Differentiation

by sometimesafangirl

Summary


Since these are AU, none of them connect to any other fics in the series.
Emma was never big on the apple festival. Every year since middle school, her friends dragged her to the festival despite her protests, and every year she vowed not to go again the next, only to be dragged along again. Of course, it was nearly impossible to say no to Mary Margaret when she pouted at her in the way she did. 'Come on, Emma' she would say, 'you always grump about it, but then you always seem to have fun.'

Yeah. Maybe when she was in high school it was fun. For a minute. When she was stuffing apple fritters into her mouth. But now? Did she really like walking around the center of town, dodging kids as they ran towards some of the food or game stands? Did she think it was worth it waiting in line for almost an hour for a bag of apple fritters or a candy apple? Did she like looking at the vendor booths? No. But she came for Mary Margaret and Ruby. She came even though they both had boyfriends now. She came because this was her first year home after college, and Mary Margaret had been asking her for weeks. Not that she denied her friend that when she was in college, always driving home for the weekend just for this.

So here she was, sitting on a bench by the cotton candy stand, looking down at her phone and muttering a bit. Of course they were late. Emma should have known that when Ruby suggested meeting up at eleven, she really meant noon or one. Maybe it was because she didn't have anyone to impress, nor did she really care about that sort of thing, but Emma never understood why it took Ruby hours to get ready. And now Mary Margaret was getting like that too.

"Anyone sitting here?"

Emma looked up from her phone at the voice and blinked. A man stood in front of her. A rather handsome man, with probably-too-tight jeans and a white tee. Leather jacket, subtle scruff, and the most brilliant blue eyes she had ever seen. He was holding a cup of hot something, probably cider, as he nodded towards the half of the bench she wasn't occupying. She scooted a little and shrugged. "Have at."

"Thanks." He sat and glanced at her. "Killian."

"Emma."

"Well, Emma, you look as bored as I feel." Killian said, pausing to drink a little and hissing when it seemed to be too hot. "Why come if you seem to dislike it so much?"

"I'm supposed to be meeting friends here, but..." Her phone beeped, and she looked down at it. "Apparently they're going to be very late." She frowned a bit at the quick 'sorry, how about 1?' text Mary Margaret just sent.

"Ah. Then we are the same." Killian chuckled. "I was supposed to meet the lads here today, but one of them just called me to tell me their lasses want to go to lunch first."

Emma blinked and arched a brow. "Isn't that a bit inconsiderate?"

"Very." Killian glanced at her. "This was the plan from the start, and I was a bit of a fool and allowed myself to get strung along."

"With what?" Emma turned a bit on the bench to get a better look at him. "Your friends planned on inviting you out and ditching you?"
"Yours did, too." Killian dug in his pocket and pulled out his phone, showing her a picture. "The lasses didn't tell you they were planning on setting you up hm?"

Emma stared at the picture. It must have been from the other night at the diner when David tried to sneak one while she wasn't paying attention. She knew something weird was up when he started grinning like an idiot, but the fact that Mary Margaret and Ruby were in on it? She looked at Killian and shook her head. "If I had known that, no offense, but I wouldn't have shown up."

"Dave said as much." He tucked his phone away. "Well, I honestly contemplated ditching the whole idea, but I didn't think it was right to leave such a pretty woman alone for so long without anyone telling her what was going on."

"How honorable." Emma sighed and sat back on the bench.

Killian chuckled. "Not honorable enough to go along with their plan any longer." He grinned at her. "Want to abandon them?"

"Wouldn't that just be playing into their set up?" Though Emma had to admit, there were worse things than being set up with a ridiculously sexy guy who apparently felt that channeling James Dean at an apple festival was a good idea.

"Do you think they'd expect us leaving? I know Dave doesn't. He fully expects me to be here with you when they arrive."

"Mary Margaret knows I would never ditch her. It's why she's able to get me to come to this thing every year." She shook her head.

"So let's get out of here and really surprise them.' He stood and held his hand out to her.

Emma hesitated, but she reached up and took his hand, allowing him to help her stand before she let go. "All right. Where to?"

Killian shrugged and tossed his cup into the closest trash bin. "Anywhere but here is fine." He grinned.
Killian stood outside, leaning against the brick wall in the alleyway next to the hotel and chewing on a lollipop stick. He quit smoking ages ago, but he still came out here for his breaks. It was a big city, but the sounds seemed to bounce off the walls and leave this little pocket of silence for him to enjoy during his fifteen minutes of freedom.

It's not that working in the hotel bar was all that difficult. He had been tending for years without an issue. It just got incredibly annoying when the hotel got busy for no other reason than some celebrity sighting. Lately that's been happening a lot, mostly because all it takes is one A-lister to stop by for an hour and suddenly everyone comes. And it was never anyone Killian liked. Never any of the guys from his favorite bands, or actors and actresses from his favorite shows. But he liked the low-key stuff. The things that most people didn't like until they broke up or were cancelled. Not that he went and looked for the obscure stuff on purpose, but he preferred storytelling and good lyrics over laugh tracks and processed pop.

Tonight the cameras were around, as usual. He didn't know who was coming in tonight, but with the amount of paparazzi, it was probably someone big.

So he stood in the alley, chewing on that lollipop stick and wishing his little bubble of silence was strong enough to hold up against the calls of the fans and the cameramen.

"Excuse me."

Killian stopped his momentary space out to look up at the sound of the voice. A woman's voice. Specifically a rather beautiful woman who stood in front of him, blonde curls pulled back into a sloppy ponytail, a pair of thick-framed glasses rested on her nose, protecting gorgeous green eyes. "Eh?" The vague feeling of recognition came over him. This was someone he'd seen before, but he definitely would have remembered actually knowing such a lovely woman.

"Sorry..." She shifted a little and glanced down the alley where there were flashes from the cameras as several people shouted names. "I was just hoping you could help me."

"That depends, lass." Killian arched a brow. "It is a bit strange for someone to walk up to a stranger in an alleyway like this...You are a very brave woman."

"I suppose. But I also know you're the bartender here." She nodded towards the hotel. Is that why he recognized her? Had she come to his bar before? If she had, it certainly hadn't been like this. "Ah." He stood up a bit straighter and shrugged. "What help do you need?"

"I need to get inside without anyone else seeing me." She glanced down the alley again.

"Why?"

The woman blinked, and for a moment she looked confused before she smiled a bit and pulled her hair out of her ponytail, letting it fall around her shoulders as she pulled her glasses off. Killian's eyes widened. He knew he had seen her before. This was Emma Swan, wasn't it? "Oh." He tried to play it cool, letting his expression return to what it was, but how long could he hold up the cool act when the lead actress in his favorite show was standing at most three feet away? "Yeah, sure. I can help."
"You are a lifesaver." She put the glasses back on and started to do her hair back up. "It looks like the Golds are here tonight, too, which is why there are so many people." She looked at him when she was finished. "And I'm worried it will be like this every night."

Killian flicked his lollipop stick into the ash-bucket by the door and grinned at her. "Oh? How long are you staying?"

"A week. Long enough for..." She shook her head and smiled a little at him. "Sorry about this."

"It's absolutely no problem." He nudged the wood doorstop out of the way and held open the door for her. "I can help you sneak in every night if you need to."

Emma slipped past him into the building, but didn't step very far from the door. "Why?" She asked as he shut the door behind them and made sure it was secure. "That's a lot for me to ask, especially if you're working."

"There are two of us behind the bar, so if I slip away for five minutes to help you, it'll be fine." Killian shrugged. "This way." He led her through the back hallway. "Besides, no one really wants to be swamped by people when all they want to do is go to their room and relax."

"Then I would be in your debt..." She said as she followed him, though when one of the kitchen staff slammed open a door, she jumped and grabbed onto his arm. "Sorry."

Killian chuckled a little, though he didn't know how he managed it when his heart started to pound so loudly in his chest, he was sure Emma heard it. "You can hold onto me all you want."

She smiled, but said nothing. Though she did keep a little closer to him even once they left the back hallway and stepped into the bar.

"Killian!" The man behind the counter bellowed. There weren't many other people there. Not at this early hour. Several couples sat canoodling at tables, but no one was actually sitting at the bar. "What the hell—" He stopped when he saw Emma holding onto his arm. "You know you're not supposed to bring your girlfriend here."

Killian opened his mouth to protest, but Emma smiled a little and shook her head. "Sorry. I had to drop off something for him, and I couldn't get through the crowd at the front door." She let go of his arm and smiled before she pulled something out of her purse and pressed it into Killian's hand, leaning up to kiss him on the cheek, whispering "call me later, okay Killian?" Before she turned and walked out of the bar and towards the elevators.

Killian stood there for a moment and looked down at the paper in his hand. When did she have time to scribble her number down like that? He smiled a little and tucked the paper into his pocket, walking back behind the counter. "Sorry Liam."

"Well, it would have been nice to know you finally got yourself a girlfriend before you broke the rules and brought her here." Liam shrugged. "At least she seems like a nice girl."

"Yeah. She does hm?" Killian grinned.
It was the fourth time he had been here this week. Emma watched the man, Killian Jones—as she memorized from his library card, walk in with the book he borrowed yesterday in his hand. He walked up to the counter and flashed her that same dizzying smile he always showed her when he came in, and put the book on the counter.

"Done with this one, too?" Emma smiled a little and took the book from him, scanning the code and putting it aside to be put away.

"Yes." He rested his arm on the counter and leaned in a little. "Though I find that my friends' recommendations aren't as enthralling as they'd made them sound."

She blinked at that and glanced over at the book he returned. It was some mystery novel. Nothing she had ever read. The mystery section was one she tended to veer away from when picking out something to read. "Oh? Well, what sorts of things do you like?"

The man's grin was back as he straightened up a bit. "Things with strong protagonists, a little action, maybe an interesting relationship with an independent, intelligent woman..."

Emma tilted her head a little. "That may be why your friends suggest these kinds of novels." She smiled a bit awkwardly when he just looked at her, as if her response wasn't quite what he was expecting.

"Well, what do you like to read, Miss Swan?" Killian smirked a bit at her and leaned in again. "You must read a lot working here."

"I guess. When it's slow I do." She smiled a little, not even remotely phased by his semi-familiarity even though they hadn't actually given each other their names. "I have always been a fan of the classics. But lately I've been reading some of the more modern books." She nodded towards the 'New Arrivals' section. "Mostly the dystopian novels."

"Hm? You like a little chaos then?"

"I suppose." She shrugged and smiled a little, standing up a little straighter when another patron came through the doors. "If you find anything you'd like to check out, just let me know."

Killian blinked, but he saw the other person out of the corner of his eye. He made a face Emma couldn't quite read before he winked. "I will be back shortly then."

Emma watched him walk away from the counter. She lost sight of him when she needed to focus on the other patron, but she found him again within seconds, and she wondered why that was. Was it the fact that he had been coming in almost every day since she started working there? Was it because she didn't know how he could possibly read so many books in such a short time? She was a little jealous of that, to be honest. It's not that she was a slow reader, but she could only read here. Trying to read at home was impossible, since she spent most of her nights helping her son with his homework.

And she wondered what Mr. Killian Jones would think if he found out she had a child? Why did she even care enough to wonder? It's not like he had any interest in her anyway, right? He came in because he liked to read.

She looked away when she noticed him starting back in her direction, and she slid off the stool as he
arrived at the counter and placed a book down on it. "This one."

Emma smiled a little and took the book and his card. "This one's a good one. Well, at least I think so. It depends on your tastes." She handed both back to him.

