, smirking as she removed the glasses, putting her book on the side table. “It’s your turn in the middle. Get in!” she ordered, clambering out to allow him to slide in. He was delighted to obey. Since he’d moved into their bed some two years ago, the three of them had tried to ensure that every night they would swap, with each of them having a turn in the middle. It did sometimes have a downside too. Regina would occasionally wake up a little too hot with both bodies so close; and often either Emma or Robin would wake up needing a pee, far too early, with the resulting difficulty of clambering out of the bed without waking the others. But the turn in the middle was always worth it, for the wonderful feeling of being enveloped by their loves. Robin, having the broader chest, was always used as a pillow, and there was the added delight of waking up to the sensation of two beautiful bodies pressing into him, a blonde and brunette head either side on his chest.

Regina snuggled tightly into his left. “I thought today went rather well, didn’t you? It’s rather nice to have another poly thruple around. I got to know Philip better, too. Fascinating young man and a little more intelligent than I realised. Did you know he spoke fluent Spanish?”

Emma rested her head on Robin’s right side as she snuggled in, her face inches from Regina’s. “Yeah, I saw you flirting with our young mayor! Can’t blame you. He’s a pretty good boss and good looking, too…”

“Are you two trying to get me jealous, by flirting and complimenting other men?” Robin’s low voice rumbled into their ears from his chest. “Because if you are…it’s working.” That made them snigger.
“Like you can talk?” Regina shipped in. “We saw you, with the princess!” She then gave a terrible impression of Robin’s English accent. “Oh, you’re positively glowing, Your Highness! Pregnancy looks wonderful on you, Aurora! You look delightful today, Aurora! Let me help you up, Aurora!” Emma laughed loudly, snuggling in even tighter.

“Was that supposed to be me? Gina, if I so much as talk to another woman who isn’t Emma, you think I’m flirting! Emma’s the one for real flirting. Did you see her with Mulan? It was positively indecent…” It was Regina’s turn to laugh.

“It was no such thing!” growled the blonde. “We were playing twister - it’s not my fault Roland deliberately pushed me over! I fell right on top of her! If anything, it was embarrassing…”

“Bloody funny though! I’m sure Mu had no problem with that. Probably a pleasant surprise!”

“Oh, shut up!” she lightly slapped his belly, making his muscles tense. “Still, you’re right, it was a great afternoon. It was nice spending time with another family who understand us, not looking at me as though I’m perverted, or wondering what we get up to at night!”

He brought his arms around their shoulders, pulling them into him and placing a light kiss on both heads. “You’re right. They’re a very happy trio; Pip and Li are lucky, just like our brood. And it looks like things are also happening with the other thruple in town…”

Regina’s brow rose. “You mean the Golds and the mermaid? Why, what’s happening there?”

“Rumple asked my sister if she’d babysit tomorrow night. As she’s engaged to Merlin’s son, he thought Gideon would be safest there. Apparently, they’re taking Ariel out to Pierre Roche’s restaurant. Going for the limo and everything, just as Emma and I did! Things are getting serious, it seems…”

“Hmm. That reminds me, we forgot to tell you, Robin. Ariel’s pregnant.”

"She is? Blimey, everyone’s having babies again. That’s Aurora, Snow and now Ariel…”

“And Ruby! We just found out the same day. It’s Killian’s.” added Emma.

“Ruby! Killian and his wife do seem awfully close to the Lucas family.”

“More than you know. I wouldn’t be surprised if eventually, Storybrooke winds up with its first ‘quad’ wedding!”

"I’ve never even heard of one of those. Sounds an interesting idea, though…"

"Not for you, thief!” Regina growled, letting her hand roam over his lower stomach, where her fingers found Emma’s. She interlinked them, and together they slipped further down into his bed shorts. "No way are you having a third wife! Though a second husband, for us, might balance things out a bit!"

He loved feeling their warm hands coursing over his lower regions, the inevitable erection quickly forming there.

"Then I’ll try to persuade you otherwise! Mind you, I seem to recall Emma promising to 'kiss something better'? It was an awfully hard knock, after all!"

"Hmm. Trust you to remember that!” said the blonde.
"Well...a promise is a promise, my dear!" her wife unhelpfully added, moving their hands lower as Emma began kissing his chest and moving south.

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He said he fell in love...with me!

Chapter Summary

Under pressure from Queen Eleanor, Neal Cassidy lets something slip. Rumple and Belle take their girlfriend out for a special evening. And something unpleasant is happening in Storybrooke Police Station.

Chapter Notes

Comments to follow when I have time. I have a big exam today and I wrote this as I was having a sleepless night. So I may well update it after I get a few hours kip!

Enjoy and think of me! Fi xx

Chapter 79

Storybrooke Hospital

“So, let me see if I’ve got this,” said Merida, having been told the intricacies of Neal’s relationships. “Yer papa used to be the Dark One. But he’s not now. He’s married to Belle. Aye, I remember her when she helped Merlin free me from jail! Very clever gurly, that one. They have a son, and some sort of thing going on with Ariel, a mermaid. And she’s now with child by yer papa?” Neal nodded, trying to ignore the ludicrousness of the situation.

Then there’s yer boy, Henry. I like him! Brave, bright and stupid at the same time. He wasn’t supposed to come with ye to DunBroch, but he did anyway. Ye had him by the Saviour, who was also the Dark One when I met her. Ye left her in jail when she was a lassie, so she could break some curse put on them by a witch, who she later married. Yeah, that’s too bloody weird! Emma has kids with Regina. How that even possible? I know they have magic, but…”

“Since Henry, they’ve gone on to both marry the father of the rest of their kids. Robin of Locksley. Or Robin Hood, as you’d probably know him.”

“Robin Hood? Course I’ve heard of him! There’s stories of him and the Merry Men, even in little old DunBroch! Mulan told me a lot about them, and I’ve always wanted to meet him. He’s supposed to be seriously guid with a bow, so I wanna challenge him. See if I can beat him! So, he’s got two wives as well? Like Mulan’s fella?”

Neal laughed at her bewildered expression. “The mayor. I know, it’s daft, right? I only found out a little while ago, myself. Apart from Henry, they’ve got five kids! Four girls and a boy from his earlier marriage.”

“Jeez, what is it with this place and women-only marriages? And weddings in threes? First Mulan, and now Robin Hood? Either the guys here are awfy greedy, or they’re awfy crap between the sheets!”
Neal chuckled loudly. “I wouldn’t know about that. Personally, I’ve always been a one-woman kinda guy! Mind, after meeting yours, I don’t think I could take two mothers-in-law!” He dropped a kiss on her lips.

“Awfy presumptious, aren’t ye, Mr. Cassidy? I can see lettin’ ye in ma bed may have been a mistake!” Though she heard herself say it, Merida was more than aware of her growing feelings for this strange man from this strange realm! The man who helped save her family, and her, from a certain fate. The man to whom she’d finally, after she’d rejected so many of her mother’s chosen suitors, given her virginity in one very wonderful night!

However, she hadn’t banked on a certain visitor overhearing her last words, as a new voice came from the door!

“I knew it! I knew ye’d been intimate with ma gurl!” called Eleanor from the doorway. “So, I presume ye’ll be doing the only honourable thing open to ye, given the circumstances, Cassidy?”

“Mum! Shit! Wear a bell or somethin’, will ye?”

The queen’s mother ignored her, looking straight at him. “I didnae hear yer answer, Cassidy?”

“That’s because I didn’t give you one. Eleanor!” he calmly replied, refusing to be intimidated.

“She’s a queen! She’s no’ a servin’ wench ye can have yer fun with. She’s-”

“Right in front of you, mamma! And I’ll tell ye, what I’ve told ye and my papa a thousand times before. If, and when, I wind up with someone, it’ll be my decision! And no one else’s!” She wasn’t angry…yet…just tired of having this same discussion year after year.

“Merida, ye’re the rightful, displaced Queen of DunBroch! Ye canna just carry on wi’ fellas, like other lassies! Ye have a duty to the Kingdom!”

“Here we go again! For heaven’s sake, mamma. I will fight and, if need be, I will die for ma country! I will lead it and try to be half the leader ma papa was, but I’ll no go walkin’ up the aisle, just cos Neal’s the first man I ever felt somethin’ for!” She stopped herself from saying too much, with him so close.

“Ye canna be serious? Jeez, gurl, ye have to think of the lineage! Ye need to produce an heir one day!”

“Why? I’ve got three brothers; one of them can take the throne! For years, ye’ve been puttin’ me in front of princes and sons of chieftains, just to find me a royal husband. So ye can have yer nice compliant queen and babies! What if I no want that? What if I want to find my own man? What if I don’t even want a husband! And if I do, why does he even need to be royal? I mean, look at this place? Ye’ve got Queen Snow livin’ here, and she married a shepherd. And by all accounts, she’s bloody happy! And their daughter? The princess married another woman, a former Evil Queen! So why can’t I just be left to choose if, and when, I want someone” she huffed, folding her arms. If only she could just get up and walk out of here!

Merida wasn’t the only one seething. Eleanor looked at the man sitting beside her on the bed, his feet propped up, “I canna believe ma ears! And you! What do you have to say about this? Ye’ve soiled ma daughter, so what ye going to do about it? Are ye a man of honour…or not?”

Neal’s experiences in the Underworld, dealing with all manner of awkward and domineering people, came to the fore as he calmly looked back at her. “Eleanor…Merida is her own woman, despite the fact she’s also a queen! Only she should decide IF, who, and when she should marry. If that’s what
she even wants! Personally, I’ve no time for all or all the self-serving, conceited bullshit and crap that surrounds you royal families! Tradition be damned! Leave the girl to choose for herself!”

*Eleanor was more than surprised by his outburst. He always seemed so placid. But there was spirit there! “When she was lyin’ there yesterday, unconscious, ye said ye had feelings for her! So, what’s changed?”*

“Nothing’s changed! I fell in love with her the moment I clapped eyes on her! But that’s me, not her! She makes her own decisions…” he stopped talking, as a nurse came into the room.

“Good morning!” said Chloe, all bright and breezy. “Professor Whale’s asked me to take your dressings off and bathe the wound before he gives you an examination shortly. May I?”

“Yeah, sure,” said Neal, lifting his feet from the sheets and standing up, hardly looking at the women. “I’ll pop back in an hour or two, OK?” He quickly dropped a kiss to the redhead’s forehead, nodding to Eleanor as he moved away, not noticing the reaction on the queen’s face as he left the room.

Merida sat silently looking ahead, stunned. *Had he really just said that? “He said he fell in love… with me!”* her voice almost a whisper.

“Aye, I heard him too!” said her mother, with a sly grin. “So…what ye gonna do about it?”

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*L’Auberge Cachée*

Ariel gasped in astonishment as the black limousine slowly pulled up outside Pierre Roche’s half-timbered restaurant and hotel by the lake edge. Belle had only told her yesterday, that they wanted to take her somewhere for a special evening, to celebrate her pregnancy, Bae's return, and the successful banishment of the Dark One.

“This is stunning! Angus, where on earth did you find out about this place?”

“Robin Locksley. He and the Saviour came here once, and the owner is the man who catered their wedding. He’s a five-star Michelin chef, so the food should be good…”

Belle had gone out of her way to find suitable evening gowns for them both, with Rumple using magic to make any necessary adjustments. Belle wore a sheer black satin strapless number with appliques lace which accentuated her hips and bust magnificently, while Ariel chose a slightly more revealing, aptly mermaid-style, off-the-shoulder split front prom dress, in maroon satin. Stepping out of the limousine, they looked like a couple of supermodels about to grace a catwalk, and Rumple’s heart skipped a beat at the vision before him.

Pierre Roch had been there to greet them all in person, having been primed by Merlin the previous evening. The Sorcerer had gone out of his way to tell him they were special friends, wishing to celebrate an even more special occasion. So, the millionaire restauranteur had also gone out of his way to arrange for his best table on the lakeside pontoon, surrounded by twinkling lake shore lights and the very best service he could provide.

The beautiful food, cooked to perfection, was served under the moonlight. They eschewed any alcohol, as Belle needed to avoid it, although they did make an exception towards the end, ordering a particularly fine bottle of champagne.

“Angus, that meal was magnificent!” said Belle, pushing herself back from the table. “One of the
best I’ve ever had. And that’s compared to some of the best places where we ate on holiday!”

“As is the company, Belle. I have to say you and Ariel look truly captivating, tonight.”

“Thank you, kind sir” said Ariel. winking at him. “I’ll have to get pregnant more often, if this is the way you’ll treat me!”

“It’s all worth it for you,” said Belle, leaning across to take her hand. “There’s so much we can celebrate. Gideon, and now Bae, are back with us. The Dark One has been lifted from Rumple, your parents have given you your freedom and now, the gods willing, we’ll have a precious little girl of our own in the months to come!” She stopped, feeling her nerves starting to give way. Ariel noticed the little look she gave her husband. Rumple merely nodded for her to continue, briefly grasping her other hand.

“But that’s not the only reason we did this,” she leaned over, picking up her glass tumbler. Ariel noticed how her hand seemed to be shaking. Putting it down, she rose from the table, walking around to Ariel’s side.

“Ariel, you came into my life less than a year ago. At that time, I’d lost everything. My baby, my husband. My self-respect. All through some rather stupid actions of mine. It was my lowest point; yet you came and gave me a reason to carry on. You opened my eyes! I’d never found love with a woman before. You changed me…” she reached for her glass, took another sip, then carried on.

“I was overjoyed when Rumple and Robin rescued Gideon, and allowed me to move back home to be with them. After what I’d done, he could have quite easily divorced me. But he didn’t. Instead, he selflessly let me not only be with our son, but left me to find love for myself. Which I did. With you. I love you, Ariel!”

Ariel smiled back, delighted at her words but, seeing the seriousness in her eyes, she grew concerned, wondering where this was all leading?

Then Rumple stood, stepping to her other side, both now looking down at her as she sat. “And as for me, even as the Dark One, I think I started falling in love with you the moment I heard you singing to Gideon. The way you played with him; loved him like a mother. I’d never believed anything like this would happen to me, but…it has! I also love you, Ariel. The fact we’re having a child together is just another joyful bonus…”

She was about to ask them what they were doing, when the standing pair looked at each other, an almost imperceptible nod exchanged, before they both dropped down on one knee, a small box now appearing in Rumple’s left hand. “Oh.My.God!” the mermaid whispered, as Belle opened the box.

“Ariel, I talked with Rumple about this, and we agreed to do this. We love you, and we want you in our lives forever! I want you to be Gideon’s mother too, and I want to be a mother to your baby. Our baby.” She nervously pulled the sparkling blue sapphire and diamond ring out of the box, turning it to the view of the mermaid. “Ariel, would you do us the honour of being our wife? Will you marry us?”

The redhead’s jaw dropped in astonishment, tears now coursing down her cheeks. She couldn’t speak at first, making Belle worried. Until, finally, “Oh my god! I can’t believe…yes…yes, of course I’ll marry you!”

Although their table was on a pontoon at least a hundred feet away from the main restaurant, a loud cheer and clapping came from the bank! And at least a dozen fireworks, rockets, flew into the air to create a series of loud bangs, the cloudless night sky now being illuminated by silver, red and purple
flashes, turning into balls of light. Trembling, Ariel stood, to be immediately embraced by the librarian, a warm mouth now latching onto her own in a hungry kiss. After a few seconds, their lips parted, only for the mermaid to feel them replaced by Rumple's, as he copied his wife, wrapping his arms around the pair of them.

From his little office overlooking the lake, Pierre, smiling at the sight, picked up his phone to make a call…

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**Storybrooke Police Station**

It was close to midnight when he’d got the call. Cursing himself for getting a new mobile phone, *even if it had been at Henry’s insistence!* “Hi Mulan! You said you needed me to get over here? But before you answer that one, first tell me how you got my new number in the first place?”

She gave him a grin. “It took a while! Emma had just gone off-shift, and suggested I call Henry. He gave it to me. Sorry but, it was necessary. We have a bit of a…situation.”

“A situation the sheriff and you guys couldn’t deal with? You’re married to the mayor, aren’t you?”

“True. But this is a delicate…political situation. You best come through to the cells and see for yourself.”

She led him through into a larger room with three jail cells, on of which was occupied by someone he instantly recognised. “Harris? What the hell are you doing in there?” Merida’s youngest, by a matter of minutes, brother was propped up on a little settle, grumbling in frustration. The second, after Hubert, in line to the DunBroch throne was a big man, some six feet four and broad. His windswept wild red hair the only similarity between himself and his sister. As he looked up at the newcomer, Neal saw from his watery eyes that he’d clearly been drinking heavily! “Tha stoopid bitch locked me in here!” he yelled, pointing at a younger woman deputy, who sat at her desk.

“Neal, this is Deputy Sheriff Butler, who arrested this man this evening. He was in the Rabbit Hole, drunk, and started arguing with one of the other dwarves, a Mister Cunningham. He appeared to punch him in the face. Clive, the owner called the station and Julie here arrested him. During the struggle to do so, he elbowed her in the face too…”

He looked more closely at the young police officer, and saw she was sporting a nasty bruise which would no doubt turn black over the next couple of hours. “Well I have to say, Julie, you did a fine job. He’s a big lump…”

“It was easy enough once I got the cuffs on him, as he’s completely pissed and could hardly stand!” said the annoyed woman. “But he caught me just beforehand. Some of the guys at the bar helped, and loaded him into the car…”

“OK, so why do you need me here?” he asked confused. However, at that moment he saw two other men sitting in the opposite corner of the room, one standing to walk over to him. Hamish, another brother! Just as large but clearly not as drunk, he walked over to stand directly in front of Neal and Mulan, pointing at her.

“Because I need ye to tell these bitches, that this man is a royal prince! And to let him oot immediately, before I take action! Now do as I damn well say, or there’ll be…consequences!”

Neal looked at Mulan’s reaction, amazed to see her remain so calm despite the provocation! Sighing, but feeling growing anger on her behalf, he stepped forward, looking up at him. “Hamish, you will
apologise to Sheriff Briar immediately! And you will never use that word to a woman again!”

The other man wasn’t impressed, deliberately putting his face into his own to intimidate him. “And who the fuck d’ye think ye are ta tell me what to do, ye little pipsqueak? Ma sister may think the sun shines oot yer arse, but I dinnae! So…again…tell these bitches…ta let ’im oot…NOW!” he snarled.

The third man, who Neal recognised as Duncan, a foot soldier friend of the younger brother, now stood, walking over to join them. “Aye, ye tell him, Hame! An’ if ye don’t, I’ll damn well tek them keys off that little cunt licker, ma self!”

Mulan was used to dealing with unpleasant drunks. Sadly, it just came with the job; but even she was surprised by the vitriol coming from these rather unpleasant individuals! However, before she could even think of a suitable response, the two men were lifted into the air by an invisible force, and slammed hard against the wall of the station! Vary hard! As Hamish gasped in shock, he then felt another unseen force, feeling almost like a hand, squeezing his throat very, very, tightly! From the corner of his eye, he could see that his friend was in the same predicament!

Disorientated and still hanging by his throat, he looked across to see his sister’s new boyfriend, with his hands raised and a face as angry as thunder! Clearly the one controlling this! Hamish had all but forgotten what he’d heard from others, that the stranger Merida was smitten with, had some sort of magic. Though apparently it didn’t work in DunBroch, and the man had made no attempt to do anything magical while he was there! Now though, he was facing a very different Neal Cassidy!

It took a few moments for Mulan to realise what was going on! By which time Neal had stepped over to the wall, magically forcing the two men’s faces to turn and face them. “Now listen, and listen well, you revolting excuses for human beings! My father was the Dark One! My grandfather was Peter Pan. My grandmother was the Black Fairy! All vicious bastards in their day, and all would have turned you to dust if they’d heard you address someone the way you just addressed the sheriff!”

His voice was now a menacing growl. “First, you will immediately apologise for your filthy tongues! Second, you will stay in your cells till you sober up, or until the deputies decide to release you.” An unoccupied cell door opened by itself. “Third, you will stay away from any inn until you have learned how to handle drink like a normal human being. Do you understand?” he growled, angrily.

With a flick of his fingers, the two large men dropped from the wall, hitting the ground hard. Their hands rushed to their throats as they both wheezed violently, trying to regain their breath. Eventually they stood, sobering rapidly. Neal pointed to the open cell door further, for them to enter. Hamish slowly stepped inside, huffing, but knowing when he was beaten. However, the third man, Duncan, looked at Mulan’s icy stare but couldn’t resist yet another barb as he rubbed his neck. “Ye call yerself a sheriff, gurly? Needing a magic man to help ye? Ye can do fuck all wi’out him, can ye?”

Neal moved to deliver a harsher response, when he felt a hand on his arm. “I’ll tell you what,” said Mulan, stepping around him, her face impassive. “You were such a brave man when you came in here, shouting and screaming. You waved that sword around like you owned the place! What was that you said earlier – how you would take the keys off me yourself? So how about a challenge? How about seeing if you can take them off me? You have a sword, after all! If you manage to so much as prick me in any way, I’ll give you the keys and you can see yourselves out…”

He stepped forward, looming over her. He was a good two feet taller. “Dinna be stupid woman, ye have nae sword! I’d kill ye!”

“You’re right, I don’t. But then, I don’t need one. I’ll just take yours! If you win, you can take the keys and let yourselves out. Go on. Let’s see how you fare!”

As the former warrior bent her knees, now adopting a fighting stance, Neal smiled, knowing where
this was going and seeing a master at work.

“Very well. One scratch, and I get the keys!” he growled, pulling his short sword from its scabbard. He moved quickly for a big man, intending to hold her neck with one hand while running his sword across her side. However, she moved so much faster than he anticipated! Before his hand even managed to touch her, she feigned to his right, seizing and twisting his wrist as she moved, pulling him sideways, while spinning and taking hold of his sword, rabbit-punching his kidney hard. As he twisted, she brought her leg up, ramming her foot into the back of his knee, making him buckle. Forcefully twisting his arm around and behind his back, he had no choice but to release the sword, which she instantly collected. A moment later, breathless and on his back, he felt Mulan’s heel in his ribs, and his own sword tip pressing firmly against his throat. It had taken a matter of seconds!

“Not bad for, what was it you called me? A ‘little cunt licker’?” the sword pushed a little harder into his throat, as the men in the cells looked on, horrified.

Neal chuckled, stepping close. “Gentlemen, meet Mulan, one of the finest blades the Chinese Army has ever produced! She’s trained with the fiercest warriors in the world and has defeated thousands of better fighters than you! As for your language, young man, not only is her husband the mayor, he’s a general, a warrior too. I wonder how he’ll treat you, when he finds out what you just called his wife?”

The fallen man looked suitably nervous.

“And his other wife, my wife too, as it happens, is also pretty vicious with a sword, when pushed. She’d have your balls off in a heartbeat, seeing the way you held your blade,” added the former warrior.

Neal couldn’t help adding, “You think she’s tough? Just wait till your mummy comes over to bail you all out of here tomorrow! Now then…” a flick of his fingers, and Duncan was magically transported into the last cell, all doors slamming shut. “You three are going to shut up, sleep off the drink, and face the consequences in the morning…”

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The Locksley Arms – earlier that evening.

“So that’s your decision? To travel through realms instead of continuing your education in Oxford?” the Sorcerer gave him a knowing smile.

“Yeah. When I went to England with Grandpa, I was sure that’s what I wanted to do. I got the Rhodes Scholarship invitation and everything. But that was before dad came back! It’s changed everything.”

“I understand, though I think all your parents, including your father, would prefer you to complete your education first. What did you want to see me about?”

“You’re a seer, like grandpa Gold. You might have already seen my future, so I want to know if it’s a mistake or not?”

“I somehow thought you’d say that!” He chuckled. “But I also wanted to ask about using my magic. There’s things I want to be able to do. I was hoping you could give me some of your abilities, like you did for Robin. And dad.”
“I cannot add to your magical abilities, Henry. Robin was given his by Zeus himself. I merely turned on what was in there. I can do that for you, though I may be able to help by giving you some extra knowledge about other realms. Plus, ways of coping in strange environments, medical capabilities, that kind of thing…”

“That would be huge! Thank you! I was going to tell the family tonight. I think they’ll be happy I’m not going to study in England after I graduate, but suspect my mums are going to do their crust when they find out I’m going realm jumping!”
If I Die, So Does Snow!

Chapter Summary

After a wonderful night on the Jolly Roger with his wife, sons and extended family, Killian discovers an old friend has more serious problems to deal with!

Chapter 80

The Jolly Roger - the following morning

Ruby was the first to wake, as usual. She was always an early riser, no doubt the wolf side of her seeking safety from any predator in the forest in the early dawn light. It took a moment or two to familiarize herself with the surroundings, realizing she wasn’t in their flat above the diner. They were on Killian’s ship, in one of the guest rooms. She and Rosie had slept there a number of times already, most recently when they’d travelled with him and Rosie to attend Elsa and John’s wedding in Arendelle, some months ago.

She loved the huge bedroom with its ornate rosewood paneling, leather furniture and massive, ever so comfortable four-poster bed. Rosie had told her that the room, and the two alongside, had been magically created nearly two years ago by her father, Merlin, to provide extra comfort for his daughter’s travels with the Captain. The room defied logic, as its large proportions were completely different to the view from outside. It seemed to be the width of the ship!

As she smelled the familiar, warm honeyed scent of her naked lover in front of her, Ruby smiled to herself as the woman of her dreams, now waking, rolled over to face her loving wife. Dorothy’s slightly larger breasts slapped gently against her smaller, though recently more sensitive ones, as she finished turning and their tummies rubbed together. “Morning, wolfie!” moaned the sleepy voiced hero of Oz, just before Ruby gave her a small peck on the lips, her right arm wrapping around her waist to pull her closer. Ruby froze momentarily, when she felt the warmth of another soft body snuggle itself into her back. “Morning,” whispered Rosie, As the other naked woman behind her dropped a kiss on her shoulder. “It’s then she remembered how they’d just spent the night!” Then Dorothy seemed to push her head forward to meet the other woman’s lips over Ruby's shoulder. “Morning!” they whispered to each other. “You sleep OK?”

“Like a log, thanks. I think the rocking of the boat helps.” That's when the three of them heard that deeper, familiar male voice.

“It's not a boat, It's a ship, love!”

“Oh, don’t start!” sniggered Rosie, used to this particular topic.

Ruby twisted her head around to see Killian, tightly pressed into the back of his wife, who in turn was pressed into her. “Well that was a lovely night,” said Dorothy. “I’m amazed we didn’t wake the boys up!”

“No, Rosie always places a silencing spell on the room when we’re about to get…frisky! She’s a bit of a screamer, as you heard for yourself!” That brought giggles from the other pair, Dorothy nodding.
“Oi!” she jabbed her elbow into his side. “I don’t remember any of you being particularly quiet!”

Killian then pushed himself tight against his wife’s back, which pushed her into Ruby, in turn pushing her into Dorothy. The four squeezed together contentedly. Until...

“Mmm, this feels lovely. Warm as toast!” said the wolf. “Killian, do you think you could get up and make a pregnant woman a lovely mug of tea?” she almost groaned her words. “Robin said it’s better than coffee in my condition…”

“Get up? I’m not sure I can even walk, love! You three have nearly killed me…”

She turned, giving him the pout, Dorothy doing the same thing over her shoulder. “Please, darling?” said his wife. “I’d love one too…”

“Tea for me too please?” added Dorothy, as she felt her wife press in harder. “I’m parched…”

He smiled, enjoying the attention, but wasn’t yet quite ready to submit. “What is this, three against one? You’ve already defiled my delicate flower of a body, and now you want to turn me into a galley slave?”

“Defiled? Delicate flower? This is MY Killian Jones we’re talking about? Captain Hook. Scourge of the High Seas? Deflowerer of maidens in all the ports?” his wife sark’d, making the other women snigger.

“To be fair love, my deflowering reputation was much exaggerated, and perhaps on occasion one maiden at a time, not three. I ache all over! Not sure I can even move my jaw properly…”

“Something a lovely mug of tea would help with, my darling!” giggled Rosie. “Killy? Pleeeassee?” she pleaded and pouted to full effect, the former pirate rolling his eyes in exasperation as the other women continued laughing.

“All right, all right, I’m going,” he groaned. “You three try to behave yourselves, until I come back!”

Even he saw the funny side. That ruddy woman had him wrapped around her little finger! Smiling at the sight of his love snuggled in the sheets against Ruby, he stretched before sliding out, reaching into a drawer for fresh underwear. God, he was tired. But it was so, so worth it!

As he put on a pair of boxers, he ambled topless out of the cabin.

Rosie peeled herself away from Ruby, lying on her back. “Last night,” she giggled, “Did that really happen?”

Ruby rolled back too, staring at the ceiling. “Seems so. Never done anything like that before!”

“Fun though…wasn’t it?” added Dorothy. “And your man’s quite the…enthusiastic lover, Rosie! You lucky girl…”

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The previous afternoon, the two couples and their sons had met for lunch together on the Jolly, as it lay berthed at the remote end of the docks. They’d played with their toddlers and later, as Mike was managing the diner for the weekend, Ruby and Dorothy had agreed to go out with them for a three-hour sail in the gentle breeze, returning just before sunset. Killian had thanked the skeleton crew, sending them off to their homes, and the four of them held lunch with the boys, The Lucas family intending to go home late. However, last night turned out to be very different!

The four of them had shared a bedroom twice before. The first time, just under a month ago, with the agreed intention of Killian impregnating Ruby, who desperately wished to carry their next child,
as Dorothy had. Knowing how it happened the first time, it had been Rosie’s suggestion to try the natural method again. Partly because of the drink, but as she admitted to Killian, also because she was very attracted to the couple, and it would give her and Dorothy, in her mind, a small part in the creation of Ruby’s baby. It had been a weird evening. After several shared bottles of wine and funny stories about their earlier love lives, Dorothy and Rosie had sat, almost like spectators at a sleazy nightclub, on a sofa close by, as they watched their partners kiss, fondle and gently relax into each other, before the essential act. Seeing Ruby giving Killian a firm, assured, blow job had aroused Dorothy far more than she imagined, and as she tore her eyes away from the lustful sight, she gasped as she saw Rosie looking similarly heated, also admiring the view. So much so, she even had her right hand pressed against the crotch of her jeans! Hearing the gasp, the redhead turned to see the Oz hero looking right back at her, cheeks blazing and starting to reach under her own skirt to do the same thing!

“Hot, right?” she breathed, earning a tiny embarrassed nod from the other, as Ruby now moved onto her back for Killian to ride her. Within seconds her powerful thighs parted as he mounted, her lower limbs wrapping around the back of his legs as they got comfortable. As he entered her slowly, the blissful groan from both of them sent tremors through the women sitting on the sofa close by, as they massaged themselves. Looking back at each other, Rosie and Dorothy shared a brief nod, acknowledging what they wanted, before Rosie leaned over and slammed her mouth hard against Dorothy’s, the other offering no resistance. Within moments, tongues were massaging mouths and hands reached out to pull each other close. Arms hauled each other together and as Rosie’s hand slid steadily up the other woman’s skirt, Dorothy’s resulting moan brought Ruby out of her own little world, to see her wife being intimately massaged by another, as her fingers worked their way into the jeans of her partner. “Oh…god! You two are seriously…wow!” The next hour flew by, although Killian and Ruby’s focus was very much on each other, remembering the main purpose of their fun together. When they finally finished, Killian having come inside her several times, the pair were joined by their partners, moving to lie either side of them. There was an embarrassment in the air but…something else too. Rosie was the first to mention it. “I know why we agreed to do this but…did you both enjoy that as much as I did?” The laughter that followed relaxed them, all agreeing that they’d not only enjoyed themselves, but that they should do it again within a matter of days, to catch Ruby during her most fertile time of her cycle. “It may have been sex, but it was sex for a good cause, and they might as well all enjoy themselves! And so it was that, two nights later, not only did Killian and Ruby copulate more earnestly, more enthusiastically, without a hint of embarrassment. But Dorothy and Rosie fucked right beside them! After they’d all finished, they gone on to hug their own spouses, reaffirming their love.

That was almost a month ago! They’d been successful; and three weeks later, while Killian was still travelling back from DunBroch, the women discovered, to her great joy, that Ruby was pregnant. She would, provided the pregnancy went smoothly, give Nathaniel, and Liam, a little brother or sister in just over eight months’ time!

Prior to his leaving, the two couples grew even closer, with more evenings being spent in each other’s company, then not. So much so, that Killian had several times walked in on Rosie draped across the other women’s laps as they watched TV, even exchanging the odd kiss or two! Ruby was also content to see her wife cuddling up to and kissing the former pirate, the father of their child. Their children; and somehow, their feelings had changed. Dorothy, often the most serious-minded of the four, was the first to articulate their unusual situation, telling them she willingly give permission for Ruby to be intimate with Killian, or Rosie, should she wish, provided everyone was truly honest with one other. Rosalind, touched by her trust, said she also gave consent for either of them to be with Killian. Oddly enough, Killian was the last of the four to comment, not quite believing what he was hearing. Of course, he acquiesced, willingly. Who wouldn’t?

After he returned from taking Neal to DunBroch, Killian was overjoyed to be told he was to be a
father for the third time! On his return, as he hugged the mother-to-be, he noticed just how closer Rosie seemed to be with both women. Very close. So much so, that he was told that his own wife had been spotted by Emma, of all people, kissing and cuddling Dorothy behind a tree. Clearly, word of their unusual friendship was starting to get out!

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As Killian now stood in the galley of his ship, making a large pot of tea, he tried to remove the smug grin he wore, as his mind went back to what happened last night. Having secured the ship, the couples had had a light supper, followed by drinks. It was after Dorothy mentioned they had a couple of days off, with their new co-owner looking after things, that Rosie persuaded the Lucas’s to stay over in one of the guest cabins. So, with their boys in bed, they relaxed and settled on deck, to have a few more drinks in the moonlight. It was a lovely evening. As light conversation shifted to recent events, Ruby chuckled as Killian poked fun at, and teased the other two for being caught by the Saviour.

“He’s right,” said Ruby, smirking. “Perhaps doing that in the Rabbit Hole probably wasn’t the best idea?”

“‘In the Rabbit Hole’? Is that some sort of euphemism?” joked Killian, earning a swipe from Rosie and laughter from the others.

“Oh, shut up! We weren’t even ‘in the Rabbit Hole’. We were at the edge of the woods nearby, as I told you! Behind a tree in the dark, as it happens. Unfortunately, your nosy former girlfriend had to go into sheriff mode, didn’t she? Besides, we were only having a little kiss and cuddle, weren’t we Dot?” she said, taking the woman’s hand in her own. “We weren’t harming anyone! Can I help it if you’ve a hot wife, Rubes?” she winked at the wolf.