"Well, then I look forward to giving it back to you when I finish. Are you in tomorrow as well?" Killian leaned a little closer, just as he had before.

Why did he ask? Emma looked at him and blinked a little before she slowly nodded. Did it really matter who was here when he brought the books back? He always seemed to come in during her shift. She never saw him on those rare nights when she had to work, and Belle had said she never saw him on the weekends when she worked. So what should she think of this?

"Good." He said and tucked the card back into his wallet. "I will look forward to it."

"Why?" The question left her mouth before she had even realized it. And she found herself staring at him, his own eyes just as wide as hers.

"What?" He seemed to try to recover, but maybe her question put him on the spot. That was the second time he didn't seem to expect something she said.

"Why will you look forward to it?" Emma looked at him. Maybe she shouldn't have asked, but after weeks of seeing him every day, and talking to him more than any other patron, she couldn't help but be curious.

He looked at her for a moment that seemed longer than it was before a smile came to his lips. "I enjoy talking to you."

"I see." She smiled at him, but she didn't feel like it did much. She certainly didn't feel happy to hear that. "Well, enjoy your book then." She kept that smile up. Somewhat fake, but better than the odd twisting she felt in her stomach.

"Mom!"

"Henry?" Emma jumped a little. She had been so busy worrying over Killian that she hadn't even noticed that her son had pushed his way through the door, waving his arm. Killian's eyes widened and he looked at Emma before looking at the kid.

"Oh! Hey Mr. Jones!" Henry smiled and walked up to him. "You know my mom?"

"Eh? You know him, Henry? Wait, why are you out of school so early?" Emma blinked and looked between the two of them. Killian didn't look like he could take any more surprises today, and Henry was grinning an almost mischievous grin.

"Yeah I know him! He's the swimming instructor at the YMCA. The one I was telling you about! He was a lifeguard at camp, too!" Henry smiled. "Oh yeah!" He dug into his backpack and pulled out a piece of paper, walking to the counter and handing it to her. "It's a half-day today because tonight's Parent Night."

Killian looked between the two of them. "Henry. Did you do this on purpose?"

"Do what on purpose?" Emma looked between them again.

Henry smiled innocently. "Mr. Jones waits with me while I wait for you to pick me up on those days you have to work late. Sometimes he helps me with my math homework." He rocked back on his
heels a little. "And he told me he likes to read, and I told him to come here."

"You told me more than to come here." Killian laughed a little and ruffled his hair a little. "You're a little imp, you know that, lad?"

Henry laughed a little. "It worked didn't it?"

Emma blinked and watched them. Her heart warmed more than she thought it would to see Killian got along with her son. And the fact that Henry seemed to like him so much was nice. Not that she had a reason, right? Even as the heat hit her cheeks, she forced herself to calm down enough for the blush to fade. "What worked? What did you do, Henry."

Henry looked at Emma, and he looked like he felt a little guilty but he smiled. "When Mr. Jones told me he liked to read, I told him he should come to the library because there's a really pretty lady that would help him, but she only works during the week. Now he comes here every day." He shook his head. "Even though he doesn't finish any of the books he borrows."

"Henry!" Killian's eyes widened. "That's supposed to be a secret!"

"Whaaaaat?" Henry laughed. "You like my mom don't you? Or you wouldn't have looked up that list of really bad books. You knew you weren't going to read them."

Emma sank back against her stool and stared at them, the blush coming to her cheeks again. "Wait...Henry, are you trying to set me up with your swim coach?"

"Yeah." Henry looked a little sheepish. "But mom! You only work here and you come home and take care of me, and then on weekends you don't ever do anything. And Mr. Jones is the same way! He only comes here to talk to you and then he teaches us swim and then he goes home." He kicked at the ground a little.

"Henry..."

Killian shook his head. "Sorry about this." He looked a bit sheepish when he looked at Emma. "I only came the first day because he seemed oddly excited about telling me to. But then..." He glanced off to the side. "Calling you a pretty lady didn't really do you justice. So I kept coming back, and I started talking to you."

"And you didn't know I was actually Henry's mom." She nodded once and rubbed the back of her neck a bit. "You shouldn't apologize. I'm the one who should apologize for my son's impulsive plan here."

"Should you?" Killian grinned. "Well, I'll accept your apology if you got on a date with me."
Killian shifted his weight from one foot to the other as he held his baby girl in his arms. Realistically, he knew this day was coming, though prior knowledge didn't make him dread it any less. He had been a sailor and a pirate long enough to know that escalating tensions between their country and the one across the sea was going to lead to war. And it had. And now the last ship was departing, and he had to say goodbye to Emma.

So he stood there on the dock, holding their daughter close, trying to look strong for her, for Henry, and most importantly for Emma as they met for potentially the last time.

Emma sighed a little and stepped up to him, taking the girl from his arms. She looked at him with a sad little smile, and Killian just returned it. When she leaned in to kiss him, he met her half way and closed his eyes when their lips touched. Would this be the last one? Or would their kingdom be victorious? Would their family be broken apart or brought back together?

"I love you." She said after the kiss, tears in her eyes, and Killian lifted his hand to her cheek, brushing his thumb over her lips.

"Yes, lass. I know. And I love you." He leaned in and kissed her forehead. He heard Emma choke on a sob, so he carefully took the baby from her again and handed her to Henry. "Here, lad. hold onto your sister while I hug your mother okay?"

Henry took the girl with a nod, blinking back his own tears and carefully trying to comfort the baby as if it would comfort him as well.

Emma sank into Killian's arms, and he held her close, his cheek against the top of her head as he rubbed her back. "Don't cry, love." He whispered. "I know that is easier to say than do, but I have hope we'll be together again hm?"

"I know." Emma shook her head a little and looked up at him. "I don't have to like being separated from you."

"And I don't like it either." He nodded once. "But we have no choice, do we?"

"No..." She sighed and tucked her head against his shoulder and stayed like that for a moment. Killian would have happily stayed like that for the rest of the day. Long enough for the boat to leave while they remained on the docks.

"It's time!" One of the men called from the ship, and Emma slowly let Killian go.

"It'll be over before you know it." He said, trying to remain optimistic as he gave her one last kiss. He smiled a little.

She smiled too, and as they separated, neither of them could look at the other.

Killian didn't look back until the ship had pulled away from the dock. He sighed as he watched the distance grow between him and Emma, his fist clenching the whole time. He watched until he couldn't see her anymore, and his shoulders slumped as he sat on the boards beneath him.
"It'll be all right, Papa." Henry sat next to him and managed a smile through his tears. "Mama's the most powerful, isn't she?"

"Yeah, she is." Killian rested his hand on Henry's head and nodded. "She's the best. She'll be okay." But he couldn't help cursing their fate a little. Why did Emma have to be the savior? Why did this war have to break out? Why did he have to be so strong about it?

He looked at the kids and forced a bit of a smile. "Well, at the very least, we can keep the house clean for when she gets home hm?" For them. That was why.

Chapter End Notes

I had one I was working on last night, but I deleted it 2-3 times before going to bed. XD So here's one early today to make up for it.
"We shouldn't do this." Emma managed through gasps, her head tilting back a bit at the attention he was paying to her neck. Her fingers curled into his hair and she moaned a little as his tongue swirled over her sensitive flesh.

"Why not?" Killian murmured, not lifting his head, but instead letting his lips brush against her skin as they traveled down along her collarbone.

"You're my student..." She managed when his hand slid up her skirt enough to feel just how hot she was getting from this. "This isn't right."

"No?" He chuckled and lifted his head this time, looking at the way she was already melting into him.

Emma opened her mouth to protest, but a perfectly timed caress up her thigh caused nothing but a soft gasp to escape. She gripped his hair again and tried to wrestle some sort of control back from him. "Killian..."

"Say it again, Emma." He smirked and pressed his body closer to hers. "Or would it make you hotter to call you Miss Swan?"

"No...don't do that." She whimpered and shifted a little, but with the way he was pressing against her, there wasn't anywhere she could go. It was too hot, this was too much, and she was losing it. Her fingers uncurled from his hair and one hand slid to loosely rest on the back of his neck, but the other moved, over his shoulder and down his chest. With strength she didn't know she had given her current state, she pushed him back enough to get some air between them.

He looked at her, clearly confused. "Emma?"

"I can't do this..." She panted and pushed herself away from the wall he had her up against. "Where did you get this idea in the first place?"

"I saw it in a movie..." He was pouting now, and she could feel his gaze follow her as she walked away from him. "Emma, love, I'm sorry. Don't be mad."

She looked over her shoulder at him and blinked. "I'm not mad. I just can't keep up with that roleplay. It feels wrong." She smiled a little, dropping her skirt to the floor and stepping out of it. "I don't want to pretend that you're anything other than my husband."

He moved quickly, crouching enough to grab the skirt as he followed her to the bedroom. "Aye. I won't suggest anything like that again."

"Good."

Chapter End Notes
Yeaaah it's short. ;)}
"Why did I agree to this?" Killian groaned a little as he let Emma pull him around the party. He knew exactly why he agreed to this: Emma's ex was in town, David felt really guilty about holding his annual 4th of July picnic party thing without inviting everyone. Of course, that posed a huge problem for Emma because it had been a horrible breakup, and Killian was the one who sat there and took care of her when she got drunk and held her when she cried.

So when Emma said she wasn't going to go to the party, he felt bad. Not because he wanted to force her to go, but because she felt like she needed to remove herself from a social circle she had been a part of long before Neal had moved to (and then subsequently away from) town. It wasn't until yesterday that she really expressed how upset she was that she wasn't going to go. So of course he said he wouldn't go either. After all, how could he let her be alone when almost everyone in town was going to be at the Nolans'?

That was when she suggested it. 'Go with me, Killian. Pretend to be my boyfriend. I can't be alone if he's there.' She had no idea, did she? She really didn't know how he felt about her? He shouldn't have agreed. He should have just insisted that they did something else. Instead, he fell victim to her pout as he usually did, and he agreed.

And here he was, letting Emma drag him around from person to person, hugging his arm or holding his hand the whole time. He leaned into her when she stood a little closer, and he did all of the things he always did when trying to keep her happy. He pushed her hair out of her face. He rubbed her back. He got her whatever drinks she wanted. And part of him hated himself for it, but when she smiled at him, that completely annihilated any annoyance he felt.

"Killian?" Emma blinked and poked his chest lightly. "Hey, are you okay? You just completely spaced out."

"Yeah, sorry." He shook his head a bit and lifted his hand to hers. "Just thinking about something."

She blinked a little when his hand curled around hers. "What were you thinking about?"

"You." He grinned. Mary Margaret squealed from across the yard, and his grin widened. "That was why." He whispered, having leaned in close enough so only Emma would hear. "She's been watching us all night."

"She's worried about me, isn't she?" Emma smiled a little, and there was the faintest little blush on her cheeks. "Because of who was supposed to be here?"

"Or because you've conned me into pretending to be your boyfriend." He chuckled and let go of her hand only to loop his arm over her shoulder. "She's probably terrified that I'm going to take you home and have my perverse way with you." He whispered in her ear, glancing over at Mary Margaret and winking.

"I think she wants that to happen." Emma murmured, almost too softly, but she looked off to the side, so Killian didn't get a chance to address it.

Especially when his gaze followed hers, and he saw him: Neal had just come. Neal, with a woman on his arm that none of them had ever seen. David rushed over to be the 'good host,' but Killian suspected it was to block Emma's view, especially with the way Mary Margaret went to stand at his side.
"Let's go over there..." Emma said softly and leaned a little against his side.

As he walked with her to the other side of the yard, towards the campfire that Robin was poking unceremoniously while his group of friends seemed to be telling Regina stories of Robin's crazy college days, Killian could feel Emma tremble against his side. He helped her sit on one of the logs, and he sat right next to her, his arm over her shoulder again, and without any real prompting, she immediately curled up against him and wrapped her arms around him as she nestled her head against him.

"He's a scumbag." Regina's voice broke through the laughter from the guys. She was looking right at Emma, a terse little smile on her lips. "And I told David he was stupid for inviting him. We all did." She motioned to the group, and they nodded or grunted a bit.

Emma looked at her and nodded a little. "Thank you."

"Besides," Regina continued. "Killian's much better looking anyway." She smirked a bit. "Even though you're pretending, I'm pretty sure almost everyone here thinks it's the real thing."

Killian arched a brow at that. "You think so?" He asked, and Regina nodded. He didn't know if he should be thrilled by that sort of thought, or if he should feel more pathetic. Then again, everyone seemed to know about his feelings for Emma. He was sure there were times that Emma knew, but she wouldn't have asked this of him if she did, right?

"Yeah. He is much better looking." Emma agreed, and for some reason Killian wasn't expecting it. Just like he wasn't expecting the way she pressed even closer, or the way her hand moved just slightly on his back. Or the way she so easily said the next thing. "Maybe we should date for real."

"Eh?" Killian stiffened.

"But you wouldn't like that would you?" Emma laughed, almost a bit bitterly and sat up. "Sorry. I am a horrible person." She looked at him and shook her head. "I really have no problem with Neal, you know. I don't care that he has a new girlfriend. I just...I used it as an excuse."

"You what?" Was he hearing this correctly?

Emma looked down and played with the hem of her sweatshirt a bit. "I like you. I've liked you for a very long time, but you don't like me, right? I'm just that pathetic friend who gets a little too drunk and needs a ride home all the time. And I'm annoying and I cry all the time. And.."

"Emma shut up." Killian sighed a little when she flinched, so he lifted his hands to her cheeks.

"Look at me." He waited until her eyes lifted, and he smiled a bit. "I like you."

"Oooooooh." Some of the guys grinned and Regina nudged them.

Emma blushed darkly and glanced over at them, almost as if she forgot they weren't alone at the fire.

Killian turned her head back and leaned in, kissing her before she could start making up excuses for him. "I agreed for the same reason you asked." He whispered when the kiss broke.

Emma stared at him. "Eh? Really?"

"Really."

"So...we don't have to pretend anymore?"
"I would prefer it if we didn't." Killian smirked. "Wouldn't you?"

Emma nodded and threw her arms around his neck, laughing a bit. "Yes!"

The group at the fire got a little rowdier, and the conversation got a bit livelier.
"Excuse me, Is anyone sitting here?"

Emma looked up from her book and focused on the man nodding to the seat next to her. He was a little tall, dark hair, stunning blue eyes, and just that perfect amount of scruff that made him look devastatingly sexy. She shook her head a little and motioned for him to sit down, shifting enough so that her elbow wasn't drifting into the space of his seat.

"Thanks." The man put a rather large bag on the rack over the seat and sat next to her, settling back and glancing at her out of the corner of his eye. "Sorry for interrupting your reading."

Emma smiled a little and shook her head. "No, it's okay. Most people aren't nearly as polite as you just were, and they usually just flop themselves down without a word. I've gotten several bruises on my arms from that, so thank you for asking."

"I just wasn't expecting it to be so crowded, and so many people just don't let you sit next to them." He nodded a little, but didn't turn away from her. "Which stop?"

She arched a brow a little. Part of her wondered if he was asking for some dubious purpose, though when she looked at him, she realized it probably had more to do with the fact that he sat by the aisle and she sat by the window. "New York, so you don't have to worry about getting up for me."

The man nodded again. "Me too." He grinned and winked once before holding out his hand. "Killian."

"Emma." She took his hand and shook it once, smiling a little at how warm it was in comparison to her own.

"And where are you coming from, if you don't mind me asking, Emma?"

"Miami."

His eyes widened. "That's quite the journey."

"Yeah, well, I took the train up and spent a few nights here in DC, and here I am." She shrugged a little. "Not a big deal."

"I suppose not." He grinned. "Well, Emma, it is my pleasure to be your seatmate for the next few hours."

"Yeah, it is." She grinned in return. "And you? Are you moving up north or something? That's a pretty big bag."

"Yeah." Killian nodded. "I'm not sure if I'll stay in New York or move elsewhere, but I just don't like the feel of this place." He motioned out the window, now that the train had started to move. "I was hoping to do something with the Navy, but..." He shrugged. "Not much for me to do here besides enlist."

"So you like sailing or something?" Emma slid her bookmark into her book and closed it, resting it on her lap. "Sounds like you might to better a bit further up the coast then. Maybe Rhode Island or Massachusetts?"
"Really? I kind of decided to do this on a whim. I figured I'd figure it out when I got there. That's usually how I do things anyway."

She looked at him flatly. "The city is incredibly expensive, and if you don't know someone who lives there, you're going to either run out of money really quickly, or have a very difficult time because you'll need to pick up some jobs just to figure out what you want to do."

"Is that so?" He lifted his hand to his chin and rubbed it a bit. "I always make bad decisions."

"Why don't you transfer at Penn and head further north, find a small town or something and go from there?"

"What would you suggest?" He looked at her again. "Since you seem so knowledgeable. Though if you're from New York, that's a silly question to ask you."

"I don't live in New York. Not anymore. I just said that's my stop because I'm spending a night there before continuing."

"Oh. So where does your journey end?"

"Maine. My family lives up there." Emma smiled a little. "So if sailing is your thing, at least more than being in the navy would be, I know some places."

"Maine hm?" He grinned. "And you will be there?"

Emma stared at him. "You realize Maine is a large state, and it's a little creepy to be that interested in someone you just met on the train. You don't know anything about me. I could be some sadistic killer. So could you for that matter."

"Ah. True, but I know I'm not. And I doubt you are."

"How can you be so sure?" Emma blinked. "Maybe I hide it well, and this is just a part of my plan?"

"Because I watched the way your expression changed when you read that." He nodded towards the book in her lap. "You must really like those old romances hm? How many sadistic killers would blush at what's written in a Jane Austen novel?"

Her eyes widened, but she laughed a little as if that would hide the slightly nervous feeling that was developing in the pit of her stomach. He had noticed that much on a glance? "I suppose you make a good point, but you can't be too careful."

"You're right. I can't. However, I have a good feeling about you, Emma. And I'm a pretty big risk taker."

"And if I have a boyfriend back in Maine? Then what?"

"I doubt you'd ask that as a hypothetical if you did. Wouldn't you be more direct?"

Emma bit her lip a little. Damn, he was pretty good. "Well, then I will ask this, with a hundred percent seriousness." She leaned towards him a little. "How would you feel knowing I have a ten year old son?"

Killian's eyes widened. "You must have been quite young then, since you don't look a day over twenty-five."

"Yes. Well, I was seventeen when I got pregnant, so yes. I have a ten year old son."
"That's pretty amazing. You raise him alone?"

She blinked. Normally that was the big deterrent. A man would hear about her child, or see his picture on her phone, and zip. Gone. Done. No one wanted to deal with a single mother, especially one who was rather bitter at the world, but hid it well. "What?"

"I said that's amazing. I can't even come close to imagine how difficult it must have been. You must have gone through a lot." He looked at her.

How did this happen? How did this complete (and ridiculously attractive) stranger come to her like this, seeming to know all the right things to say? Emma wasn't a risk taker. She couldn't afford to be. She made one risky decision in high school, and she was working twice as hard to make sure that misjudgment didn't ruin her kid's life. And yet here she was, part of her desperately wanting to take a risk on this guy. "Y..Yeah." But what should she do?

"I bet he's a wonderful kid. I don't have to know you well enough to know that you're working your butt off to support him hm? And you must at least have someone at home you trust to take care of him, or you wouldn't be coming from Miami alone."

"Yes...he's with my parents." Emma nodded once and turned more towards him. "Why are you like this, Killian? How do you do it?"

"What do you mean?"

"I just met you not even an hour ago, and here I am wanting to tell you everything...knowing I shouldn't trust you at all, but feeling like I already do."

Killian blinked, but he grinned a bit and chuckled. "Perhaps we were lovers in a past life, hm?" He lifted his hand and pushed a strand of blonde out of her face. "I am a firm believer in fate."

"Are you?" Emma's cheeks flushed, but she didn't pull away from his hand.

"Absolutely." He dropped his hand and grinned. "I do take a lot of risks, and I make a lot of rash decisions. A lot of times they don't go well for me. But I also think that things happen because something wants them to happen. I don't think it's a mistake that I actually missed my train this morning because my taxi got stuck behind an accident."

"It did?"

"Yeah. I made it just in time for this one." He grinned. "And I jumped onto this car. And I saw all these grumpy men and women who couldn't be bothered to give me the time of day. And look. Here you are. The last seat before the door to the next car, and you let me sit with you. Fate, no?"

"Is that possible?" Emma wasn't sure what to think. "Is it that easy?"

"It can be. Want to find out?" He smirked and pulled out his wallet, flipping through it. "It looks like I have enough money to buy a ticket to Maine. Maybe more if I can find a cheap place to spend the night." He looked at her. "If there's a lovely lady willing to take a chance on me."

Emma swallowed as she felt the blush creep up her neck. "I..." She lost her voice, but she managed a nod of her head. "But, maybe on the floor hm?"

"Whatever you wish, love."
The Nanny (46)

Would Emma fire him for this?

Killian sat on the couch and watched the clock. It was now almost eleven. Emma normally came home much earlier than this, and she did at least call and apologize profusely. There was a problem at work. She couldn't let the deputy handle it, even if he was completely capable. She would be home as soon as she finished. She promised.

But that's not really what happened, was it?

Killian felt bad for Henry, who had been looking forward to getting pizza with his mom tonight. The lad did love his pizza. So he took him instead. And as they sat in the restaurant, Killian just happened to look out the window, and he saw it. Emma was walking down the street with a man. His arm was around her shoulder, and they were smiling and laughing. He tried to keep Henry from seeing it, but the boy noticed almost at the same time he did, and he was crushed.

So she ditched her son to go out on a date? Was the work thing just a lie because she knew Killian wouldn't like the truth?

But she didn't know how Killian felt about her. He was very careful not to let her know. She would fire him for sure if she knew that he loved her. That he wanted to be Henry's father, not just his after-school baby sitter. But how could he bring that up now?

Sometime after twelve the door opened and he heard Emma tip-toe into the apartment. She probably figured he was asleep on the couch like he usually was, but instead he sat on the couch, watching her, so when she turned, she jumped.

"Jesus Killian." She lifted her hand to her chest. "You startled me."

"How was work?" He asked, his voice colder than he had ever used on her, and she definitely noticed, because she looked at him with an arched brow.

"Work was work."

"Looked like you were having fun." Killian shrugged and stood, gathering the empty beer bottles that rested on the coffee table. "Henry was very upset."

Emma paled a little, and she suddenly seemed to find the floor very interesting. "That was work."

"I see." He rinsed out the bottles in the sink and put them with the other recyclables. "Well, whatever. I don't care if you lie to me, but that boy deserves better." He grabbed his coat off the back of one of the kitchen chairs and started to pull it on.