“Guess not. You’re right – she’s hot! But I also guess we all have to be a bit more discreet in future. Perhaps somewhere we’re not overlooked?” The couple exchanged heated glances, Dorothy instantly picking up on the fact her wife’s pupils were blown. “Like a pirate ship?” A silence hung in the air, as the other pair picked up on her meaning. The mere fact that their first sexual forays were meant to get Ruby pregnant were now forgotten as they’d enjoyed themselves too much on their two nights together. Ruby slowly stood, before leaning over to peck her wife on the lips before, unexpectedly, doing the same thing to Rosie and Killian in turn. “I’ll be in my room – if anyone cares to join me?” The last words delivered more as an invite than a question.

The following two hours were completely different to the last time they’d all been together. Without needing to get Ruby pregnant, the four of them came together differently, naturally, all now taking the time to share themselves with the other three, fully. Instead of an urgency to copulate, it became slower, and…even, romantic. With tenderness. In short, they didn’t just have sex. They made love! And all four realized that something had changed.

As he carefully carried the tray into their bedroom, pushing and holding the door open with his foot, the sight that greeted him almost made him drop it! The three women still lay there, naked, but huddled tightly together either side of Ruby, long legs draped over hers as she hugged them into her. Dorothy seemed to whispering something to them, as Rosie kissed the wolf, the three of them in a little world of their own. As he placed the silver tray on the nearby dresser, he seemed to be oblivious to the trio, who continued with their whispering, kissing and stroking, Rosie’s hand now working its way down between the wolf’s thighs. “Tea?” he said softly, garnering no response.

It was a rare and odd feeling for Killian, but right now he felt surplus to requirements. Sidelined. “Ladies?” But they continued. Worse still, Ruby started moaning. It was childish, he knew, considering what the four of them had been doing, just hours ago! But he still felt it. Hurt. Without
another word, he silently left the room, the other three still seemingly unaware of his presence.

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But they were aware. “Shit!” whispered Dorothy, pulling back after the door closed, having seen him from the corner of her eye. “Ro, I know you said it’d be funny but, I think he’s pissed! Stop laughing, Rubes!” Rosie and Killian’s wife started giggling uncontrollably.

“He…he’s fine! I know Killy. He’ll know we’re just messing with him! I’ll get up and say sorry for teasing him soon. Now, who wants this tea?” She climbed out of the bed and the other two women couldn't help but marvel at her beautiful curves!

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It was at least twenty minutes later, when they heard one of their boys crying. “That’s Nattie!” said Ruby, now starting to dress. “I’d know it anywhere. I’ll go!”

“It’s OK, Killy’ll get him!” said Rosie, adjusting her skirt from the opposite side of the bed. However, with no sound of movement outside, and the boy continuing to yell, she now heard a second youngster joining in. “And that’s Liam! Hang on. I’ll come with you…”

They stepped outside, walking across to the extended cabin used for the nursery, and collected the children. The mothers hushed and calmed them, before walking out towards the galley for food. “Killian!” yelled Rosie, up the stairs to the deck. “Nattie’s up!” but she heard no response.

The wolf took a long sniff of the air as Dorothy appeared, having dressed. “Nope, I can’t smell him! Perhaps the sea breeze is putting him downwind. I’ll go take a look. Dot, could you take Nattie please?”

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Unbeknown to them, fifteen minutes earlier Killian had stepped up on deck. When at sea, early morning was always his favourite time of the day and he loved few things more than the embracing salty breeze. As they were moored, he wasn’t surprised to see some of the dawn fishing boats entering the harbour, their morning catch eagerly awaited by the traders, who stood with their baskets by the fish stalls at the shore end of the quay. He smiled at how life, and trade, continued, as it had for centuries, regardless of all the shit that magic and monarchs threw at them. However, as he scanned the horizon, the one thing he didn’t expect to see was a hunched figure sitting alone, on one of the benches. Focusing his mind, he allowed his magic to bring his familiar smaller telescope into his palm. Bringing it to his eye and looking closer, he was surprised to see the figure was one David Nolan. Prince Charming himself. Not a familiar figure at the docks, the man sat looking glum, as though the weight of the world rested on his shoulders. Before his violent death, he and David were almost close friends, and he often wondered what sort of father-in-law the protective man would have made?

Seeing him so burdened, Killian felt inclined to go talk to him, though realized he was standing on deck in just his boxers. Closing his eyes and using the gifts Zeus had bestowed, he focused his magic until a loose fitting black t-shirt, jeans and boots appeared, covering his modesty. He’d practiced using his apparating skills recently, though decided startling the other man wouldn’t be a good idea. So nimbly stepping down the gangplank, he ambled slowly towards the prince’s bench. As he got closer it was clear the man was indeed burdened. “Hello, stranger! Farm missing a sheep?”

David head shot up in surprise. “Hmm? Hook! Um…sorry…Killian! Apologies – force of habit!”
“No problem, mate. You look like you won a battle and lost a war! Something bothering you?”

“No…I’m fine, thanks.”

“Well that’s clearly bullshit!” said the Captain, sitting down next to him. “Have another go!”

David really didn’t want to talk about what was on his mind with Emma’s former boyfriend. So instead, he used Snow’s tactic of changing subject. “Oh, just…life I guess. I hear that congratulations are in order? For Ruby and Dorothy? Snow told me you had a hand in it – forget the pun - once again?”

It took a moment for Killian to realise what he was talking about. “What? Oh, you mean Ruby being pregnant? Me pulling myself off into a tub?”

“Yeah. For the record, I think it’s very noble of you, Killian! Agreeing to help the girls like that, by being a sperm donor! Not sure I could have done it though. Watching another couple bringing up my kid! Full credit to you!”

Sperm donor? I guess they’ll forever think of me as being that?!” “Um…yeah. Well, they are very good mothers.”

“And your wife being OK with it? She must be a very special lady indeed. Rosie, isn’t it? I’ve hardly had a chance to meet her properly. An exceptionally beautiful woman. You’re a lucky man, Killian Jones!”

“I am! But if you think I’ll be put off that easily, you really don’t know me as well as you think! What’s really wrong? Is it something to do with Snow? Or Emma? You know I always keep a confidence…”

David sighed loudly, rolling his head back. “No…it’s not Emma. Or Snow. She’s perfect! A little too perfect and…quite pregnant…”

“She’s expecting? Well, aren’t congratulations in order? You don’t seem too thrilled about it!”

“What? No…I am! I love children. It’s just…I’m getting older, you know? I wasn’t there for Emma when she was growing up. And we almost lost Neal when he first arrived. I guess I’m worried about being there for this one…”

“Dave, those were dark times. Lighten up! We had villains coming at us every other day! And I think Emma finally understands why you did what you had to do. And she seems to be happy with quite a large family of her own right now. So what makes you think you can’t cope this time?”

It took a while for David to wrestle with his thoughts, wondering if he should say anything. He hadn’t even been to see Archie about this!

“Killian was sure how to deal with this. “That’s been the case for a while! Ever since you came back from the Enchanted Forest! You live in more peaceful times, Dave! You don’t have evil witches and monsters trying to kill you every five minutes! You’re surrounded by quite a few people with powerful magic these days! Emma, Regina, hell, even your son, son-in-law and most of their children! So why worry now?”
“It’s not magic or monsters I’m worried about! It’s…me.” He almost whispered the last words.

“You? What’s wrong with…you? You ill or something?”

David’s head rose as he looked up at the sky, avoiding his gaze. Killian noticed his eyes were red-rimmed. *No Dave...don't do this!*

“Something’s...something’s not right...below.” He seemed to drop his eyes down to his waist. “I’ve had some pains recently and...I’ve spotted a lump. A fair-sized lump! I think,” his breath hitched. “I’ve been checking things out and...I'm pretty sure I have cancer.”

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No, You're not Going to Die!

Chapter Summary

Killian goes to help a friend, without letting his wife know. David has one of the most embarrassing times of his life. Merida gets released from hospital and Robin gets challenged to an archery contest. Just a typical day in Storybrooke.

Chapter Notes

Hi again, everyone! Thanks for sticking with me...

Just about finished university for a decent break, so hoping to turn more attention to finishing this story. Really hope you enjoy it!

Once again, all constructive comments and criticisms gratefully received...

Love Fi xx

Chapter 81

“I think I may have cancer.” The oddly calm way he said it was disturbing. “My dying doesn’t worry me. But, the thought I’d take Snow with me, as half her heart beats inside me? Killian, that scares the shit out of me! What about our baby?”

“Dave…I don’t know what to say! Are you sure about this? There couldn’t be some mistake?”

“I don’t think so. I looked on the web and…well, all the signs are all there…” Charming seemed resigned.

“The web? Mate, you really must see a doctor about this, without delay! I don’t know what you’re facing but…imagine Emma or Neal told you they were ill? You’d do anything, right? So, now’s the time. Come on, I’m taking you in…” without another word, a swirl of mist transported the pair outside the hospital.

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On the Jolly Roger

“He’s not up here, Rosie!” said Ruby, yelling from up on deck. “I’ve checked. Can’t see him anywhere.”

“I think we hurt his feelings,” added Dorothy as she put the cereal bowls in front of the boys.

“Just like that? Just by pretending he wasn’t there? Dot, he just spent half the night fucking all three of us! I hardly think he’s going to go off in a huff just for ignoring him for a few minutes! No…he’s probably just being melodramatic, as usual!” At least I hope so! “Hang on, give me a minute. I’ll
speak to dad and Anna. See if they’ve seen him!” After travelling to Arendelle with Rosie and Killian on the Jolly only a few weeks before, Ruby and Dorothy had witnessed for themselves just what Merlin’s family could do with their minds. How they could communicate without words. Now they watched his daughter sit at the table, putting her hands flat in front of her, closing her eyes.

‘Dad? Anna? Anybody?’ It took a few seconds before a voice came into her mind. Her sister.

‘Rosie? I think Dad’s in appointments all morning. You OK?’

‘Yeah. I just can’t find Killian. I only got up a few minutes ago and he was gone. Not sure where you are but…could you let me know if you see him?’

‘Just got up? I’ve been awake three hours already - Some of us have to work for a living! Well, it’s nice to know some of us are still ladies of leisure. Trying to keep tabs on your husband, sis? Or just had a lover’s tiff?’

‘Neither. Just want to know he’s OK. He left a bit…dramatically this morning. You know him…’

‘Yeah? Well lucky for you, I do happen to know where the gorgeous pirate is! He’s here, at the hospital. I think I saw him in reception, waiting with someone.’

‘Hospital? Shit, what is it?’

‘It’s a big building with sick patients in it!’ Jeez, her sister always made stupid jokes, or recycled old ones! ‘How the hell do I know? All I know is he seemed to be looking worried! Want me to go talk to him?’

‘Please. I’ve got my hands full. I’ll get over there as soon as I get someone to look after Liam. See ya later…’

Dorothy and Ruby watched the odd sight of their friend communicating telepathically. She’d sit with her eyes closed and the only sign she wasn’t asleep was usually the rolling of eyes under her eyelids and occasional lip movements as she reacted to someone. Finally, her eyes opened:

“Anna’s seen him! He’s in hospital with someone. Don’t know who or why yet but…could one of you look after Liam for a little while?”

“Of course, babe!” said Dorothy. “You go!”

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**Storybrooke Hospital**

“Killian – you OK?”

The captain looked up into the warm blue eyes of his sister-in-law. “Anna? What are you-” stopping when he realized it would have been a stupid question. *She’s a doctor for god’s sake! “It’s nice to see you, Anna. Busy?”

“Never too busy to see my favourite brother-in-law! What’s the problem?” she said it before noticing the man sitting next to Killian. Someone she’s met but never had a proper conversation with. “Sorry. You’re Mr. Nolan, aren’t you? Emma’s father?” The man was still deep in thought, seeming worried.

“Eh, sorry, what? Oh…yes, I’m Emma’s father. David Nolan. Nice to meet you…doctor!” he
offered a hand which she took.

“Just call me Anna. Which of you is waiting to be seen by a doctor? Most of these people have reservations. Can I help?” she looked down at Killian, who seemed to be nodding to David to speak.

“Oh…no! That’s fine, thank you! I’d rather wait for…” he looked embarrassed. She guessed why.

“For a male doctor? No problem. Most of the women here tend to prefer seeing a female doctor, but I had some availability. Dad and Professor Whale are also covering for us today, even though strictly speaking they’re supposed to be focusing on gynaecology and neurology. But we’re shorthanded. Let me find out if one of them can see you, Mr. Nolan.” She walked off to the receptionist, to check her screen. Giving Killian a chance to whisper quietly to Charming.

“Listen mate, there’s no need to feel embarrassed! This lot have to deal with this sort of thing all the time! Anna’s a first-class surgeon.”

“Maybe,” he whispered back. “But it’s bad enough having to have someone look at a growth on my balls, without it being some pretty blonde thing younger than my own daughter! If I have to have it done, at least let it be some older guy like Merlin! Or even, god forbid, Whale!” he groaned, partly in discomfort.

“Fair enough. I’m just saying-”

“Noted! And for the record, I don’t want this getting out! I mean it, Killian! This is STRICTLY confidential! Not even Snow knows about this yet and god knows how I’m going to tell her!”

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While David was waiting to be seen, two floors up, Merida was packed and saying goodbye to the surgical team that had saved her life and looked after her over the last week. Fortunately, only a small shaved area of the back of her head, buried by her long wild red hair and a surgical plaster, was evidence of the major surgery she had undergone. Victor Whale had given her a thorough final check over before, after much begging from the queen herself, finally agreeing to release her.

“But seriously, Merida. If you feel any headaches, any blurred vision or dizziness, you MUST get someone to call me or come over! I know you’re a very brave woman, but this is important! Is that clear?”

“Jeez man, I promised ye already! I will! Ye startin’ to sound like ma mother!” Despite rolling her eyes, she stepped in front and gave him a tight hug. “Thank ye for savin’ ma life, Doc. I can never repay that!”

“Repay me by staying alive, young lady! Now, Nurse Chloe and I are going to push you down to reception in that wheelchair. Hospital policy. In you go…”

“Hospital policy? I’ll no go in that thing - I’m no a cripple!”

“No arguments!” added Neal, grinning at her as she glared back. “He won’t let you out of the building otherwise. If you get in this chair without a fuss, I might stop calling you Ginge…Ginge!”

“I’ll ‘Ginge’ you in a minute! Where’s ma mother? She was supposed to be here!”

“She just popped down to the Sheriff Station, to deal with a little problem.”

“Sheriff? What sort of ‘problem’?” A red eyebrow went up.
“Oh, nothing she can’t handle, I’m sure! Come on, let’s get you out of here. There’s a little group waiting for us at a pub called the Locksley Arms, celebrating your return to health. Everyone’s meeting there…”

“Sounds grand but, a pub? The doc said I canna drink as the medicine he gave me will send me loony! Where are you stayin’ tonight? Where’s home?”

Neal sighed, a little more loudly than intended. “That’s a very good question. You have to remember, I was dead a few weeks ago! My dad has a very big house, a wife, my baby brother, plus their girlfriend, who also happens to be pregnant! I’ve a decent room there, though I’ll need to find my own place sometime. Then there’s Henry, who is supposed to be at university, a few hundred miles away, near a city called Boston. I’ve only spent a few weeks in his entire life so far, so I need to be close. But for tonight, I guess I could stay at the forest pub where your party’s being held…”

“At the pub? Is there a decent bed there?” she enquired, innocently, earning a knowing smirk.

“Not sure, never stayed there. As It’s Robin’s place, and he’s now Emma husband, I kinda kept my distance.”

“Can we go back to your place? I’d like to meet your family.” She gave him a shy smile, the first in days.

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The Sheriff’s Office

The Dowager Queen Eleanor was angry. Furious! Ten minutes earlier she’d walked into the sheriff’s office, only to be told about the terrible behavior of two of her sons and their friend the night before! The drunkenness, the punching of an innocent bystander in the Rabbit Hole, the assault of Deputy Sheriff Butler when being arrested and finally the verbal assaults on her and Deputy Sheriff Briar. A formal charge sheet was issued, listing all the misdemeanours, in detail, of the night before. The only description left out, at Mulan’s request, were the actual words Duncan had used specifically to insult her.

“Ye did this to that wee lassie?” Eleanor roared at Harris, pointing to Julie’s black eye, now almost closed up. “Ye struck a sheriff of this toon? The toon that’s takin’ yer sister in, tryin’ ta save her life?” She gave him an almighty hard clip around the head, making even Mulan flinch. “Even if ye were drunk, I’m so ashamed of ye! And you!” her glare transferred to Hamish. “Ye’ve always been a blitherin’ idiot, but I thought ye had some sense!” She gave him an equally hard clout. “Thank the gods ye fatha wasnae here to see this! He would a beaten ye senseless with his bare hands! Get oot! Wait outside!” Then her ire turned to Duncan, sitting silently, ashamed. “Sheriff, what did this man say to ye both that was ‘verbal abuse’?”

“I’d rather not say, Your Majesty. If Julie had written it down, it might be seen by my husband. He’s the Mayor here. I’m thinking of this man’s safety!” Philip would have skinned the little bastard for what he’d called her!

That earned a surprised look from the Queen Mother. “Whisper it in ma ear, Sheriff! We’re grown women after all…” she urged. Reluctantly, Mulan did so, watching the woman’s features change from anger to disgust at the culprit as she looked down on him in contempt. “He said that? Why, ye dirty little swine! I’ll no hit ye as ye’re no son of mine, but by heaven’s I’ll be tellin yer fatha when we get back! He can punish ye as he thinks fit. Ye’re demoted forthwith. And ye’ll stay away from my sons!” she turned back to face Mulan. “Now then, will there be a bail payment for releasin’ these buggers? I’m afraid we don’t have coin of this realm, but we do have some gold and jewellery we
can set against it…”

“No. The bail for your sons was paid early this morning, by a donor who wants to remain anonymous. He asked me not to name him, saying I should only accept it if they were released into your charge, as and when you saw fit. You just need to sign here…” she turned the release papers for her signature.

“This ‘anonymous donor’, his last name wouldn’t be Cassidy, would it?”

The warrior smiled an enigmatic smile. “I couldn’t possibly comment!”

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Henry had forgotten just how good his bed really was in Mifflin Street! Snuggling back under the covers and pulling the sheets around him, he resolved to have his first decent sleep-in since he left Harvard for the recess. However, his bladder had other ideas, so he reluctantly rose, trudging into his little bathroom. Finishing and washing his hands, as he left to go back to bed the delicious aroma of coffee and pancakes from downstairs started to hit him. “Hmm.”

Grabbing a dressing gown and trudging slowly downstairs, his eyes still bleary and his hair disheveled, he smiled as he heard the happy banter and morning chat of his stepbrother and sisters coming from nearby. Ambling slowly into the kitchen to pour himself an emergency coffee, the first sight he encountered were his two mothers. Emma had Regina pressed against the kitchen sink, the brunette’s arms around her waist, as they shared a warm kiss. “Eugh! Bit early, isn’t it? Get a room guys!” he groaned.

Both women broke away immediately at his voice, Regina sporting a slightly embarrassed smile, as she flicked hair off her face, back over her ear. “Henry!” she’d almost forgotten he was home!

“What can I say, Hen? When you got something good, you don’t let it go!” the blonde countered, deliberately planting a follow-up kiss on her wife’s lips, as he heard a deeper-voiced chuckling nearby. Looking over, Robin was standing in front of the stove, sliding yet another pancake onto a large serving plate.

“You try living with them, Henry! this is a daily occurrence. Best close your eyes, if I were you…” earning a glare from his wives.

“You’re up early,” said Regina. “For you!”

“Yeah well, I smelled coffee. Any left?”

His blonde mother poured him a cup and he took it gratefully, slowly trudging towards the dining room. Honour and Margot cheered at the funny-looking sleepyhead in pyjamas, the noise of which in turn made little Faith cheer, her gummy smile smothered in butter, which in turn made the others laugh, then setting off Hope, who started giggling for no reason whatsoever. Their noise drew the attention of Regina, who looked in to see what the noise was about. She beams with happiness at the sight. All four of their girls were laughing and giggling at whatever Henry had done. Emma’s head appeared, resting on her shoulder to see what was going on. Regina felt choked with emotion, a little tear of happiness sliding down her cheek. “Look at them all. We did this, Emma!” she whispered, as arms enfolded her waist from behind. “Yeah, we did. Quite something, eh?”

Their precious little moment was broken when Emma felt a light smack on her bottom, as Robin appeared from behind. “More pancakes, kiddiwinks!” earning another cheer from the table. “Mi’ladies, come eat!”
Henry, his coffee now starting to take effect, watched their little morning family scene play out. He’d hardly stayed with them much over the last year, except during the university breaks, so seeing the simple, happy domesticity before him filled him with his own sense of happiness. As Robin now leaned over the older girls, loading their plates, Emma wiped the goo and yuck from Faith and Hope’s faces in turn, as Regina wiped their highchair trays, replaced their own plates with fresh food. As he stepped towards his wives places to do the same, Emma swiveled her head to meet her husband’s lips in a quick, chaste kiss, Robin hugging her waist, before he dropped two pancakes onto her plate. A moment later, and Regina had grabbed him to do the same, as the three worked around each other in their well-practised roles. It was so obvious to anyone witnessing this, just how much the three of them were very much in love, just two years after Robin returned from death.

Regina looked across at her son, as he seemed to be lost in thought. “Something wrong, Henry?”

“Hmm? Erm...no mum., nothing’s wrong at all! Something’s very right, actually! I guess I just missed this. You know, all you guys…”

“You don’t need to miss anything. This is your home, Henry. It always will be, for as long as you want it to be. You know that, right?”

“Yeah. I just…well, I hope I have something like this for myself, one day!”

“I’m sure you’ll find your own happiness, in your own way.” sid Robin, patting his back as he moved to sit down.

“What’s your plans for today, Hen?” asked Emma. “You don’t leave for Boston till Monday. We were planning on going over to the lake and staying in Sherwood tonight. We’d love it if you joined us?”

“Sounds fun. Yeah, I’d like that. Honnie, could you pass the pancake plate over, before ma snaffles what's left?”

As Robin and Regina chuckled and before Emma could say anything sarky, a heavy clump was heard on the stairs, followed by a wild-haired almost-thirteen-year-old shuffling slowly into the room. “Mornin’ all…” said Roland, yawning.

“Gina, you never told me you released the Kraken?” said Robin, earning a light slap on the arm from the brunette. “Good morning, my fresh-as-a-daisy boy! Come eat. We’re going to the lake. You want to come?” Roland was, until very recently, usually one of the first to wake up in the mornings. However, as his hormones started to kick in, the normally effervescent boy was starting to change. Roland yawned loudly, ambling to his seat, still bleary-eyed. “Um…I dunno… I need to think about it. Can I have some coffee please?”

“Not for a few more years, Roland,” said Regina. “Come sit. I’ll fetch you a milk. Pancakes?”

“He’s tired because he was talking to Freya all night!” said Honour, earning a glare from her brother. “She’s his girlfriend!” If looks could kill, Honour would be dust right now! His parents said nothing, merely exchanging knowing looks. However, Henry couldn’t resist picking at it.

“Girlfriend? That true, Ro?” The boy grunted, not committing, just throwing his mouthy sister a look, which she ignored...and continued.

“I saw them kissing in the locker room! Like mum and ma do, when they think we can’t see…” that brought a blush to both wives’ cheeks as Robin grinned, choosing to say nothing.

“Well good for you, Ro! I hope she’s nice…” his brother encouraged.
“I think she’s lovely!” said Margot. “She has beautiful, dreamy eyes and a nice smile. I like her…”

Emma gave Robin a silent look before turning to him, in a lowered voice. “One for you, dad! We agreed Gina and I would do the girls, so, perhaps time for a father-son chat?”

Unfortunately, Roland understood what she was saying. “Please don’t tell me you’re asking him to have a ‘birds and the bees’ chat with me? Dear god, anything but that! It’s fine, dad, I know what’s what, and me and Freya aren’t um…anyway, you don’t need to worry.” After that, Robin was DEFINITELY going to have a chat with him later!

As an awkward silence hung in the air, Henry’s phone beeped a distinctive ringtone. “That’ll be a text from dad!” Before Regina could admonish him for using a phone at the table, Henry had already read it. “Oh great. Dad says Merida’s being released this morning. He’s heading to grandpa’s, and they’ll all be staying over at the Earl, with her family, tonight! If you’re all going over there anyway, I can have ALL my family together before I drive back to Boston tomorrow night!”

“Robin, did you know the queen’s family were staying in your pub?” asked Regina.

“I didn’t. Though Tuck and Will usually sort out all the bookings without referring to me. Is that a problem? I’ll talk to them this morning. Emma, are you OK?”

Although everyone had moved on, Emma still didn’t feel entirely comfortable in either Neal or Killian’s company these days. The fact Henry’s dad now seemed to be close to Merida, the DunBroch queen, still made her feel...sidelined. And as for Killian? Well, who on earth knew what he was playing at, being a sperm donor to Ruby and Dorothy? when he’s already got one of his own! “I’m fine. It’s just that, perhaps we could do something else today? Seeing as the Earl is going to be quite crowded later…”

“No!” barked Margot. “I want to meet Queen Merida! I watched Brave last week and… I also want to see Henry’s daddy, too! He’s funny…”

“Ma,” said Henry, softly. “Does being around my dad still bother you? I thought you talked it all out? It’s ancient history after all, and when will I next have a chance to get everyone together, including my dad?”

The blonde sighed. “It’s not that. It’s just...you know what? You’re right, Hen. OK, let’s go to Sherwood.”

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Storybrooke Hospital

“Dad, I know you’re busy but, do you have a minute?”

Merlin, walking with Victor Whale and on his way between consultations, stopped in the corridor. “Anna, something wrong?”

“I’ve got Killian in outpatients. He brought somebody in, who needs to see a male doctor urgently. He doesn’t want to tell me what’s wrong, but he looks to be in a lot of discomfort. Could you fit him in?”

“I can’t right now, I’ve got Mrs. Rutherford operation and the surgical team are waiting. Perhaps he can wait till this afternoon?”

“I can fit him in,” said Victor. “I just had a cancellation, so I’ll take him on. Who is it, Annabelle?”
“A Mr. Nolan. Emma Locksley’s father? I think you may know him?”

Victor groaned inwardly, as Merlin smirked. “Oh yes…I know him! Unfortunately! OK, let’s go see what's bothering our arrogant prince today?”

Minutes later, David found himself ushered into Victor’s office, leaving Killian outside. The two men had been equally unenthusiastic about the consultation, or each other. Whenever he saw the medic, David’s mind always went back to the fact the man had had a one-night stand with Snow when they were under the curse!

“Whale,” greeted the surly shepherd, walking awkwardly into his office.

“Nolan,” Victor responded. "Always a pleasure, never a chore." Well two can play at that game! “You asked for an urgent appointment?” His coldness toward the former deputy sheriff obvious.

“Yeah. I have quite a bad pain. A swelling…below!”

OK, Victor was going to make him work for this. For all the slights, injustices and snubs he’d shown in the past. “Below? Can you be more specific?”

“Um…it’s a growth. A swelling. On...on my balls.” The last three words delivered in close to a whisper. “Any idea what it could be?”

God, what is wrong with these people? “Without seeing it, no! Mr. Nolan, just take your trousers and underwear off and lie on that gurney over there.” He pointed to the bed opposite, enjoying watching David squirm with embarrassment and not moving.

Oh for heaven's sake!

“Mr. Nolan, there is no need to feel embarrassed! In the course of a normal working week, we doctors see and examine everything and anything. Penises, vaginas, anuses, you name it! We’ve seen it all, so please, just drop your clothes and the quicker we get started, the quicker we’ll finish!”

---

Back in the waiting room, Killian sat nursing some godawful drink from the vending machine, waiting for David to come back out. “Hell’s above, what is this supposed to be? I pressed the button for coffee and appear to have been given the swilled contents of a chum bucket!” he moaned after the first sip.

“Hello, sailor!” said a warm voice now standing over him. “I know we gave you a bit of a workout last night,” she added, looking down at his lap. “But I didn’t realise we’d actually broken something?”

It took a moment for him to figure what what she meant. Oh! “Hello, love. Sorry, I got called away. A man in distress. I would’ve called you but...I left my phone on the ship.”

“Do you mean this one?” she said, holding the missing item. “I found it on our dressing table. The ‘man in distress’ wouldn’t be you, by any chance?” she sat beside him, taking his free hand.

“Thankfully not, love. I discovered someone in pain at the docks. I brought him over here in rather a hurry. He’s being seen by Whale right now…”

She let out a breath. “Well that’s a relief. Dot seemed to think we’d hurt your feelings…earlier!”

He smiled up at her. “Hmm? Oh, that? No, love, I knew you were fooling with me. Still, for a moment I did feel rather...slighted. Bit unnecessary...!”
“Oh, poor you! After what you did last night; what all of us did together last night, I have no sympathy whatsoever!” she whispered. "So...who’s the poor guy in there? I mind-called Anna earlier. She said it might be Emma’s father?"

“Are there no secrets kept in Storybrooke, that the Sage women can’t get around? Yes, it is David Nolan, but it’s a deeply personal, serious matter, Rosie! There may be bad news to come. So, best keep quiet love, until we know…”

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One hour later

“OK Mr. Nolan, we have the results of the ultrasound scan. Please sit yourself down.” David had stood silently in a side room since they’d taken the x-ray. The indignity of having the man with whom Snow had once had a one-night stand, showing sympathy towards him, was compounded by the same man feeling his swollen testicles for signs of disease! It was not a good day for Prince Charming.

“So…first, let’s put you out of your misery. As I suspected, you don’t have cancer…”

He’d been so braced for bad news, his stomach in a tight knot, that Whale’s comment shook him regardless. “I…I don’t?”

“No. You have something call epididymitis. It’s usually, but not always, a painful swelling caused by a bacterial infection, in a small tube called the epididymis. This sits behind each testicle and carries sperm. We can treat it with antibiotics and painkillers…”

David sat in shock, trying to absorb the news. “So…so it’s not going to kill me?” He could feel his eyes water.

“Highly unlikely, though if you’d left it unchecked, the pain and swelling would become unbearable. However, we do need to book you in to get your hernia taken care of! I’m really surprised you didn’t come and see us sooner!”

“My what? Hernia? I don’t understand.”

“Were you having discomfort, pain even, in your groin when you were lifting heavy things, bending over or even coughing?”

“Well, yes. But I just assumed that was a sign of getting old. I never thought…”

“Most men don’t, sadly. Women tend to be better at checking their health regularly than us. From what I can tell, you have a small piece of your intestinal tissue pushing through a weakness in your abdominal muscles. It’s quite common but we will need to operate and repair it. I’ll organize some optional dates for surgery. You can pick up the antibiotics and painkillers for the other matter after in an hour or so…”

David never cried. Never. However, he could do nothing to stop several rogue tears now cascade down his face in relief. Victor, seeing this sort of reaction daily, had a box of tissues close by, handing them to him. “Here, it’s not every day a man gets told he’s not dying…”

“It’s not just that! Snow and I share her heart. She split it to get us back to Emma. If I were to die, so would she! And she’s pregnant, as you know.”

“Ah. Now I begin to understand! All the more reason to take care of your health, Mr. Nolan. And
hers! Now, I’d best get on…” he stood to indicate the consultation was over. Though David sat, thinking through his words.

“Whale? I mean…Professor?” The man raised a brow, waiting for him to speak. “Victor. I’m…I apologise!”

“Hmm? For what?”

“For the way that I’ve treated over the years. Since the curse! Because of you and…Snow. We were all cursed. Since then, you’ve treated most of my family here one time or another. And I’ve often been…less than grateful. I’m sorry for being such an ungrateful arsehole…” He carried on looking down, feeling…ashamed.

Victor saw how hard it was for the normally assured, assertive man to say that. “Well…that’s all history now! Thank you…I accept your apology. We all seem to be living happier lives now.” He offered his hand to David to shake. “Let’s move on…”

David took it gratefully. “Thank you. And I understand congratulations are in order? I gather you’re about to be married. To Miss Locksley?”

“It’s true. Next month. Caroline has made my life worth living again. That, and getting to further my training away from here. We’ll be spending more time in New York fairly soon but, I’ll be back helping out from time to time. She does want to be near her family, after all…”

“She seems a very fine lady. Beautiful too. I wish you luck.”

A few minutes later, as David sat on his own outside the dispensary, the tears flowed in blessed relief.

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**The Gold Mansion**

After introducing Merida to his father, stepmother and their girlfriend, Neal sat around the table with his family, recounting all the events of the three weeks spent in DunBroch. He skirted over his burgeoning relationship with the young queen. Merida was fascinated by the odd little family, particularly Rumple! “I canna believe you used ta be the Dark One? Ye seem too lovely!” she gushed. “An yer lovely ladyship here. Neal tells me yer a princess of the auld country?”

Belle gushed. “It’s true. My father still lives in Storybrooke, but we’re estranged. He never really took to Rumple, so I no longer took to him!”

Then she looked at Ariel, not sure how to address her relationship with the others without causing offence. “So, Neal tells me ye’re a mermaid? Well I have ta say ye have beautiful hair for a redhead, Ariel! I canna do anythin’ with mine, so ye have to teach me how ta make it shine like yours!” Ariel blushed at the compliment.

Seeing her wanting to ask, and feeling awkward, Neal stepped in. “Ariel is Belle’s girlfriend, Mer!”

“Well…I’m kind of Belle and Rumple’s girlfriend. We’re together…” she looked to her partners, not sure whether she should say any more at this stage. But Belle nodded to her husband that it was OK.

“Bae, we have something to tell you, and you’re the first to know. Last night, Belle and I asked Ariel to be our wife. And I’m delighted to say, she’s accepted!”
Neal’s mouth dropped in shock before morphing into a huge grin as he stood. “That’s wonderful news, papa! I’m so happy for you. I was only back a week but I saw how happy you were, all together; how you all fitted. Ariel, welcome to the family!” He stepped around the table to take her in a warm hug, to the relief of the mermaid.

Merida looked on at the happy scene, with a grin of her own as the family celebrated, Rumple using magic to make a chilled bottle of champagne and glasses appear on the table. As Neal eventually sat back next to her, Merida leaned into him, whispering, “Yet another family with two wives? I hope ye’re no getting’ ideas, Cassidy?"