"It was work, Killian." She lifted her head to look at him, and for a moment Killian almost believed her.

"If you say so." He shrugged and walked past her. "I don't care."

She grabbed his arm and turned her head. "If you don't care, why are you so mad at me?"

"Because that didn't look like work. Because I had to watch Henry's face change from excitement to disappointment. You knew he was looking forward to getting dinner with you. He does understand
that you have a difficult job, and you can't be home all the time, but he's just a kid, Emma."

"I know he's just a kid. Don't think I don't understand that it's difficult for him. Do you think it's easy for me? Do you think I like working so late?"

Killian turned and looked at her, frowning a bit. "I don't think you're a good enough liar to convince him that what he saw wasn't you ditching him to go on a date with some guy."

"It. Was. Work." Emma frowned and grabbed the edges of his jacket, shaking him a little and staring up at him. "Don't you dare scold me for doing my damned job."

"I'm not scolding you for doing your job. I'm scolding you for thinking you're fooling anyone." He lifted his hands to pry hers off his jacket.

"I'm not trying to fool anyone. That was..." She sighed and dropped her hands. "That was Henry's father."

Killian froze. How was he supposed to react to that? Well, aside from the anger that boiled up inside of him. "What?" He practically hissed through his teeth.

"He's..." She shook her head and looked down at the floor. "He's not a good person, and he came back to town, and I didn't want him to see Henry."

"Does he know? Does Henry know?"

Emma nodded once. "They both know. Henry...doesn't want to meet him, so he wouldn't know what he looks like. I have no pictures." She looked up at him again. "And Neal, well, he knows I have a son. He didn't make the connection that it was because of our...thing...ten years ago."

Killian groaned and ran his hand through his hair. "Jesus Emma. What are you getting yourself into?"

"David and I have linked him to some pretty bad things, so that...what you saw, was me playing nice to see if I could get any information out of him. It worked pretty well. It was work. Not a date." She shifted a little. "You were mad at me all night because you thought that though...I should have explained more when I called. Or at the very least, I should have told you keep Henry in and maybe order takeout or something. Sorry."

Killian watched her for a moment before he grabbed her by the shoulders and pulled her into his chest, wrapping his arms around her and pressing his face into her hair. "I was really mad. I don't want..." He sighed. "I don't want you to date anyone."

Emma stiffened in his arms, but she didn't move much, except to lift her hands to his back. "Why...?"

"It should be me." He whispered.

"Idiot." She pulled back enough to look at him. "It already is. You're the only one I trust to take care of Henry. And he loves you." She smiled a bit, lips trembling. "I do too, but how was I supposed to say anything? You never seemed to like me."

"I am a much better at acting than you are." He returned that shaky smile. "I thought you'd fire me if you knew I have feelings for you."

"Well, I will." She smiled a little more, and his face fell. "Well, would you rather be the babysitter or my boyfriend?"
"But you'd still want me to watch Henry?"

"Well, it would be nice if my boyfriend lived with me. If that meant he still picked my son up from school, and continued to bond with him like a father, I wouldn't complain." Emma leaned up and kissed him.

From the top of the stairs, Henry grinned and shouted "Finally!"

Emma and Killian both turned to look at him, and all three of them burst into laughter.
"Why are you two even still together?" Regina's words echoed in Emma's head as she waited for the barista to finish making her drinks, and while she could only stare at her friend this afternoon without a word in response, her brain was furiously coming up with excuse after excuse.

Reason after reason why she stayed with Killian, or why Killian stayed with her even though their relationship seemed so volatile to everyone else. They always seemed to be arguing over something or other. It had always been that way, with maybe the exception of their first month together in college. Regina and Mary Margaret once tried an intervention because they were worried Killian was abusing her, but he never hurt her.

And he never would. She smiled a little at that thought as she took the cups from the barista and walked out of the coffee shop. Their fights were always stupid, and always minor. They never fought the way Mary Margaret and David did, over hugely serious things like jobs, or the house, or children. They never stopped speaking to each other for hours at a time like Robin and Regina, who were both too stubborn to admit being wrong.

No, they argued over stupid little things. Things like whose turn it was to pick up dinner, or 'just do the damned dishes, I always do them.' They argued over which one of them was too busy because of work, or which movie they should go see.

It certainly didn't look ideal to any of their friends, but Emma was okay with that. She didn't want the fairy-tale romance Mary Margaret and David had. She didn't want the hot-and-cold that Regina and Robin had. She didn't even want the wild whatever it was Ruby and Victor had. She just wanted Killian.

And she knew he felt the same way. At the end of the day, even if they got mad at each other, they never went to bed angry. And it wasn't like they were fighting every day, they just didn't hang out with their friends often enough for the others to see that.

Emma sighed a little as she carefully balanced the two coffee cups as she opened the door to the bar. Killian should be in by now, since it was nearly six. Her shift didn't start until eight, but she could at least spend a little time with him while he set up.

She walked to the counter and put the coffee down. She could hear Killian cursing a bit as he crouched behind the bar, so she half leaned over the counter and whistled. "That's quite a mouth you have on you, sailor."

He stopped and looked up, a wide grin forming when he had just looked so angry. "You quite enjoy my mouth, don't you, wench?"

"Mmm." She smiled a bit. "Don't let that get around hm?"

He chuckled as he stood up and leaned over and kissed her. "Did you come to save my life again, darling?"

"Yup." She handed him his coffee and grinned. "Triple shot, since you were so tired when I left to run errands."

"You're the best." He kissed her again before he took the coffee and drank it as he moved around the bar. "Robin called me this afternoon. Said you got lunch with Regina, and she was pissed off about something or other having to do with me again."
Emma slid onto a stool and shrugged. "The usual. Why are you still with him? Why'd you change so much for him?" She shook her head and drank a little from her cup before she rested her elbow on the bar and her chin in her hand. "I couldn't say anything. I just froze and sat there like an idiot."

"I worry about you. Though at least Mary Margaret's calmed down about it?"

"That's probably because David is absolutely enamored with you. Don't leave me for him hm?"

"Never." He chuckled and rested his arms on the bar in front of her, leaning in and nuzzling her cheek a little with his lips. "He wouldn't be nearly as good in bed as you are."

Emma smiled, turning and kissing him. "Would anyone?"

"Nope." He grinned and straightened up again. "Emma, you don't need to validate yourself to anyone, you know that don't you?"

"Yeah." She watched him clean up. "The only opinion I care about is yours." She swung her legs a little and drank more of her coffee. "I'm thinking of inviting everyone over and just laying it all out."

"Why?" Emma could tell Killian tried not to sound annoyed, but the way he hunched up his shoulders was a pretty good indicator that he didn't want her to.

"About the job. Even Ruby keeps making comments about how it's not so romantic to quit a full time job to work at a bar with my boyfriend."

"It isn't romantic. I don't particularly enjoy watching other guys stare at you, you know." He looked over his shoulder at her. "But I'd be a hypocrite if I actually got angry at you for that."

"You flirt way more with the women than I flirt with the men." Emma arched a brow when he clenched a fist. "But there is something satisfying in watching their disappointed expressions when they see us leave together." She smiled when she watched him relax a little.

"So are you sure you want to tell them? You still have nightmares don't you?" Killian was back in front of her again, this time his hand rested on her cheek. "You don't owe anyone an explanation."

Emma looked at him and nodded once. "I'm okay." She rested her hand over his and smiled a little. "I can't help the nightmares, but you always wake up and hold me, so I can deal with them. Besides, I'm getting tired of the way everyone assumes you're a shitty guy just because of your past. I was a shitty teenager too."

"If that's what you want." He nodded. "Even if I think it's stupid that you feel the need to justify your choices. Your friends shouldn't be so crappy about this."

"I don't think it's stupid. They're my friends. They were the first people who liked me for me." Emma frowned a little. "I don't say mean things about your friends even though I think Smee is an idiot."

Killian frowned a little. "How is that not saying mean things?"

"You said something mean first." Emma stood and grabbed her coffee. "I'm going home to change. I'll be back in time for my shift." She muttered and walked to the door. She could practically feel Killian's eyeroll and his stare, but when she reached the door and put her hand on the handle, she turned enough to look at him. "I love you, even if you're an ass."

He stuck his tongue out at her, but he grinned a little. "And I love you, even though you left your makeup all over the bathroom sink again."
"Ugh! Fine! I was in a rush! I'll clean it up!" She groaned and left.
Killian sat at the corner table in the lunchroom as he always did, head bowed, looking down at whatever book he was reading. Today it was only his physics homework, nothing too exciting. But focusing on words was much better than paying any attention to the people in the room around him.

The less noticeable he was, the better. Or at least that was what he thought. He heard shuffling on the other side of the table, and while he knew he should ignore it, he looked up anyway, and that's when it happened.

She sat there, directly across from him, her elbows on the table, and her chin in her hands. She watched him with wide, green eyes and a curious smile that almost startled him more than her presence actually did.

Emma Swan. School everything. She was a cheerleader. She was on the student council, and a member of yearbook. She volunteered. She joined all sorts of clubs. So why was she sitting in front of him.

"Killian..." She kept that curious smile, her chin still in her hands. "Are you busy?"

"Eh?" He glanced around the lunchroom and shrank back into himself a little, his hands clutching the edges of his physics book. "Why...?"

Emma's smile never faded, but she glanced over to the left. The football jocks were sitting there, some of them watching her. One of them in particular, and Killian saw a flash of displeasure in her eyes before she looked back at him. "I'm not bothering you, am I?"

"No." He closed his physics book and tucked it back into his bag, shaking his head a little. "I'm not busy."

"Awesome." Her smile brightened a little. "Will you help me find a book for our English report?" She somehow managed to lean a little closer to him without actually shifting her position at the table. "You read all the time, right? So you must know some really interesting books, and I think Miss French is really upset with me."

He looked at her a bit warily, but he nodded. "Should we go to the library now?"

"Yes!" She jumped up almost too enthusiastically, and Killian wondered just why today, of all days, this happened? They didn't even have an English report due, so was she messing with him?

He stood and pulled his backpack on his shoulders, stuffing his hands into his pockets and walking just a step behind her, head bowed. He knew his place in this school, and he knew that at the very least, walking with Miss Popular meant he could no longer hide. So he could at least act like a kicked puppy or something. It wouldn't be surprising if someone of her status used someone like him, right?

Emma said nothing until they entered the school library. She glanced over at him before she grabbed his wrist and tugged him to a small table in the back, mostly hidden by a stack of books. "You are an absolute lifesaver. Sorry for dragging you here."

"What is this all about, Emma?" Killian slumped into a chair and looked at her, frowning a bit. "We don't have an English report due. And you never have any problems finding a book." He had been in honors English with her since freshman year. There was no way she needed help.
"I know. But Neal and the others don't." Emma sighed and shook her head. "You're the only one I can rely on to save me from them you know."

"It's annoying." Killian shook his head. "Can't you just tell him to screw off?"

"I have. It doesn't work." She sighed and looked at him. "But he hates you, so he won't bother me while I'm with you. And he won't bother you because he knows I'll get mad at him for it."

"I don't know why he hates me." He groaned a little and rested his head on his arms. "Is it because we're friends? That's so stupid."

"It is stupid." He felt Emma's hand come to his hair, and he glanced at her. She smiled a little, but didn't pull her hand back. "Though it's probably because I like you."

"Well, we're friends. It would be stupid if you didn't like me and still called me a friend." He looked at her, brows furrowed.

"No, Killian. I like you." Her cheeks flushed a bit. "I have since we were partnered on that Catcher in the Rye project."

He stared at her, his mouth open a little before he regained his composure. "That was two years ago, and you're just telling me now?"

"Well, it's embarrassing. You don't see me that way."

"The hell I don't see you that way." He sat up and grabbed her hand. "Are you nuts? How could I not like you?"

"What? Are you messing with me?"

"Why would I mess with you? Do you think I would have let you drag me to Junior Prom if I didn't like you? I'm not exactly comfortable here. I hate talking to other people, but you're different." He shook his head a little. "You were the only person who wanted to get to know me. Everyone else just looks at me with disgust because of how nerdy I am."

"Well, they're stupid." Emma smiled a little, her cheeks still a bit pink. "And they haven't seen you without those thick glasses. Not that I want anyone to see how cute you are."

"I'm not cute." He pouted.

"Okay fine, you're hot." She smiled more. "I'm serious."

"So, then if you like me, and I like you, why are you pretending to use me to save you with English projects?"

"I don't know. Maybe you should save me with dates instead?"

"I've never gone on a date, Emma. I don't even know how to date someone. I don't know how any of that works."

"To be fair, Killian, neither do I."
She hated parties like these. It wasn't like she knew anyone, really. Ruby dragged her here and then went off with Victor, one of the hosts, and so Emma sat on the couch and drank. A lot, actually. She was definitely drunk. She could feel it as she stumbled to the kitchen to grab another beer.

But she was on the floor now, and she didn't remember falling. Someone was half on top of her, and she blinked once to try to clear her vision.

"Sorry love." The person pushed himself up and grinned at her. "Guess I'm a bit bevvied." He held his hand out to her, but he looked more wobbly than she would have been getting up on her own. But she took it anyway because why not?

That, and he was incredibly hot.

Emma smiled a bit and pulled herself to her feet, stumbling a bit again and grinning back. "I didn't think I'd find someone here drinking more than I am."

The man chuckled and leaned on the counter for support. "Not much else to do at these things."

"Yeah." Emma leaned in a little. "I'm Emma."

"Killian."

"Well, Killian..." She rested her hand on his chest and grinned. "Wana leave?"

"Hm?" He grinned and his own hand came to rest on her hip. "Where to?"

"Somewhere else." Emma shook her head. "I duno. My roommate has the keys."

"Hm." Killian pulled her that much closer and dropped his voice to a whisper. "Well, this is my flat...well...mine and Victor's and Dave's" He grinned. "You don't need keys to come to my room."

"Oh...That's way easier." Wait, so he lived here? She vaguely remembered Ruby saying something about Victor getting a new roommate that was pretty hot. It certainly wasn't David. So it had to be Killian right?

Killian took her hand and pushed through small crowds of people, stumbling a bit and muttering under his breath when the stairs proved to be a bit too much for him. So Emma helped him as much as her limited balance would allow her.

"Emma!" Ruby called from the bottom of the stairs, and Emma turned almost too quickly and fell back into Killian, but by then he had grabbed the rail and he caught her before either of them went down.

"Whaaaaaat?" Emma groaned and pulled herself up enough to stand on her own, though Killian's arm was still around Emma's waist, and his lips were at her ear.

Ruby's eyes widened. Her mouth opened a bit, but no sound came out.

"Ruby?"

"No! Nothing. I'll bring you home in the morning!" The girl smiled and went back to the party.
Emma shrugged and pushed Killian the rest of the way up the stairs.
Killian looked at the woman sitting in the chair across from his desk. Her hair fell in loose waves around her face and over her shoulders. A pair of thick-framed glasses rested on her nose and obscured just how bright her eyes might have been. "Miss Swan...is it?" He looked down at the resume in his hand and arched a brow. "You're way over-qualified to be an intern, you know."

She shrugged a bit and looked at him. "And I'm too old, too. I hear that a lot too. You're too old. You're too experienced. We have nothing here you'd be interested in." She sighed and started to stand. "Sorry for wasting your time, Mister Jones."

"Wait" He rose before she finished standing, and he held his hand out to her. "That isn't what I meant. I meant that I could use someone with your skill set." He smiled a little. "And at the end of your internship, provided you don't do anything I'd have to fire you for, I'd like to give you a job."

"Eh?" She stared at him, eyes wide. "Are you serious?"

"Yeah. I don't like the way a lot of other companies run, so I don't run that way. I don't care if you're older than the average college intern. I don't care if you've worked a lot of jobs before, or you've moved from city to city. I care that you have the qualifications I need."

"Thank you." She smiled, a bright smile that caught Killian completely off guard, and he found himself staring at her with wide eyes.

When he regained himself, he smiled and took her hand, shaking it once before grinning. "I'll have one of the girls show you around hm?" He opened the door and waved one of the clerks over. "This is Emma. She'll be starting today."

"As the intern?" The woman's eyes widened. "Isn't she—"

"Perfect? Yes." Killian cut her off with a meaningful look, and the woman nodded and led Emma away. This was going to be a problem, wasn't it? He watched her as she walked, his eyes following her more than they should and he groaned a little, moving to sit back at his desk. This was going to be torture. Pure, and utter torture.

But if he could make her want him, it would be worth it in the end. He grinned a little at the thought and glanced out the open doorway, his eyes finding Emma easily. She looked over in his direction and seemed a bit startled to catch his eye, but she smiled a little at him, and Killian wasn't sure if it was that same type of smile she showed when he accepted her application, or what.

But she was walking towards him again, now, her eyes still locked on his, and he felt himself shifting in his seat as if that would make things a bit more comfortable. It didn't.

"I should give you this." Emma handed him a small piece of paper. "It's my number."

"But I have your number on your application." Killian took the paper and looked at it.

"No. My cell phone number." She smirked a little at him. "The one you should call after work to ask me out on a date."
His eyes widened. "What?"

Emma smiled and leaned forward, her hands resting on the desk. "Is that a conflict of interest? If I want the boss to woo me?"

"Yes! I mean, I'm not opposed to it, but..." He tucked the little paper into his shirt pocket. "You're full of surprises, aren't you Miss Swan?"

"Emma. And yes." She straightened up and looked at him. "I wasn't entirely truthful on my application, you know. I didn't apply here because I needed a job. I had one. I applied here because I wanted to be closer to you."

He looked at her, one brow lifting. "But I would know if I knew you."

"You don't. But I worked at the store across from that orphanage. I watched you bring food to those kids every day. You're kind of a sap for someone who looks like a perpetual playboy."

"Ah." Killian nodded. "Poor lads and lasses have no one else, really. Except the Sisters."

"And you." Emma smiled and turned a little. "And I grew up there, so it moved me, you know? And now I'm here." She glanced at him. "So don't make me wait too long for that phone call hm?"

He nodded. "I won't."

Chapter End Notes

Because office sex is so overdone? haha.
"Come on, Killian." Emma walked a little faster to try to catch up with him. He was mad, for sure, and it was definitely because she overstepped her bounds as she seemed to be doing a lot lately, but didn't he know it was all for him? Didn't he see that? "Look, I'm sorry! I should have asked you first!" She reached out and grabbed his arm. "Please!"

Killian stopped and turned his head to look at her. He was frowning, still. It seemed like he had been doing that more often than not, and Emma looked at him, shame coloring her cheeks before she looked down.

"Yes. You should have." He said rather tersely, looking at her a bit longer before he turned his head away, though he didn't yank his arm back. That was a good sign wasn't it?

"I know..." She sighed and kept her head bowed. "I just wanted to help you." She slowly let go of his arm and slumped a little. She really mucked this up this time didn't she? The curse. Trying to keep the kid safe. It was just...

"Listen, Emma." Killian turned to look at her. Some of the anger seemed to have faded, and he gently rested a hand on her shoulder. "You were just trying to help, right? I won't be mad at you for that. You just should have said something."

"I know." Emma looked up at him and shook her head. "I just didn't want to hear you say something so hurtful again. When she cursed me..." She rubbed her arms a bit and took a step back. "Nevermind."

He looked at her, taking a step forward when she took one back. "Emma." He frowned. "I said that to rattle her, not because I meant it. Besides, she forced it out of us anyway didn't she?"

"And now you lost your magic and it's my fault!" Emma looked at him with tears in her eyes. "Do you know how that makes me feel? All I wanted was to help and I ruined it!"

He rested his hands on her shoulders and shook his head. "It's ok. She's gone now. I don't need any of that stuff. Being the savior is overrated anyway." He managed a little smile. "Really."

She nodded once and looked at him, lifting her hand to wipe the tears as they slid down her cheeks. He had no idea did he? Just how far she'd go for him? Even though she kept messing up, she wanted to be there for him.

"Now, let's head to the diner hm?" He dropped his hands from her shoulders, but took one of hers instead and pulled her along with him.

A sense of relief washed over her and she smiled a little. "Yeah."

Chapter End Notes

So this was actually supposed to be doctor/companion, but as I don't watch Doctor
Who, I just made my own "Role reversal" au. Just a quick little blurb.
"Have you ever seen Forrest Gump?"

Killian looked up from his book at the voice. He turned his head and looked at the woman sitting next to him. When had she done that? Last time he noticed he was alone on that bench. "Excuse me?"

"The movie, you know, where Tom Hanks sits on a bench and most of it is flashback as people sit down next to him?" She turned her head a little and looked at him.

"No. I'm not big on movies." He replied and shrugged a little, wondering how much longer he should give her his attention before he looked down at the book again.

"You know you're really a pain in the ass to find, Killian Jones." The woman was staring at him a bit more steadily now, a frown curving on her lips.

"What?" His eyes widened and he closed his book. Who was this woman? How did she know his name? Should he just run? Did something from his past finally come to bite him in the ass? He stared right back at her, trying to place her face, but he couldn't.

The woman pulled an envelope out of her purse and handed it to him. "I've been looking for you for months. You're a damned pain in the ass to locate." She kept that stern expression even as he took the envelope from her hand. "I have instructions to bring you back to DC with me."

Killian opened the envelope, and there was a one-way ticket to DC with his name on it. He frowned a bit and held the envelope back to her. "First, let me say no. Second, I would be nuts to go with some woman I don't know to some place with no reason other than these supposed instructions." He frowned.

The woman arched one brow at him and the frown on her lips changed into a bit of a smirk. "I suspected as much." She made no move to take the envelope, instead she pulled out her phone, pushing a button and holding it up to her ear as she kept a steady eye on him. There was a click before she spoke. "You were right. He refused."

"Are you sure?" The woman seemed genuinely surprised by what she heard, but, without taking her eyes off Killian, she held out the phone to him. "He wants to talk to you."

"Who? What kind of idiot do you take me for? Do you think I'm just going to take a phone call you started?" Anger laced his voice as he stood and turned to take a step away.

The woman made no move. She simply pulled the phone back to her ear. "See, Liam? He won't do it."

Wait, did she just say Liam? He turned back to her, eyes wide. She was still looking at him, but the hard stare was gone. Instead she seemed almost submissive to the voice on the other side of the phone. The voice that seemed to grow louder with every "Yes, I understand" She uttered into the phone.

A click. She put her phone back into her pocket and looked at him again. "Won't you consider it, at
"If you're honest with me. Who are you, and what is this all about?" He sat back down on the bench and half-turned to look at her. He would remain skeptical, of course, but that didn't mean he couldn't at least listen.

"My name is Emma." The woman leaned back a bit and looked away from him, looking up at the sky. "Like I said, I've been looking for you for months. There have been others before me who have also looked. Looked and looked and failed miserably."