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The Earl of Locksley – later the same day

The moment they arrived at the Earl of Locksley, the Dunbroch family erupted in a huge cheer for the safe recovery of their queen from near death. Merida hugged her three brothers, though couldn’t help noticing how her mother only hugged Hubert, completely ignoring Hamish and Harris, who seemed to scuttle away from the group, to the bar. What happened? She thought, though chose not to ask till later. What did throw her though, was seeing her mother make a point of coming over and hugging Neal, whispering something in his ear!

Everyone seemed to show up at the pub in the forest that afternoon. Ruby and Dorothy arriving with the boys to catch the sun by the lake, with Rosie and Killian joining them after returning from the hospital.

It was another hour before the Locksley-Swan-Mills entourage finally appeared. The large family had also spent most of the day walking in the forest and playing by the lake, though Emma had had to leave them for an hour, after hearing disturbing news about her father earlier, returning an hour later.

The dinner was at Henry’s insistence, as it was his last opportunity to be with his entire family, before leaving for Harvard in the morning. Regina was more than surprised at the loud cheer reserved for Victor Whale, arriving with his fiancée. Queen Eleanor insisted on giving him a bear hug, before Hubert shook his hand in thanks for saving his sister, turning the slight medic around and lifting him easily on his shoulder, to a “Woow!” from Victor and a loud guffaw from Caroline, as the DunBroch party paraded him around the room like a hero, thrusting a drink into his hands. “Carrie? What on earth is going on? And why is Wha…your fiance, being trooped around like a cheerleader?”

“Gina!” Robin’s cousin kissed her cheek, bringing her into a hug. “You're looking lovely, as always! Victor operated on Queen Merida. Her family are just...showing their gratitude!”

As Merida scanned all the new arrivals, she couldn’t help but notice Neal’s blonde ex-lover, a former Dark One, who at one time had ripped her heart from her chest, almost killing her before being stopped by her family. She’d heard a lot about the woman. A saviour, someone who had broken a curse to save her entire town and unite her with her parents. The woman who had produced a child by the man she was definitely falling in love with! The blonde appeared to be arm-in-arm with a tall, dark-blonde haired man. Rather handsome, she thought. Then she remembered what Neal had told her. So, getting up and walking gingerly towards the pair, she stopped at Emma. “Emma Swan, isn’t it? Henry’s mother? Do you remember me?”

Emma had tried avoiding her, remembering her first dark act. How she’d almost killed her. “Of course I do! Hello Merida. Though it's Emma Locksley now. I’m pleased they managed to save your life, as it was touch-and-go at one point. I came to the hospital to see Henry when you were
brought in. Not sure whether you’ve ever met my husband, Robin?”

Merida grinned self-consciously, like a teenage groupie meeting her idol for the first time. “No, I haven’t. But his name is well known in DunBroch! Robin of Locksley, the Prince of Thieves, defender of the poor! The Merry Man who protects the forest folk against the mighty? I’ve heard much about ye!” she gushed. *Emma could have sworn she was flirting with him, right in front of her! She held onto his arm just a little tighter.*

“I’m very honoured to meet you, Your Majesty!” he said, giving a polite bow. “I hope you like our little pub?”

*But she wasn’t done, ignoring his greeting. “I read books about ye! About stealin’ from the Wicked Witch an’ the Dark One an’ livin’ to tell the tale! How ye shot an arrow into an Ogre’s eye from a half-mile away! How ye men saved villages by the score. Is it true ye killed King George and the Black Fairy with yer sword?”* she gushed, Emma now feeling distinctly irritated.

“Well the men did most of the work. I couldn’t have done it alone.” He felt slightly embarrassed at the praise. “I’ll have to introduce you to everyone, though sadly Little John is now living in Arendelle…”

“Have ye ever been bested?” *Well, that was a segue!*

“Well, of course! Mulan over there is still the finest swordsman I’ve ever known. I’ve beaten her on a few occasions, but most of the time she reigns supreme. She’s a much valued and loved friend.”

“I know her! She says the same about you. But that’s with a sword. I’m talkin’ about a bow! Have ye ever been bested at the finest sport there is?” *Robin pondered what she was getting at and why she was asking? He hated boasting, but he hated lying even more.*

“Well…no, I guess not! But then again-” as he was again interrupted, he noticed Regina and Mulan, now joining them, had started listening in.

“I’d like to try. I’d like to try an’ beat the famous Robin Hood in an archery contest! Nothing serious, ye understand. We have nothin’ here to give as a prize, but, just for a bit of fun! If yer as guid as they say, ye’ll have no problem against little me!” She could see the reluctance on his face. “Or are ye worried about bein’ beaten by a wee gurly?” *His wives knew she was trying to goad him.*

“I have no problem being beaten by a better man or a woman, as Mulan here can testify!” As his warrior friend nodded in agreement, he saw Regina’s brows raised and sensed a message coming to him telepathically. From Emma:

‘*Do it, Rob! Take her on. She’s a cocky little bugger…’*

Then he felt his other wife’s words come through:

‘*But younger and practised. I’ve never seen you compete before. If you’re out of practice, I don’t want you feeling embarrassed in front of the family! Perhaps you should politely decline?’*

Emma looked crossly at her, annoyed with her discouraging words and lack of faith in their husband.

‘*Gina, what the hell? Don’t put him off! Robin, ignore her! If you do this, I’ll make sure you get a reward! Win or lose, you’ll still get a reward...from me!’*

Robin looked up at her, a sly smirk on his lips, knowing the games she was inclined to play.
'What kind of ‘reward’ do you have in mind, my love?'

‘Oh, I’ll make it something worth your while, I assure you! I’m thinking…your turn to be…Dom?’ She wiped her tongue over her lower lip, knowing he understood.

*Ooh, that stiffened his resolve - amongst other things!*

“Well, your majesty, it seems you have yourself a contest!”
Where the Hell did Ye Learn to shoot like That?

Chapter Summary

An archery competition between a queen and a former thief sets Robin up for a suitable reward...

Chapter Notes

Hello all! University's finally over and I can get on with finishing this story!

As I've said many times before, thank you so much to those of you who stuck with this, my first ever story. This particular chapter became a little geeky, so I had some help from someone who knows (more than I do, certainly) about archery.

The next chapter after this will be the last very-smutty one, before I then fast forward the years to reach the end of the story. Really hope you enjoy it!

Love Fi xx

Sherwood – Earlier the same day

For Regina, it had been the perfect morning with her family. Earlier, they’d arrived on the edge of the forest, taking the shorter, less hilly two-mile walk via the long leafy glade towards Sherwood Lake. Hope and Faith, still too young to walk any distance, happily sharing shoulder-rides with their parents and their big brother, Roland and Margot having charged on ahead, the redhead with her bow and quiver on her back.

The former queen was delighted when Henry latched her arm in his to walk together, chatting about everything and nothing. Every time he went back to Harvard, she missed him terribly, despite having more children than she’d ever imagined. And now, her baby was a man! A tall young man, who towered above her. But her sadness at the lost past was replaced by the comfort of his large arm as it looped around her shoulders, pulling her against him. “I’ve missed this, mum.” He whispered.

The sun came out to greet them as they eventually reached the lake, settling on a bank not far from the large timber frame of Earl of Locksley Inn. The forest pub which, despite being built with magic only two years ago, had now become a local landmark and centre of the community, as its creator had intended. Roland had already met and spoken to Alan-a-Dale, and a little fishing boat was now ready and waiting for them by the jetty. Roland had proudly announced to all was going to teach Emma how to fish, just how his dad and the men had taught him!

Having already agreed to have a light supper later, Regina used her magic to produce blankets, cushions and a small picnic on the bank, as she watched her family play. Robin and Regina knelt by the little girls, pulling out various toys as they stumbled happily on the grass. Henry challenged Honour to a sword fight, their parents watching happily, warning Henry to be careful with his little sister. As Emma pulled on the oars, rowing the little boat further out towards the middle of the lake,
Robin shouted out instructions on where the fish were most likely to be found, after which he yelled, “Roland, did you see where Margot went?”

“By the pool, dad! Auntie Maria’s over there!” the boy yelled back.

“Maria?” said the brunette to her husband. “I didn’t even know she was back.”

“Me neither. I thought she and Charlie were in Boston for a couple more weeks. I’ll pop up and see them. But it’s too nice to leave here just now…”

The next hour passed blissfully enough, punctuated by the occasional scream as Emma managed to land a couple of decent size fish, the first time holding one up proudly and yelling to her spouses, in delight, “Look! I’ve never caught a real fish before! Look!” she sounded like an excited pre-teen.

“Well done, my love! Looks like a Cisco you’ve got there!” Robin yelled back. “We’ll make a fisherman of you in no time!”

As he said it, Regina already spotted several people walking down from the lawns toward them. “Uh oh! Looks like word’s got around that we’re here!” As the visitors walked closer, seeing who they were, Roland started, with Emma protesting, rowing the little boat back to the bank. Although they hadn’t wanted to be disturbed, Regina grinned in delight when she saw just who was going to disturb their little family afternoon.

“Hooey! Is that my very aged relic of a brother, I see before me?” yelled Maria as she stepped closer to Robin, her brother standing up to finally envelop her in a tight hug. “Hello, baby sis of mine, I’ve missed you! Been raiding young Charlie’s bank account to buy new clothes then?”

Regina noticed how the young veterinary surgeon now appeared to be dressed much smarter than when she last saw her. Wearing her beautiful ash blonde hair down, her familiar muddy boots and jeans were now replaced by a sheer, clearly very expensive, dark blue silk summer dress, which hung on her lithe frame perfectly; and a light white straw hat. She looked like a supermodel stepping off the catwalk. “My, someone’s dressed to impress? You look wonderful, Maria!” she complimented, making the younger woman blush. Joining her was Maria’s young bronzed fiancé, accompanied by his sister, Rosie.

“Gina, flattery will get you everywhere!” she said, pulling the brunette into her arms for a hug. “You’re looking rather lovely yourself! The dress? Well, I’m having dinner with the future in-laws tonight, so I thought I’d better scrub up and get rid of the horse smell! Don’t want anyone mistaking me for my brother now, do I?” she sarked, getting a squeeze in the ribs from Robin, making her screech with laughter.

“Now, now, siblings, stop with the ritual abuse!” said Charlie, Merlin’s son, chuckling as he greeted them. He shook Robin’s hand before kissing Regina’s cheek and giving her a light hug. “Hello, you two. Lovely to see you both.” Regina flushed slightly. Though not her type, Charles Sage was not only a musically gifted, highly intelligent young man, but he was also ridiculously handsome. She remembered how even Emma had admitted how attractive she found him, as it seemed, did most of the town’s women! “We arrived first thing this morning. Maria and I are finalizing the wedding and wanted to come up and see papa, Rosie and Anna. Perhaps you could join us a little later? You are going to be family, after all…”

Regina invited them to sit and join them for their little picnic, as Roland and Emma joined them from the lake, each holding a brace of fish. The welcomes and hugs began all over again, until when she got to Rosalind, Emma hesitated. “Rosie! Look…once again, I’m sorry about…well, you know!”
“Emma, stop. It’s OK. It’s forgotten and we’re good! I told Killian all about it and, well, he’s fine too. I left him at the hospital. How’s your dad, by the way?”

“Dad? Sorry, I don’t understand. What about my dad?”

“Killian rushed him to the hospital first thing this morning! I think he was already in with the doctor when I saw him. Sorry…I just thought you knew?” Rosie realized she may have spoken too soon.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to surprise you. I’m sure everything’s OK. It was hours ago…”

Regina saw Emma’s worried look. ‘Rushed in?’ Emma and her father were far too alike, too stupidly stubborn to admit when something was wrong! Unlike Snow, who always wore her emotions on her sleeve, David was always a closed book to his own emotions, preferring to focus on others. Plus, over the years she realized what a daddy’s girl Emma had become. He’d always accepted, even encouraged, her relationship with their daughter as they clung together through their crises. “Emma, if you want to go, just go. Check he’s OK!”

“Er…yeah, I will! Sorry guys…it’s lovely to see you all but…if you’ll excuse me?” Before even waiting for a sympathetic nod from their guests, the blonde disapparated in front of them.

"You know it's irritating..." said Maria. "I'm the only one out of all of us who can't do that!"

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Within minutes of arriving at the hospital, Emma established that her father was not there, and disapparated once again, only to apparate outside her parent’s farmhouse. About to open the rarely locked front door, she hesitated as she heard raised voices inside:

“Of course, I’m angry! You should have told me!” bellowed her mother.

“I’ve already told you, several times! I needed to know what it was first!” her father yelled back.

“I could have helped! Jesus, David! Testicular cancer? You should have talked to me first - I have a right to know these things! If I thought I had anything like that, you would have been the first to know! Always! How could you not tell me? I’m your wife!”

Emma gasped, shocked at her words. Dad? Testicular cancer? She felt her legs starting to give out.

“I needed to know for myself first! Snow, if I died, you’d die! You know that. I needed the facts. Anyway, I go in for the operation over the weekend…”

“Don’t you think I-” but she stopped, when they heard a noise, like a sob, by the front door. It couldn’t be Neal, as he was playing at Pip’s house! She walked over and opened it, to find Emma hunched on the ground. “Emma! What on earth are you doing down there? I thought you were-” then she noticed her daughter’s red, teary eyes. “Darling, what’s wrong?”

As she looked inside the room, Emma saw her father sitting on the couch, slowly starting to get up, with difficulty. “Someone told me dad was rushed into hospital this morning!” she got up too, nervously walking in. “So, I just came over from Sherwood and…and I just heard what you said. Dad…is it true?” her last words almost whispered out.

He stood slowly and awkwardly, the dull ache in his groin still there, the drugs not yet taking effect. “Well, I’m not sure what you heard but…yes, I go into hospital Saturday morning, the earliest they can fit me in…”

“Oh dad…dad! I’m so sorry…” the blonde, tears now flowing, pushed forward into her father’s
arms, though he flinched, stooping with all the pain. However, her weeping made him straighten, hissing in discomfort. Bringing his arms around her and cupping the back of her head, he held her close.

“Hey, hey! Emma, it’s all right! It’s going to be OK! Whale says I’ll be out the same day…”

“But, but dad, it’s serious!” she continued sobbing. “I don’t wanna lose you!”

“Emma, what do you think you heard us say?” asked Snow, realizing she may have misheard.

“You said cancer. That means chemotherapy, and it’s horrible! I had a friend once, who, who…” she could hardly finish the sentence.

“Emma, listen carefully. I DON’T have cancer! I thought I had, but it seems I have something else instead! It’s not terminal, and it can be treated with drugs and painkillers, which I’ve just started taking…”

“So…why are you going into hospital?”

“It seems some of the pain is due to a hernia. It’s like a little hole in my stomach wall and my intestines are trying to push their way out. He’s going to repair it. It’s a small operation, but needs to be done quickly…”

“Hernia? So…no cancer? Then why was mum shouting at you?” she calmed, as her dad kissed her forehead.

“Because he didn’t tell me, Emma! I was annoyed with him for keeping it from me, as usual. I knew something was wrong, but he still said it was nothing, till he came home this afternoon. I might have overreacted…” as she spoke, David pulled her into their hug with his free arm, wrapping the three of them together. “He keeps things bottled up, like someone else I know! I’m sorry.” Emma nodded slightly, knowing she was too much like her father. She stayed resting her head against his broad chest, enjoying the increasingly rare family cuddle.

“Well, if everything’s OK, I’d best get back to Gina and Rob. I came straight over here from the Earl, when Killian’s wife told me she’d seen you both in the hospital. Sorry, I overreacted too. Listen dad, if mum needs to take care of Neal, I’ll come and take you to the hospital! Please? I’d like to stay there while you’re under…if that’s OK?

He was so tempted to tell her not to trouble herself, as usual, but moments like this, with both his precious girls, were rare. “I’d like that…”

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Emma returned to her family in Sherwood, telling them all about David, before they all finally trooped into the Earl of Locksley.

After a slightly embarrassing meeting with Merida, the fiercely competitive young queen had gone on to challenge Robin to an archery competition, to which, after an inducement by Emma, he’d finally agreed to. As two of the men trooped off to set up various targets outside, a familiar figure came up beside her. “Em? How you doing?” said Neal, watching the young queen talking to her family.

“Neal? Surprised to find you’re not still stuck next to your girlfriend! I heard you’ve hardly left her side since you got back?” The moment she said it, Emma regretted her words. God, I sound like a dumped ex! And unfortunately for her, Henry’s father always called her out on her shit.
“Where did that come from? Jeez, I only came to talk to you about Henry! Still, if you can’t be civil…” he started walking away.

“I’m…I’m sorry! I just have a few things on my mind. Plus, dad’s not well, so just ignore me. What about Henry?”

“I’m going back with him to Boston first thing Monday morning. He’s going to drop me where I’m gonna be buying a trike. I’m selling the flat, and looking for something bigger, so Henry and the family can use it too when they’re in town.”

“Good. That flat’s in one of the dodgiest parts of the city! I’d feel better knowing he was staying somewhere safe. But bigger? Are you thinking of moving there permanently? Or moving someone else in with you?” she looked over to Merida.

“Well, she needs to be in DunBroch soon. But who knows? Besides, the family’s getting bigger, after all. My papa could use it sometimes…”

“I have heard things. I gather Ariel’s expecting?”

“I forgot how quickly news travels around here! Yeah, it’s true. I’m going to be getting a little sister. And Storybrooke’s going to be getting its third poly marriage!”

“She’s marrying Gold and Belle? Hell, I didn’t see that one coming!”

“Me neither. But they all seem to be in love, Em! I thought you’d understand, being in your position! And, besides, he ain’t the Dark One anymore and he ain’t changing back, even if he wanted to. He’s a completely different person now.”

“I saw. How he dresses, acts, hell, he’s even been smiling these days! It’s spooky! Anyway, never mind that. Why is your new girlfriend acting weird around Robin? Where’s all this ‘besting him’ shit coming from?”

“Oh that! Merida ridiculously competitive! Mulan was the one who taught her how to fight, and wield a sword. It annoys her that she was never able to beat her when they trained. Mulan told her that she experienced the same problem when Robin taught her archery. That he always won. She just wants to prove something to herself. That she can take on anybody. She hates showing weakness, or being second best. Like someone else I knew…”

“I don’t go around trying to humiliate someone in front of his own family, Neal!”

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Half an hour later, a fair number had assembled on the edge of the forest close to the inn, to witness the little competition. Four targets were set, at different distances from the crowd, ranging from the nearest, 100 yards away, all the way back to the furthest, a smaller thatch disk, set up a tree at almost 500 yards away. How the hell would anyone even be able to get an arrow that far, let alone hit anything? thought Emma.

Alan-a-Dale, ever the stage performer, stood before them to face the crowd.

“Your majesties, your royal highnesses, my lords, ladies and gentlemen! Her Majesty, Queen Merida of DunBroch, has challenged our illustrious leader, Lord Robin of Sherwood, to a contest of archers. Five targets have been set up, as you can see. The closest arrow to the centre will win that target. Three attempts are allowed for each target and the most target wins will be declared the winner! Contestants, are you both ready?” Robin and Merida nodded, before he turned to the queen. “Ladies
Merida walked to the chalk line, wholly focused on the first target. Pulling an arrow from the quiver, it took a matter of moments for her to notch the arrow, focus, pull on her bow and confidently release. A light swish of the air as it covered the 100 yards distance and its tip ploughed comfortably into the yellow centre of the thatched board.

“Bullseye - ten points!” yelled Alan a Dale, as Merida, not looking behind her, grinned in quiet satisfaction. The first target was always the shortest, the easiest and she never doubted the arrow’s flight. However, within seconds a second arrow plunged into the board, a few inches to the left of the first, in the red zone. That made her smile even more. “Bad luck, Hood!” as she turned to face him “I’m surprised you weren’t a-” she stopped, realizing he was still holding his bow, and more importantly, an arrow.

“Begging your pardon, my lady, but I have yet to take my shot!” said the archer, looking back to who had fired the second arrow. “Margot! What on earth are you doing?”

His almost eight-year-old redhead, at the edge of the crowd, with the bow still in her hand and looking sheepish, started to blush. “Sorry daddy! I couldn’t help it! That’s the same target I use with Will!” That made a good deal of the crowd roar with laughter at her mischief. “Sorry daddy!”

A tall woman stepped beside her, draping an arm around her shoulder. “Never ye mind, hinny! That were a fine shot for one so young!” said Eleanor, smiling down. “Now who would be teachin’ ye so early?” The moment the words left her mouth, they heard a slight swishing noise, looking over to see a third arrow had hit the target, bang dead centre, splitting Merida’s arrow in half!

“Daddy taught me!” she said, proudly, earning a smirk and a wink from Regina, standing nearby.

As the Dowager Queen and the audience chuckled, Merida had a wry look on her face. *It was normally her that split other peoples’ arrows, not the other way around. She had a fight on her hands!*

“Bullseye – ten points!” yelled Will.

They moved towards the second target, at twice the distance. A little more concentration required. “Ladies and gentlemen, could we have a little hush now please!” Alan assumed a slightly more formal tone, seeing some of the audience getting closer to the competitors. He’d seen cheating and badgering many times during past events. “I also have to warn you all, that any attempts to cough, shout or blatantly disrupt this competition, or the players, will be dealt with harshly, and the offender removed!” he said, theatrically. “The competitor so affected will be required to retake their shot! Thank you!” he puffed, earning an ‘ooh!’ from some of the crowd, and a proud wink from his husband, Malcolm, who stood close by.

Though Robin and Merida took a little longer to release their shots, the second targets were a repeat of the first, Robin’s arrow burrowing itself into the back of Merida’s, both dead centre. “Ye know Robin, I’ve only a limited number of arrows with me! Never havin’ expected to be here, I’d like to save a few from bein’ turned to matchwood, if ye’d be so kind! You can go first next!”

“As you wish, your majesty!” he merely gave her a small smile. As she looked at him more closely, she noticed how relaxed he seemed. Like he wasn’t concerned whether he won or lost. *To someone like Merida, who’d had to prove herself to others all her life, it was incomprehensible!*

“An’ call me Merida, please! Ye dinna seem too bothered if ye win. Are ye no concerned about yer reputation? Or are ye just good at fakin’ it?”
“Well…there’s no life at stake, is there? No monsters to kill. I’m very different then, I assure you…”

“Hmm. Well...Ye got a bonny daughter there. A fine archer too, given her age!”

“I have,” he looked back at her, proudly. “That’s my Margot. She’s wonderful, and I’ve got three more ‘bonny’ daughters at home. But she’s my little archer! My Roland used to love it, but he’s a teenager and has discovered girls. A far more important interest right now! Still, I know Margot hero-worships you. She’s been watching a film about you, called ‘Brave’.”

“Neal told me last night what ‘films’ are, but one about me?”

“You’ve a lot to experience in this land. I hope you have some time to stay with us?”

As they chatted, the next target was set at 300 yards from the pair of them. Nine hundred feet! To everyone else it seemed almost impossible to reach that far, let alone hit something! While Regina had used her magic to collect her binoculars from home, Emma had already pulled her phone out to google something, showing the results to her wife. 300 yards was more than three times the longest distance used in Olympic competitions! This was stupid!

“This might take all three arrows,” Robin announced, lining up his arrow. He appeared to be pointing into the distant sky when he released it. However, as it flew smoothly into the distance, it appeared to be going too high, before gravity pulled it gently back down, landing smack in the centre of the roundel.

A member of the Merry Men appeared from the nearby trees, to check the target, before waving his hands, signaling Alan to confirm the result, before Will again yelled, “Bullseye – ten points!”

“Hmm, bit lucky that! I thought the wind might catch it,” said Robin, stepping back.

Merida took her position. Unknown to anyone else, this distance was about the maximum she had fired an arrow previously. Taking her time, she finally released her bow, watching her arrow soar away, curl down, before embedding itself into the yellow eye, side-by-side with Robin’s.

“Bullseye – ten points!” said Will, as the crowd began to gasp, a round of applause breaking out for the skilled pair.

“Excellent shot, Merida!” Robin encouraged. “Whoever taught you, taught you well…”

“My fatha! Everyone else thought I should be lookin’ for a husband and learnin’ gurly things! But no him! He thought his princess should be able to fight a bear an’ lead an army. No waste time at home…”

“My first wife, Marian, was taught much the same. She was better with a sword than me. I still miss her…”

“I read about her in the fables. Was she Margot’s mother?”

“No, we only had my boy Roland, before she died. Margot’s mother is…well, it doesn’t matter now.”

“I heard ye died? That Zeus sent you back? And now ye’ve two wives?”

As they talked animatedly, all the competitive element seemed to disappear from Merida, as she relaxed, enjoying the conversation. As they prepared for the third target, Regina watched how the pair in front of them seemed to be not only engaged in conversation, but laughing, enjoying their
Merida went first, her arrow taking a good five seconds to reach its target. Unfortunately, it missed, wide by several feet, driving itself into the long grass to the left. She hissed with annoyance, preparing for a second shot. Robin stepped closer. “Milady, if I may be so bold? I think your shot was picked up by a slight breeze coming from that glade to the right? Perhaps aiming a little more to the right and a couple degrees up might compensate?”

If anyone, other than her father, had ever given her instructions on how to shoot an arrow, Merida would have torn them off a strip pretty sharpish! But this man, this soft-spoken, family man seemed to be genuinely wanting to help her. To help her beat him!

So not responding, she took aim again, making the little adjustments he suggested. Some seconds later, the arrow embedded itself into the distant roundel, in the red second zone, barely visible from the audience. Some moments and distant signaling later, Will yelled “Red zone – seven points!”

Merida’s last arrow turned out to be a slight improvement. Not a bullseye, but nearer to the centre. In truth, she was rather proud of the achievement, having never covered such a distance successfully before. She looked back at her mother, who smiled encouragingly as she linked arms with Neal’s boy, Henry. On the other side of the woman, Neal himself was mouthing something to her. Well done? Possibly, but her moment admiring the man who’d brought something new to her life was interrupted by another yell.

“Bullseye – ten points!” yelled Will, now bringing a loud applause from the crowd. Robin quietly shrugged, raising a hand to thank them.

“Ye’ve gone ahead! Well done…” She muttered. Merida HATED losing even one round!

“Thank you, milady. But there’s still time for you to draw ahead.” He encouraged, as they prepared to fire at the fifth and last roundel, a distance of some five hundred yards. Most of the audience could barely see it, let alone hit it! Merida had never even fired an arrow that far!

Now recognizing she was standing beside the best archer she had ever witnessed, Merida’s cockiness had gone, replaced with a sneaking admiration for the humble, bearded man. “Robin, I’d like it if you went first, please?” He nodded, stepping up to the shooting area. Maybe I can learn something?

Unlike the previous targets, this time, as he prepared to fire, Robin stood ramrod straight, looking at the skyline. His head seemed to weave slightly to left and right at he seemed to be studying the skyline for a good half a minute, before reaching behind for an arrow. One that looked different to the others. Longer. Thicker. This time he changed his stance, dropping onto his right knee and bending his left, turning his body to the side. Merida watched, fascinated. It was a good minute gone, before the first arrow released, and Robin didn’t aim it anywhere near the target, but seemingly into the sky. The audience watched, transfixed, as it curved gently upwards, levelling, curving to the right and the wind gently pulling it back as it homed in on the target. The flight took a good eight seconds. Merida’s eagle-eyesight saw what almost all the others couldn’t see, the arrow finally reaching and ploughing into the target. To Robin’s right, Tuck, holding a pair of binoculars, yelled “HIT!” The resulting gasp, cheer and applause erupting from the audience.

Emma whispered in her wife’s ear, “How the bloody hell did he do that? It’s miles away!”

Regina shook her head. “I have no idea,” as the crowd whooped.

Even Merida clapped, astonished. “I canna believe it! No way did ye hit it from here! How the
Robin merely smiled back as finally Will announced the result “Blue Zone – five points!”

He used his final two arrows to see if he could improve on it, and the result of his final shot was announced:

“Red zone – seven points!”

As Merida took her place, all her bluster now gone, she quietly admitted. “There’s no bloody way I’m gonna hit that! I’ve never even shot an arrow that far!”

Robin stepped in front of her, speaking in a low voice so they couldn’t be overheard. “Don’t give up. Would you allow me to help you with a bit of advice? After all, as you acknowledged, I don’t mind if I lose!”

Further back, the audience looked on at the pair of them, as Robin seemed to be talking through something with her. The queen seemed to be kneeling in front of him, and he pointed into the sky, making curving movements with his arms. Finally, he crouched down, onto his knees, immediately behind her, pressing himself into her back, making two of Merida’s brothers gasp, Neal frowned and Robin’s wives shared a look as his arms came around to take the queen’s bow in his left. It definitely looked a little…*intimate*.

“What on earth’s he doing?” asked Regina, with Emma looking on, suspiciously.

“Teaching her!” said Mulan, standing close by. “He’s teaching her how to shoot long-distance. It’s completely different, as you need to use a much heavier arrow. Stance is completely different, and he’s showing her how to judge wind speed and direction; how to stabilise before you release. It’s very difficult!”

“I’m sure he can do it without cuddling her!” said the still uncomfortable brunette.

“Relax, Gina. He’s not looking for a third wife!” said Emma, putting an arm around her back.

A minute later, her arrow flew its long journey. A miss, but a close miss. Robin gave her more advice, again pointing at the sky, before she stabilised and fired again. Another miss. But the third and final arrow finally found its mark! Merida whooped with excitement, standing up to hug him.

Will gave the final result “Blue zone – five points! Robin wins!” The crowd roared.

“I dinna care no more! I hit the fuckin’ thing!” she said, delighted.

“You certainly did and well done! If that was your first time on that sort of distance, you did extraordinarily well! I’m sure if you’d had practice, you may well have beaten me!” he encouraged, as his wives and children came forward to join them, Regina looping her arm possessively through her husband’s.

Neal appeared at Merida’s side, knowing how much she hated the idea of losing anything. “You OK, Mer?”

“Aye. Aye, I am. I was bested. But like Mulan, I was bested by the best, so I can learn!” she said, looking at the former outlaw, who quietly nodded. “Where on earth did ye learn to shoot so far? *Why* would you need to do that?”

He lifted Regina’s hand, kissing it. “Breaking into castles. If they had a large royal guard, it caused a
distraction, sending them the wrong way. Takes a bit of practice, that’s all…”

“Yeah, I remember you also used that way to shaft that Duke of Bisconne, didn’t you? The one who- ” Will stopped himself, regretting he might have opened up old memories, looking to gauge Robin’s reaction.

“The one who murdered my mother and father? Yes, it’s true…”

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Afternoon turned to evening, and a party atmosphere developed outside and inside the inn, celebrating the DunBroch queen’s safe delivery from certain death. Most of Storybrooke seemed to be there, as the Lucas family arrived, followed by the Briars and, most surprisingly for Emma, the Golds. Neal had already tipped her off about Ariel, so she wasted no time heading straight for the mermaid, who walked arm-in-arm with Belle, Rumple having gone to the bar to fetch drinks.

“Hi, you two - I hear congratulations are in order?” she nodded towards Neal, as the source. “Don’t worry, I won’t say anything if you don’t want me to?”

“No…it’s fine,” said Belle. “Rumple’s about to make an announcement anyway, and we’ve nothing to hide. Yes, I’m in love with our new fiancée, and I’m happy!” she turned to give Ariel a small, chaste kiss on the cheek.

“Good for you,” she looked over to Regina and Robin, now deep in conversation with the Sage family. “Having found love in the arms of two people, I can thoroughly recommend it! What with the six of us, Phil, Rory and Mulan, we’ve almost got a soccer team. Or football, as Roland keeps reminding me!” she looked down at Ariel’s very tiny bump. “Your little one won’t be short of new friends at school, either. You know Ruby, Aurora and even my mum are expecting too?”

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And so, a little while later, Rumple, with Belle and Ariel standing on either side, proudly announced they were to be wed in two weeks time, at a little ceremony in the harbor (Ariel quietly hoping her parents would overcome their pride, to attend), and that a larger celebration would be held at the Earl of Locksley in the evening to which all well-wishers were invited, earning a large cheer from the crowd around the bar.

More cheers rang out later, when Ruby told everyone publicly that the rumours were true, and that she and Dorothy were expecting their second child in some six months’ time. Mulan, looking over to her husband as he nodded, joining her from the bar, followed her by confirming that their beautiful wife was also pregnant. Each new announcement earning more cheers and toasts from the others.

Most of the DunBroch party seems happy too, apart from Hamish and Harris, sitting quietly in a corner of the bar, nursing their pints, occasionally earning an angry glare from their mother. The Dowager Queen looked back as a tall, broad-chested man kissed Mulan on the cheek, linking arms before stepping up to her. “Your majesty,” he gave a slight bow. “I’m Philip, Mulan’s husband,” Mulan was quietly delighted when the man who insulted her in the station looked up, nervously. Shit, what if she told what I said? thought Duncan. “I’m sorry I wasn’t here to welcome you in person but…welcome to our little realm, anyway! I hear Merida’s almost fully recovered?”

She stood, offering her hand, which Philip took, bowing to press the tip of his nose against it. “Aah, it’s nice ta see the auld courtesies, but there’s nae need. Just call me Eleanor. Ye’re Prince Philip, right? I met yer parents once. Fine people, Agatha an’ John! Shame they’re no longer wi’ us. Mulan tells me ye’re the mayor?”
“I am. And she told me you visited our sheriff’s office?” he looked down at the sullen men, frowning.

“I did. I’m sorry some of ma’ boys have bigger beer bellies than brains! I hope the young deputy’s eye is feelin’ a little better?”

Philip looked back at her, confused, having only been told about the men being arrested for drunkenness. *She’s said nothing about someone being hit? “Sorry – the deputy’s eye?”*

Mulan squeezed his arm. “All dealt with, Phil! Don’t go all mayor-y on us now! Julie just got an elbow in the eye, by accident.” *She wasn’t going to tell him what one of the men had called her later, knowing he’d probably react badly. She gave Eleanor a look, advising her to just go with it.*

“She’s said nothing about someone being hit?”

“Yer wife here did a first-class job o’ getting them silly sods back in line! Ye know she once taught ma Merida how tae use a sword?”

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As the evening drew to a close and everyone went back to their homes, after paying the babysitters, Robin walked back into their suite at the inn, yawning loudly. He could hear his wives next door in the en-suite bathroom. *Why do they always seem to get washed and dressed for bed together? he pondered. Nonetheless, the results were usually more than worth it. He tapped gently at the door.*

“Aren’t you decent?”