"Ok, Emma. So why are you looking for me?" He watched her carefully. Of course he still didn't trust her, but he could also somehow tell she wasn't lying.

"Well..." Emma sighed and stared up at the sky. "To put it simply, your brother hired me to find you. Of course, I don't know why. He wouldn't say anything other than find you, you'll probably refuse if I manage to succeed, and if I don't succeed, I'll regret it."

"So he threatened you?" Killian frowned. This didn't sound like Liam at all. He would never resort to threatening a woman, would he?

"I guess if you don't want to sugar-coat it, you can think of it that way. Everyone else who's failed him has..." She grimaced a little. "I guess just moved away. Or at least that's what he says, but I don't think that's true."

His frown deepened. That didn't make sense. Liam wasn't like that. Liam didn't do bad things. But when Emma looked at him, with tears shimmering in her eyes, he sighed. He didn't want to believe it, but could he risk putting anyone else in danger for his sake? "So how did you find me if everyone else failed?"

"I have a son." She said simply, as if that meant everything. "Well, right now it's more accurate to say that Liam has my son. I don't care about myself, to be honest. I've been through some bad stuff as a teenager. I've been in prison before, and that's what your brother latched onto. He's that desperate to find you, that I have to. I have to bring you back, or Henry..."

"I got it, I got it." Killian raised a hand, picking up the envelope with the ticket. "I just have to go with you and you'll get your son back?"

Emma nodded and reached out, resting his hand on his arm. "If Liam finds out I told you any of this...I'm going to be in so much trouble."

"I won't say a word. I promise. If he asks, I'll just say I heard his name and decided to come with you to find out why he was looking for me, since I haven't talked to him in almost ten years."

She smiled a little and leaned over to kiss his cheek. "Thank you."
Emma sat at the bar, her back to the room as she circled the rim of her wineglass with the tip of her finger. She had only gone to one high school event while she was there, so why did she come to this reunion? It wasn't like she wanted to, and the only people she cared about she saw on a weekly basis. So how did she let herself end up here?

Was it the pout Mary Margaret plastered on her face when Emma told her she didn't want to go? Was it the way she kept saying little things and dropping all these hints that she wanted Emma to come to the reunion with her? Either way, it was too much to deal with, so she just said yes to shut her up.

And now she wished she had more patience. She didn't know most of the people here, and those she did know were off in their own little worlds, socializing with other couples. So Emma just drank her wine and kept to herself.

She remained that way for a good while before someone pulled the stool next to her and ordered a drink. She glanced to the side and wrinkled her nose a little. It was Killian. Of course it was Killian. It was always Killian. He was Victor's friend, and part of Regina's little group, but he always seemed to make it a point to bother her whenever they were at the same party. She hadn't seen him since Victor's graduation party, and she almost wished it stayed that way.

Almost. He certainly looked a lot sexier now than he did when they were eighteen. He turned a little to look at her and flashed her that same, mischievous grin he always showed her, but it looked so much more charming now than it had ten years ago.

"Swan."

"Jones."

He chuckled and turned so his back was against the bar, watching the room, though his head was turned towards her instead. "You must be pretty bored hm? You've never been the type of lass to enjoy these sorts of things. Always getting bevvied in the corner, ignoring anyone and everyone."

"And you always managed to find me to annoy the shit out of me hm?" Emma put her empty wine glass down and rested her chin on her hand, looking at him without turning towards the room. "You don't like these though, either, do you?"

"Nope. Hate them." He smirked. "I only ever went to parties if you were going to be there. Vic always got on me for that."

She blinked a little, brows lifting. "What are you talking about?"

"I didn't go to any party you weren't going to. If someone told me you were going, but you didn't, I always left. And I only went to prom because you did." He looked at her and shook his head. "I'm not surprised you didn't know. Dave seemed to be more interested in keeping me away from you."

"Huh." Emma shook her head a little and kept watching him. That probably explained a lot, but at the same time, it explained nothing. Though it was true that Killian spent all those parties at her side, and that he kept bugging her to dance with him at prom since they both went solo. That whole night was a chorus of 'we should have just come together.' But why?

"You seem confused." Killian took a swig of his drink before he put it down on the bar and turned
"All those times you were flirting with me?" She looked at him with raised brows again.
"Seriously?"

"Told you. Bloody awful." He chuckled a little. "Everyone thought I was picking on you. You were the only one who knew I wasn't, but you didn't know I was trying to get you to look at me more, either."

"You're such an idiot." Emma shook her head and sat up a little more, turning her whole body towards him. "I knew you weren't picking on me on purpose, but I did think you liked getting a rise out of me because annoying me was fun."

"I liked getting a rise out of you because it meant I had an effect on you." He leaned a bit closer and moved his hand enough to touch one of the curls on her shoulder. "I'm not sure I'm any better at flirting though."

"You could try being straight forward for once, Killian." She glanced at the fingers that twirled into her hair and she felt her lips curve upwards a bit. She almost hated to admit it, but she actually kind of wanted him to flirt with her. And it wasn't just because he was that much more attractive, but she did have a crush on him in school, and she only pushed it down because she thought he didn't like her.

"Straight forward? Like how? Telling you that I only came tonight because Ruby told Victor you'd be here, and Victor told me? Or because the only reason Mary Margaret insisted in the first place is because I asked Victor to make sure you came?"

"Eh?" She was just all sorts of surprised by the things he was saying.

"I know I left after graduation, but my stint in the navy is over, and when I got the invite to this, I debated not coming at all. I was sure that by now you'd be happily married with kids." He tugged on that curl a bit and leaned in even closer, so his face was mere inches from her. "But then Victor told me you weren't even dating anyone."

"I'm not..." Emma couldn't help but whisper due to his proximity, and she could feel the heat rise to her cheeks. "But...Killian...it's been ten years. So why would you care?"

"Because you're the only one." He whispered as if her drop in voice was contagious. "You're the only one I've felt this way about. You're the only one I can imagine being at my side. You're the only one I want to be with. And I would have stayed away if you found someone else, but..."

She sighed a little and lifted her hand to the one he had in her hair and gently pulled it away, but she didn't let go of it. "But you don't know anything about me anymore, and I don't know anything about you."

"Then why not take a risk and let me ask you out? What's the worst that can happen? You decide you don't want to go on a second date with me and I sulk off?" He glanced down at their hands. "I told you I'm no good at this whole thing."

"I'll go on a date with you." She said, almost surprised by her own words. "But before that happens, you need to know some huge thing Victor's been keeping from you."

Killian looked back at her and he blinked. Now it was his turn to be surprised, though there was a slight smile pulling at his mouth.
"I have a kid. A son, actually."

The smile faltered and faded. He arched a brow. "That is pretty huge."

That was enough wasn't it? Within the next minute, he would let go of her hand, down his drink, and excuse himself, right? "Yes."

"So, is that a problem?" He continued to hold her hand. "Are you worried I'd be a bad influence on your lad?"

Again, surprise crossed her face and she found herself staring at him. "You...aren't bothered by that?"

"Should I be? It's been ten years. Wouldn't it be unrealistic to think you had never been with anyone in those ten years?" He shook his head. "From the way you're reacting, it sounds like other men don't take that news the same way?"

She nodded a little and smiled just a bit. "I honestly expected you to bolt for the door. Everyone else does."

"Well, I am not like everyone else. How old is the lad?"

"Almost ten."

That shocked him. That's for sure. Killian's brows furrowed as he seemed to be doing the mental math. "So...you were...?"

"Yeah. At prom." She looked at him evenly. "Are you ready to bolt yet? Or get incredibly mad at me for not telling you?"

"At prom. But...." His expression darkened for a second, and then he paled a little and his other hand came to clutch hers. "Emma, why didn't you tell me?"

"One, we were both incredibly drunk, and you absolutely didn't seem to remember. I didn't either until I started getting sick over the summer." She looked down a bit. "And by the time I went to the doctor, you were already gone. I didn't tell anyone except Mary Margaret and David, and I swore them to secrecy." She kept her head bowed, letting him clutch her hand, though his hands were trembling.

"I should be angry that you never said anything." He said after a what seemed like an eternity of silence. "I should be, but I'm not. I won't be angry. This..." He pulled her hand up to his lips and kissed her fingers. "This is amazing, Emma."

She lifted her head again, tears in her eyes. All this time, she thought he didn't like her. That they only did it that night because they were drunk and everyone else had gone off to do it. That he left to be in the navy because he remembered and didn't want to have anything to do with her anymore. And she probably wouldn't have told him the truth if he hadn't told her he had feelings for her. She knew that was wrong of her, but that didn't matter did it? He did come back. And she did tell him. "Killian..."

"This is amazing." He took her other hand and grinned. "Marry me, Emma."

"What?" She stared at him. "We...I mean...What?"

"I mean, you agreed to go on a date with me right? So let's date until you fall in love with me, and
then marry me."

"I...But Killian. I mean..." She was a bit flustered, her cheeks flushing a deep red. "Do you think it'd be that easy?"

"Sure. I love you. I always have, I joined the navy because I thought you'd never love me. I totally remembered, but I thought you didn't, so I didn't want you to feel guilty or ashamed for it." He held her hands, that grin still plastered on his face. "We're both idiots, right? So we must be meant for each other."

She actually laughed at that. "Okay."

"Eh? Really?"

She nodded. "I'll date you until I fall in love with you, and then we can get married."

Killian pulled her up off the stool and into his arms. "Thank you!"

"You might want to buy a ring pretty soon, though." She blushed when he held her, and she lifted her hands to his shoulders. "I wonder how quickly we can plan a marriage."

"Wait, what? That makes it sound like..."

"I already love you?" She leaned in and kissed him. "I might."
Support Group (27)

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Killian sat on his chair, arms on his legs as he looked down at the floor. This was his third court-mandated support meeting, but he still hated it, and he wasn't at all comfortable with it.

Who would be? He knew he had a problem. He didn't think he needed to talk to other people about it. But no. The courts wanted him to meet with Dr. Hopper and his group every week. So here he was, feeling less than stellar.

The doctor was talking about the goals for today, his pen clicking against his clipboard. Killian lifted his eyes long enough to glance around the room. All the same people that were here last week. Ruby, who developed severe anxiety after accidentally tearing her boyfriend's shoulder with her teeth. Victor, who had a strange obsession with the dead. Mary Margaret, who would take as many pills as she could to keep from sleeping. Regina, who liked to burn things. And Killian, who couldn't stop stealing.

But there was another chair there, and Killian wondered just who was going to be their new member. Would it be Belle? She had developed quite the fantasy complex. Or was it David the histronic?

"Sorry I'm late, Archie."

"Oh, that's quite all right Miss Swan." Dr. Hopper smiled and motioned to the empty chair.

Miss Swan? Wasn't that the Sheriff? Killian never met her, as it was usually Dave who had to book him for his kleptomania. Why would the Sheriff need to come to group? Was she there to get information she could use against them?

"Since you're new, why don't you introduce yourself?" Dr. Hopper was still smiling.

She nodded and stood. "Hey, I'm Emma Swan." She glanced around the room before she crossed her arms enough to hold her elbows, seeming to curl a little into herself. That wasn't the kind of behavior a Sheriff should have right? "I..." She shifted and took a deep breath. "I have abandonment issues that make me unable to effectively cope with reality." She sat down and ducked her head a little.

"It's about time." Regina mumbled, dodging Mary Margaret's elbow.

"Regina, be nice. Emma's trying to get better."

Killian watched the way Emma curled up into her chair. He didn't understand that. Well, he understood the abandonment issues. A lot of people had those, but being unable to cope with reality?

"What does that even mean?" He asked, not realizing the question came out until everyone's head snapped in his direction.

"Jesus Killian. You're more insensitive than Regina." Victor shook his head.

"Now now." Dr. Hopper held up a hand. "Let's not get at each other hm? Remember this is supposed to focus us on healing and foster that process." He smiled at Killian. "It's okay to ask questions." And he turned to Emma. "And it's okay to answer them, or not answer them if you choose."
Emma nodded a little and pulled her knees to her chest, somehow balancing like that on the chair. She glanced at Killian, frowning a little. "I...was abandoned on the side of the highway when I was a baby." She started, grimacing a bit. "So...I've created this...I don't know how to explain it. Since I don't cope well, I make everyone something they're not."

Mary Margaret reached over and took her hand, smiling a little. "You're doing very well, Emma."

Emma looked at her, and for a moment she looked a bit pained before she looked elsewhere. Killian found himself unable to tear his gaze away from her, and when she caught him looking, she stared at him for a good minute.

"Hook."

"Excuse me?" He blinked.

"That's you. Captain Hook." Emma pointed at him.

He arched a brow, but then his eyes widened. So that's what she meant? She associated real people with fictional characters? And so he was Captain Hook? "Well, I must be a rather dashing pirate then, love."

It was Emma's turn to widen her eyes and stare at him. She didn't say anything else for the rest of the group session, but she kept her eyes on him the entire time. And as they got up to leave, she still didn't look away. No, instead she walked right up to him, looking at him in a way that confused him. Was she angry with him for that comment?

When she grabbed the collar of his jacket and pulled him down, crushing her lips against his, he guessed not. His eyes widened a little, and he lifted a hand to the back of her head, if only to support her even as she broke that kiss. "Quite a dashing pirate." She whispered.

He blinked a bit, glancing around the room, but everyone else had left. "What...?"

Emma's hand slid down his chest before she took his hand and looked up at him. "So you're the thief right? Char—um...David told me about you."

"Did he?"

"Mmm. Perfect for a pirate, hm?" She started to tug him along with her. "You're the first person who didn't look at me like I have seven heads when I admitted something like that, you know. I...am really grateful."

"I gathered."

Killian didn't know why he was letting himself be tugged along by her. Normally he would never go with something like this, but there was something in that kiss. "But I'm glad."

"Are you?" Emma slowed her pace and looked over her shoulder at him. "Really?"

"I would be nuts to think that kind of kiss from such a pretty woman was bad, hm?" He winked and leaned closer. "But, Emma, what do you want from me? You don't know me at all."

She turned to face him, still holding onto his hand. Her head tilted just slightly, and she shrugged a little. "I don't know, to be honest. I just find you incredibly attractive, and you didn't make fun of me. You also didn't seem offended."

"Well, it's not every day that someone pegs you as a villain with strange perms and waxed moustaches." He chuckled. "But there's no need to make fun of you hm?" He lifted his free hand to
her cheek. "It would be rather bad form."

Emma smiled a little. "All right, Pirate." She leaned in and kissed him again. "Come with me. I have something I want you to plunder..."

"Only if you call me Captain."

Chapter End Notes

Honestly? I don't even know...haha!
"I'm not sure I'm strong enough to keep doing this." Emma sighed as she sat against the wall in the cabin, legs drawn up to her chest as she rested her cheek against her arm. Her eyes followed Killian's every movement as he sat in a chair at the table, his fingers drumming against the wooden surface. "They're questioning my every move now."

He looked at her, his face not betraying his emotions, though those blue eyes were dark and stormy. "You want to give up?"

"No. No absolutely not. I just..." She sighed and closed her eyes. "I don't know what to do. I'm pretty sure they tried to have me followed tonight. They know something is up. They know I'm sneaking out to do something I'm not supposed to do, and if they catch us, I'm afraid of what they'll do to you."

"And what about what they'll do to you?" He shook his head. "I'm not afraid of them."

"But you should be." She sighed again and looked at him once more. "What do we do, Killian?"

He looked at her and frowned a bit before he stood and walked to her. He leaned down, resting his hands on her arms as he kissed the top of her head. "We have two options. Stop, and never see each other again, or you can run away with me."

"Eh?" She looked up at him, tears shimmering in her eyes. Stopping was too much for her heart to deal with, but running away? Could she do that? "Wouldn't that be worse?"

"Than what? Them forcefully ripping us apart, forcing you to marry some prince or other, and probably executing me?" He lifted a hand to her cheek and smiled. "But we can do it. We can just sail away tonight. We can go somewhere far away. Some other realm where they'll never find us."

"But I'll never see my friends or family again, right?" She sighed and tilted her cheek into her hand. "I don't like it. I don't like that I have to choose between you and them. It hurts either way..." The tears fell from her eyes.

"Well, the other option is telling them and hoping they accept it. Though I don't know how accepting they'll be when they learn their precious little princess is in love with a pirate."

She nodded once and uncurled her arms from around her legs, moving enough to hug him a bit. "I'll...tell them. And if they get angry, or they threaten to lock me up or anything, I'll run away with you."

"Are you sure that's what you want?" He stroked her hair a bit. "You won't be happy if you do that will you?"

"No, I'm not sure. And I don't know if I'll be happy with such a decision." She looked at him. "But I do know that you make me happy, and I don't want to live without you. It's hard enough when you're gone, but never being able to see you again would be too much for me." She managed the tiniest of smiles. "I love you."

He stroked her hair a bit more before he nodded. "And I love you. So I will go with you."

"Eh?"
"I may not be able to stand up against all those guards, but I want them to know I'm serious about you." He slid a finger along her cheek. "Besides, I'm clearly not a man who cares about society and taboo, hm?"

That tiny smile on Emma's lips widened a little and she pulled him down, kissing him once before pushing him back enough so she could stand up. "All right. But if it gets bad, we run."

"Of course, love. I am rather good at that."
Killian groaned and rested his forehead against the steering wheel. He suspected that the car pulled over on the side of the road was an unmarked car, so he should have slowed down, but he didn't. And now here he was, flashing lights reflecting in his rear view as he waited to get yelled at or ticketed or both.

When the knock came to the window, he rolled it down without turning his head. "Can I help you, officer?" At least if he tried to look confident, it might help, right?

"Do you know how fast you were going?"

He blinked a little and turned to look at her. He didn't know why he was so surprised. There were a lot of women on the force in this town, but he honestly never expected to actually end up talking to one. Usually it was the men who came and broke up the bar fights, or pulled people over on dark roads in the middle of the night.

"No," He looked right at her, though all he could really see at this angle was the frown plastered on her lips.

"Seriously? All right. License and Registration please." She held out her hand, and when Killian handed them over, she walked back to her car.

So now what? If he apologized, it was like admitting he knew he was speeding. If he got indignant, he'd get a larger fine. If he flirted with her, he'd be a pig trying to get out of a speeding ticket.

"Here." The cop was back and he jumped a little. She was holding his license and registration out to him.

"Thanks..." He mumbled and took them, putting them away and turning to look at her again.

"Well, Mr. Jones, it looks like you have quite the record." She said, and Killian could practically feel the disgust that must have radiated from her.

"Ah, well..."

"I'm afraid I have to take you in. You won't cause me any trouble will you? I'd hate to have to make this more painful for you than it's already going to be."

"What?" Now it was his turn to frown. Taking him in for speeding? "I couldn't have been going that fast, officer."

"No, but you're still on probation from that last arrest aren't you? It's policy. It also doesn't help you that your license is expired."

"Only by a few days! I haven't gotten a chance to get down to the DMV." He snarled a little.

The cop sighed, and Killian wasn't sure if it was in anger or resignation. "You are going to make this difficult for me aren't you?" She stepped back from the door. "Get out. Slowly."

Well, he really screwed this up didn't he? He grumbled and rolled up the window, locking up the car and opening the door, stepping out slowly. "Fine." He looked at her and blinked. This was worse than he thought, wasn't it? This wasn't just a cop. It was the damned town sheriff. And here he was
after mouthing off about her stupid rules.

"Turn around."

He groaned and closed the door, doing as he was told. He felt her hands on his back and over his sides before she pulled his hands behind him and cuffed him. "Sheriff, I wasn't trying to cause you any trouble."

"Of course not. You just think you can do what you want." She led him to her car and put him in the back seat. "You just think it's okay to get into drunken brawls, or drive under the influence, or continue to break the law when you're still on probation."

"So at this point, I suppose flirting with you would be pointless?"

"You can flirt with me all you want. It's just not going to change the outcome of this."

Killian groaned a little and looked out the window as she drove. "So how bad is it going to be?"

"Well, that depends on you." She pulled into her spot and got out of the car, opening the door and helping him out, leading him into the building. "You'll be booked, but you know how that goes hm?" She shrugged a little and brought him to the appropriate desk, uncuffing him and motioning for him to sit.

He sat and looked up at her. "Are you doing it?"

"Nope." Now she smirked at him, and she stepped aside to let the deputy through to the desk.

"You again, Jones? Seriously." The man rolled his eyes and sat down. "I got this, Emma. Go home hm?"

"Sure." She looked at Killian once more. "You'll be able to get your car from impound once you renew your license. Don't be an idiot, all right?"

"And what am I supposed to do until then? I can't exactly get to the DMV without a car." Killian muttered.

"You could always call your brother." The deputy grinned.

"Shut up, Dave. You know that's not going to happen." Killian pouted a little. "Liam'll kill me."

"We can't have that now can we?" Emma rolled her eyes. "We'd lose our only regular." Her smirk was a full on grin. "Maybe you should consider this a second chance. Well. I guess in your case, a fourth, given what I saw when I looked you up."

David chuckled a little. "I'm surprised you haven't met Killian until tonight, Emma. Maybe you should come with us the next time we break up a brawl at The Rabbit Hole?"

"Hey man, those fights aren't my fault. You know that." Killian rested his elbow on the desk and put his chin in his hand. "I just happen to be there, and then some guy always accuses me of screwing his girlfriend, and I defend myself." He glanced at Emma and smirked a little when he saw the way her eyes widened a bit at that, but she seemed to realize it, and she quickly recovered. "I'm innocent."

"Yes yes. And yet they're always the ones knocked out on the floor by the time we get there."

"I hold my liquor better than most of those drunkards."
"Well maybe if you weren't such a relentless flirt." David rolled his eyes.

"I only flirt with women I'm serious about. I've never flirted with any of those girls." He glanced at Emma again and grinned. "Very few women are worth the effort."

"I'm not sure if you're trying to flatter me with that after your comment in the car, or if you're insulting me since you didn't actually flirt with me." Emma shook her head and crossed her arms.

"Oh. Take it as flattery, love. I meant it when I offered, but I know when it's not wanted." He winked.

"Ugh." She rolled her eyes. "David, make sure he makes his phone call before you lock him up for the night." She turned and walked into her office, shutting the door behind her.

"Tough lass."

"She is the Sheriff, you know." David shook his head. "And what kind of idiot are you, offering to flirt with her?"

"I like her. Why does it matter to you anyway? You've got that lovely little wife and cute baby at home, so it's not like I'd be getting in your way."

"Not what I meant." He stood and went to open the holding cell door, motioning for Killian to go in. "I just don't want you going after her if you're not going to be serious. Emma's not just some woman you can have a fling with. If you honestly want to date her, then I wish you luck, but if you hurt her..."