“If we were ’decent’ you wouldn’t have married us!” sarked Emma from inside. “Come in…”

He stepped in to see the familiar site of Emma and Regina, standing side-by-side at the vanity basins in front of the mirror, in just their bras and panties, as they washed and cleansed their faces. It was a sight that always brought a smile to his face. “You OK?” asked Regina.

“I was just going to take a quick shower; anyone fancy joining me?”

“I thought you’d want to have a shower…after?” said Emma.

“After, milady?”

“After your…reward…for winning the archery contest!” the blonde gave him a devilish, sultry look, that she knew *always* had an effect on him. “But…I guess if you’re too tired?” she pouted, feigning injured pride.

“You know what…it seems I don’t feel tired anymore! But I’m still sweaty from the evening, so give me a couple of minutes to freshen up and I’ll…happily accept my prize?”

“You, Mr. Locksley, are a complete and utter slut!” said Regina, tittering as he yelled in shock at the first burst of cold from the shower head. She grinned, knowing it was going to be a long night!

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Perfect Night for a Threesome

Chapter Summary

With the children settled, it's an early night for Emma, Robin and Regina in the Sherwood inn. In Storybrooke, Neal and his queen also retire early. However in town, Merlin and his family have something to celebrate...

Chapter Notes

OK, so this is going to be the last 'smutty' chapter of the story, as I'm going to be fast forwarding a few years after this. I hope I haven't gone too far with it! I deleted two versions already, cut bits and added more, as they went way too pornographic after I read them through. If I still went to far with this version and anyone thinks it's offensive, please let me know and perhaps I'll make time to re-edit it again.

Again, try not to be nasty, but constructive comments and criticism are always welcome.

I find some chapters so hard to write. Thanks for sticking with me.

Love Fi xx

Chapter 83

After a brief shower, Robin dried, brushed his teeth and, wearing just his silk dressing gown and boxers, stepped back into their bedroom. Usually he'd expect to see his beloveds already in bed, probably reading. However, this time, Regina was sitting on the edge of the bed, kicking her legs, looking straight at him with a hint of lust in her smile. Emma was standing by the dressing table, pouring a bottle of champagne into three glasses.

“Late night champagne? Just for winning a little archery contest?” he asked.

“No. I was just in the mood,” she replied, turning to hand them each a glass. “Do we need a reason?”

“I guess not. I must say, you both look more beautiful than ever, tonight. Gina, purple’s definitely my favourite colour on you,” they chinked glasses as he leaned over, pecking her lips, before looking across at his blonde wife, who was wearing a particularly short robe. “Cheers! And as for you, Emma, those legs are sinful…” he gave her an interested look.

“And they only open for you two,” Emma whispered, Regina rolling her eyes at the unnecessarily smutty response. “Still, I did think Merida deserved her comeuppance! She was being quite arrogant with you to begin with…”

“Oh, she’s still young. She has the weight of expectation on her back, and I think she feels she always has to prove herself,” he winked at the brunette. “I like her. She’s feisty and stroppy, like
some other people I could mention!” he winked at the brunette.

“I saw how you liked her, Locksley!” said Regina, glaring. “The feeling seemed to be mutual. Bit young for you, don’t you think?”

“Don’t be silly. First, you know I only have eyes for you two. Second, she seems to very much have eyes for Baelfire. They seem very close…”

“Hmm,” grunted Emma, replenishing the glasses. “I don’t want to think about them. Only us…”

“Certainly. Well, a certain stunning, leggy blonde did promise me…a reward?”

“ Seems I did. I never break a promise so, what would you have us do… ‘Oh Masterful One?’” she growled in her best sarcastic slave voice.

In almost two years since Emma and Regina had moved Robin into their home, and into their bed, the trio had gone on to experiment in all areas of lovemaking together. They’d looked at all manner of both erotic and frankly, pornographic online sites. Most of which, they all agreed, were much too distasteful or nasty, turning what should be a beautiful act, into something rather sordid. But some sites gave them ideas, and they experimented enthusiastically, discovering what they liked, and just as importantly, what they didn’t like!

Of the three, Regina was the one most interested in BDSM, particularly the clothing, no doubt a throwback to her Evil Queen past. Though she disliked anything to do with sadism; however, bondage was her own little fetish. Emma proved to be the most sexually ‘aggressive’ of them all, as Robin was always aware of his own physical strength being misused in the heat of the moment. Emma was the biter, the scratcher, and Regina had regularly had to use her magic to remove some of the scars from Robin’s back and chest after a particularly vigorous lovemaking session. And Robin? He was definitely the most voyeuristic, being more than happy to watch his lovers engage with each other before he joined in. The women regularly made fun of him for it, accusing him of just wanting them to tire each other out, before he joined the fray.

“We could take turns?” suggested Regina. “Emma and I can look after each other, while you sit over there and watch, until you can’t stand it anymore. You mustn’t touch yourself, mind! Then you two have fun, and I’ll watch. Then Emma. The winner could be the one who manages NOT to join in. I’m pretty sure you’ll lose, Locksley!”

“He’ll definitely lose! We both know his little kinks, don’t we?” Emma added, “and I certainly know yours!”

“So sure of yourself, Sheriff?” Robin’s voice a little hoarse with excitement.

“Oh, Em and I both know pretty well what you like, thief!” insisted Regina, grinning. “So, go sit down over there!”

Robin raised his hands in surrender, placing a strong locking and soundproofing spell over their room, before replenishing their glasses. He had no idea what they were thinking, but it was bound to be good!

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The Gold Mansion

“Come in!” called Merida, following the knock on the door of the guest room.
“Hi,” said Neal, carrying a small tray and trying to keep his voice down. “I brought you a little nightcap. Hot chocolate. To help you sleep.” He placed down two cups, before looking back up at her. “Bloody hell Merida, you look…great!” The queen wore a pink coral chemise, no bra underneath, and matching panties under an open white robe, strikingly different to her usual plain nightie. Her long, bright red hair cascaded down over her shoulders.

“Thanks,” she blushed, seeing his look. “Ariel lent me somethin’ for the night! I’ve never worn anythin’ like this before. She an’ Belle have got some lovely things. Belle even offered to straighten ma’ hair like Ariel’s…”

“You should wear that colour more often! I’m pleased you decided to stay here, instead of the pub.”

“Ach. Ma brothers would probably just get bladdered anyway! I’m not sure what’s goin’ on wi’ them? Hamish and Harris were actin’ really weird, and I think they’ve upset mamma somehow. Then mamma was makin’ cow eyes at that auld fella by the bar. I didnae wanna see all that!”

He chuckled. “Geppetto? He’s the town carpenter. Don’t worry, he’s a nice guy…”

“Hmm,” she didn’t sound convinced. “Besides, I wanted to spend a bit more time with a certain former dead thief…” she winked.

“I thought you’d had quite enough of Robin Hood already?”

That earned him a slap on the arm, followed up “ Shut up! Ye know exactly what I—” but her words stopped the moment he latched his lips on to hers. “Hmmm…” she groaned, opening her mouth further as his arms came around her. When they separated to draw breath, she groaned, putting a flat hand against his chest. “Neal, we canna! Not here! Ye fatha’s next door!”

“Yup. With his wife and girlfriend, and a soundproofing spell on their room. Which reminds me…” he waved a hand towards the door, which made a clunking noise.

“What was that? What did ye just do?”

“I put a lock and soundproofing spell on the room. You can come in and out if you want, but no one else can get in till I take it off. You can scream my name as much as you want, because nobody will hear you!”

“Scream yer name? Awfy confident of yerself there, Mr. Cassidy!”

“Well,” a wash of magic flew over him and his clothes disappeared, leaving him standing in just a pair of cotton boxers and a rather impressive bulge underneath. “I aim to please. Particularly when it comes to giving service to the queen!” She gasped at the transformation, her eyes surveying his bare chest, lightly muscled arms and what was in his shorts.

“Nice. Well I do have a particular itch that may need scratchin’!” Her robe dropped to the floor, as she pulled the sheets back. “Ye best get in!”

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**Back at the Earl**

Any doubts the two of them were deliberately trying to make him as uncomfortable as possible as he sat watching them, were dispelled by the blatant activities in front of him. Getting onto their knees, they shared a light giggle before the two women, both just in sheer silk, embraced, hip to hip and breast to breast, tilting their heads to capture each other’s lips in a searing kiss, moaning, as their right
hands drove down between thighs. *Just that was enough for Robin’s loins to stir, as he marveled at the beautiful sight. His loves, loving one other.*

“You like that?” said Emma, drawing breath. *It took a moment for him to realize she was talking to him, not Regina.*

“Every time,” he groaned. “Someday I’m going to draw the two of you, just doing that. Just kissing, looking into each other’s eyes, holding each other.”

“You did that already. Something else for your ‘private’ album?” said Regina, never taking her eyes off the green pair in front of her. “But posing like this for too long would be rather…painful.”

“Not if I took a couple of photos and drew from the best one. Deleting them after, of course…”

“Well don’t waste time then, Annie Liebovitz. Get your phone!” said Emma, seizing the brunette’s lips again.

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A few minutes later, Robin couldn’t believe his eyes. As he tried to avoid touching his now painfully engorged cock to relieve himself, his wives raised their game. After witnessing Emma going down on her Queen, she now rose, to forcefully grasp the brunette’s hips, lifting her right leg up and over her own shoulder, sliding her own left leg under and her right across the brunette’s stomach, she magicked several pillows under that perfect ass, before raising Regina’s entire lower half into the air. Athletically crouching and raising herself onto her knee before squatting, she lined up their cores before slamming her vagina hard against Regina’s, causing her to make an ‘oomph’ sound. She followed by grinding their two centres hard against each other, gripping onto Regina’s calf for support.

“Hold on!” groaned the brunette, stopping to insert her hands between them, parting Emma’s labia and her own, before whispering something he didn’t catch. Whatever she’d done, it seemed to make a difference, as Emma’s next push down made Regina croak, “Yes! Yes, that’s it! Right there! Now slow…slow…you move, and I…unngghh!” Robin remembered what she’s once said once about them doing this. That it felt great, but she couldn’t finish that way. Well it damn well looked like she was going for it this time, judging by the noises!

*In their frenzied state, they were both completely oblivious to his phone, now floating magically in mid-air a few feet from them, as it took several snaps. Fortunately, he’d remembered to set the camera sound to ‘off’ previously. Robin knew he’d have to make doubly-sure he destroyed the images immediately after he’d made sketches from them. They’d kill him if they fell into someone else’s hands!*


“YEEEEESSSSS!” growled Regina, as her thighs now gave out, causing Emma to roll off, collapsing sideways onto her back, giggling. “That felt lovely, but I couldn’t have held that much longer. I was starting to get cramp! That was for your benefit, thief!”

The two perspiring women lay still, catching their breath, Emma looking over to Robin, watching them. Seeing the state he was in, she started chuckling again. “Enjoy the show, you old perv? And she said no touching yourself!”

“Of course I enjoyed it, missy, and I’m not the only ‘perv’ around here! If you saw what I just saw, you wouldn’t be saying that. That was stupidly hot, but unfortunately, because of you two, I’m now
in rather a lot of discomfort myself. You want to carry on, or have a rest?” asked Robin, desperately hoping it wasn’t the latter. If neither of them wanted to continue, he was definitely going to go relieve himself in the bathroom! He stood, walking across to deliver short kisses to both of them. Emma more than impressed by the fine package he was now sporting!

“You two,” said Regina, massaging her right thigh. “After that, I need to get my blood supply back!”

“Well in that case, Mr. Locksley, I’m game. But nothing too acrobatic this time…”

“I could just say you just lie back Em, and I’ll do the work! But that sounds rather creepy!”

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Frankie’s Restaurant, Storybrooke

After meeting up in Sherwood, the entire Sage family had taken over a corner of Storybrooke’s only decent restaurant for the evening. Merlin’s eldest daughter Celia had returned, having flown in from the UK for two weeks. Rosie and Killian sat opposite her father, with Annabelle and her brother Charlie either side of them, Charlie holding his fiancé’s hand, Maria having just confirmed the wedding dates. Either side of Merlin sat his special guests, Maleficent and her daughter, Lilith. Their daughter. It had been a fun, lively evening which was now drawing to its close. Merlin turned to his side, dropping a kiss on Maleficent’s cheek before standing.

“Well, I need to say a few words. First, it’s been an absolute joy for me, to have ALL my family together, the first time since the Arendelle wedding!” He stopped to stroke Lily’s shoulder. “That was the first time I had the chance to meet the daughter I never knew I had, your wonderful sister here…” Lily blushed, as her half-brother and sisters cheered, nodding in agreement. “And Celia, it’s lovely to have you back! Now, I asked for us all to meet up for a number of reasons. Last time, we introduced Lily and Mal to the family. Now, I need to formally welcome Maria! This bright, beautiful young lady has stolen my boy’s heart and rightly so! Charlie, your fiancée’s rather wonderful, but it seems with her you’re punching well above your weight!”

That brought agreeing chuckles from his sisters, a blush from Maria Locksley, and a resigned “true!” from Charlie, taking his ribbing in good heart. “Maria, welcome to our little family! You’ve made my boy do something I’d never imagined. Namely, settle down in one place! But Charlie, you need to know this girl is treasured by her brother and many people here, so don’t think about upsetting her or taking her too far away!”

Annabelle nodded, blowing Maria a kiss. “Damn right! She’s my best mate!”

“However, there’s also another reason I asked you all here! As you’re all aware, Maleficent and I knew each other long before your mother was even born. You all know how I mourned my Catherine for so long. Well, after Zeus allowed me once again, one of my split-selves met with her last week. Your mother wanted me to tell you just how amazingly proud she is of you all! I also told her something I was intending to do, and she gave me her blessing.” His family looked at each other, mystified.

“Children, when I last knew Mal, she and I were in dragon form, under different names. Unfortunately, our romance was cut short due to a crisis in Camelot. Mal had also been forced to leave her homeland and we were forever split, before either of us even realized she was pregnant. That beautiful child is finally united with us, the evidence of our love!” Lily was blushing furiously now, Celia’s hand resting on hers in support. “That love has been rekindled these last months, and after gaining your mother’s blessing, I asked Mal if she would give do me the great honour of marrying me. Thankfully, she said yes!”
Maleficent had been gripping the tablecloth anxiously, worrying how they’d react. What if they hate me? What if they already know about my past? Merlin’s son’s eyes drove straight on to her own, a serious look on his face before gradually turning into a beaming smile as he stood, walking around the table to stand close to her, his hands inviting her to stand.

“That’s wonderful! Congratulations, Mal! I can’t wait!” His arms engulfed her in a hug, Maleficent almost shaking with relief. By now his sisters had also joined him, taking it in turns to hug the former Mistress of All Evil, as a tear slipped down her cheek. Looking over Anna’s shoulder, she saw Merlin had taken Lily into his arms, giving her a fatherly hug, her daughter grinning back at her mother.

The last of the group to hug her was Killian Jones. “And congratulations from me too, Maleficent! I truly wish you both well. Speaking as a former villain myself, you know, you’ve hit the jackpot here, right? Like me, you’re marrying into a rather remarkable little family. I never honestly believed I’d have something like this, and it’s changed me beyond measure. With them, I’m sure you, and your Lilith, will definitely get your happy endings!”

"Thank you, Killian. And thank you for overlooking my attempts to kill you in the past, even if you did break into my castle! By the way, what did you finally do with the Khayam ruby you stole from me?" she gave him a soft glare, a shadow of her former scowl.

He chuckled. "You thought that was me? I’m sorry to disappoint you, but for once I’m not guilty. My spies in Agrabah once told me the culprit was one Robin Hood. I gather it went on to pay for five villages to be fed for a good year!"

Mal huffed, a sardonic smile on her face. "Locksley? I should have known, as they left no clues! At least it was finally used in a good cause. I apologise for misjudging you..."

"No need. I'm sure we have both wronged each other in the past. However, it's forgotten. We're going to be family now, you and I..."

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It was now Regina’s turn, getting more than turned on by the sight facing her, as she lay back on the sofa, back in her dressing gown, champagne glass in hand, watching them. Robin had been quite urgent at first, desperate to gain some sort of release, after having watched his wives screw each other senseless, minutes before. However, realizing he really needed to slow down lest he peak way too early, and seeing Emma was still a little breathless from before, he slowed his pace, merely kissing and stroking her, before working his way slowly over her entire athletic frame, kissing every square inch. Emma was always self-conscious about her stretch marks, so he soothed her, assuring her they were just one more reason why he loved her, as she’d ‘won’ them undergoing the hard work of creating one of their daughters. Emma knew he was talking shit, but she loved him for it anyway!

He kissed the fine silvery lines, working ever closer down towards her centre. Emma was now definitely recovering, her breath catching, as he finally arrived, drawing a flattened tongue across a still very-wet entrance, making her sigh. She knew what was coming. He was a past master at this! He was a past master at this!

But he was surprised to find a slightly different, but no less recognizable taste, mingled with her own essence.

“Hmmm - never actually tasted Gina’s pussy on yours before!” he groaned making her snigger. “Two tastes in one! Rather a delicious combination…” before lowering, to wrap his lips over her still reddened nub, nipping slightly to draw out a large hiss.
Emma looked across to Regina, who was sitting a little more upright, watching closely, a glass of champagne still in one hand, but the other hand disappearing into her gown. “Hey, no-touching-yourself rule here?” she gasped, as another nip drew a jolt right through her, Robin carrying on, oblivious.

“That only applied to him!” Regina wheezed, staring into those beautiful emerald-green eyes.

Emma knew what she was doing, just from the sound of her voice. “Let me see?” she puffed, near her peak. “Let me see you play with yourself. I want to see you come again…” Her jaw dropped at the blonde’s words, but she slid her gown apart slightly, bringing a knee up onto the sofa so Emma could clearly see enough. “Holy shit! So hot…” she groaned. A moment later, the jolt of her orgasm fired through her entire frame “Fuck - Robinnnnnnn!” she yelled, the sight alone making Regina tremble. His head lifted, lips and beard glistening from his efforts. “Better?” he smirked.

But Regina had other ideas! “No…still my turn to watch, and you two aren’t nearly finished! We said we were going to indulge each other’s favourite little…kinks? Is that how you put it, Emma? Well, Robin saw the two of us. Now it’s my turn! And if you haven’t noticed, he hasn’t peaked yet?”

Regina’s favourite sight, apart from both of them making love to her, was her wife’s facial expressions when she was being aggressively ploughed by their husband. Having seen it so often, it tickled her just how angry she looked when she was being penetrated deeply and reaching her peak. Her teeth would bare in sheer concentration, her longs legs wrapped tightly around their lover’s waist as, from behind, his little tight bum cheeks shook as he slammed mercilessly into her. Emma liked it rough! The two women had repeatedly tried using the feel doe they bought in New York, but it always fell out of one of them under pressure. No such problem with Robin!

So now, Regina watched in lustful fascination as Robin, having already threatened to break the bedhead in his enthusiasm, lifted Emma clean off the sheets, while still inside her, stepping onto the floor and pushing Emma’s back against the wall, both grunting loudly as he again started slamming into her. With their lips fastened together in a fiery kiss, Emma’s lithe legs again wrapped themselves around the back of his thighs, her arms around his shoulders, as he cupped her buttocks, keeping her upright. She knew it was one of Emma’s favourites, and Regina felt she was going to come again, just from looking at them!

Amongst the gasps of air and shouts from her, “Faster!” “Harder!” and the usual “Oh fuck!” she neared her peak. Emma dug her fingernails hard into his back, making him flinch as she did so. Emma often caused scratches down Robin’s, and even Regina’s, backs from time to time, but this time she seemed to be clawing him!

Robin didn’t mind so much. Yes, it stung, but the kisses Emma would administer on his scratches after as she healed them with her magic usually more than made up for it. However, this time was to be little different!

“Yes-yes-yes-yes-yes! Oh fuck…YES!” she yelled, as Robin continued ploughing hard into her. “YES!” she screamed once more before digging her nails into his back, drawing her teeth back and biting into his shoulder as she came. Hard!

Robin was in utter heaven as his lover tightened around him. However as he felt the beginning of his own release finally start to build, the divine pleasure he felt from being inside this incredible woman, suddenly turned to a very sharp pain on his shoulder. So sharp, it stopped him immediately! “OW! FUCK! EMMA, STOP!” he screamed into her ear, when he saw the cause of the pain. “STOP!”

As her orgasm still rampaged through her, it took a second to realise what she’d done! Another to
notice a worried Regina already on her feet and at Robin’s back. “Emma, stop, you’ve hurt him!” The horrified brunette examined an angry gouge on his shoulder. Much more than a scratch, the teeth marks were clearly visible, and the flesh broken. “You drew blood!”

“I’ve done what?” He slipped out of her, lowering her onto her feet, and she pulled around him to inspect the damage, Regina having already magicked a wet flannel with ice inside. “OH MY GOD! ROBIN, I AM SO SORRY!” She was utterly mortified, a tear starting to appear. “What have I done?”

“It’s OK, love,” he assured her, seeing her state. “You were just being a little…overenthusiastic…as you get from time to time. I’m sure it’s nothing. Gina, can you help please?” After checking the wound, the brunette sent a warm pulse of magic over it, sealing the skin and reducing the redness. “There. Robin, it’ll still sting a bit, but the mark’s gone. Emma, you really need to be a bit more careful!” she chided. But Emma already had her hands over the mouth, not quite believing what she’d done. “I’m so sorry! I ruined everything…” she started pulling away and Robin saw the anguish in her eyes.

“Hey, stop that! Come here…” he ordered, pulling at her wrist to pull her in close again. “I love the fact you’re my tigress in bed! You’re my tigress and Regina’s my lioness. Honestly, it’s fine, Emma. Gina’s dealt with it! Gina, come here too please?” as she stepped forward, Robin pulled her into their hug as he dropped his lips onto Emma’s in a warm kiss, whispering “It’s forgotten,” before unsealing them and delivering the same to Regina, pulling his two loves in even tighter.

“You do realise I’m the only one wearing any clothing right now?” Regina muttered, their breaths all mingling.

“I noticed. Far too overdressed…” said the outlaw, winking, as her gown disapparated. “Much better! Now, Emma, perhaps it’s your turn to sit back and…relax?”

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On the other side of town, as she lay in the arms of her fiancé, the former Mistress of all Evil thought about their wonderful evening. “I still can’t really believe this is happening! That they accept me? Your family’s wonderful and I think I’ve fallen in love with all of them.”

“They love you too, Mal. And just as importantly, they love Lily! I knew they would…” he pulled her in tighter.

“I never thought I’d have this. Only two months ago I assumed I’d never see you again. I’ve been alone for so long. But are you quite sure I can cross the town boundary with you and survive? I just assumed…”

“I double-checked. There is a small spell involved. You won’t have any magic outside, but then nor do any of us, unless you travel to the right places. You’ll have your freedom at last, not being stuck here. And you’ll have Lily. I’m sorry you’ve been so alone, Mal. Were there no lovers? Nobody to comfort you…”

“Nothing permanent, but over the years I did take some. Only human women, as I somehow couldn’t face being with another male, human or dragon, after you! The pain of losing Lilith was too great and I couldn’t risk that again…”

“And nor will you have to! My darling, you and I are immortal. I will be here for you for as long as you want me! But, immortality is a hell of a long time. So, you must be free to take lovers as and when you wish. But I’ll be here for you as long as Zeus wills it!”
“And Catherine really gave you her blessing? I can’t imagine why…”

“As I explained, there is no jealousy, no envy, in the afterlife. All souls are divisible, and love is shared, without anyone needing to see anyone they don’t wish to. There is no awkwardness. My passed wives have no need to meet as there is time for all. Though some of them have become fervent friends! Actually, Catherine rather likes you. She said she’s already met your mother. And Briar Rose…”

The name of her last real lover since Merlin made her stiffen. “Briar Rose? But…but she must still wish me dead?”

“She really doesn’t! Death’s a great healer, Mal. Stefan has forgiven her for her infidelity, and she has forgiven you. Though she hopes one day you will finally ask forgiveness from her daughter for the wrong you did her, before she eventually passes over. You know Aurora’s currently expecting their third child?”

“No, I didn’t. That sleeping curse was one of the worst things I ever did! Aurora didn’t deserve that, and I still regret it…”

“Then you should tell her and ask her forgiveness. Contrition is good for the soul…”

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As Emma sat back on the couch, still feeling bad and cursing herself for biting him so hard in her excitement, she now watched as Robin lay back on the bed, Regina starting to massage him, lowering her lips over his recovering shaft to suck long and hard, enjoying Emma’s taste on him. Sure enough, within minutes he was again as hard as a rock, having yet to enjoy his first orgasm, compared to Emma’s three and her two already. She knew Emma loved watching her do this to him! Before they’d married him, she’d once remarked how hot it was to watch such an elegant and refined lady as Regina do something so completely unladylike, thinking it was something only ‘common’ girls did! Regina had been surprised by that, responding that as Robin had been good enough to master the hidden arts of cunnilingus, which he performed on both of them regularly, then the least she could do was respond in kind. Besides, she rather enjoyed it, loving how he moaned in bliss when she did!

He was groaning with pleasure. “Darling, I don’t think I can last much longer. I need to be inside you…please?” he almost begged, long overdue for relief. Definitely more than ready for him herself, Regina released him with a soft ‘pop’, grinning widely as she climbed up, ready to mount him. However, as she turned, Robin breathed. “No, my love - face Emma. I’d love her to see your face and it’s her turn to watch, after all?” He gently lifted her waist to help turn her, so they were both facing the blonde as she lowered herself down. Emma was faced with the erotic sight of her wife now straddling their husband, before taking his cock in her hand, ready to lower herself onto him. “Well that’s different!” she groaned.

“Care to join me?” she whispered. Emma didn’t hesitate, rising to step closer in seconds, her robe falling to the floor. The brunette pulled her down, taking her lips in her own, before pulling back to whisper, “I’m not quite ready to take him. May I?” Before she could figure out what Regina had meant, Emma gasped in surprise as the brunette moved her left hand around, cupping her ass cheek, bringing her closer before quickly sliding her right hand over her core, dipping two fingers within her folds. Almost as swiftly, she removed them again to smear her glistening essence over his cock! Seconds later, the brunette’s fingers were back on her again, removing them, but this time inserting them into herself, working them within. Emma could hardly breathe! If that wasn’t kinky enough, Regina then pulled her fingers out, taking one of them into her mouth to suck on it, her eyes closing.
“Hmm. You know, Robin’s right. Two tastes in one. It is rather distinct!”

Emma pounced, seizing the second glistening finger to suck on, before pulling the hand away from them both, wrapping her hands around Regina’s cheeks and taking her lips with her own in a frenzied kiss, peering over her shoulder to see Robin’s lustful grin. “Here, allow me…” she whispered, moving her hand to seize Robin’s staff, lifting the brunette slightly and guiding it inside her as Regina lowered herself down onto it, moaning loudly.

Robin groaned in exquisite pleasure, feeling her warm walls envelop him as she took him in fully, and praying to god his climax wasn’t going to be interrupted by someone biting him again! “Emma, come sit on Gina’s lap. I can take both your weight. Hold her?” Seeing a curious smirk on his face, and Regina’s inviting look, she silently complied, lifting herself up and interlacing her legs with her queen’s, as they sat facing each other, on top of him. As Regina now started riding him, her movements sped up, added to which she and Emma wrapped their arms around each other, pulling close as the blonde latched their lips together, sliding her tongue into her mouth to massage her own, rising and falling with her. Robin couldn’t believe the erotic sight, of the two women holding each other tightly, Regina rising up and down on him, Emma cupping her perfect ass, as their breasts bounced together. “Gina…I’m close!” he wheezed.

“Me too! Just…just…” she growled. Emma knew the moment her orgasm hit, again taking her lips as Regina screamed into her mouth. Feeling that familiar clench, Robin could no longer stop, an almost angry roar as he felt himself explode deep within her. “Ginaaaa!” Knowing Robin so well, after his first pulse and yell, she knew she had a couple of seconds before the lesser, second one came. She rose, pulling Emma even closer, before swiftly removing his still-hard, wet cock from within, pushing the glossy brim forward an inch, pulling Emma’s waist to line them up, and pushing her down onto it, hard.

“JEEZ!” she groaned in surprise, as Robin’s shaft suddenly entered her without warning, a second before he climaxed once again, the final painful yet blissful pull on his groin causing him to growl. “Haaaaah! Emma? Gina, did you just…?”

The brunette leaned back from Emma, smiling, her body glistening with perspiration. “Yes. I share everything with Emma, remember?” She breathed back, dropping a kiss on the pink lips, her eyes never leaving her. “Everything!”

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Ten minutes later, they all lay back in bed, Robin’s turn in the middle, with their heads on his chest. Regina noticed a look in her wife’s eyes. “Emma, you look worried. Something wrong?”

Robin tilted his head down to look, too. “You’re not worried about David’s operation, are you? I thought you said it was fairly straightforward?”

She shook her head. “No…it’s not that. Well, it might be, a little bit. I guess I was just reminded of everything they did. When he eventually dies, mum dies too. And the same with him, if she goes first…”

“I was there when they made the curse, remember?” said Regina, a sad look in her eye. “It’s the price they paid to get back to you and Henry! David willingly gave his life by letting his heart be destroyed, and Snow split hers to bring him back. I often think about that. I never understood how people could have so much love in them to do that. But now I do! I know I’d give my life for either of you or the children if I had too!” she reached out to find Emma’s hand resting on Robin’s stomach, giving it a squeeze.
"I’d do the same, without any hesitation..." whispered Emma, giving a sad smile, just visible in the moonlight.

Robin gave her shoulder a squeeze. “It’s the price they willingly paid for love, Emma. For the love of you, Henry, and each other. Is that what’s making you sad? Knowing when the time comes, you’ll lose both of them?”

“I guess. But it’s not just that. It’s the fact that everything’s changing. We’re not going to be seeing so much of Henry once he goes off realm-jumping, which he seems to insist on! His dad’s back, so he’ll want to spend time with Neal too, wherever the hell he winds up. Half the women I know are having babies and getting on with their lives. Once the only people with magic here were Gina, me and Gold; whereas now, there’s loads of us. The town isn’t constantly under any sort of threat every five minutes, so it’s not as though they…” she drifted off.

“Not as though they need a Saviour? You’re feeling a little unwanted? Unappreciated?” Regina probed.

“You make it sound like I’m being silly...”

Robin gave a low chuckle. “Emma, you’re not being silly, you’re just feeling a little unsure of yourself! Yes, our roles are changing. But Regina needs you. I need you. Our family needs you like never before! Yes, Henry’s become independent and needs to create his own life. Roland’s going to be going that way too before very long. But we also have four beautiful, growing daughters, who’ll need the love and guidance of both of their extraordinary mothers for quite some time to come. You’re needed more than you ever have been before. By all of us!”

Regina dropped a kiss on her cheek. “It’s true. One day, my love, you and I are going to be aged great-grandmothers, sitting in our wheelchairs, tits down by our knees, watching our children’s children, and their children, building families of their own and going their own way. It’s love, and life, Emma. Compared to the life I had, I welcome it...”

As Robin listened, he remembered what Merlin had said nearly two years ago. About Zeus one day paying him a visit. About battles ahead. And more importantly, about the likely prospect that he was now an immortal. But did he even want to be? Wouldn’t it be better to live his life alongside these two wonderful women, grow old with them, and eventually die, to share eternity with them?

“You’re right. Of course you are.” Emma sighed loudly. “Just ignore me! I guess I’m feeling a little sorry for myself, what with everything that’s been going on around me as I watched from the sidelines, I guess I was starting to feel like a bystander, and a little...ordinary.” Her last words were almost a whisper.

“Ordinary?” Robin moved fast. Easing his right side out from under Regina, he forced his chest into Emma’s, pushing her easily into her back, tickling her left side with his fingers, making her giggle, before, in one swift movement, easing himself on top of her, careful to keep his full weight off, before using a knee to separate her thighs, planting himself between them. It took less than a couple of seconds before she found his face over hers. “Ordinary? My wife, Emma Locksley, ordinary?” he had a lusty twinkle in his eyes as he stared into hers, Regina looking from the side, laughing at the sudden change in him.

“How VERY dare you?” he gave a devilish smirk. “There is nothing ‘ordinary’ about either of my wives! They are ‘extra-ordinary’ in every way! As I shall now go on to prove, when my wife Emma goes on to give me only my second orgasm of the night, before screaming my name when she gets her fourth!”
Emma chuckled into his face. “Fourth? Somebody’s been counting!” However, feeling something hardening as it rested against her core, she thought it could definitely go beyond four!
A busy month for the Storybrooke Maternity Unit

Chapter Summary

Four families, all very different, are expecting new babies. Yet more magic comes to Storybrooke...

Chapter Notes

And so we move even closer to the epilogue (yes, I know, the British, and French, spelling!) which will be split over two chapters. This one’s all focused on babies. Probably because my cousin gave birth recently and I’m feeling very, very broody!

Hope you enjoy.

Love Fi xx

Storybrooke Hospital – Six months later

They’d been waiting in the little visitor’s room for at least an hour, when an exhausted-looking David Nolan finally emerged from the delivery room. “Dad? Is everything OK? The nurses wouldn’t tell us anything!”

“It’s a girl, Emma! You have a beautiful baby sister!”

Regina’s worried face broke into a huge smile, as she stood up to join her pacing wife. “That’s wonderful, David,” she hugged him tightly. “How’s Snow?”

“Sore. There were some complications. You know her, she wanted to delivery naturally, but Marina insisted it was too late for that, plus the baby was in distress. So they had to do a C-section. She bled a lot more than usual, so they’re giving her a transfusion and stitching her right now. That’s why I popped out to tell you. The baby’s OK though!”

“Oh, dad!” Emma hugged her father tightly. “That’s rotten luck. But she’s going to be all right, yeah?”

“Yes, thank god. She’s weak, but she’s in good hands. Merlin’s trained up an excellent team and her midwife said she may need to be in a day or two, just till she gets her strength back up. Once they’ve finished settling her, I ask for you to be allowed in.”

It was only another half hour wait before they were called in. Nervously stepping into a side room, Emma saw her exhausted mother propped up by pillows, nursing a tiny swaddled package. “Hi mum. You OK?”

“Emma!” the new mother looked up, her mouth turning into a tired smile. “Come in, sweetheart! Come meet your little sister? Regina, you too!” David stepped back from the bed, so they could
come get a closer look.

“Oh my!” Regina gasped at the tiny bundle. She was even smaller than she expected, with wispy dark hair that shot up into the air. A small tube came out of one of her nostrils. “She’s so weeny! Much smaller than my girls were, but I guess that’s because she’s prem?”

“Yes, almost a month early. The tube’s there to help feed her. Now then, she’s just tried finishing her first feed off me. Emma, come closer. I want her to have her first cuddle with her big sister.” Emma cautiously collected her from her mother’s protective arms, lifting her into her own, as Regina moved next to her to take a close look. David had already taken his phone out for a picture of the special moment.

“Mum, she’s beautiful! I hope she opens her eyes before we leave? That hair though. So dark…”

“Yours was the same, Emma!” added David, proudly. “Marina told us hers’ll change over the months. She says she’s going to be a blondie, too!”

At the sound of his deeper voice, tiny eyes opened to look up. “Green eyes! She’s got my eyes!” she yelled excitedly, like a little girl herself.

“Yes, she’s going to look like her Emma. Your mini-me!” said Snow, grinning. The blonde instantly went into baby-babble as she snuggled her closer. “Hello gorgeous! I’m your big sissie, Emmy! Yes, I am. Who’s a bootiful baby den?” the others giggled at the silly-speak.

“She’s perfect, Snow,” said Regina. “Beautiful, just like her brother…” Emma arched a brow at her. “…and sister!” She pressed a kiss to her wife’s cheek as she pouted. “May her sister-in-law also be allowed a little cuddle? What’s her name?” Emma pressed a final soft kiss on her little sister’s forehead before handing her over to Regina.

“Louise. Louise Eva Nolan. After David’s favourite aunt and my mother…”

“Suits her. Hello little Louise! I’m Gina, your sissie’s wife,” even she couldn’t avoid going into a silly baby-speak voice as she addressed the little cutie. “You’re lovely, you are, just like your handsome big brother! You and me and Nealy are going to be the bestest friends and I’m going to be your favourite! The one you’ll also come to when you want to escape your insufferable parents and big sister! Yes you will! Yes you will!” she gabbled, as Emma exchanged a look with her parents, who chuckled regardless.

“Speaking of big brothers, shouldn’t Neal be here? Does he even know, dad?”

“He knows, and he’s on his way! Mulan’s bringing him over, as he was staying over at Pip’s house. We thought it best, as we knew your mum was likely to have…complications, and we couldn’t be sure how long it would take.” Or if the birth went seriously wrong! he left unsaid.

Regina bristled. “We could have looked after him. We are family…”

“We thought of asking you,” Snow defended, “But you’ve already got the girls to take care of in the mornings. Little Philip’s one of his best friends too. Perhaps you could help over the next week or two? As they’ve carved me up a little downstairs, Marina says I’m going to need quite a bit of bed rest.”

A short while later, an excited Neal burst into the room. “Hiya mum! Hi guys. Right, where’s my little sister?”

After more cuddles and kisses, David finally marshalled everyone to sit around Snow and Louise for
family photos, before they all eventually left so mother and daughter could sleep. As Emma and Regina walked back to the car, Emma smirked over the roof. “You know something? In all the years I’ve known you, you never cease to surprise me!”

“In what way now, my Swan?” she asked, innocently, recognizing a fun-poking look.

“Your sissie’s wife? Bestest friend? Nealy?” she tittered. “If I didn’t know you better, I’d say you were smitten!”

“Perhaps I am. Can I help it if you have much more adorable, less sarcastic siblings?”

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The Maternity Unit - Three weeks later

Emma and Regina would never have guessed just how soon they’d find themselves back in the same nursing room that Snow had given birth, only three weeks earlier.

It was several hours since the former Princess Aurora had given birth to a son, and they now walked in on the happy, but tired, family as a clearly-smitten mayor cradled their newborn, sitting at the edge of the bed. Mulan sat on a chair in the corner, their infant daughter Li on her knee, happily chewing a biscuit.

“Morning ladies! Come meet the latest addition to the Briars?” said a tired Aurora, sitting upright in bed. Congratulations and hugs were exchanged all around until Philip could finally be persuaded by Mulan to part with the baby for cuddles elsewhere.

"I can see that one's going to have you so wrapped around her little finger, Phil" said Emma.

"Probably! Like two other women I know..."

As the former warrior passed the baby boy into Regina’s cautious arms, she gasped when she saw the face. Though the face shape was Philip's, the almond-shaped eyes were clearly Mulan’s!

“What? I don’t understand. He is VERY handsome but…Mulan, he has your eyes! How?”

“Merlin,” said Aurora, softly, so not to disturb the baby. “After Dorothy told me how Nathaniel has the DNA of both mothers, I spoke to Merlin a year ago, just in case we wanted more. He used the same magic on me. So if Mu or I got pregnant again, we’d share. He thought it wouldn’t work, as Philip doesn’t have magic. But it seems having once been turned into the Yaoguai, he has something…”

Emma looked closer. “So he’s like Hope and Faith? Three natural parents?”

“And Ruby’s imminent baby. Just the same…”

“He’s wonderful, Aurora,” added Regina. “Thanks for letting us come see him so soon.”

“You’re very welcome. But I have to confess, we also asked you both to come for a reason…”

“Oh?"

Philip stood, moving closer. “Well…as you know, Robin’s Li’s godfather. We asked him, partly because he’s been Mu’s closest friend for some time. And at the time, we didn’t really know you two. But, we like to think we’ve all become closer friends since Rob returned. We were wondering whether you would both be willing to become two of Xhou’s three godmothers?”
That drew a gasp of astonishment from Regina! She remembered how she’d once laughed, when she’d watched Maleficent put the princess under a sleeping curse, as revenge against Briar Rose, her mother. “Godmothers?” gasped Emma. “Well that’s a bit of a surprise! But…” seeing an awkward smile from Regina. “Yes, of course we would! We’d be honoured, Phil. Thank you. But… his name? Xhou?”

Mulan nodded. “It’s my father’s name. Fa Xhou. Though we might put ‘Zoo’ on his certificate!”

Aurora took Mulan’s hand, smiling. “Fa Xhou was a very famous warrior, and hero in his time! One of the emperor’s greatest generals. We thought it fitting…” Mulan leaned across to peck her lips.

“Xhou Briar? Hmm…I like it!” said Regina, kissing the baby’s forehead. “Hi Xhou! I’m Gina, one of your new goddies! You and I are going to be the best of friends! Two of my girls…our girls…are going to just love you!”

“You said ‘two of his three godmothers’?” Emma recalled. “Who else?”

“Well, Merlin’s agreed to be his godfather. Let’s face it, if it hadn’t been for him, Xhou wouldn’t even be here! Then we started talking to his family, and we thought—” she was interrupted by the room door banging open, a new visitor walking in.

“MAL?” yelled Regina, shocked by the entrance of the last person she expected here. “WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING HERE?” she instantly turned her back on Aurora’s nemesis, shielding the newborn with herself as Emma stepped in front, ready to protect the baby with a magical strike. Even the Saviour knew what Maleficent had done to Aurora!

“Emma! Regina! Stop!” Aurora yelled back. “She hasn’t come to harm us. We asked her to come!”

“You did what? Mal? Why on earth would you—”

“You’re not always party to everything that goes on in your little town, kitten!” said Maleficent, her brow arched at her fellow witch, friend and almost-lover. Regina hated when she used her pet name for her in public!

“I’ve met with Aurora, and her family, numerous times over the last few months. I’ve begged her forgiveness for my past crimes, against her and her parents. And, fortunately for me, she’s found it in her heart to forgive me, even though I don’t deserve it!”

“That’s perfectly true, Regina,” Philip spoke up. “We’ve had many chats with Mal and Merlin and, we’ve asked them both to be Xhou’s other godparents.”

Regina stood open-mouthed, stunned at the revelation! Maleficent stepped forward, opening her arms to request to hold the baby. “May I?” Regina looked to the parents for approval. They nodded, as the former Mistress of All Evil took the baby Briar into her arms, holding him to her chest as a small silver bar appeared in her right hand. The baby’s eyes opened.

“Hello young Prince! It’s lovely to finally meet you!” she smiled down at him, but with a steely, determined look in her eye. “I’m Maleficent, your grandmother’s former nemesis! Your three parents have given me the great honour of allowing me to become your godmother. I accept the role without hesitation, due to the immense wrong I did her. So, I am making this act of contrition. I hereby now make you a dragon’s pledge. I swear my eternal fealty to you, my prince, and vow to protect you, should you require it, for the rest of your natural days. A dragon’s promise cannot be broken on pain of death, and I call upon all those here present, to witness…”

As she intoned the words, her right hand drew the small silver bar across her left palm. A wide, painful-looking cut opened up, which started to bleed, though Maleficent didn’t flinch. Instead, she
calmly dipped the end of the silver bar into the fresh wound, before lifting it to draw a small wavy line across the baby’s forehead. As the Locksley women stood transfixed, the bloody mark seemed to absorb itself into little Xhou’s skin, become invisible. As it did so, Emma felt a warm magical wave pulse over her. Magic. ‘There, it’s done!’ she said, dropping a small kiss on the boy’s cheek. “Live a long, happy life, my prince!”

After a moment’s silence, when the others began to realise what her vow had implied, Mulan finally spoke. “Sorry, but I know so little about dragons. This…this vow to protect? Does it cover his brother and sister too?”

She initially glared at the woman, her thoughts interrupted. The glare slowly morphed into a smile. “It does. That must have been a little confusing for you but, I basically translated something from an ancient tongue to English. It’s a promise to protect him from anyone, or anything, that wishes him harm, with my own life if necessary. You may think of it as your son becoming my liege lord. It applies to all members of his family. Including you three.”

“But you said protecting ‘with your own life’. As an immortal, surely you cannot be killed?”

“A common fallacy. Even an immortal can be killed…”

“Mal, could you bring Xhou over and come sit by me please?” asked Aurora, softly. As she did as asked, she carefully decanted the baby boy back into her arms. “Thank you!” she whispered, before placing a warm kiss on the woman’s cheek. The affectionate touch had a much more profound effect on the dragon, than she realised. “And for the record, your fiancé told me about you and my mamma…”

Mal looked down at her, a heaviness weighing on her heart. “I loved her, you know? I truly loved her. We both wronged your father terribly! There was a time when Stefan and I were friends. Until I…until we…” the memory of her shame overcame her. “But she wanted to get this out! “After Merlin, or Draco as he was in dragon form, I never felt as one with anyone until Briar Rose…” she stopped to wipe a stray tear. “It was wrong of both of us. We betrayed your father. And then, when your mother decided to return to him, I just…”

“Mal, I forgive you! I think it’s time for us to move on, don’t you?”

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_The Same Maternity Unit – five days later_

Ariel was the next to give birth, to a beautiful baby girl, with Belle and Rumple at her sides. The birth had been straightforward and without complication, as was to be expected from Rumpelstiltskin’s careful planning and precautions. Knowing there could possibly be unknown complications coming from the birth of a mermaid-human, Merlin, in his Professor Sage gynae capacity, successfully delivered a perfect little baby into the arms of her loving parents.

An hour later, Ariel, Belle and Rumple were surrounded by family as they cooed, praised and flattered the expanded family. Ariel was still in a haze, exhausted by the twelve-hour labour, and sat back on the plumped-up pillows as Belle, sitting close beside her, held their tiny daughter in her arms, Gideon on her other side.

Four months before the baby was due, the marriage of Angus and Belle Gold to Ariel Tritonsdottir was held on the Jolly Roger, a mile offshore, facing Storybrooke Harbour, with Archie Hooper
again officiating. Killian had initially been reluctant to loan his ship for anything involving the former Dark One, but Belle, and Henry, had worked on him, persuading him that the creature that killed Milah and wreaked havoc to thousands, was no longer inside her husband. Although Ariel’s six sisters had been allowed to attend, and supported her as bridesmaids, Ariel’s parents boycotted the entire wedding, which cast a small shadow over her day. Nonetheless, the third polyamorous marriage of Storybrooke took place under a bright blue sky, and the evening celebration back on land in Sherwood was attended by an enormous crowd of well-wishers.

“Oh she’s bonny!” said a simpering Merida, as Baelfire proudly took back his baby sister, folding her carefully into his arms. “The world needs more feisty redheads like you an’ me, doesn’t it Ariel? An’ this wee lassie is gonna keep our flag flyin’!” That earned a chuckle from the little group.

“Have you decided on her name?” asked Henry, who’d raced with his father from Boston on his new trike, once news came that Ariel had gone into labour. Ariel gave Belle a smile and a small nod to tell them, as Baelfire carefully passed the little bundle into his father’s arms.

“It took us a while to agree a name. So we thought, what with Ariel’s musical connection, that we’d—” Belle was interrupted by a loud rap on the door, stilling everyone. Merlin leaned his head in to address the room.

“Sorry to interrupt, but you have some ‘unexpected’ visitors. They weren’t sure whether they would be welcome, so asked me, to ask permission for them to be allowed to see you?” The two mothers looked to Rumple, looking confused, until the Sorcerer followed with, “Your parents. King Triton and Queen Athena!”

Ariel gasped and Rumple stiffened immediately, wondering whether they might try to abduct Ariel… or even the baby! Merlin saw the worried looks, so in the low, calm voice, so not to be heard outside the room, he said “Rumple – why don’t you and I go see them together first?” At least two powerful sorcerers may have more chance against a god and goddess! Rumple nodded, turning to step over and press a quick kiss on Ariel’s, then Belle’s lips, whispering a silent ‘don’t worry’, before leaving the room.

They were gone for several minutes before the door opened again. Rumple moved back to them. “They have sworn to stick to our agreement, and they will leave the moment you ask them too! I said that I would defer to you, Ariel. It’s your decision.” After a moment’s hesitation, Ariel nodded, and the royal deity were allowed to enter the room. Neal, having spent long enough amongst the gods, felt the familiar powerful magic of the pair as they entered the room. They seemed oddly…nervous.

“Ariel? How are you my dear?” Triton began, cautiously, looking at the tiny bundle that was now in Belle’s arms. Athena stood a pace behind him, saying nothing. Ariel looked at the pair, her face a combination of sadness and determination. She ignored the question.

“I’m surprised to see you here, considering you never showed up for my wedding!” she glared.

Triton seemed to hang his head in shame. “Yes, well…I’m sorry. I’m just a proud old man, I guess.”
He seemed to have a problem continuing, until eventually, “Your sisters have also voiced their displeasure with me. Attina refuses to speak to me. Arista has turned her back on us and Andrina…”

“Andrina hasn’t been since they came back from your wedding, Ariel!” added Athena, looking up at her husband. “We’ve sent out search parties but…nothing.”

“Andrina’s missing?” Ariel sat up, alarmed. “Then we’ve got to do something! Rumple?” she looked to the side, to her husband. “Can you help?”

“You father and mother are the rulers of the oceans, Ariel. If they cannot find her, it means she must be on land somewhere.” Or dead, he thought, but wasn’t going to upset them unnecessarily.

“She left us a note…” said the grey-eyed goddess. “Basically…she has informed us she no longer wishes to be part of our life until we have…resolved things with you!” the goddess replied, matter-of-factly before her cold eyes cast over the man sitting nearby. “You’re the one Zeus sent back, aren’t you? The friend of Persephone?”

Neal had spent long enough working on behalf of the God-of-Gods, not to be intimated by the deity. He gave her an equally cold look. “The name’s Baelfire, or Neal in this world. Hello to you too, Athena.”

“If she is on land and in this realm, I can help,” said Rumple, interrupting “If she still lives. I can prepare a suitable tracking potion for you to use…”

“She lives. But at what price? There’s always a price with you, Rumpelstiltskin!” his comment drew an angry glare from his daughter, which he couldn’t fail to notice.

“No price, dearie. You choose to forget, I’m no longer the Dark One! I will help, but only because of your connection to Ariel, to find her sister.”

Triton nodded silently, unable to thank him. “May I be allowed to see my granddaughter?” asked Athena, stepping forward. Ariel nodded to Belle, as she stepped closer. The librarian gently placed her daughter in the older woman’s arms. As the goddess examined the tot for the first time, the baby’s eyes opened wide. Piercing blue met grey and for a moment, Athena shuddered, recognizing something enormously powerful within the baby’s knowing look.

Triton had been silent during their exchange. He stepped closer to his daughter. “Ariel, I’ve been a proud fool. It’s taken me a long time but, as your sisters have been quite persistent, I realise it was wrong of me to seek to prevent you choosing your own path. I’m sorry, my love. Do you think you could forgive an old god his short temer and poor judgment?”
If she didn’t know better, she could have sworn her father was about to shed a tear! “Papa!” Ariel sniffed, opening her arms. Triton leaned into them, hugging her, as tears fell on both sides. “Of course, I can papa. I you!” Getting cuddled by his youngest girl again was the best present he could have, and they held each other for several minutes, neither wanting to let go. Eventually, they separated, after which Athena quietly passed the baby over to Triton.

“Hello, precious one,” he said, kissing her cheek. “Ariel, have you chosen a name?”

“Melody,” Belle answered, having felt invisible the last few minutes. “Melody Colette Gold.”

Ariel squeezed her wife’s hand. “Colette was Belle’s mother’s name, papa. She died protecting her. Like Melody did for me…”

Triton winced. Melody had been the daughter they’d lost, accidentally killed so many years ago by a human ship. Just one of many reasons he mistrusted human so much!

“Hello Melody, my little angel! I’m your grand-papa. Your grand-mama and I have looked forward to this day. You are a very special girl indeed. A bridge between two worlds. We have a very special present, just for you….”

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The very next day it turned out to be Ruby’s turn! She’d been sitting on a sofa in the back of the Diner, talking to Snow and Emma, when the first contraction hit. With Regina minding the little ones and Robin spending the day in Sherwood, she had decided to spend her day off with her mother, getting to know her one-month-old little sister. As she held the little one in her arms in the armchair, Ruby suddenly stood. “OW! FUCK!” yelled Ruby, holding her legs apart and resting a hand on the table to stead hurt. “SHIT, THAT REALLY HURTS!”

Snow moved quickly to her side, going into her calming, best friend mode. “Looks like things may be starting to happen! Rubes, hold steady for a moment while I get Dorothy. We’ll use my car. Emma, could you mind your sister for a little while longer?”

“Sure. Better still, get everyone together with all the bits, and I’ll poof us over to the hospital. Merlin set a little room aside for us to arrive in, so we don’t disturb anyone.”

---

An hour later, Ruby was lying back on the hospital gurney while Patricia, one of the senior midwives, ran the ultrasound over her belly. “OK Ruby, everything looks good to me, though I’m pretty sure labour hasn’t properly started yet. You’ll be here a little while until baby arrives. What with the wolf genes and the baby’s mixed DNA, although I’ll be delivering, Professor Sage is going to be here, supervising the birth. He’s in theatre now and should be out in an hour. So, get comfortable. Anyone you need me to call?”

“All in hand thanks, Pat!” said Dorothy, holding Ruby’s hand, her phone in the other.

Emma smiled across at the midwife. “You know, Pat was my midwife? She delivered Hope! You’re in good hands here, Rubes, even without Merlin…” she winked at the midwife.

“I know. I’m sure everything’s going to be fine. I just wish we could get hold off Killian and Rosie! They should be here too…”

Emma knew the two couples had an odd relationship, but after earlier blunders didn’t want to say anything to set them off. “Where are they? You need me to find them?”
“Killian’s doing sea trials with the Jolly, so they’re several miles offshore. They’re going to be heading back to DunBroch soon with the royals and Neal.”

“They’re going back? I thought it was too dangerous? Neal said…” but Snow squeezed her arm, encouraging her to say no more, in case it stressed the pregnant woman. Emma frowned. They may no longer be together, but he was still Henry’s father and she felt ‘something’ for him!

“Best ask Merlin when he gets here. He’s going with them…” said Dorothy.

Snow pondered the problem. “Emma, you know that mind-link thing you do with Robin and Regina? Didn’t you say Merlin has it with his children? Perhaps he could ‘call’ Rosie and get them back here?”

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It was a good four hours before the Jolly was moored, Killian bursting into the delivery room, by which time Snow and Emma had long departed. Rosie joined him an hour later, once the boys had been settled with Blue at the convent. By now, Ruby was bored out of her mind and Dorothy falling asleep, resting her head on the bed beside her. “Is she OK, Rubes? She seems…bloody exhausted!” said a concerned Captain.

“She’s been doing all of the late shifts, as Mike’s been away. And what with me like this, I’m no use! Poor lamb’s been run off her feet, but she won’t leave me, even though she desperately needs her sleep!”

Rosie rested a comforting arm on her back. “You silly things, you should have said something! I wouldn’t have left with Killy if I’d known. I could have helped in the diner, or something…”

“Listen, love,” said Killian. “You said there’s no chance of having the little one for at least twenty-four hours, right?” Ruby nodded. “OK. Rosie hasn’t had a decent rest the last two nights so…why don’t we let her take Dot back home, so they can both catch up properly? It’ll be a long night after all. I’ll go get some books or something for us, and I’ll sit with you overnight. That way she knows someone’s with you. When the girls are rested, they’ll come back and I’ll take a break.”

“Great idea, Killy. I’ll take care of Liam and Nattie, make sure she goes to bed and keep an eye on her…”

Ruby wanted to argue, but seeing her beloved seeping deeper into sleep. “You’re sure you don’t mind?”

---

Six o’clock the next morning, Dorothy woke up, an hour later than usual. Normally expecting to find her true love spooning her, she was instead met with the sleepy eyes of Rosie Jones. “You sleep OK?”

“Yeah. I still feel guilty leaving Rubes. What if the labour got going?”

“They would have told me! Now stop worrying. Killy just texted…” she pulled her cellphone from the bedside table, pulling it closer:

Killian: Morning lovely! Quiet night. No more contractions, so she got some shuteye! All good here and Ruby says there’s no need to rush over! She says, give Dot a kiss good morning from her, make her have a lie in, and could she bring her phone over as she left it behind?
They smiled at the message, Rosie texting her reply:

*Rosie:*  
Glad to hear it. Just woke up. Yes, I'll see she rests before coming over. Give her our love. Love you!*

She was surprised how quickly he texted back. They read:

*Killian:*  
Rose, it's Ruby. Just borrowed Kill's phone! Thank you both SO much for doing this! Love you, and don't forget to kiss my girl good morning from me!

As she placed the phone back on the side, Rosie rolled back to face her. “You heard the lady!” before placing a soft, warm kiss on her lips. “Mmmm, nice!” whispered Dorothy, rolling on her side to come face to face with the other woman, a little smirk on her lips. “Who’s looking after the boys?”

“You really were tired, weren't you?” Rosie sniggered. “Vic and Carrie picked them up from Blue. They said they could look after them for the day if we wanted?” A flirtatious look on her face. Blue eyes staring into green.

“Then you’d better help me rest!” With that, The brunette rolled on top of the other woman, giggling as she used her knee to part the other woman’s thighs, before resting between them. “First, I need to relax!”

“I can help with that!” said Rosie, pulling the woman’s mouth down on to her own.

---

Three hours later, after a vigorous bout of lovemaking, resting, showering and coffees, Rosie and Dorothy made their way back to the hospital, bring flowers and a box of pastries “Wolfie,” she dropped a kiss on her lips. “Not sure if you’ve eaten, but Mike pulled a few things out of the bakery for you. Says to give you a kiss from him. How’re you doing?”

“Hiya, babe, I’m glad you’re back. We got my contractions started about two hours ago!”

*As she hugged her wife, her heightened olfactory senses kicked in, picking up so many scents on the woman. So many more than a human could detect. “Hmm, you smell nice! That’s the basil and mandarin bath oil we bought, isn’t it?” She took another long sniff then recognised…several other distinctly non-bath smells on her!*

“Yeah. The expensive one we bought in Arendelle. I had a soak before I came out. You’ve gone into labour? I thought they said nothing was going to happen for at least a day! Sorry, I would have come sooner had I known!”

“It’s OK. You’re here now. You smell nice!” She looked up at the other woman. “Rosie, do I get a hug?”

“Erm…yeah, sure. Glad you slept OK. It’s a bugger settling down, when you’re that pregnant, isn’t it?” Killian’s wife bent over the trestle bed to hug her. As with Dorothy before, Ruby took a long, drawn out sniff of the woman’s scent. *Sure enough, and as she half-expected, mixed with the smell of bath oil was another, very familiar scent!*

“Hmm. You used that bath oil too?” she said, watching the other woman’s reaction. Sure enough, Rosie’s cheeks pinked at her words. *Ah ha, gotcha!* “Yeah, it was lovely. Hope you didn’t mind me borrowing some?”
Before she could answer, Killian walked into the room. “Rubes, they only had some poor excuses for sandwiches, and some pizza slices, so I went for…oh…hi Rosie, Dot! Sorry, I didn’t know you’d arrived! I got some food for Rubes, though I can go back and get more, now you’re here?”

“No Killy, don’t go,” said Ruby. “They brought some more food too so we’re good.” Then casting a sly glance at the two other women, she said, “Don’t they both smell nice, Killian?”

“Erm, what?” he was confused

“Our wives! Don’t you think they smell nice?” She touched her nose as she looked across at the guilty pair. Dorothy knew that look - they were busted! They knew they were allowed to be with the other couple, separately or together, so there was no point in denying it!

She slowly nodded in resignation, looking sheepish.

“Sorry, am I missing something?” said Killian, wondering why Dorothy was acting weird.

“My ‘super-sniffer’ found out something! This morning, before they came over, our girls had a lot more than a rest…didn’t you both?” Rosie was stunned! How the hell did she…?

"Underneath all that bath oil, I can smell you on each other!"

“Guilty!” breathed Dorothy. “My fault. I woke up horny and…Rosie was there, looking all hot and gorgeous and…well, how could I resist? I know we shouldn’t, what with you guys being in here, bored out of your brains all night! I’m sorry…” At her abrupt confession, it was Rosie’s turn to blush, avoiding Killian’s stare!

“So…let’s see if I’ve got this right? You and I were sitting here, bored out of our tiny minds, having suffered the delights of hospital cuisine and reading material Belle wouldn’t give to a blind man. While you, heavily pregnant, lay on a bed made of straw and me on a chair that left me walking like a Victorian orphan with rickets!” Ruby tried so hard not to burst out laughing at that line, knowing he was laying it on a bit thick!

“And all the while, our beloved ladies here were instead laying in soft warm sheets, making the beast with two backs?” he huffed.

Rosie felt dreadful! She looked at him, then across to Dorothy, whose eyes were also a picture of confusion. “Killian?” she tried desperately to compose her thoughts. “I thought we all agreed we were happy with this? That the four of us could be with each other? Share each other? I know it was selfish seeing as you two were stuck in here, but…”

“Then it’s a good job your husband managed to kick start my contractions, Rosie. Otherwise we’d be stuck in here for another night!” said Ruby, deciding to put them out of their misery. Killian’s serious face gradually morphed into a grin as the other women tried to figure out what Ruby meant.

Dorothy looked puzzled. “Killian kick started your contractions? How?” Her wife gave her a lascivious grin.

“You had sex, didn’t you?” said Rosie, seeing the look that passed between Ruby and Killian. “You two had sex to get things going! Why, you rotten buggers! You let me and Dot feel guilty, and all the time you were…”

“But here?” gasped Dorothy, finally twigging. “Rubes, anyone could have walked in!”

“Not when there’s a lock and magical soundproofing spell on the door!” said Killian. “Besides, Rubes guessed you’d probably both go at it like a pair of banshees on heat! She was right!”

“Easy guess. Dot always wakes up horny after a decent night’s sleep, as you well know Killian! She - AAGH, FUCK! ANOTHER ONE!” she squeezed Killian’s hand almost to breaking as the
contraction kicked in.

“OK love, that’s less than eight minutes since the last one. Let’s call the midwife!”

---

It appears a wolf gives birth a lot quicker than a human being! In less than three hours from Dorothy walking into the room, Merlin executed a textbook delivery. “Congratulations, Lucas family, you have a beautiful baby girl!”

After cleaning up Ruby, and checking the little one for any abnormalities, the Sorcerer passed the little bundle over to his excited mothers. “Here you are ladies, one perfect little daughter!” Dorothy was already in tears as she looked at the tiny face. “Rubes – she looks like you! Ooh, she’s so gorgeous!”

“She’s got your cheekbones, Dot! Come on let’s get them in here!” Unsurprisingly, Killian was completely smitten, falling in love with his little girl the moment he clapped eyes on her. Rosie, her unofficial ‘third mummy’ had no intention of letting go of the tot either.

A little later, the first visitors to arrive were Victor and Caroline Whale. “Vic! Carrie!” Ruby pulled her old friend into a hug. “I’d like you to say hello to your goddaughter, Alice Anita Lucas!”

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And so, in the space of just four weeks, four remarkable children entered the world. Each of them having very different forms of magic; all of them would go on to change their worlds, for the better. Each of whom, in collaboration with other magical users, would decades later, help to finally reunite the realms.

But their stories are for another day...

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Two Weddings and a God comes to visit!

Chapter Summary

Eight years after the birth of two of his sisters, Henry Cassidy is getting married! Another eight years after that, and his sister Margot is too! However, at her wedding, Robin receives a most unexpected visitor...

Chapter Notes

To all those who have stuck with this, thank you! Nearing the end now with two more chapters to go! I've loved the positive feedback and taken your comments on board.

Have a wonderful summer everyone!

Love Fi xx

Storybrooke Chapel – Eight years on.

“Keep still, Henry!” moaned Neal. “How can I fix your damn bow tie, if you keep moving around? For god’s sake, stop twitching!!”

“Sorry dad! I’m just-”

“Nervous? I get it! Stop worrying, your girl’s going to turn up!”

Father and son stood in the side chapel, dressed in their morning suits. The bride wasn’t due for a good fifteen minutes, but the groom was nervous beyond belief. Neal grabbed him by the shoulders. “Sit! Tink’s keeping an eye on her. She’s going to be here. What’s got you so rattled?”

“Sorry. It’s just…I’m worried she’ll pull out! She’s met all the guys. And mum and ma. There’s loads of them out there! Dad, what if she gets frightened off at the last minute?”

“Not going to happen! Henry, Ella’s gonna be fine. She loves you. And don’t forget, she’s a royal, remember? She’s used to all this formal bullshit, so stop worrying, just relax and try to enjoy it.”

Henry looked down at his father, a good six inches shorter than him. Shorter, but a giant in other ways! At least in his eyes. “Sorry, I’m being a bit paranoid. A bit stupid…”

“My son, stupid?” Neal sounded almost offended. “Henry Cassidy, youngest ever nominee for a Pulitzer Prize for Literature, stupid? You may be daft, old son, but you’re never stupid!” After Neal's return from the underworld, Henry had decided that, rather than take Robin’s surname as his siblings and mothers had done, he would instead honour his own father by taking his name.

“Thanks. You know, right up till I was ten, I’d always imagined what my dad would have been like! I was told you were a hero who died in a fire. Then I went with grandpa and mum and found you in New York, only to lose you again soon after. I always missed you, even if I didn’t know you. But
now…I’m lucky to have you in my life, dad!” He pulled his father into a tight hug, both feeling a little…emotional, quickly separating when a loud crash was heard in the hallway, followed by a clacking of heels on marble. I know that sound anywhere!

“Henry?” gasped Regina, a small group running into the room behind her. She looked at her boy in his wedding suit. “Oh my goodness! You look so…so…” she almost choked with emotion.

“Handsome?” said the Author, a cheeky grin on his lips.

She rolled her eyes at him, slapping his arm lightly. “I was about to say, ‘grown up’. A man! But yes, you look handsome too,” she bit back a tear threatening to betray her. “A grown man who no longer needs his mothers! Or his father, for that matter!” she nodded in greeting to Neal, both stepping forward to kiss each other's cheek.

Henry collected her with his arms, pulling her gently to his chest. “Mum, I will always need you! And ma, and dad!” She stepped back looking up at him as another voice came up behind them.

“You’d better have one of those for me too, Hen? I may not tear up like your mum does these days, but dammit, you look good!” A long arm reached out, pulling her into the hug, joining her wife on the other side of his chest.

“Mums, none of this would have happened, if it hadn’t been for you two! I should say it more often but…I love you both so much!” He pressed a kiss on the foreheads of both women as he hugging them to him. Their little moment didn’t last long, before another yell came, this time a lanky teenage girl bundling straight into him as his mothers stepped back, pushing between them to wrap her arms around him “Henry!”

“Marge! I don’t get to see you in a dress too often. You look great, and blimey, you’re getting taller!” he kissed the top of her head, looking over to a seemingly shy, but pretty blonde girl who hung back. “Aren’t you going to introduce me to your friend?”

“Oh yeah. This is my girlfriend, Kathy. Kat, this is my annoying big brother, Henry!” A year ago, to nobody’s surprise, Margot announced to her family that she was gay. Even though she lived with bisexual stepmothers, who were in a polyamorous relationship with her father, she’d still been nervous to come out, only finally being persuaded by Henry. The family had been immensely supportive, encouraging her to bring any new friends home whenever she wished. Zelena, now settled in Los Angeles, had been a little weird at first, but even she eventually came around.

“Lovely to finally meet you Kat!” Henry shook her hand. “Marge always seems to be away when I come back to Storybrooke. Have you met my dad?” he introduced Neal, who shook her hand, warmly.

As the family gathered in the little annex to the chapel where the ceremony was due to be held, everyone caught up with the groom. Margot and Honour, now sixteen and fifteen-years-old, went to a recently opened high school in Storybrooke, one year apart. Hope and Faith, now bored-looking ten-year-olds and looking more like Emma and Regina every day, went to the local junior high.

“Locksleys!” yelled Roland, as he walked into the room with his father. “What’s a’ happenin’?” Roland, now twenty-years-old and several inches taller than Robin, was in his second year studying Environmental Science at Stanford. Only flying back from San Francisco during the semesters and breaks, his family often missed him terribly, as he was so much further away than Henry had been. So it was no surprise when his four sisters rushed over to hug him, his mothers’ trying to wait patiently, before their turn.
Roland had, over the years, transformed into a seriously handsome man. Much more confident around women than Henry had been, he was adored by many of the female students in his college, particularly for his kindness and gentle nature. One thing hadn’t changed about him though, and that was his wild, long curly hair, which Robin had frequently urged him to cut! He always cited ‘why dad - the girls love it!’ as his main reason not to! After Emma and Regina finally released him from their bear hug, Roland slapped his brother on the back, with a big grin. “So, Big Bro, you doing anything much today?” The rest of the family chuckled, watching their silly exchange.

“Oddly enough, yeah! I was thinking of getting married today. Fancy being Best Man?”

He huffed. “Well, I could, I suppose! Seeing as I’m wearing this penguin outfit!” he opened his arms for everyone to admire his new three-piece morning suit. “Got a particular girl in mind?”

“Yeah, there’s this tall brunette popping over. I’ve heard she’ll be wearing white today!” Regina’s eyes almost rolled over her head, as Emma sighed. The pair had personally helped their imminent daughter-in-law find the perfect wedding dress only two months earlier.

“I know her! Good, so you’re not interested in that stunning tall blonde in the pink hat that just came in and sat at the back? Think I might be in with a shout?” Robin’s brow raised as Henry chuckled.

“Ro, you old tart - you never change” sniggered Henry. "That’s tall blonde is Lisa. She’s a friend of Ella’s. Well, you can try your luck, But frankly, I think Margot would have more of a chance, to be honest!” His sister sniggered back.

“What? Oh, she’s not too, is she?”

“Yep. Card carrying! Never mind, plenty of single, straight women still out there…”

“Roland,” said Robin, grinning, “Isn’t it time you thought about having a single girlfriend for a change?”

“Says the guy with two wives! Heck dad, I’m only twenty-one!”

“I happen to agree with Roland,” Regina interjected. “He’s still very young, there’s no need to rush these things…”

Emma cackled, taking her arm. “You’re just saying that, because you’re dreading becoming a grandmother and being called granny!” that earned a light slap on the arm.

“Well I don’t care about being called grandpa,” added Robin, “but it’d be nice if it didn’t happen by accident, years earlier than intended! So do be careful Roland!”

“OK, OK! Can we NOT be discussing my love life right now? We should be talking about Henry’s instead!”

“Oi!” he sniggered. “This is my wedding day, and I’m not having you saying that kind of stuff in front of Ella! I’m a strictly one-woman guy – no offence, Robin!”

His stepfather was about to make a suitably barbed remark, when the door opened again. A fiery red-headed woman appeared, dragged in by two equally flame-haired twin girls, all three wearing what looked like extremely expensive, bespoke dresses, no doubt paid for by the twin’s grandfather, for the special day.

“Isla, Maisie!” yelled Hope, suddenly no longer bored when she spotted Henry’s twin half-sisters. Neal grinned widely, as the girls rushed over to them, Merida looking relieved to see her husband.
Eight years ago, after Merlin had found a way to overcome the magical block in DunBroch, so they could defeat the Black Knight. Thanks to Merlin and Neal, Merida was finally restored to her throne, after they had overcome the enemy’s armies. It’d had been a bloody campaign, with Hamish, one of her three brothers, killed in battle. Neal had been honoured by the queen and, within weeks, as Neal believed he couldn’t propose to a royal, she proposed marriage instead. He accepted immediately, though refused to accept the title of King. After much nagging from her mother, who insisted a queen’s consort held some sort of title, a year later he acquiesced, becoming Prince Baelfire of DunBroch. Ten months later, Merida had given birth to twin girls!

“OK Bae, your turn ta look after these little buggers! They’ve run me ragged…” groaned Merida, earning a knowing, sympathetic chuckle from the other parents in the room. Neal dropped to his knees, gathering his girls to him, Emma looking on with mixed feelings. This was the man with whom she’d once had true love! So much so, that Henry himself had magic. And now, their time was over and they’d both gone on to create families of their own. Robin and Regina looked on silently, sensing Emma’s thoughts.

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That afternoon, Henry Mills (the only one to forgo the Locksley name, as he felt he was too old to change) married Jacinda Vidrio (also known as Cinderella in the realm where he first met her), a beautiful olive-skinned brunette and former princess, in the small chapel, his entire family in attendance. His father’s family came out in force to support him too, with Rumple, Belle and Ariel, uncle Gideon and aunty Melody, now an eight-year-old force of nature herself. It was decided a much larger, though informal, evening celebration party would be held a day later, in Sherwood, where the rest of their friends would be able to celebrate with them. A wise decision, as it seemed the entire two towns had turned out in force to celebrate the marriage of their local hero! It turned out to be a wonderful day. Finally, before Henry and Ella left for their honeymoon night, the now thirty-year-old celebrated author stood to address everyone, standing on the bar to be seen.

“Ladies and gentlemen! QUIET EVERYONE!” he yelled. “Can I just say a few words?” the hubbub from the huge gathering finally calmed so he could be heard. “OK. Can I first of all thank everyone for the fantastic reception you’ve given us! It’s been great getting back and seeing so many friends!” he could see a crowd of smiling faces looking at him. “Years ago, I felt alone. Really alone. I had my mum, and I loved her to bits - but I always knew something wasn’t right! My teacher, who turned out to be my granny - one of the best grannies in the world,” he smiled across at Snow, who blushed, winking back, “gave me a story book. A book that changed everything!” Virtually everyone in the village and town knew the story by now. “I’m not gonna bore you with all the details, but as a result of that book, I’m definitely not alone any anymore! I’ve now got one brother, six sisters,” Ella blew a kiss at Isla and Maisie. “Two astonishing mums, one awesome dad, one legendary stepdad and stepmum, plus the most brilliant collection of grandparents you could ever imagine!” the audience generally chuckled and sniggered. “I love my family so much, and sorry if I don’t tell you enough!” As he spoke, Ella brought out two wrapped presents, which she walked over, giving one to Baelfire and the other to Regina and Emma, all three also receiving a short kiss on the cheek.

Emma watched her beautiful new daughter-in-law walked back, before jumping up to stand on the counter beside her husband, collecting her glass of orange juice. As her eyes looked at Ella’s place setting, she noticed that her wine and champagne glasses were still full. Untouched.

“Ella and I wanted to thank all of you, but particularly to three very, very special people. My mums and my dad!” Emma looked across at Neal, who smiled back, treasuring the special moment as their son continued. “Guys, we got a little something for you. Could you open them now?”
Regina looked down at the gift wrapping, and started to gently tear it off. Inside was a rectangular box with a lid, which she carefully opened as Emma leaned over to look. Inside, there appeared to be the back of a black, ebony and silver photo frame, facing down. She lifted the frame out of the box, removing the tissue paper to reveal...a scanned image. A 3D scanned image. Of a...

Her breath hitched as she realised what she was seeing, exchanging an astonished look with Emma before looking up to her now slightly red-cheeked new daughter-in-law. “Ella? You’re...you’re pregnant?”

The tall brunette gave a short smile and a nod, before mouthing “thirteen weeks!” Regina instantly clicked her fingers and Ella disapparated from the counter, apparating a second later directly in front of them both. She and Emma instantly engulfed her in one huge, tearful hug, before finally subjecting Henry to the same treatment as his wife, as roars and cheers ran around the bar at the news.

“I thought you said you didn’t want to be called ‘granny’ yet, mum?” he sniggered.

His maternal grandfather appeared from nowhere, slapping him on the back, a huge grin on his face. “‘Granny’? That’s nothing, Regina! You try being called ‘great-grandpa’ and see how you like it? Now that sounds seriously old!”

Six months later, Ella gave birth to Lucy, who turned out to be a bright, imaginative little poppet, who shared her mother’s looks and her father’s love of writing and books. Three years after that, Ella also gave birth to a son, Christopher, and the pair would be loved beyond measure by their paternal grandparents and great grandparents. The Author’s little family would finally settle in New York, though as his fictional stories became more widely acclaimed, wealth soon followed, and they travelled the world extensively. Though they always returned to Storybrooke whenever possible!

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The Same Storybrooke Chapel – Again

It was another eight years after Henry’s wedding, that Margot Locksley, having travelled into the same realm as her brother Henry had previously, returned to Storybrooke after a second trip, with the news that not only had she fallen in love with the daughter of another realm’s version of Killian Jones, but she’d asked said girl to marry her! Although initially shocked at her news, after meeting the bubbly, gregarious blonde beauty that was Alice Rodgers, all three parents were bowled over by her warm enthusiasm for life, and embraced her within the family.

The wedding was held in the Earl of Locksley, only two months later. Meeting his new daughter-in-law’s father, an apparent doppelganger of Killian Jones, was an odd experience for all her parents, particularly Emma. Though it was even more weird when the two Killians met (although one was now Killian Rogers)! Still, everything went smoothly enough. Toasts were made by both bride’s fathers (oddly enough, this time Regina decided to not insist on speaking herself) and once the meal had finished and the wedding cake cut, Robin left the table to circulate with guests as the band prepared to start. “Please be upstanding as our brides take to the floor for the Marriage Waltz!” bellowed a rather pompous MC. “Ladies and gentlemen, I give you – our beautiful brides, Mrs. Margot and Mrs. Alice Locksley!”

Robin smiled to himself proudly, as his eldest daughter, his beloved Margot, took her wife’s hand, leading her to the dance floor. As he watched, he saw Regina, arm-in-arm with a tearful Zelena (her first visit in years) looking on, equally proud. Emma stood nearby, talking to Elsa and John, his best
friend. As he leaned against the wall, he hardly noticed the appearance of a tall, hooded figure next to him. At least not until he spoke!

“THEY MAKE A BEAUTIFUL COUPLE, DON’T THEY?” said the deep voice under the cream-coloured hood. Robin immediately turned, stiffening, sensing something amiss.

“Sorry – do I know you?”

“WE HAVE MET, ROBIN OF LOCKSLEY.” the voice was rich and sonorous. That voice! It was weirdly familiar.

"Then you have me at a disadvantage. You know, it could be considered bad form, impolite at the very least, to hide one’s identity under a cloak at someone’s wedding! Could you kindly reveal yourself…please?”

The hooded figure nodded. “I COULD. I WILL. TRY NOT TO BE ALARMED!” Two hands came up to slowly pull back the cloak, revealing an instantly recognisable face from his past, making him gasp in shock.

“Zeus?” he almost choked. “Is it really you?”

“IT IS, THOUGH YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR, LORD LOCKSLEY. NOTHING IS WRONG, I JUST THOUGHT IT TIME TO PAY YOU A VISIT. WE NEED TO HAVE A… CONVERSATION!”

“Well it’s certainly more than a surprise! It’s not every day the King of the Gods pays a social call. I’m not sure of the form here. Should I introduce you to my family?”

Zeus chuckled, deep and low. “YOU COULD TRY, BUT I SUGGEST NOT! YOU MAY GET SOME RATHER STRANGE LOOKS. YOU SEE, NO ONE ELSE CAN SEE OR HEAR US AT THE MOMENT. AS FAR AS THEY ARE CONCERNED, YOU AND I ARE NO LONGER HERE…”

Robin looked up as Alan-a-Dale seemed to walk right past them, within inches, without even noticing his forest leader. “Well, while you’re here, I suppose I should start by thanking you! For sending me back? For allowing me to be with my children, and-”

“YOUR WIVES?” his smirk surprised Robin. “YOU’RE WELCOME. I’VE BEEN KEEPING A CLOSE EYE ON YOU, LOCKSLEY. I ALREADY KNOW WHAT YOU’VE BEEN DOING SINCE YOUR RETURN. YOU AND CAPTAIN JONES OVER THERE. YOU’VE USED YOUR TIME WELL. THIS VILLAGE IS RATHER IMPRESSIVE, AND CERTAINLY A LOT OF LIVES HAVE BEEN IMPROVED THANKS TO YOUR EFFORTS. AND I’M AWARE OF THE FATES OF KING GEORGE AND THE BLACK FAIRY!”

“Not my finest hours. But I’ve certainly been blessed with the extra time you’ve given me. So are you taking me back?”

“TAKING YOU BACK? WHY ON EARTH WOULD I DO THAT? CERTAINLY NOT!” he laughed. “THOUGH I WILL BE ASKING A FEW FAVOURS OF YOU IN THE YEARS TO COME. AND SOME TASKS. BUT THAT IS FOR THE FUTURE, WHICH IS WHY I’M HERE. I CAME TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT…YOUR FUTURE.”

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Regina and Emma certainly noticed the change in him. Margot definitely had! After watching their
daughter and Alice take to the floor to begin the first dance of the evening, amid the cheers of their guests, Regina had looked around for Robin to share the moment, and a dance. She asked Emma and others whether they’d seen him. Henry checked the men’s bathrooms and Roland looked outside. But he seems to have disappeared off the face of the earth! When he finally appeared, he seemed to be…different. Glum. Margot chided him for missing her father and bride dance, dragging him onto the dance floor for a quick waltz before the band finished, to be replaced by a DJ. He’d apologized, but didn’t seem himself. His mind clearly occupied, he’d exchanged pleasantries with all the leaving guests, but it didn’t seem to be…him!

As they finally settled after the long day, with the rest of the family retired to their rooms, Regina sat on the edge of the bed, rubbing moisturizer onto her legs as Emma, freshly showered and with a towel around her head, came out of the bathroom. Robin stepped into the room from the hallway, to questioning gazes from both wives.

“Well? Are you going to tell us what’s up? Or do we have to drag it out of you?” said the frustrated blonde to her husband of eighteen years, her tone a little more caustic than intended. Robin looked up, surprised, as though he hadn’t even realized they were there! “Hmm, sorry?”

“Robin, what the hell is wrong with you today?” growled Regina. “You’ve had a face like a whipped puppy all evening! You upset our daughter! She’s even wondering whether you don’t like her being married to Alice!”

That finally seemed to make him take notice. “But that’s just stupid! Alice is lovely; she’s perfect for her!”

“Well have you told HER that?” Emma jumped in. “Because you’ve been grumpy as sin ever since they started dancing! She thinks you’ve got something against Alice. And where did you even go? Henry and Ro looked for you everywhere!” The women knew it was rare for their husband to be moody. “What’s going on?”

As the pair glared at him, almost angrily, he sighed, a little more loudly than intended. They’d all vowed to be honest with each other, so he’d best get it off his chest. “You’re right, there is something wrong. I didn’t go anywhere. I was in the hall the entire time…”

Emma could sense he was telling the truth, but…

“Impossible, we looked. We would have seen you.”

“Not if I was cloaked in a soundproofed cell. I could see you, but you couldn’t see me. I had a visitor…” Emma and Regina raised a brow each, almost in unison. “Zeus. He came for a chat, as he put it”


As Emma’s jaw dropped in disbelief, Regina’s mind skirted the possibilities. Please don’t take him away! “How come I never felt his magic? How come he-” But she knew it was a foolish comment. There was magic in the heavens far greater than theirs!

“He didn’t want anyone else to see him. Though judging by a look he gave back at where we were standing, I think Merlin saw him! He came to give me some information…” His wives merely nodded for him to continue. “Merlin was right, all those years ago. Apparently, I am now an immortal…” he moved over to sit on the bed, staring towards the floor, Emma sitting beside him and taking his hand.
“Well, you kinda guessed that might be the case! So why are you-”

“Because I really hoped I wasn’t, Emma!” his voice grew louder. “It means I have to see you two, all our children, little Lucy, and any future grandchildren, all grow old and die! While I just carry on? Do you know how many women Merlin married before Maleficent? Forty-five! And Lily is his one hundred and sixty sixth child. I don’t want to outlive my children!” A couple of treacherous tears sprouted from his eyes, despite trying to stop them. “I don’t want to carry on without you!”

Finally, Emma and Regina realised the enormity of what he was telling them! The brunette pulled herself closer to him, resting her head on his left shoulder as her arm went around his back, as Emma did the same on his right side, resting her head on his free shoulder and bringing her other hand to interconnect her fingers with Regina’s.

“I don’t think I could bear saying goodbye to all of you!” his tears were in freefall now as his wives clung tighter to him. They stayed like that for a good few minutes till he calmed. Emma finally pulled away, turning to face him.

“Do you remember when you came back from rescuing Gideon, when Merlin came over? When he said you might be immortal, he also said he visits the afterlife regularly! He said he sees Anna and Rosie’s mum, and all the other families that have passed. I remember he said you can split yourself, sort of into ‘multiple you’, so you can be with everyone without any rivalry or jealousy. Surely that’s a good thing, isn’t it? So we’ll all get to keep seeing you, even when we’ve all died and moved on! Robin, how good is that? Everyone else has to grieve their loved ones when they die. You don’t! You’ll be able to see us, whenever you want. Robin, I don’t understand how it all works but, it doesn’t sound so bad to me!”

“But it won’t be the same as living with you, Emma! I can visit, but I can’t stay there. It’s not the same. When everyone dies at least they know they’ll be united! I’ll be...a visitor. At least until Zeus lets me move on. Like Merlin and Mal...”

“What do you mean?” asked Regina. “Surely they’re both immortal too?”

“Not any more. After they married, they asked Zeus if he would release them from immortality. They’re both two millennia old, after all. Zeus agreed, provided he ‘trains’ me in some final skills and helps with a few tasks, to allow them both to grow old and eventually die. I haven’t spoken to either of them yet about it. It seems Zeus does this every few millennia. Apparently, he always needs at least two immortals in the world at any one time, to ensure darkness never takes over.”

“So there is the possibility that one day you’ll be able to die and move on too? Robin, that’s better than forever. I know it’s a lot to face but-”

“Next week, Merlin’s going to teach me his last two ‘reserved skills’” he interrupted. “Time travel and...the ability to travel to the afterlife with my mind. He’s going to take me there...”

“So you’ll be able to talk to anyone you know who has passed?” Regina looked amazed as he nodded. “You’ll be able to see and pass messages between the living and the dead! Robin, that’s astonishing!”

“I guess,” he smiled, his first in hours. “So, no doubt you’ll want me to pass messages on to your father? And Daniel?” Cora was in the bowels of hell, so not to her!

“Well yes...eventually. But first, I’d want you to give a message to someone far more important. Someone I know you’ll want to see first!” His brow raised. “Marian. Your Marian! I want you to apologise for me, for my stupidity and weakness, and beg her forgiveness. And thank her for...
brining Roland into the world. Tell her he’s one of the people who saved my life, and she should be so proud of him!”

Robin smirked, turning to brush his lips against hers. “I guess I can do that. It’s true, Marian would be the first person I want to see again. As they say these days, I never did have closure…”

“In that case,” said Emma, her mind going back to more dangerous times, “You better apologise from me too, for clubbing her over the head when Killian and I tried to bring her back! If it hadn’t been for me, Zelena wouldn’t have killed her the second time…”

He nodded. “I’ll apologize to Margot, and Alice, in the morning. I didn’t mean to be grumpy, I just…”

“Had a lot on your mind? Yeah, I get that.” Emma leaned over to kiss both partners’ lips before standing. With a flick of magic, her two white towels disappeared, revealing her beautiful, still quite lean and athletic body, naked as the day she was born.

That brought a happy smile from Robin, quickly ending when a pale blue silk dressing gown covered her. “Shame, I enjoyed that!” which earned a titter from both women. “Me too!” said Regina before magicking her own attire. “Come on you two, bed! Your turn in the middle, Locksley…” He happily complied, moving into the centre and opening his arms to gather in his lovers to his chest, all settling quickly. Emma frowned in thought as she gave one of his nipples a quick peck, settling her head on him. “One thing. You said Zeus always needs two immortals down here?”

“He did, though I have no idea why.”

“And Mal and Merlin were now mortal, and you’re not. So who else is immortal?”

“Baelfire, apparently.”

“NEAL?” Emma almost choked. “Fuck - why Neal?”

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"Daniel Colter. Mr. Locksley, it's a pleasure to finally meet you!"

Chapter Summary

After Margot's wedding, as the implications of his immortality sink in, with Merlin's guidance, Robin makes his first trip to the afterlife to meet some very special people.

The Lucas and Jones partners have an announcement for their children, and it seems someone other than the Locksley trio got to see Robin's drawings, much to Regina's embarrassment...

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone. Still here? If you are, you have my love and gratitude. My first ever story is almost complete and there'll be an epilogue to follow. It'll set the scene for a follow up story.

Thanks once again for taking the time to read me. As I've said so often, all constructive comments will be taken, though nothing nasty. I hope you enjoy...

Fi x

The Gold Mansion

The recent years had been kind to the Gold family. After centuries of pain, loss and misery, trapped under the absolute control of the Dark One, Rumpelstiltskin had decided that, no longer being immortal, he would enjoy the remaining years of his life with his family, to the full. Although centuries old, he'd managed, with magic, to hold the recent years at bay. Having two beautiful younger wives, he wanted to ensure he was still fit enough, in all respects, to keep Ariel and Belle happy. However, underneath the magic, his mortal body was rapidly approaching his seventies, so time was of the essence.

A decade earlier, he'd officially changed his name to Angus Gold, in line with his passport. Taking full advantage of his considerable wealth, he, Belle and Ariel travelled the world extensively, all wanting to see and enjoy as many sights and experiences as possible. They acquired additional homes in Scotland (close to his forebears and magical roots) and Italy, where so many wonderful experiences getting to know their mermaid happened and life was somehow simpler. Baelfire and Henry, along with their families and his beloved grandchildren, became regular visitors, to Storybrooke and elsewhere, and his happiest times were on those rare occasions when he had them all under one roof.

Today, the day after Margot Locksley’s wedding to the young Rogers girl from another realm, Rumple’s family were gathered at their Storybrooke home, for Sunday lunch. As he looked around
the dining room, Rumple smiled contentedly. There were fourteen people around that table! As he poured wine and soft drinks, Belle and Ariel fuss ed around their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, serving up bowls and dishes laden with food. On one side sat Merida and Bae, their now fifteen-year-old twin girls Isla and Maisie either side, and in the middle, their surprise son Hamish, a bouncy seven-year-old bundle of energy who looked so much like Henry. He’d been named after Merida’s much missed brother, who’d died in the battle of DunBroch. On the opposite side of the table sat Henry and Ella, their children Lucy and Christopher in between. Gideon and Melody sat beside their mothers, on Rumple’s left and right.

Gideon and Melody had both acquired their father’s magic, and their three parents’ intelligence. Gideon, having Rumple’s more scientific mind, would go on to win acceptance to Stanford in California. Melody on the other hand, was more of a bookworm, like her brunette mother, although it would also break their mothers’ hearts when she would finally go on to win a place at Oxford University, studying English Literature and Languages. Both children would finally graduate with first class honours degrees, carving excellent careers for themselves in the future. But that was the future. For now the family was all together. Bae (Neal was the name reserved for this realm) had just told them all about his conversation with Zeus the previous day. It seemed the King of the Gods had also had a similar conversation with Robin Locksley.

“So you’re really immortal now? Dad, that’s amazing!” said Henry, realizing the implication. “Though you’re taking it a lot better than Robin did. They told us over breakfast this morning. He didn’t seem too happy about it!”

Bae shrugged. “Yeah, it must have been a shock to him. He’ll be fine, once he realizes what happens after the Underworld. I was lucky, I guess. I spent a lot more time down there than he did. I’d a chance to meet loads of people who’d moved on, even my own mum and her parents. Zeus let me meet a lot of people who’d gone to the happier place. It’ll be horrible watching all my loved ones die and move on, but at least I’ll get to see you all regularly after. It’s a really hard thing to explain. Robin just has to experience it for himself.”

Rumple looked on, his heart heavy. Bae would spend an eternity seeing his family in the afterlife, but that pleasure would likely be denied to him, a former Dark One. He was almost certain to be going to the same place as Cora, and his own mother Fiona, and his father, Peter Pan. The pits of hell!

However, it seemed Bae picked up on his dark thoughts. “Papa, sorry, I almost forgot some something he said. Something important. He told me him and the gods look upon the crimes of a Dark One as belonging to a dark entity itself, not its host. You were controlled and not acting of your own free will. So when you finally pass over, you may need to spend some time in purgatory, but you won’t be going where you think you’re going!”

“What - Zeus actually said that?” he couldn’t believe his ears!

“I swear it, papa! The Dark One’s crimes are not your crimes. You’ll be joining us in the afterlife!”

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The Diner

Alice Lucas’s parents looked on lovingly, cheering as she blew out the sixteen candles on her birthday cake.
Alice knew she, and her two older brothers, were ‘different’ from most people in town. How could they not be? After all, one of her mums was a werewolf, the other the fabled Hero of Oz, and her father was an infamous pirate captain with magic, which she’d inherited! And her third, non-biological mother? Well she wasn’t famous, but mamma Rosie had magic more powerful than any of them, and her father was the greatest sorcerer who ever lived! When they were old enough to understand, Alice her brothers had been sat down by their parents and told all about their origins. About how she and Nattie wouldn’t even be alive today, if it hadn’t been for Merlin’s magic. How he had fused their mothers’ eggs, and, with her father’s help, had enabled them to have children. Having three natural parents wasn’t too hard to take on board, once she discovered that her friend and classmate Xhou Briar, and the older girls Faith and Hope Locksley, were the same.

She loved her older brothers, but was particularly close to Liam, who seemed the more caring and protective by nature. It was a happy upbringing, though she used to hate it when dad had to sail off on his ship at least once a year, sometimes for months at a time, taking Liam and mamma Rosie with him. As she grew older, she became more aware of the unusual relationship between Dad, Rosie, and her mothers. She knew the four were close. Very close. Though it wasn’t until ten years ago, when Nathaniel came back from school one day looking upset, that she got to know all about the rumours that were spread about them. It took a while, under their mothers’ continued pestering, for him to reveal what had been said.

Now, on her sixteenth birthday, after she’d opened her presents and polished off half the birthday cake, the mood turned a little more serious when her older mother said they had something important to say. Rosie and dad sat at the table, waiting for Dorothy to start.

“OK, guys. Your mums, dad and I have something to tell you. As you know, the four of us have been together for the best part of two decades now...” she started, looking across at the other couple, Killian winking back. “Though technically, even though we all love each other to bits, we are still two married couples…” Alice stared back, wondering why she was stating the obvious?

“Well...we’ve been very happy over the years, but, after talking with your mum, we decided that perhaps we wanted something more. So, last night she and I asked mamma Rosie and dad if they would consider something. We asked for their hands in marriage. And they said yes!”

Liam and Nat looked at each other, Nat slightly confused. “Erm...not that I’m saying anything against it but...why now? I mean, it’s good but...you guys are already together anyway, right?”

“We are indeed, lad,” replied Killian, expecting this from his older son. The one who was most like himself. “Nathaniel, it wasn’t necessary; just something the four of us wanted! After all these years, it brings us all together, just a little bit more formally…”

Alice face slowly morphed into a huge grin as she thought it through. “So, there’s really going to be a wedding? A real four-way wedding?” gasped Alice. “Never heard of one of those before. Four parents – sounds kinda cool! That’s one more than Xhou or the Locksley girls got! Three mums - and we get Liam as a ‘proper’ brother, too!”

“So what am I now - an improper brother?” said Liam, who merely smirked, “I somehow always had a feeling these guys would do this, eventually!”

And so, just three months later, the two towns witnessed their first ever four-partner wedding ceremony, held on the back lawn of at the Earl of Locksley Inn, which Robin had given over to them for the day. As word spread of the unusual event, despite some odd reactions initially, it seemed most of the citizens of Sherwood and Storybrooke wanted to attend. As Nathaniel had been dating
Hope Locksley for over than a year, they also invited her family, even though Emma and Killian were still not entirely comfortable in each other’s company, even after so many years.

It was a quirky, but romantic ceremony, as all four of them each took it in turn to pledge their vows to the other two. Dorothy and Ruby Lucas had stood with the officiant and newly-elected mayor, Archie Hopper, waiting for their bride and groom to arrive.

Although Killian looked particularly dashing in his former naval uniform (with Ruby and Dorothy still able to fit into magically-restored wedding dresses worn nineteen years ago!), it was Rosalind’s new dress that stole the show. As she slowly walked up the aisle arm-in-arm with Killian to meet their brides, gasps were heard all around. Magically created with the help of both her sisters (Celia came from England especially), the entirely seamless sheer white pure silk dress flowed over her long torso legs and torso like liquid paint, with nothing underneath, and had the unintended effect of arousing Ruby, Dorothy and a fair proportion of the crowd at its unadulterated sexiness! Set against her long brown locks and careful makeup, she looked fabulous. The Lucas wives shared a look, Dorothy whispering so low only her wolf would hear “We are so going to nail her tonight!” Ruby smirked back, replying, “no way I'm waiting till tonight!” Killian glanced over the guests, seeing an almost envious look on the face of a certain blonde Saviour, who he’d once thought was his true love. Envious of her…or me? he pondered.

Once the service concluded, applause rang around the grounds as the four walked from the platform down towards the inn, Rosie arm-in-arm with Dorothy, and Killian with Ruby right behind. “Well, now I’ve seen just about everything!” said Snow, clutching onto her husband, a tear in her eye.

It turned out to be an excellent marriage. One that would remain full, loving and faithful for many decades to come, till old age, rather than illness, injury or misfortune, finally claimed them all. After completing her education at an exclusive private girls’ school in Boston, Alice Lucas-Jones would go on to travel across realms with her father and mothers, enjoying countless adventures and several relationships, before eventually finding love in the arms of Xhou Briar, marrying and settling in Storybrooke to create her own family. One day she would even be mayor herself.

Liam Lucas-Jones, sharing his father’s wanderlust, would go on to take ownership of the Jolly Roger, after Killian became too infirm in his eighties (or two hundred and eighties in enchanted years) to sail alone. He explored the realms, often joined by family and grandfather Merlin, who taught him in the use of his magic. Although an avowed bachelor, having had several serious relationships over the years, with both men and women, Liam finally found his own true love with Paul, a fellow seafarer from the Enchanted Isle. His older brother Nathaniel, although travelling frequently across the realms with his family, decided to base himself in Storybrooke, where he eventually fell in love with, and married, Faith Locksley, going on to have three children of their own, uniting two of the most famous families in Storybrooke, much to Emma and Regina’s initial discomfort, even if they did adore their resulting grandchildren.

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The years would also be kind to the Briar family. Despite his regular attempts to resign from office, the town peoples’ choice of the former Prince Philip yo remain mayor proved to be a wise one. Mayor Briar served ten years overall before, despite objections from many, including Mulan, deciding to stand aside so a fresh election could be called and a new figurehead installed. Following his example, Emma also resigned as sheriff, to enjoy more time with her growing, dispersed family.
Mulan stood for election, won, and finally became Sheriff of the jointly administered Storybrooke and Sherwood, an office she would hold for a further five years before retiring herself. Aurora ran the local elderly residential care home and nursery before retiring herself. Philip Junior, or ‘Pip’ as he was known by all, would eventually leave Storybrooke to join the US Air Force. A decade late, after a brief marriage ending in divorce when his wife was unfaithful, he returned to Storybrooke, where he dated, and eventually married, Honour Locksley.

His sister Li, like her mother Mulan, would leave college to serve in the armed forces with distinction, before eventually travelling across China with a boyfriend she dated in college. Later in life, Li decided to return to her home, especially as her three parents were getting older. Like her father, she’d go on to become Mayor of Storybrooke one day before, much to everyone’s surprise, she started dating the bookish scholar Gideon Gold, who she eventually married, giving birth to two daughters. Her younger brother Xhou turned out to be the most academic of the Briar children. He followed Henry’s path to Harvard, discovering a gift for languages. Like Li, he would travel and explore China and the Far East, before setting up a travel business in New York. It was while he was there that he renewed his friendship with his old classmate, Alice Lucas-Jones. Friendship eventually turned to something much deeper and, just before his fortieth birthday, they were wed.

So over the years, through marriage and new offspring, the four magical families of Storybrooke. The Golds, Locksleys, Briars and Lucas-Jones families, the four polyamorous families of Storybrooke, became linked by blood and law.

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The Convent

Three days after Margot’s wedding, Robin met Merlin at the convent. The Sorcerer had explained the magical process involved at some length, going over it numerous times. It involved lying down, somewhere where he knew his mortal body wouldn’t be disturbed, preferably in a secured room, while he magically made himself unconscious. Hence the reason Blue stood listening, as it would be her fairies’ task to ensure Robin’s body lay completely safe as his mind separated itself for the first time.

“Will it hurt, Merlin?”

“No Robin, the sensation is painless, but you’ll be exhausted after. You’re putting yourself into a coma. The tricky part of all this is the concept of time! There is no sense of it in the afterlife; it’s perpetual. Once you’ve got over the initial shock, you will find the experience…joyful. Even addictive! Re-united with all those you have lost. Family, friends. The only ones you won’t see are those who have committed major acts of evil or have not atoned. But time still moves on back here, and a physical body will soon decay without sustenance. Sometimes you can visit the afterlife and it seems, when you return, that only minutes have passed. Other times - weeks may pass. Reul will inform me if there’s any sign you’ve been away from your physical body too long. At first, I may well have to come and get you! So, are you ready?

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Putting himself to sleep wasn’t the difficult part, but this this was completely weird! Robin had imagined the afterlife (or Heaven, Valhalla, Paradise or however anyone referred to it) would be like the Underworld. But it bore no relation. He’d imagined clouds and mist, people in robes, but this? He stood in a large open forum, with giant Coliseum-like pillars in the distance. People appeared to be walking around in normal clothes. But so many varieties, so many colours! As he stood in wonder at the scene before him, immediately behind him a warm female voice spoke. “Robbie?”
He turned, his jaw dropping in utter shock and amazement when he laid eyes on her. The woman he hadn’t seen for over forty years. The woman who knew him like no other. The woman who gave birth to him. “Mamma? Can it…is it…really you?”

“My little chick! Just look at you? All grown up. A man. A father. A husband…” her voice was soft and gentle. Full of understanding how he was feeling right now. On hearing her pet name for him for the first time since he was a child made the tears well up almost immediately.

“Oh mamma!” he pulled her tightly to his chest, grateful to find she wasn’t some ethereal figure in the mist. She was solid, even warm! “Mamma, you have no idea how much I’ve missed you…” he felt warm, strong arms as she pulled herself into him a little tighter.

“Oh, I have every idea, my darling! I’ve missed you too! And my Maria. But I’ve also been watching you. We all have…”

“Watching me? All of you? I don’t understand…”

“You will, in time. We all have the means to look on our loved ones from here, my chick. Your father and I have watched you and your sister closely since the days we passed. I know all about your lives…your children…your wives…”

Robin felt a twinge of embarrassment. “You have? So you know…everything?”

“Most things. Not your thoughts, obviously, but your actions, most certainly. All the things you’ve done for the poor over the years, protecting your people. We’re immensely proud, Robin. It’s no wonder the King of the Gods sent you back…”

Robin was floored, not sure what to say. They could see everything? “And…what about papa? We didn’t part on the best of terms…”

“And that was entirely my fault!” a deeper voice rumbled, right beside him. “I was unfair to you Robin. I hope you can find it in your heart to forgive a proud old man?” his head turned to see Robert, Earl of Locksley, standing right there, looking as he did, dressed as he last remembered him, over forty years ago, when they’d had a terrific row. Robert had finally lost his patience, slapping his disobedient son hard around the cheek. Rather than take it, as he so often did, Robin had reacted angrily, by punching his father hard in the face, knocking him out cold, before storming off. It was the last time father and son had spoken.

“PAPA!” without asking, he hauled the man tightly into his chest. “Papa, please forgive me? I reacted harshly!”

“Nonsense, my boy! You spoke nothing but the truth – as usual!” the two men held each other tight, his mother looking over his shoulder, sporting a sad smile. “I struck you first and I deserved the beating. I just wish we’d had the time for me to make amends before I passed over in the fire. There’s nothing for you to forgive, my boy. It is I that seeks an apology! I was wrong and your Marian turned out to be a remarkable woman; I’ve seen what a joy Roland has been to your life. You’ve made me very proud!”

Many tears of joy and more hugs were shared over the next, what seemed like hours, until a soft, warm voice he’d heard so often in his dreams, a voice he’d know anywhere, was heard from behind him as he held his mother once again. “I hope you have one of those hugs for me?”

“MARIAN! OH, MY DARLING!” he turned instantly, dragging her into his arms and, not caring who saw, seizing her lips with his own as though his whole life depended on it. Marian responded in
kind and for a while it felt like she’d never been gone. When they finally parted, as he remembered his current situation, guilt fell over him. “Sorry – I shouldn’t have done that!”

“Whyever not? Robin, you may be widowed, but we were still married! I hardly think Emma and Regina would mind, under the circumstances. In this afterlife, I’m quite sure Regina will be kissing Daniel Colter when she passes over too. I’m sure Merlin told you how this works here?”

He sighed, nodding and smiling. “Of course – you know about them…” he looked to his sides, noticing his parents had disappeared. “So the Prince you were once betrothed to; the one killed by George. You see him too?”

“I see everyone who I knew before I passed, if I want to. We are divisible, my love. No envy, no anxiety. You will get used to it. Everyone does. You remember Sophia, my ladies maid? I know she will love to see you again. She even said it was she and I who taught you all those little techniques that your living wives are so appreciative of!” she gave him a lusty look he never imagined he’d see ever again.

“God, I’d forgotten how deliciously wicked you can be,” he kissed her again. “Though I can’t help feeling this would be wrong if you were alive rather than in my mind?”

“Well, I’m not, so it doesn’t count! By the way, I need to have a word with you about those… drawings!”

“Drawings? Sorry, I don’t-”

“Those drawings and etchings you made of me? The more intimate ones? Robin, they got to see… everything!”

*Now it was his turn to be smug.* “They did! Though just for the record, they both thought you were very beautiful. You forget, they both have an appreciation of the fairer sex! Regina was really quite effusive. Incidentally, she wanted me to apologise on her behalf, for the Black Knights who ultimately killed you! It may not have been her, but she sent them…”

Marian smiled benevolently. “It’s forgotten. It’s difficult to maintain hatred up here. Besides, I know how much she’s changed since her Evil Queen days. It’s not for me to judge. That’ll be done by the Celestial Court when she finally passes over. But I’m pretty sure her mental illness at the time will be taken into account. You can tell her that I’ve also spoken with her father on numerous occasions. And Daniel, the lover her mother murdered…”

“You know Daniel? But…how? You were in different realms... different times!”

“We were. There’s many Underworlds but only one afterlife.Incidentally, I also had a chance to meet one of your youngest. Faith? When she almost died in that car accident a little while ago? My father and I helped her go back. Far too young to be here…”

Robin was stunned. He remembered how Faith was only eight when she and her friends were involved in a crash caused by a drunk driver. How she had been on life support for three days, in that hospital bed, her mothers never once leaving her side. The nursing team said it was unlikely she would come back. But come back she did! He remembered how, after she eventually recovered, she told them how a beautiful tall black-haired lady, and an older silver haired man, had told her she wasn’t due to arrive there yet, to think about her family and about wanting to be back with them. That she had to be strong. That her daddy and mummies needed her to go back.

“That was you? You met Faith?” *Were there any more surprises I store for him today?*
"I did. She’s lovely. Fascinating, how even though Regina gave birth to her, she’s a blonde like
Emma. You don’t need to explain, I know all about the shared DNA! Without Merlin’s help - that’s
impressive! A sign of True Love indeed…"

He frowned. “You seem to know everything, Marian! Hardly anything I need to tell you…”

“You’re so wrong there! I have hundreds of questions. Mainly about Roland. I need to know
everything he’s doing, he’s…” she stopped, looking over his shoulder as something distracted her.

A deeper voice, a young, shy man, seemingly in his early twenties, had appeared beside them,
looking hesitant. “Sorry to disturb you, Marian! It's very rude of me, I know. But…” he interrupted,
Marian glanced across at him, her face changing from surprise to a resigned smile. “Of course. It’s no
problem, Daniel…”

Daniel? Robin stepped back from Marian, looking at him properly when he heard the name.
“Daniel? As in…”

“Daniel Colter. Mr Locksley, it’s a pleasure to meet you!”

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Fortunately, Robin remembered the instructions the Sorcerer had given him to return to his body.
Nonetheless, as he slowly opened his eyes, he reacquainted himself with his surroundings, to find
three women looking over him, all with odd smiles on their faces.

“Welcome back, Robin!” said Reul Ghorm, as his vision came into focus.

It felt like he’d woken from a very deep sleep. “How long was I gone?” he groaned.

A smiling, familiar, green-eyed blonde appeared over him “About four hours,” said an old friend.

“Tink? you’re back!” he yelled, before clutching the fairy’s arms, pulling her down to apply a large
kiss on her cheek. “We missed you! Does Gina know you’re here? She needs to…hang on a minute.
Four hours? It felt like I’d been gone days!”

“Time in paradise often works like that, Robin. So I’ve been told!” said Blue, grinning and resting a
hand on his right thigh. The green fairy gave her superior a knowing look, smiling back and
scrunching her nose. “Did you enjoy your first visit to paradise?”

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“I still can’t believe you met Daniel?” Regina was almost speechless as Robin had recounted his trip.
Evening cocoas in hand, Emma sat close, her arm around her wife, knowing too well how her mind
was doing somersaults.

“I did. He seems such a nice young man, Gina. He introduced me to his parents too! He told me how
much he loved you, felt terrible for having broken your heart in the way he was forced to leave. That
he wanted to know just how proud he was of what you’ve finally become…”

A tear for the memory of her first ever love slid slowly down her cheek. “I loved him, Robin, so very
much.”

“Correction. You still love him, Gina. Love doesn’t just end on death. You take it with you. When
you pass over, he’ll be there, waiting…”
“Robin, I love Emma and you! Please don’t say things like that. I moved on. I had to!”

“You love all of us! As we love you! I saw how it works, Gina. Imagine you being able to split yourself into many Reginas. One for me, one for Emma, one for me and Emma together. Another for Daniel. Your parents. There’s no envy. No competition. No anger or need for vengeance. It’s just… paradise.”

“And daddy? Is he happy?”

“He watches over you. He’s so proud too. He had his first love, Beatrice, by his side. He was forbidden from seeing her by his own parents. Sounds like someone we know? And he adores Henry and the girls. Emma, he wanted me to personally thank you for saving Gina’s life! He saw everything…”

Emma gave him a sad smile. “You forget. She saved mine too, you know? So, you saw Marian?”

“It was wonderful. I’m going to tell Roland all about it, when he gets back. Do you remember when Faith had that car smash? She was in a coma for days. You remember, just after she woke up, she mentioned a black-haired lady who told her to go back? How we all thought her imagination got the better of her? No, that was Marian! She watched over our girl. She told her it wasn’t time, and how she could get back to us…”

Regina sighed, content. “It seems I owe Marian more than I ever realised. She may have been your first wife, but I’m almost looking forward to meeting her. When I die.” Was she really saying that?

“And you will, Gina. Mind you…she did tell me off for letting you see my pictures of her!”

“The naked ones?” said Emma, grinning. “Don’t see why she’s upset. She looks great in them!”

He chuckled. “Interesting you say that. She said something similar about you two! Somehow, she got to see those ones I did of you and Regina, when we finally managed the honeymoon. The Zanzibar one…”

Both wives looked at him, in shock. “Not that tribbing one, surely? Robin, that was positively pornographic!”

“And one I happen to love! I sneak it out of the sealed casket to look at it on rare occasions. It seems Marian was looking over my shoulder…”

“Thief, you better pray that drawing never sees the light of day until I’m at least dead and buried. Hopefully not even then. Otherwise, I’ll have to return and kill you myself!”

Emma chuckled. “Personally, I think it’s a great sketch! One I’ve looked at several times when I’ve been… alone!” At that, Regina and Robin shared a knowing smirk. When she was alone? Emma saw it, realised what they now knew and blushed, deciding to change subject, quickly!

”So…any other news, Mr. Immortal Traveller between Realms?”

“Well, only one little snippet. Are you aware Tink and Blue are now a couple?”

Regina almost sprayed hot chocolate over the carpet in her coughing fit. “You have got to be kidding me?”
Are you trying to seduce me, Mrs. Locksley?

Chapter Summary

The Heroes are getting older and frailer. What awaits them in the afterlife? One of the first finds out for herself and gets an uncomfortable surprise!

All lives, no matter how great, must finally draw to a close, just as surely as night follows day. And as the Heroes grew older, and more frail, finally, one by one, they faded into the night.

The first to pass was, surprisingly, Belle Gold, at the age of eighty-five. After a severe bout of pneumonia, she passed away peacefully in her bed in their Storybrooke home, Ariel and Rumple either side of her. The doctors had advised them she’d weakened considerably, so it wasn’t too much of a surprise when her fighting spirit finally gave up. But it was still a major blow and her family mourned her. They all gathered for the funeral, with even Triton and Athena joining them to pay their final respects to the woman who tamed the beast that was the Dark One, and who loved their mermaid daughter.

Just over a month later, the passing of Snow White and Prince Charming, within seconds of each other, was, despite their ages, a great blow to Emma. As she, her brother Neal and sister Louise, the young Emma-lookalike, herself almost forty years old, held onto each other tightly by the graveside, the double-coffin containing Storybrooke’s most famous true loves, was gently lowered into the ground. Their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren all stood silently, most sobbing, as the sad ceremony came to an end. It was a poignant moment for Regina too, who, as she clung to Robin, shed many tears at the final passing of two of her once greatest enemies, now two of her closest friends. The royal couple had never feared death, having almost had it taken from them so many times in the past. But as Emma watched Henry’s daughter Lucy drop a single rose onto the coffin as it lay in the ground, she was at least later comforted by Robin’s words, as he spoke eloquently and with personal knowledge, to the gathered crowd at the wake after. After delivering a eulogy on behalf of the family, he gave a few personal thoughts:

“You’ll get to see them again, you know? All our loved ones. If they genuinely repent and ask forgiveness from those they’ve wronged in this life, they’ll move on to Heaven, or Paradise, Valhalla or however you prefer to describe it! Rubes, you know I’ve spoken to Granny? And your mother, Anita. They’re both so proud of you and Dot and adore Alice and the boys! Gilbert, your brother Billy’s taking good care of Connie (Constance, Gilbert Whitehand’s daughter, died in a freak accident when she was only five)! You all need to remember that life still goes in, even after you die, just...differently. Your past loves, your loved ones, your friends. So although this is indeed a very sad day, as we celebrate the remarkable lives of Snow and David, you need to know that you’ll meet again…”

It turned out Regina would see Snow and David much sooner than she expected! Six months after the funeral, a day shy of her ninety-first birthday, the former Regina Mills, Mayor of Storybrooke and Evil Queen before that, suffered a major stroke from which she never recovered. Two days later, in the now-expanded Sherwood Hospital, surrounded by most of her family, her heart finally stopped. Robin and Emma stood either side, leaning over her still-warm body to kiss her for the last time.
"Rest in peace, my love!" sobbed Emma, a tear falling on the cheek of her now-grey haired wife.

"Till we meet again..." added Robin, "which hopefully will be sooner than you think!"

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Regina opened her eyes to a very different place from the one she was in when she closed them! She seemed to be lying on some sort of couch, in a log cabin? Without thinking, he sat up immediately, when a voice came from nearby. “Hello Regina, it’s been some time, hasn’t it?”

She turned, seeing a bearded man she hadn’t clapped eyes on for over forty years. “King Arthur?”

“Yes, Your Majesty, but I think we can both forgo titles now, don’t you? Welcome back to the Underworld.” He saw her shoulders slump, a sadness starting to overwhelm her as she realised her predicament. “Don’t be afraid. I can assure you it has changed considerably since you last came here. We try to make the process quick and as painless as possible…”

“Process? I’m not sure I understand?”

“The process of judgment, Regina. In the past, Hades treated this place as his personal fiefdom, to bring pain and torment to the dearly departed. With his destruction, we now treat it as the gods intended; as a departure lounge to the afterlife. Very shortly I’ll take you to a stairway, which leads to the Celestial Court. You’ll be judged, to decide your fate. The process is surprisingly quick and painless, I assure you. Most people then need to remain in purgatory for a while to atone for their past. They will show you how. Then...hopefully...you pass on to paradise. Come!” Almost as soon as he finished speaking, an entire wall of the cabin seemed to fade to nothing, an enormous slow-moving white staircase now appearing in its place, leading up into the clouds with a bright light behind.

Regina gulped, her mouth dry. “Arthur...I’m...I’m frightened!”

“Of course you are, my dear. Who wouldn’t be? Now come…”

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Storybrooke

Ruby and Dorothy had sold the diner over twenty years ago, to their business partner Mike’s son. He’d gone on to refurbish and extend it, incorporating his father’s old bakery next door. But he’d kept the name and the ‘Granny’s’ sign still hung over the door, even though he was born long after the old wolf had died. The tables in the dining room were now heaving with food as people from the town and village came to pay their final respects to Regina’s memory. At a centre tables sat Robin and Emma, the Saviour now in a wheelchair, with their grandchildren asking question after question as they sat around the pair.

Lucy, Henry’s ever-inquisitive daughter, thinking up most of them. “Explain it to me again Grandpa, what's the ‘court’ you have to go through when you die?”

Robin smiled down on her. “The Celestial Court, Lucy. Everyone who dies has to go through it. I never actually saw it myself, but Merlin explained it to me. It’s like a giant arena, bigger than you could possibly imagine. Hundreds of thousands of people can sit in there, just to listen to the judgments, while judges make the final decision. There’s magic involved as screens play ‘live’ scenes from the history of the life being judged. The good things you’ve done, the bad things. But the screens show it all. Nothing passes their gaze. If you’ve led an overall good life, you pass onto another staircase that takes you to your version of heaven. If you’ve been really bad, you go
somewhere else.” Robin really didn’t want to think of that option! "Most people have done some bad things as well as good in their lives. In their case there is something called purgatory, where they have to face people who they’ve caused harm to. Where they can reflect, apologise and most importantly, ask for forgiveness. If and when they finally receive it, or if the gods think they sincerely tried, they can move onto the upper staircase again…”

“So how long would you have to remain in purgatory? Months? Years?”

“That depends on the crimes, and if you really regret them. Time’s very different there. So what feels like years there can be weeks here. Or vice versa. It all depends on the judgment…”

Henry said what everyone else had been thinking, “So what about mum? Do you think her Evil Queen days will-” he stopped, seeing the pained look on Emma’s face. “Sorry ma, I didn’t mean to-”

“It’s OK, Hen. You’re just curious. As far as Robin and I are concerned, she more than made amends over the last few decades for what she did in the distant past. Yes, she did some pretty bad stuff before, but…”

“Daddy,” Faith interrupted. “You’ve been there a few times, haven’t you? Couldn’t you go there and check up on mum, to see what’s happened?” She was talking as though she hadn’t actually died!

Robin sighed heavily. “I wish it was that simple, my love! Unfortunately I can’t just go there whenever I want. There’s strict rules as to how much access they allow. Merlin and I can’t abuse it. But I’m going to speak to him to see what I can do…”

“Is there any chance she could go to hell, like Grandma Cora?” said Hope, in all innocence. Though seeing the shocked looks on her two remaining parents’ and older brother’s faces, she wished she’d kept her mouth shut!

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The Celestial Court

Regina stood rigid with fear when she finally arrived at the end of the moving staircase. An other-worldly feel clung to the place, as a magical force seemed to gently lift her, moments later transplanting her into the centre of some form of giant white ampitheatre, far larger than anything she had encountered! Although it could clearly contain hundreds of thousands of people, only a few hundred were gathered either side. It was difficult to see any individual faces, being so far away. She was still in shock when a large wooden lectern, and microphone, apparated directly in front of her. Now she felt she was on trial!

Before she could react, a giant screen, greater than she’s ever seen, and certainly larger than anything she knew of on earth, appeared above and to the front of her, enabling all around the arena to see the event unfold. Her terrified face now appeared on it, magnifying her grey hair, rheumy eyes and wrinkles, and nine decades of living, visible to all. Moments later, the image switched across to someone starting to speak.

“THE COURT IS NOW IN SESSION!” boomed a huge, deep voice, heard all around the arena, reducing the hubbub to silence. The shape of a large, black haired and bearded man appeared. He emanated power. “Regina, daughter of Cora and Henry, you stand here to be judged, as all must, for your actions during the life you were given and the gifts bestowed by the gods. Depending on the evidence, you will be granted eternity, either in Paradise, or damnation in the bowels of Hell. Do you understand?”
Momentarily unable to speak, she clutched the lectern tightly for support. As she did so, a glass of water appeared on it. She seized it gratefully, gulping the contents down quickly. *If she was dead, why was her throat dry? Why did she need water?* “Yes. Thank you…Sir!” she finally replied.

The bearded man nodded. “I am Minos. To my left sits Rhadamanthys, Lord of Elysion. To my right, Aeacus, Guardian of the Keys. Together we three form the Judges of the Dead, answerable only to Zeus. We will witness the evidence before reaching our decision. All will be shown and nothing hidden. Unlike on Earth, you have no prosecution or defence counsel, unless specifically requested, and will not be required to give evidence yourself, although you can challenge any evidence produced by raising your hand. We may take further testimony before reaching our decision. Again, do you fully understand or have any questions?”

*Regina had spent the best part of fifty years trying to undo the crimes of her past. She knew it would be pointless.* “No sir. I fully accept the judgment of the Court, no matter what it may be.”

“Very well, let us proceed. We start from the then Miss Mill’s first meeting with the Dark One…”

Within moments, the giant screen started playing an apparently live recording of Rumpelstiltskin, appearing sitting on her dressing table as a younger version of her strode in angrily. “Hello dearie, having problems I see?”

The next few hours turned out to be the most painful experience of her long life by far, as all her acts, all her crimes, all her failings, were played out on the screen in front of all, as though they were happening now. Being electrocuted on a table was nothing compared to this! Several scenes were more painful than most. She winced when she saw the younger her, dressed in the most ridiculously theatrical black costume imaginable, plunge her hand into the chest of a young man, whose only crime had been to hold a small wedding service for him and his fiancée, on the edge of her lands. No mercy shown as he begged to be spared, she nonetheless crushed the heart in front of his fiancée. Exactly as her mother had done to Daniel! She bowed her head in shame. Then followed a series of other killings in the Enchanted Forest, of villagers and even her own soldiers. The wiping out an entire village, whilst her soldiers ran swords through children and the elderly, brought her the most pain, and she had to look away in disgust. *I deserve nothing less than Hell for this!*

“DO NOT LOOK AWAY! YOU MUST WATCH!” roared Minos, seeing her avoiding the evidence before her. She felt a magical force turn her head, gently but firmly, back up to face the screen. Tears were now falling freely. The images continued, showing her seemingly endless barbarity as she wrought vengeance on all who defied her. The earlier murder of King Leopold was as nothing compared to what followed. As she saw her younger self tear the heart from Graham Humbert, her most-favoured royal guard and accomplished woodsman, from his chest, Regina knew with certainty that his ultimate death at her hand would surely be shown. The visions moved on, until her father, the gentle, wonderful Prince Henry, appeared. She wailed in agony herself, when she saw the excruciating pain on her father’s face, as the cruel queen on the screen dragged his heart from his chest, crushing it in front of him. “Papa! Oh, my papa!” she cried, as he fell to the ground, his death instant. She dropped to her knees, vomiting. As she twisted to her side, a shiny silver bucket and tissues appeared from nowhere. She seized them, heaving her guts into the bucket involuntarily.

“Please…please make this stop! I’m guilty! I’ve caused so much pain and suffering - I deserve no mercy. Just, just end me! Please?” she begged.

Minos didn’t respond, merely twirling his fingers for the images to continue, as he had countless times before. The images switched to Storybrooke, to her home and her mistreatment of Henry, Snow and the townsfolk under her own curse. She thought she’d seen the worst, till a split screen appeared, one side showing the Evil Queen crushing a heart and on the right, a certain blonde sheriff
clutching Graham Humbert as he fell. *Oh god, enough!* After several more scenes from her life, no more deaths but just actions of the spiteful, catty, nasty and vindictive, spoilt, self-important woman Regina had become! After a few more unbearable scenes, all played out before her in painful reality, she sobbed quietly, waiting on her well-deserved sentencing, before no doubt being consigned to oblivion, or pain, or whatever retribution awaited her.

“That concludes the case for conviction!” boomed Minos. “Now we see the case for mitigation!”

The images switched. Firstly, Regina was shown the adoption of her son, Henry. She smiled sadly, remembering his beautiful features all those years ago. *He was a grandfather himself now!* Images raced forward as little acts of affection were displayed. Eventually, Her beautiful wife appeared, and she couldn’t help but smile as the stunningly beautiful blonde, in all her glory, walked into her life. *Now, Emma was grey-haired, wheelchair-bound, and almost as old and wrinkled as her!* The woman who had given birth to their wonderful eldest son and a daughter, who had gone from being her enemy, to her accomplice, as they fought demons and monsters in Storybrooke, Neverland, Camelot and beyond. To being her trusted ally and co-parent, as they continued to fight side by side. To being her best friend, as the images and scenes raced by, to eventually being her lover and, as scenes from her wedding appeared, her wife. The woman who captured her heart.

Then Robin came into view. The True Love she could never be without. The man who’d fathered five of their children. The man who sacrificed his own life, to save her worthless one. As Hades appeared on the screen for the first time, gasps of shock were heard around the arena when the former Lord of the Underworld blasted magic from the Olympian Crystal into Robin’s back, as he deliberately stepped in the way to save Regina’s life, killing him instantly. Her horrified expression was clearly visible to all. Regina couldn’t help but notice the surprised look on the faces of the judges as they were displayed on the screen. They then watched as the last fifty years of her life flew past in a matter of minutes. It was without doubt the most exhausting experience of her life. After what felt like hours, the images ended, her three judges reappearing on the screen.

“We’ve seen enough! I have consulted with my peers, and they have reached different conclusions and verdicts. It appears I now hold the casting vote in this matter. So, before I reach my decision, is there anything you wish to say before I pass judgment?”

A thoroughly exhausted former queen attempted to stand a little taller behind the lectern. “Sirs. Forgive me for I do not know the correct form of address here. I’ve committed some of the worst atrocities imaginable. Seeing the brutal, selfish murder of my own father has been too much for me. Magical abilities have clearly helped make me a monster. My son, and later my wife and husband, may have made me change for the better but even for me, what I have been reminded of is too much. I accept I deserve the same fate as my mother and accept whatever decision you reach. I submit my soul to your judgment!”

She closed her eyes, awaiting sentence. However, Minos appeared to address their audience. “Before I give our decision, we have received requests from witnesses to the life of the woman being judged here, who wish to give evidence. Two of those, Prince Henry of the Enchanted Forest, and Snow White, Rightful Queen of the same. However, we have declined as they are related…”

Regina sighed at the forlorn hope of seeing her father just one more time before being consigned to the flames.

“However, we will allow two witnesses to testify. The Court recognises Graham Humbert, former Captain of the Royal Guard under the then Queen Regina. Mr. Humbert?” Regina gasped as, immediately in front of her, looking and dressed exactly as he had all those years ago, Graham appeared, looking straight into her eyes.
“Thank you, my lords!” said Graham. “As you’re aware from the evidence, the queen did indeed hold me captive by capturing my heart and withholding it. She repeatedly raped me, before finally crushing it when my memories recovered.”

Regina shuddered at the memory. It was the one and only killing she carried out in Storybrooke. Nonetheless, it was murder. She avoided his eyes in utter shame.

“However, since my passing, I understand Regina has indeed changed. When I was killed, I left behind a daughter, her mother having departed some years earlier. Merlin, the Sorcerer informs me that the former queen has sought to atone for her sins by…” Graham went on to tell the demi-gods about how she had financed the young girl’s education and re-homing, setting her up with a trust fund to protect her in the years ahead. Regina was truly astonished. How on earth does he know all this? How often is Merlin here? He summarized, before bowing to the three demi-gods sitting in judgment.

“Thank you, Mr. Humbert. We shall take this into consideration. Now, let us call the final witness.” As Graham’s image faded into the mist, another figure solidified in his place.

A dark haired woman, slender, shorter than Graham, and several inches taller than herself. The new figure looked up to the judges as her face was portrayed on the screen. Regina’s jaw dropped in astonishment, scarcely able to believe her eyes.

“Mar…Marian?”

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Hardly anyone slept the night they buried Regina. It was gone one o’clock in the morning, but all the deflated grieving Locksley family still sat in the living room of the family home, the children, now adults, taking turns to tell stories of their dearly departed mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. Although it had been maudlin, they were comforted by Robin’s repeated assurances that they would one day all be reunited with her. The conversation had finally moved on to other things. Robert, Roland’s twenty-five year-old son, sat on the floor in front of his grandparents, his own four-year-old young son Billy resting between his legs. “Bumpa, (the grandchildren’s pet name for their grandfather), you’re an immortal now, right? So you live for ever and ever! How come you got really old, like nanna and grandma? You’re really wrinkly too!”

Robin laughed loudly, the first time he’d laughed in quite a while! It seemed to relax his children considerably, as all his daughters began chuckling as an embarrassed Robert rolled his eyes. “For heaven’s sake, Billy, don’t be so rude to great-grandpa!”

“No, it’s fine, Robbie – don’t tell him off!” Emma interrupted, keen to stop their grandson admonishing his boy. “Bobbie’s right to ask! Your Bumpa’s been cheating a bit over the years, so not to attract suspicion. You see, as great granny and I got older, we got lots more wrinkles and all this grey hair…” she held a lock of her now short bob up to them. “Well, it would have looked really weird if two old women in their nineties were married to someone fifty years younger, wouldn’t it? Especially as the town walls are down now. So he uses a bit of magic to hide how he really looks…”

“I never thought of that!” said Millie, Margot and Alice’s daughter. “What do you really like look now, Bumpa?”

“Millie, behave yourself!” growled Margot, embarrassed. “Sorry dad – just ignore her…”

Again, Emma defended one of her granddaughters. “It’s fine, Margie, she’s just curious! Rob?” she snuggled into her husband’s side. “Why don’t you show them?”
“Well, if you insist…” Robin’s pupils flickered gold for a moment, and his entire face changed. The carefully developed double chin and thickening cheeks disappeared, as did his grey hair, being replaced by natural dirty blonde. A darker, shorter beard replaced the grey and his cheeks now showed his dimples in all their glory.

“WOW, Bumpa, you look great!” gasped Millie, “Really handsome – I love it!”

Emma chuckled, resting her head against his chest as his arm came around her. “See what I mean? Our handsome man! Seems odd though, doesn’t it, this gorgeous guy being married to an old prune like me…”

“Stop that right now, madam!” admonished Robin. “You’re as beautiful now as you were when I fell in love with you. And when our darling Gina fell in love with you!” he kissed her now wrinkled lips, ignoring their audience, who groaned their disapproval.

Unbeknown to most of them, although Robin masked his immortality by gradually ageing himself magically, whenever the two of them retired to bed with Regina, the women would also make a point of using their magic to transform themselves into their younger, more nubile, selves. Thus ensuring that, despite their ageing bodies, their love life remained strong.

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“My lords, I was killed by the Evil Queen’s guards when I was still in my twenties. I left behind a husband and a wonderful young son, Roland, who I doubt would even remember me!” Regina grimaced at the bitter aftereffect of one of her many crimes. “The then Saviour, Emma Swan, went back in time and released me from imprisonment, though Regina’s sister, Zelena the Witch, would go on to kill me once again, as I lay unconscious after being bludgeoned to prevent my resisting…”

If there was anyone in the universe who deserved to kill her, it was Marian! She’d killed the woman (or at least her men had), Zelena had killed her a second time, and she had raised her son in her place. That wonderful boy, who had provided so much joy to her life. It was so unfair.

“However, I’ve listened to the evidence presented, and I believe you have left out several vital pieces of available evidence, that may help explain how a young girl turned into an evil queen! Firstly, the killing of her first love, a certain stable boy named Daniel Colter, who I have befriended. I wonder, my Lords, if you could kindly start from that point? I think it may add to your knowledge of the situation…” Marian seemed surprisingly confident in front of them all.

The demi-god seated on Minos’s left, Rhadamanthis? frowned, but waved a hand in tired acceptance. In a blink of an eye, the giant screen was taken over by one of the worst events of Regina’s long life. There, in front of her, she watched as her first love’s murder was played out before them. Daniel, the beautiful, innocent stable hand with whom the young Regina had fallen in love, was taken aside by Cora, before brutally forcing her hand into his chest to rip out his heart. Her cold eyes bore no humanity whatsoever, as she crushed the organ, the boy collapsing in front of the young Regina, who was screaming hysterically. Tears now rained freely down the cheeks of the much older grey-haired Regina as she witnessed it all for the third time. Murmurs of outrage were heard from around the arena as the visions ended, returning to Marian, who it seems was also now visibly shaken by what she’d seen.

“And, my lords, while I have no wish to torment Regina further,” she dabbed at her own eyes. “I believe the abuse she received at the hands of King Leopold, the man her mother forced her to marry, should also be taken into account!” A flick of Minos’s hand, and earlier scenes were displayed for all to see. Cora’s threats to Regina and partial strangulation for daring to defy her; her rape on her wedding night, and several more times were fortunately sped through as the judges saw
enough; the beatings the king inflicted on her when he realised she was only acting under duress, and held no affection for him. All scenes were played through, and as the images ended, the screen returned to Marian, who, even though she’d asked for them to be played, seemed rather upset by the brutality they contained.

“I put it to you, my Lords, that the young Regina Mills, a woman of previous good character until the death of her young lover, experienced such terrible and incredible distress from that moment, such intolerable anguish, that, coupled with a forced marriage to a cruel tyrant, she was driven to a state of severe mental instability. This was further evidenced by the complete change in her character from that point on, when she sought revenge throughout the lands. I put it to you, that she wasn’t entirely responsible for her actions…”

“Hmm. We will consider this,” replied Minos, both judges nodding either side of him. “Frankly, I am rather surprised to see you requesting to give evidence here, Mrs. Locksley. Do you have a personal interest in the outcome?”

“Yes, sir. I loved my husband, I still do, and I was always proud to carry the Locksley name. However, my death deprived me of my time with him and our son. You will know him, no doubt. Robin Hood? The man Lord Zeus sent back to the living?”

“We are fully aware of your husband, Mrs. Locksley,” Aeacus spoke for the first time. “He is even known on Olympus. Your point?”

“Robin is an excellent judge of character, my lords. I have watched over him and our son as often as I was allowed, since my passing. Robin mourned me, then some decades later he fell in love with Regina. You saw the evidence earlier. He even sacrificed his life for her. Would he have done that if Regina hadn’t changed? I hardly think so. And there’s Emma, the Saviour. Would she have fallen in love with, and married Regina if she were still evil? Unlikely, I think. You saw the acts of reparation she tried to make for her earlier crimes. She, my husband and Emma Swan even went on to create two hybrid children of their own. I understand from Merlin that it would have taken pure white magic to achieve that. Would it have been possible if Regina hadn’t been reformed? My lords, I ask you to take all this into consideration before you reach your decision…”

The screen changed to the images of the three judges, who seemed to be conferring amongst themselves. As they did, Marian turned, walking closer to the lectern, where Regina stood, still in shock.

“Marian…why…why would you do all this? After all I’ve done to you!” she whispered.

“Because of Robin. Our husband! The man we BOTH love! And for Roland.”

Regina gave her a sad smile, nodding in understanding. She studied Marian a little more closely. She was taller than she’d remembered (though that had been Zelena’s disguised version). She was certainly a beautiful woman. Luxurious long, dark brown hair, rich brown eyes, high cheekbones, a slight smile that reminded her so much of Roland. “I think I’m beginning to see why Robin fell in love with you…” the words left Regina’s mouth accidentally.

Marian smiled. “Funny - I was thinking much the same thing!” If Regina didn’t know better, she’d think Marian was flirting with her!

Their mutual admiration was brought to a halt by a grunt from Minos as the screen again centred on him. “Ahem. Mrs. Locksley?” both women looked up, nodding at him. “Mrs. Regina Locksley?”

“Yes my Lord?” This was it - the judgment!
“We had earlier been persuaded that, despite your attempts to reform and atone for your sins in the latter years of your life, these were far outweighed by the serious crimes you committed against your own people, and others, in your earlier years.”

Regina’s shoulders sank despondently, knowing what was to come. *Eternal hell and damnation!*

“However…the evidence from Mr. Humbert and Marian Locksley has given one of us pause to consider. If two people, whose lives you ruined, can speak in your defence, then it is quite possible others may too. For this reason, our judgment is that you serve a sufficient period of time in Purgatory, where you will be allowed access to those you have wronged. The period of time will depend on whether they will accept your wish to atone, or your apologies accepted, and whether your actions are sincere. You’ll be given someone to assist and counsel you in the process…”

“My Lord!” shouted Marian. “My I be allowed to assist her? I have been through Purgatory myself!”

For the first time since they appeared, two of the demi-gods faces broke out in wry smiles. “So you, Robin Hood’s first wife, wishes to help his second wife?” said Rhadamanthys, shaking his head in disbelief, “…the one ultimately responsible for her own death, to atone in Purgatory, hopefully to reach Paradise?”

“Yes, my Lord…” said Marian, smiling at an astonished Regina. “That is my wish!”

“Hmm. Very well then, let it be so recorded! Regina Locksley, you owe this woman a debt the scale of which you cannot possibly imagine. This session is now closed.”

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*The Underworld*

The moment the Celestial Court concluded, Regina felt a swift, all-encompassing power surround them, creating a thick white cloud. When it slowly evaporated, she and Maid Marian were left standing in what looked like a typical town high street, albeit with no cars and very few people around. There was some familiarity about the place. It wasn’t quite the Underworld version of Storybrooke, but a lighter shade somehow. *Less oppressive.* She didn’t recognise the few people wandering around. “I don’t get it – is this still the Underworld?”

Regina raised a brow. “They let us drink? I thought you never get hungry or thirsty up here?”

Marian chuckled. “We don’t, but that doesn’t mean to say we don’t miss it! Come on, let’s have that drink. After what you’ve just been through, I think you need it!”

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*Regina could hardly believe it. Here she was, having died, sitting on a sofa in what appeared to be a comfortable village pub, in Purgatory, sharing a bottle of rather decent red wine, with Robin’s long deceased first wife! It was madness! Worse still, she found it difficult not to warm to Marian herself. The woman seemed calm, unflappable. “Cheers! Here’s to your surviving the Celestial Court!”*
Regina couldn’t resist smirking. “I have you to thank for that! If you and Graham hadn’t interceded on my behalf, I would have-” she gulped, imagining the consequences. An eternity of pain and torment. No release. Never seeing her family again. Unimaginable suffering, most of which she richly deserved!

“Well it’s over! Now we need to ensure you meet with anyone and everyone you’ve wronged, seek their forgiveness, or do something to redress the balance. I’m going to help you find them. Most will already have moved on, but I can help bring them down here to speak to you. Like Graham, he’s moved on, but no doubt he’ll be here soon. He should be your first one you talk to…”

Regina studied Marian as she spoke, brown eyes staring into brown. “No. I can think of someone else who comes first. Someone who just stopped me getting sent to Hell! Marian, I still can’t quite understand why you even helped me? I caused your death! How can you even bear to look at me?”

The taller woman gave her a sympathetic smile. “I guess you won’t quite understand until you reach paradise itself. My hatred for you ended the moment I completed my own time in Purgatory. The gods allow us to view you all, you know? I saw how I left Robin and Roland. He was lost for a long time and there was no way I could help. Then you came into his life. As I said earlier, Robin’s always been an excellent judge of character. I saw how he fell in love with you. And you with him. In your own way, you saved him when I couldn’t. And as for Roland, the love you and your family have shown my boy as he grew up, made me realise that I misjudged you!”

Regina blushed at the compliment. “Roland’s wonderful. He saved me at one of my lowest times. I can see you in him!” she reached a hand over to rest on Marian’s. “You know he’s married now?”

Marian grinned back, interlocking their fingers. “I do. His children are adorable. My great-grandson Bobbie reminds me so much of my dad!”

The two women spent the next, what felt like several hours, catching up on all the family gossip, as though they were old best friends reunited. Marian had clearly spent a great deal of time watching over the now widely-dispersed Locksley family, and Regina was truly amazed at just how much the woman already knew about the world she’d departed over sixty years ago. Yet there was also this raw enthusiasm, this energy, that she could never imagine from someone who had died. As well as beautiful, she was far more eloquent than she’d imagined her to be, although she remembered Robin telling her that the woman was from a long-gone noble family, so it made sense. The conversation soon changed, from children and grandchildren, to memories of Robin, the man they loved. Regina asked about how they’d met, and the other woman spoke of the young thief who stole the family horse, to sell for food to feed a local village. As Marian recalled his humble apology for having mistaken them for a wealthy family, the saw the taller woman’s look change, as she desribed the moment she fell in love with him, her voice softening.

“I mean, I know he’s gorgeous but, it was that sheer kindness and gentleness that won me over! Like I was the most important woman in the whole world. Despite me being a complete bitch to him!” she reminisced.

“‘Bitch’? I’m the former Evil Queen, remember? I can do bitch!” Regina smiled back, taking another slug of the surprising good red wine.

“But Robin saw something past all that! In both of us, it seems…”

“His gentleness won me over, too. It’s pretty rare for a man to actually ‘listen’ to a woman…”

Marian nodded. “I know what you mean! Then there’s those eyes. Searing blue eyes…”
Regina pictured him in her mind. “And the dimples! That’s where Roland gets them. And his children…”

“And his chest! I remember how I used to spend hours resting my head on it, rubbing his chest hairs, when we hid in the forest, under the moonlight…”

“And the fact he’s hung like a carthorse definitely helped!” breathed Regina, causing a surprised look on Marian’s face, before the pair fell about, laughing loudly. Several drinkers looked over at the noise. It took a while for them to calm, both wiping happy tears from their eyes.

“You know, you get all that again, Regina? In paradise…”

“What? Sex in Paradise? Is that even allowed…”

“Of course! We’re not all flying around on clouds with wings attached, you know!”

Regina recalled what she’d said before. “So…you said we’re ‘divisible’. So what does that mean…for us? Would you, me…and Emma…’share’ him somehow? I’m still not sure I understand…”

“ ‘Share’ is the wrong word! I meant that each one of us can split ourselves into multiple beings. So there would be several of you to go round, spending time with Robin, your family, your previous loved ones. Same with Robin. We won’t be competing for him, or him for us, as we all have each other to be with, whenever we want. No jealousy. No envy…”

“Sounds perfect,” Regina sighed. It was so easy to talk to this woman. Now she studied her, she could see that she was really quite the beauty.

“He’s still in love with you too, you know? His beloved Marian. You were his first love. A True Love!”

“That made Regina snigger. “Well, as I said earlier, I can see what he saw in you. Tall, beautiful, elegant…”

“Why thank you, Mrs. Locksley! Our man clearly has a type, doesn’t he? Stroppy but sultry, brown-eyed brunette’s with olive skin with a temper? Can’t blame him, Regina. We’re a catch, right?” she smiled back, cheekily.

“You are! Perhaps I was once, but I’m now a ninety-two-year-old, grey-haired wrinkled prune these days…”

Marian chuckled. “Nonsense. When we get you into paradise, you’ll see! Your features change to how you want to be, or for the person you’re talking to! So when you meet Daniel, he’ll just see a stunning teenager again, with tits as hard as rocks, pearly teeth, and that gorgeous smile he knew! Then, when Emma gets here, she’ll see the more mature, alluring sexy lady she fell in love with! Same goes for you! You’ll see that amazing blonde hair she once had, the athletic body, those wonderful legs…”

“That’s my wife’s ‘wonderful legs’ you’re talking about!” she gave a devilish smirk as she sniggered. “I know you’ve been watching over us but…I’m starting to wonder just what you’ve been watching…Mrs. Locksley?”

Marian gave her a flirtatious look. “That’s for me to know, and you to guess…Mrs. Locksley!”

Regina was enjoying this banter, responding in kind. “You know, Emma and I saw Robin’s drawings and sketches of you! Those one’s we definitely didn’t put on display!” she followed it by
letting her eyes drag slowly up and down the other woman’s body. “They were really very good, especially that one of you reclining by the lake!” She expected Marian to blush. She didn’t!

“Yes. I did tell Robin off for that, when he was last here!” she took a large gulp of wine. “Though I think the ones he drew of you and Emma together were so much better! Mind you, what you were doing looked rather exhausting, I thought!”

Regina almost choked on her wine, before burying her face in her hands in embarrassment. “Oh god, I forgot about that one!” she cringed, which made Marian laugh even harder. “No please…don’t!”

“Don’t feel bad, Regina. They are a beautiful memory. You and Emma really had great bodies back then, didn’t you? Personally, I thought you both looked rather sexy. Emma’s a very lucky girl…”

“Well I have to admit…it feels a bit weird coming from you but…thank you!” Regina felt slightly less awkward.

“So…something I was wondering. As everyone’s able to be with everyone they liked, or loved, at any time, do people in the afterlife have new relationships? Or is it just continuing with the ones they had before they died?”

“Of course, just like in the land of the living! There’s more people to make friends with, for a start. Do you know, I met Pope Gregory recently? A fascinating man. And Queen Berangaria, the wife of Richard the Lionheart? What a beautiful woman, so intelligent too! All you need to do is think of the people you want to meet with, and they’re there! That’s how I met your father, Prince Henry. We’re firm friends!”

Regina gulped. “Daddy?” She knew he said he forgave her when they came to the Underworld the first time, but…“I need to speak to him before anyone else! “Is he happy?”

“Yes, but he’ll be happier when he hears, if he hasn’t already, that you’re here instead of being sent down! I met his first love, Princess Sophie, too. Lovely lady! They spend a lot of time together. I know Daniel too. He’s happy…” Marian took her hand again. “I’m going to get you to them, Regina! I’m going to make sure you get out of this place and to the people who love you. Hopefully, it won’t take too long!”

Regina held her hand tightly, before lifting it up to place a small kiss on the back. “I don’t know how I’ll ever be able to thank you?” Marian returned a warm smile. Then, to Regina’s surprise, the other woman pulled their joined hands back, raising them towards her own lips, before returning the hand kiss, albeit much more slowly, looking at her, with mischievous eyes. “Oh…I’m sure I’ll think of something!”

Another deafening silence, as brown eyes met brown eyes, neither woman looking away. It wasn’t her imagination – Marian had flirted with her earlier!

“Are you’re trying to seduce me, Marion Locksley?”

“And the fact he’s hung like a carthorse definitely helped!” breathed Regina, causing a surprised look on Marian’s face, before the pair fell about, laughing loudly. Several drinkers looked over at the noise. It took a while for them to calm, both wiping happy tears from their eyes.

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“And you were too! He does seem to have excellent taste in women, doesn’t he?”

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“Are you’re trying to seduce me, Marion Locksley?”

"What if I am...Regina Locksley?"

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Purgatory

Chapter Summary

How does a former villain, an Evil Queen, who has committed so many crimes and barbarous acts against humanity, get to reach her happy-ever after? Purgatory. A place where a sinner must truly atone and request forgiveness. Regina finds out what that entails...

Chapter Notes

Almost there, everyone! What started out as a small idea has just kept going, partly due to my tendency to deviate from the main point! Still, I'm learning. Last chapter after this one...

Enjoy,

Fiona xx

The Underworld

It felt like Regina had been in the Underworld, or Purgatory as she'd been told, for at least a year. She was fed up!

Robin said he'd spent three weeks here, but that was five long years in Storybrooke! In one of her lonelier moments, she'd worked out that, if that was the ratio, then 86 years would have passed for Emma, Robin and her family since her death! That couldn’t be right, could it? If it was, everybody she knew, apart from Robin, would probably be dead! What's happened? Would she ever get news about them? Would they even be with her when they did pass over?

“Somebody looks glum?” said the brunette, placing a cup of strong, black coffee into her hands once she'd propped herself up. “Want to talk about it? Or should I just leave you alone?”

She looked up into the kind eyes of the woman who had been her only source of comfort, her rock, over…god knows how long. “Thanks. I’m just…missing them all. It feels like I’ve been here forever! Robin said it felt like three weeks for him, but for everyone else it was five years! So that means–”

“Don’t use that as a guide, Regina, it really doesn’t work like that. If it did, it’d mean everybody you knew, even our Roland, would have died, and I’m pretty sure I would have heard something!” Regina was always touched that, since they’d been here, Marian had always referred to ‘our’ Roland and ‘our’ man. Plus, she had to continually remind herself that, though the woman was helping her, she still had part of herself already in the afterlife. “But I’ll put out the word, and see if anyone’s passed over. As I’ve said so many times since we started this, think of this place as
being a sort of ‘time trap’, until the job gets done. You’ll see them soon enough, I just know it!”

When they’d first arrived in the Underworld, Marian had been the one to arrange meetings with everyone the Evil Queen had been involved with, so they could meet again, and Regina could start the long process of atoning for her crimes and hopefully, be granted forgiveness. It was a trial, because there were just so many! Upset to find out that she could only meet people who had never forgiven her (that ruled out seeing her father, Daniel, Snow and David), her first awful meeting had been with Graham Humbert, the former Sheriff of Storybrooke; and before that, one of her guards, a huntsman and soldier.

Even though he’d spoken as a witness for her trial, he was still nonetheless more than abrupt with her:

“So…you just want me to accept your apology? Just like that, so you can move on?”

She wasn’t surprised by the aggression. It was justified! “Graham, you’re the first person, apart from Marian, who I’ve met so far, and I’m not quite sure how I even do this! I can apologise and beg forgiveness, but I can’t actually give you anything or help in any way that’s going to make up for what I did to you!”

“So, what do you THINK you did to me, Your Majesty, that you need me to forgive you for?”

Wasn’t it obvious? “Well…I killed you!”

“Anything else?” he looked ready to explode.

“Well…I took your heart in the Enchanted Forest. I made you obey me!”

“You CONTROLLED ME, YOU HEARTLESS BITCH!” He exploded, stepped right in front of her, lowering his face to an inch of hers. “You ripped the heart out of my chest, because I didn’t murder Snow White! You controlled me for five years, before you took me to another realm, leaving my mother and brother behind! And for what? Just so one spoilt, pampered bitch can put a curse on another spoilt, pampered bitch? I had a daughter, Mills! I only found out she was still alive thanks to the Merry Men finding her! Then you raped me!” Marian froze at the news, realising the task she’d undertaken wouldn’t be an easy one! “Then, just because Emma Swan broke the curse and told me she liked me, you crushed my fucking heart to dust!” he roared into her face in fury.

Regina bowed her head in shame. “I know! I’m…I’m so sorry…”

“Oh! You’re sorry, are you? Oh…oh well, that’s all right then! Let’s forget all about it! All water under the bridge…”

She knew she was treading on eggshells. “You…you don’t mean that…”

“OF COURSE I DON’T FUCKING MEAN THAT! he roared, specks of spittle now coating her face. “You destroyed my entire life! You left my daughter fatherless! Why should I ever forgive you, you vile, odious, selfish cunt!”

Her next words were a whisper. “You’re right not to…but I don’t know how I can make it right!”

“You can’t! But you need to be punished for what you did! Put out your arm - now!” he ordered.

“What? My arm? Sorry, I don’t understand…” Both Regina and Marian looked up, alarmed at the way this was quickly turning.
“YOUR ARM! REST IT ON THE TABLE! YOU WANT MY FORGIVENESS? EARN IT!” As he yelled, he reached over his shoulder, producing a short-handled axe from his back strap. “You took my heart because I wouldn’t cut off Snow White’s head with my axe! So now I want you to know what pain feels like! Your arm!”

“Mr. Humbert, please?” begged Marian. “There has to be a better way!” The taller woman stood, moving closer in an attempt to get a hand on the axe. But Regina watched as her body now appeared to suddenly freeze before she could get close enough, only her lips moving. “Please - don’t do this!”

Graham merely ignored her, looking at a now terrified Regina. “You want forgiveness – that’s my price! Your willingness to sacrifice your arm! I wasn’t even given a choice!”

Was this a test? Proof she meant what she said? However, seeing the overwhelming rage in his eyes, she didn’t argue. Just prayed that he was bluffing! She slowly nodded, before kneeling in front of the coffee table, then laying her lower left arm across the surface, holding still and closing her eyes as she heard a distressed Marian still try to stop him. “Mr. Humbert…Graham…please? I beg of you!”

Regina’s jaw trembled as she kept her eyes tightly shut. It may have been a bluff, but it was still terrifying. Within moments she had a tremendous ‘thump’, followed quickly by the most agonising pain in her arm, greater than any pain she’d ever experienced! It was absolute torture! A moment later, Marian’s ear-piercing scream went straight through her skull. “REGINA!”

The pain was so intense, that she had no choice but to open her eyes. THE HAND WAS GONE! It lay still, close to the damaged coffee table, now awash with so much blood!

“AAARRGGGHYYYY! Make it stop!” she screamed, as the pain scorched through her entire body. She saw Marian, now unfrozen, ripping off her own silk blouse, quickly winding it to make a temporary tourniquet, which she now started urgently wrapping around the bleeding stump. “MARIAN – PLEASE MAKE THE PAIN STOP, PLEASE???” she begged.

As the brunette bound the bloody mess tightly, she screamed across to a young man now looking at the commotion from behind the bar. “YOU! Don’t just stand there gawking? Bring a bottle of vodka over here, and any towels. NOW!” she bellowed. The moment the boy came over, she ripped the bottle from his hands, smashed the top against the remains of the table, and pored the neat alcohol straight over Regina’s open stump, making the other woman cry out in pain. “NNNNGGGGHH!” she winced, as Marian poured the rest of the bottle into her empty water glass. “Here, swallow this back, quickly!”

Within seconds, Regina starting shivering uncontrollably, as the indescribable pain raged through her entire side. As the bleeding stopped, she felt unbelievably cold. Having finished nursing the wound, Marian quickly sat down close beside her, before physically lifting the smaller woman up by her waist and onto her own lap, pulling her tightly against her and forcing her to rest her head on her now naked, blood spattered, shoulder. The woman’s blouse was now completely saturated in blood. “Just don’t look!” she ordered. Regina was in too much pain to argue as she tried to nuzzle herself against the woman in a desperate attempt the relieve the agony. “Ok Regina, sit still a moment! When you’ve calmed, I’ll go see if there’s any sort of doctor or medical assistance I can get! Just...just try to rest and fight it!” As Marian looked around her, she now realised that Graham Humbert had disappeared completely!

Looking down, Regina had indeed gone very quiet, her damaged stump falling down beside her. That’s when Marian realised – she’d fainted!
As she slowly regained consciousness, it took a little while for Regina’s senses to kick in. She felt herself lying on a mattress, a light cotton quilt resting over her. Slowly opening her eyes, she saw the calm, smiling face of Marian Locksley sitting close, staring straight back at her. “Good morning! Feeling better?”

That first night Regina arrived in the Underworld to begin atonement, she bonded almost immediately with Robin’s first wife. Apart from being a very assured, capable woman, Marian had a lighter touch to problems than herself, much like Robin. She was also a tremendous flirt, who made no secret of the fact she found the former Evil Queen ‘interesting’! In her distant past, Regina had often used her looks, and body, to flirt and toy with people, to get what she wanted. Though now she was old, grey and wrinkled, those days were but a distant memory. But Marian seemed to be a master at it using her femininity too, and, having died early in life, had preserved her beauty forever, one of the many gifts of paradise! Regina rather liked the mutual flirting, thinking it flattering and a pleasant distraction, considering what she was going through. Nothing happened between them of course, save for the odd kiss on the cheek. But she still couldn’t understand how Marian could possibly find an old crone like her...attractive. She had explained that, having seen the old queen’s beauty in her past, it would be restored to her in the future in the afterlife. And that’s the view that Marian said she saw now!

As her memories came back, Regina looked down towards her left hand. It was still there! Also she had no wound, no dressing, no…

“Did I just dream? About Graham Humbert cutting my hand off?”

Marian collected the hand in question in her own, sitting on the bed. “Sadly, no Regina, you didn’t! It happened right in front of me. I dressed the wound, but you fainted from the pain shortly after. You never woke again. I put you to bed, put your severed hand on ice in the bar fridge, and decided that, because I was worried what would happen when you woke up, I climbed in here beside you…”

“I don’t understand? He cut this ruddy hand off with an axe! I felt it Marian! It was real! Then I wake up to this…” she waved her hand around, “But it’s as good, albeit very wrinkled, as new? What’s going on?”

“It seems to be part of the atonement. Graham wanted you to suffer, physically, just like he had. He died when you crushed his heart, so…I guess he needed to make you know how it felt?”

A horrible thought came to her. “So...what if everyone else they send me, wants to do something like that? I’ve killed hundreds, Marian! I don’t think I could take that sort of pain every day, even if I do wake up all repaired afterwards! It’s going to be absolute hell! It’s going to be-”

“Atonement? Perhaps that’s the whole idea, Regina? Nobody said it was going to be easy!”

“So I’m to be spending my time here getting my limbs chopped off, skewered and god-knows-what, going to sleep in screaming agony, before waking up all good to go again? Hell I-” her eyes started to redden.

“Hey, hey! Come here…” Marian pulled her close, wrapping an arm around her, forcing her head onto her shoulder as she cuddled her. “It’ll be OK. I’ll be here to help you through it…”

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That painful first confrontation with someone the Evil Queen harmed, was the first of many chastening experiences! It also wasn’t the only violent episode, and a number of times Regina found herself being attacked, bludgeoned, stabbed, horsewhipped, and almost blinded by one ferocious
former guard she’s once transformed to a snail and stepped on. One former guard she abused actually raped her! Yet after each incident, many ferociously painful, she’d wake up in the same room, in the same bed, unharmed, and ready to start the process all over again! In one case, an old woman farmhand had launched a pitchfork straight through her chest! If Regina had been alive, she would no doubt have been killed outright at least two dozen times during her daily trials and torments. However, she stuck to it, regardless, knowing there was no alternative other than eternal damnation. Her only reprieve, and one she begged for each day, was the time she woke each morning, to the sight of Marian Locksley bringing her tea or coffee in bed.

It felt like more than a year since her appearance in the Celestial Court, though it was impossible to judge. She estimated she must have faced at least three hundred different former victims of the Evil Queen when, one morning, she woke up to Marian’s beaming face, wreathed in a smile. “Regina, I have news!”

“Don’t tell me - I get a day off from being killed?” snarked the old woman, as she sipped her coffee.

“No, sadly, but it’s better than that! Your wife passed away, is in Heaven now, knows about what’s happened to you and what you’re going through, and wanted me to assure you that it’ll all be worth it in the end!”

“Emma’s dead?” She sat up with a start, alarmed; but then picking up on something she’d said. “Wait – ‘she wanted to assure’ me? You mean you’ve spoken to her?”

“I met her – a little while ago!” Marian seemed as excited as her. “My, she’s a beautiful woman, isn’t she?”

“What?” This was confusing. Emma was only a few years younger than her! “Beautiful?”

“She’s not the old woman you left, Regina! I told you. In the afterlife, you’re the age you want to be! I’d say she looks about mid-thirties. Lovely blonde hair, great legs. You are a lucky girl, aren’t you?”

“So you spoke to her? What’s happened back home? How’s Robin? What-”

“All in good time! When I met her, she was with her parents, David and Snow. She’s only just arrived, so everybody’s mobbing her. And, she doesn’t know how to split herself yet! Anyway, I’ll find out soon enough, but she wanted me to give you a message. She told me, to tell you, that she misses you so very much! That you were gone about five years when she passed over. I told her what you’re going through right now, and she said she was so proud of you, that she is so in love with you, and can’t wait till she finally ‘gets her hands on you’! Her words, not mine…”

Regina chuckled, her first laugh in such a long time. “That sounds like my Emma!”

“Oh, and she took me away from her folks, and specifically asked me to give you something…from her!”

“Give me something? What could-” but her words were cut off when the taller woman placed her hands on either side of Regina’s face, tilting it up and to the side, before latching her lips onto Regina’s! It took a moment for her to realise what had happened, though feeling the first real affection she’d had in so long, brought her own arms over Marian’s shoulders to pull her closer, before finally opening her mouth to accept the kiss fully. “Mmm,” she groaned. Her lips feel like heaven. They held each other a good minute before finally separating.

“That’s exactly what she wanted me to do and, frankly, I’ve wanted to do that for ages!” whispered Marian. “But I never would, without Emma or Robin’s permission. Hope you don’t mind?”
“Shut up – and kiss me again!”

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A little later, the pair sat, side-by-side, on the coffee bar stools, Regina impatient to just get yet another horrible former victim ticked off from her list of people she needed to grovel to. Marian’s eyes were on a young, handsome, well-built man who appeared to be working behind the bar. “He’s nice!” she whispered in Regina’s ear. “Recognise him?”

She followed her eyes. “You’re right, he is rather lovely. Can’t say I recall him though…”

It was then the pair heard a rich, deep, and somehow familiar voice, close behind them. “Hello Regina!”

Her head spun, to see a sight she thought she’d never see ever again. The most important man in her life for so many years! The man who loved her, no matter what cruelty she inflicted on him. The man who’d tried to keep her on the path of good for so long! Her breath caught. “Pa…Papa? PAPA!”

She launched herself off the stool, jumping up to him. “PAPA – IS IT REALLY YOU?”

“It is, my love!” he had a tear in his own eyes now, as he pulled his daughter into his arms, forcing her head to his chest before kissing her brow. “I’m so very proud of you, for going through everything you have here!”

Regina shook with emotion, folding herself into his loving embrace. It took a while for her to calm, but eventually, she managed to pull back, looking into his eyes, and making no attempt to wipe the tears from her cheeks.

“Papa, is it you I’m supposed to be seeking forgiveness from today?”

Henry Mills, the original Henry, smiled back at her, nothing but love in his eyes. “No, my little. I forgave you a very long time ago. I’ve come to take you home. You’re done here. I’m taking you to Emma…”

“You’ve done your time,” said Marian, now standing closer to them. “Look into that mirror, over there, Regina. Tell me what you see?”

Regina looked across, her jaw dropping instantly at the sight. In her reflection, between her father and her friend, she no longer saw an old, wrinkled, slightly hunched woman, but a familiar dark-haired, brown-eyed one, seemingly in her late thirties, looked straight back!

“You’ve been judged to have atoned, Regina. You’re moving on. To Paradise!”

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Storybrooke

It was a full year since they’d buried Emma. Five years since Regina’s passing.

Robin sat in the refurbished dining room of the Earl of Locksley, surrounded by his, now grown-up, children. He’d just spent a couple of hours with an unusually frail Merlin and Maleficent.

“Can you imagine what it must be like?” Said Hope, Robin’s youngest daughter, now a mother to grown up children herself. “They’ve lived for not hundreds, but thousands of years! And now they’re actually happy about dying?”
“I can, my love,” said her father. “They had immortality, and Merlin has been able to pass into the Underworld from time to time. He’s got hundreds of children and nearly fifty wives over all that time, and he sees them all. But now he doesn’t want to just visit. He wants to stay with them! Maleficent too. She couldn’t travel across, so for the first time she’ll see family that passed away thousands of years ago. For them, dying is a blessing…”

“So why are you telling us all this, dad?” asked Roland. His former wild-haired, wild natured son was now a grandfather in his sixties, even if he looked younger than his years. “You asked us not to bring the kids or the grandkids. What’s happening?”

Robin took a slow breath before starting. “You remember I told you all that I was an immortal now? That I would have to outlive you all?” His six grown-up children all nodded. “Well, so not to arouse suspicion, I’m going to need to ‘change’ soon. My face, my character. Everything that made me ‘Robin Hood’!”

“Like Merlin did, after he left Camelot? He was a handsome, quite young, black guy. Next time I saw him, just after Zeus sent you back, he’d changed to an old, white-bearded white guy…” Henry informed them.

“True. It’s so he didn’t arouse suspicions outside the magical world. Now the barrier’s down on the town line, I’m going to need to do the same thing soon. I’m going to need to be seen to have died! I’ll still be with you six, of course, but to all intents and purposes, Robin Hood will need to be seen to die, like everyone else who gets old. We’ll have to arrange a fake death, possibly a funeral. I’ll still be here for you of course, but I’ll look and sound…different!”

“So what about the kids?” asked Honour. “Do we tell them you died?”

“I think you should! Only you six will know my new identity, and who I really am! And then, when they’re old enough, and mature enough to keep a secret, you could possibly tell them, if you want…”

“I hate lying to them, but…I kinda see the point!” agreed Faith. “But you are going to stay with us, aren’t you dad? You’re not going to up sticks and leave?”

“Apart from when Zeus calls me to do him some service from time to time, I’ll stick around you right up until you’ve all died, hopefully all from old age! I know that sounds morbid, but death should come to us all! After that, your two mums, in Roland’s case, three mums, will be there to welcome you!”

The rest of the group were quiet, mulling over things, before Margot thought of something. “Dad, when were you last allowed in the afterlife to go and meet mum and ma?”

“Just before my Emma passed. I had hoped to see Regina, but Marian told me she was in purgatory, seeking forgiveness. Roland, it’s really hard to explain how this works but, your mamma has made great friends with mum. She’s helping her through, until she gets sent to Paradise…”

“So when can you go again?” asked Henry.

“Oddly enough, I’m planning to go next weekend, when I visit Blue in the convent.”

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Although everyone in Storybrooke and Sherwood, apart from Robin, had got older and more frail with the passing years, the fairies all seemed to remain the same! Some, like Nova, had left to marry, or be with humans, some had sought to work and travel, but a small coterie had stayed at the old convent.
As Robin lay down on a large mattress in one of the guest bedrooms, he looked up at Reul and
Tinker Bell, as they watched him get himself comfortable. “You know, that wedding of yours was
something else! I had no idea there were so many fairies around?”

Tink smiled down at him, plumping his pillow, before stepping back and holding her wife’s hand.
“One for every human. At least, that’s how we start! Most fairies prefer to stay in the shadows or
woodland once their human godchildren grow up. Which reminds me, if my own particular human
has been allowed in there yet, I need you to tell her that her own fairy godmother misses her very
much!”

“And the same goes for me, Robin!” said Blue. “Tell Snow I’m thinking of her, and I hope she and
David are happy. Bring me back any news you can?”

“I’ll do my best; thank you, miladies. Keep your fingers crossed that I see at least one of them?” With
that, he closed his eyes, settling his hands over his chest and brought on the silent spell to put himself
into a coma.

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The moment the mists disappeared, Robin stepped into the afterlife, for the first time since Emma had
passed away, peacefully in her sleep, over a year ago. The former Saviour had had a difficult three
years since Regina died. Already in her late eighties, Emma’s health had deteriorated, her asthma
worsened, and her legs gave out, leaving her wheelchair-bound, for the final year of her life. A cruel
reminder of the frailties of old age, despite a lifetime of fitness.

As he stepped into the white forum he recognised from his last visit, someone was already there,
ready to greet him. “Hello, my chick, it’s wonderful to have you back!”

“Mamma!” Robin took his mother into his arms, hugging her tightly. “I would have come sooner,
but-”

“I know. The rules still apply, my love! I understand. By a strange, happy twist of fate, your timing
seems to have been perfect. There’s not one, but two, very special people here who have been
waiting to meet you!” his mother nodded to look to his side. He turned, gasping as he took in the
most wonderful sight. There stood Emma and Regina, an arm wrapped around the back of other’s
waist, as they stood side-by-side, looking at him. Not the two grey-haired and partly-infirm old
ladies he’d said farewell to, but the stunningly beautiful couple who had captured his heart, when
Zeus sent him back all those years ago!

“My loves! Gina, you’re back! Can it really be you?” he almost stuttered when he saw the pair of
them. They both looked sensational, the last forty years seeming to have fallen away. All the grey
and wrinkles of age had gone! Emma appeared to be wearing some sort of pale-grey toga, her
wonderful long-blonde hair cascading over her shoulders. Regina wore a similar style, but dark
purple, her hair up in some sort of bun. They looked relaxed…and happy.

“Hmm. What do you think, Gina? Was he worth all the trouble?” said Emma, a delicious smirk on
her lips.

“Always - come here, you!” Regina stepped forward, jumping onto him and latching her lips onto
Robin’s, desperate to savour the man she’d missed for so long. Robin groaned into it, unsurprised
when a tongue pressed past his teeth, demanding entrance, which he gave immediately. The moan
that rang from both of them was very, very primal.

“Ah-hem!” said Emma, when she felt the moment drag on too long. And frankly, she was feeling left
“Oi, Locksley - you’ve got more than one wife around here!” Regina released him, sniggering as she let his other wife get to him.

“My darling Emma! You look-”

“Hot? Bloody sexy? Not crippled? Yeah, I know!” she interrupted. “It was nice getting my legs back! My turn, I think!” she dragged him into her own arms to give him as ferocious a kiss as Regina's, as her wife watched, gigglng at the raw passion the pair could squeeze from just one kiss!

“You better not be feeling too tired, thief? Because I can assure you, you’re not getting any sleep anytime soon!” He chuckled, reaching his arm out to pull Regina back into their hug, before the reunited trio began their old 'shared-lips' routine, oblivious to anyone around as they held tight.

“Aaaaand, with that, I guess I’ll leave you for a while!” said a voice to his side. “Ladies, please go easy with him?”

He looked across to see Marian, sporting an odd, curious smile as she stepped away. He felt awkward, knowing his very first ever love had just spotted him in a loving embrace with his other wives. “Marian! I’m so sorry, I-”

“Making up for lost time?” she sniggered. “Don’t worry, I quite understand! You three need some quality time together. Just...think of me when you’re ready? Then we’ll talk.” She didn’t seem upset. Just a little...sad?

“No!” said Regina, stepping away from them to stop Marian, taking her arm before she left. “Please?”

As Marian turned to face her, Regina collected her free hand with her own, before, to Robin’s surprise, placing a gentle kiss on her lips! He looked at Emma, to see if she’s seen it too, but the Saviour didn’t seem in the least bit bothered. “Robin,” said Regina, her eyes never leaving the taller woman’s. “I could never have survived the Court without Marian! Without her, the judges would have sent me to Hell. She stood by me all the time though Purgatory, patching me up and keeping me going when I felt like giving up! She’s your wife too, just as much as Emma or me. Now - say hello to her properly!”

“You – you don’t mind?” he asked, bewildered. He stepped in front of Marian. “You did all that – for Gina?”

“Of course! We both love you, as does Emma, and true loves should never be parted! You’ll begin to understand when you finally get to stay here…”

Smiling down on the wonderful woman who gave him his son, he lowered his lips onto hers, sealing them together with a much-needed and long overdue kiss. His arms enfolded her against him as she became fully immersed in him. God, he’d missed her. Missed them! As their lips finally unlocked, he looked up to find Emma was giving Regina much the same treatment, his wives holding each other tightly. His mind went back to their younger, more energetic days, when seeing them like this was a regular, but still beautiful sight. Finally, Emma released her hold on her.

“Marian, come join us?” Regina offered. Robin wasn’t quite sure what she was inviting her to join!

“Not now…” she responded, releasing Robin. “But very soon, OK? You three need to spend some quality time together, alone. However...I’m not against us all spending more time together. Wherever that may take us! See you later…” with that, her body seemed to evaporate in front of them, leaving them alone…
Robin’s jaw dropped in astonishment. “Did she just suggest…erm, what did she just suggest?”

Emma laughed aloud. “Don’t worry about it! Things are just…different here. Different…but wonderful!” she stepped back into him, wrapping an arm around his back and kissing his cheek. Regina mirrored her again, on his right side, as she and Emma wrapped arms around each other to continue their cuddle.

“I’m beginning to see that! So…what should we do first?”

“That...” the brunette kissed his cheek, “...is an unbelievably stupid question!”

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Chapter Summary

Sorry, this is not a proper update!

Having realised I made a complete balls-up of this chapter, I also realised it screwed up
the final ending!

So I've deleted it and will republish it again (only the chapter and the epilogue) very
soon. Beginners mistake, basically. But after such a long story, and the fact it is my first,
I wanted to get it right.

Apologies to those few who were waiting for the ending. I'll make up for it with a much
better one...

Thanks for your patience. Fiona xx

COMING SOON. SEE CHAPTER SUMMARY ABOVE.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!