"I got it." Killian sat on the cot and grinned at him. "I'll be serious." He didn't even jump at the sound of the cell door slamming.
Killian leaned against the wall, arms crossed, frown plastered on his face. He should have known this whole thing was some sort of set up when David proposed they each pick a color to match their ties and masks. Whatever they chose, they could only ask women to dance if they were wearing a dress of that color. A detail Dave neglected to mention until after they had all chosen their colors. A detail that the other gents all seemed to be aware of. Of course. Since Dave himself chose white, Victor took green, August took purple, and Jefferson took blue. What did that leave him with? Not much given the theme of the masquerade. None of the women would wear orange or yellow, not for a winter dance anyway. Black was out of the question, since it wasn't a somber event. So what was left, pink and red? Those were essentially the same thing.

So here he was, frowning because he should have known that they would have known what colors their girlfriends or interests were wearing. David was happily dancing around with Mary Margaret in her snow-white gown. Both laughing and having a grand time. Ruby seemed to enjoy Victor's company as she twirled around in that forest green dress. Jefferson and August were both talking to quite a few ladies.

And none of them in red. Of course not. It was a Winter masquerade after all. Not a Christmas one.

Killian grumbled and pushed himself off the wall, reaching up to yank off the red bow tie. He didn't really want to come to this thing in the first place, so why would he stay if he was the butt of some sort of screwed up joke?

Then she entered. Red silks swirling around her as she walked into the ball. Killian could practically feel David's smirk when the entire room seemed to stop.

So he did what any gentleman would do. He walked over to her and held out his hand, a slight smile tugging at his lips.

She took his hand and smiled a bit in return, a few strands of gold bouncing around the red mask that only made her look that much more amazing.

He felt like he should know this woman. The way she twirled with him around the dance floor was both new and familiar. But he couldn't have known her. He had just moved to the city a few months ago, and the only people he really knew were the gents and their ladies by association.

"Are you the reason the girls insisted I wear red?" She asked after the music stopped and Killian let go of her.

"What?" He blinked a little and looked at her. "What does that mean?"

"Well, Mary Margaret said something about dressing to match a partner. She wore white because of her boyfriend. She strongly suggested...well, she all but forced me into this red dress. And here you are, the only guy in the whole room with red." She shook her head a little. "I should have known it was going to be some sort of set up."

"Is that why?" He should have known. "Well. I guess we were both duped hm?"

"Looks like it." She rested her hand on his arm as she stepped past him. "Though that doesn't mean we can't get them back."

He turned and followed her, blinking. "What do you mean?"
"Well, it looks like our friends are trying to set us up." She stopped at the wall and turned to look at him again. "I don't know why. I only just moved here two months ago."

"Me too." Killian chuckled a little. "Too coincidental?"

She smiled a bit and grabbed one of his hands, pulling him so close that he had to rest the other hand on the wall in order to keep from crashing into her. "Well, it is a big city. People move here all the time. I came for a job, did you?"

"Came on a whim. Woke up one morning and just felt like coming here." He grinned,

"Hm. Destiny maybe? You do feel like someone I should know."

His grin widened. This was a bit too much wasn't it? But here was a woman he never met before, seeming to feel the same things he was feeling. "And so you want to get them back, how?"

"Let's run away." She leaned in so close that her lips almost touched his. "We can split up later if you want, but I've got the beginning of next week off, and it would be pretty funny if they couldn't get a hold of us for a few days because their plan worked too well."

"Wouldn't that make them happy?"

"Oh. Eventually. But Mary Margaret will freak out and try calling me a thousand times. And then she'd complain to her boyfriend, who would be beside himself with worry for her." She grinned a bit more, still so very close to him. "What's the worst that can happen anyway? We end up liking each other's company enough to go on a date?"

"Or maybe we'll be so dazzlingly attracted to each other that we have amazing sex the entire time?" Killian smirked a bit, and she laughed. "No? too much?"

"No. But Mary Margaret will worry about that the most. Let's do it."

"Sounds good to me." He laughed a little and took her hand, winking once before he started to walk towards the door, picking up the pace when he noticed the others looking at them.

"Oh this is going to be great!" She ran with him out of the building, pulling her mask off once he stopped at his car and opened the passenger door to let her in. "I'm Emma, by the way."

"Killian." He dropped his mask to the ground with hers before moving around to the driver's side, grinning at her when he started the car. "Well, Emma, shall we go enjoy our friends' botched plan?"

"Absolutely!"
It was sometime after nine when the soft knock sounded on the apartment door. Emma blinked from where she had been curled up on the couch, half-watching something on TV. Henry was already in bed, and the apartment was pretty quiet, so even the soft knock seemed a little loud.

Of course, she didn't know who would be knocking this late. All of her friends knew her son went to bed sometime between nine and ten, and she absolutely hated when people disrupted that, so this must have been important?

But as she slowly walked to the door, her brows furrowed. If it was important, wouldn't the knock be more frantic? Or wouldn't someone call her?

She opened the door, but only enough to see who was knocking. "Yes?"

The man standing in front of her apartment blinked and stared at her for what felt like minutes before he spoke. "Oh. Apologies, lass. I suppose I have the wrong apartment." His brows furrowed, and he looked down at the paper, before looking at her door again. "...I must have written it down wrong."

Emma blinked and opened the door a bit more so she could get a better look at who this person was. She had seen him around town before: he usually hung out down by the docks. Maybe he was one of the fishermen or something. But she didn't actually know him. And from the confused look on his face, he clearly didn't know her.

"Who are you looking for?" Emma blinked a little. "Maybe I can tell you which apartment?"

"I'm not sure, to be honest." He looked down at the paper. "There was a package on my stoop this morning, and it looked like it was mis-delivered." He showed her the slip. "So I thought I would bring it when I got home from work. I apologize for disrupting you so late."

Emma looked at the piece of paper. Well, that apartment number was definitely her apartment, but there was no "Jamie" living there. Her brows furrowed a little. She didn't even think she saw the name on the apartment list. "Huh." She shrugged. "I don't know anyone who lives on this floor by that name, and maybe not even the whole building. Maybe you should bring it to the post office tomorrow?"

"Ah. That is a solid idea." The man nodded and picked the box up off the floor. "Again, apologies for interrupting you. I realize it's late." He smiled then, an awkward little smile that Emma found a bit charming.

She smiled in return and shook her head. "It's not a problem. Thank you for not pounding on my door." She leaned against the doorframe a bit and looked at him. "And I think what you're doing is really nice."

His shy smile changed into a bit of a grin. "Oh yeah? Well, thank you, lass. It's not every day that someone thanks you for screwing up this royally."

"It's not your fault that box is marked wrong." She smiled again. "Good luck, hm?"

"Thank you." He started to turn, but then he stopped and looked at her. "Next time I knock on your door, it will be on purpose." He winked before heading down the hallway.

Emma shut the door and rested her hand against it, feeling the heat rising to her cheeks.
"Why do you always have to invite her to these things?" Killian groaned loudly, loud enough for Emma to hear from across the room. He sneered a bit at her when she looked over in his direction and stuck her tongue out at him.

It was no secret that Killian hated Emma, and she hated him. Whenever their friends planned something, they often argued and glared at each other. When someone mentioned that the other would be there, they both usually let out a groan of disgust and expressed their displeasure.

It was a huge lie.

Killian grumbled a bit as pushed up from the table and walked to the bar. Tonight was Victor's birthday, so they had pretty much filled The Rabbit Hole with friends, mostly at his girlfriend's urging. And since Emma was pretty much best friends with Ruby, it was no surprise that she was there. He walked past her and purposely nudged his arm into her, not putting any real force into it, but as she always did, she moved a bit and turned to curse at him.

At this point it was pretty comical to the two of them. Their friends absolutely had no idea what was really going on. And they often got lectured, separately and together, about being more cordial with each other at these sorts of events.

It started two years ago, when Emma came to town. She was shunned at first, as people in small towns tended to dislike outsiders, but Killian always found her to be intriguing. They were even on friendly terms those first few months, since they both lived in the same apartment building down by the docks. But within a few months, their socializing started to diminish as Emma had won over the entire town.

The pawn broker's son was especially smitten with Emma. Completely smitten, and absolutely jealous of her friendship with Killian. It caused a lot of problems, to say the least. Neal would show up at the building randomly and try to get in the way of their conversations. At one point, he even threatened Killian if he spoke to Emma. 'Emma's too good for a shitbag like you to ruin. Leave her alone.' Killian never forgot that.

Neither did Emma. And one night they sat on his couch, discussing the entire situation when they made the agreement. Emma would pretend to believe Neal's lies about Killian, and Killian would pretend to hate her for it. Their friends would believe it, and all the problems would stop.

And it worked. It worked almost too well. Everyone seemed to forget that Emma and Killian used to be close, or that they lived in the same apartment building. They didn't even seem to think it was possible that the two were acting, or that they had actually been dating this entire time. They didn't think it was possible for Emma to reject Neal's advances because she actually couldn't stand him, or that she was interested in someone else.

And when Neal left town with his tail between his legs because Emma flat out refused to date him, they had considered telling all their friends, but by then the lie was too good.

"You two should stop fighting."

Killian turned his head as he half leaned on the bar, waiting for his drink. It was David. Of course it was David. He was one of the few people that didn't take a side on this fake feud, and it seemed to genuinely upset him when they argued.
"I mean, Neal's been gone for a year, so the two of you should just make up hm?" He shrugged a bit and ordered a beer. "I know no one else really remembers it, but you and Emma used to be good friends hm?"

Killian arched a brow at him. "And you remember this?"

"I remember the first day you guys got into that shouting match. I remember thinking how weird it was, since I could have sworn I just saw you at breakfast together." David leaned closer to him and whispered. "You guys are faking it aren't you."

"What makes you say that?" Killian chuckled a bit.

"Emma's way worse at lying than you are." David shrugged. "When she rejected Neal, Mary Margaret asked her why, and she seemed completely insulted by the question. But she had always acted like she trusted Neal and thought of him as a friend."

"Well, he's a bloody git." Killian muttered.

"And he really hated you. And suddenly Emma seemed to hate you." David shrugged. "And no one else seemed to catch her slip up when Mary Margaret was going on and on about how nice Neal was, and how they'd make a good couple."

"So what then, Dave? You think that because Emma finally saw him for what he was, that we've been faking it?" Killian chuckled a little. "Isn't that a bit far-fetched?"

"About as far-fetched as the way you two keep looking at each other when no one's watching. Or when you argue about things louder when certain people are around." He glanced in Emma's direction, nodding to the fact that she was talking to the girls. "You know I never believed the crap he said about you, but the girls did. And when she's around the girls, she's worse."

"And what about me then?"

"You only complain or start crap with her when there's someone around to listen." David rested his hand on Killian's shoulder. "Just stop already hm? I get tired watching you."

"All right. So let's say you're right. Let's say Emma and I have been faking this animosity for over a year now. How does that make sense?" Killian tried to play it off, and for a minute he thought David was buying it, but then the other man just shook his head.

"It's getting old. Just make up with her okay?"

"Fine." Killian finished his drink and pushed away from the bar. He took slow, purposeful steps for Emma. Truth be told, he was tired of it, too. Their dates were always at home, and he knew Emma deserved better.

"Swan." He stopped right in front of her, earning some pretty nasty glares from her friends.

"What is it Jones?" She crossed her arms and frowned at him, but she took a step forward so she was just that much closer to him.

He smirked a bit at her. And to the girls, it probably seemed like some sort of cruel smirk, but he saw Emma's eyes widen just slightly, and she parted her lips just enough to speak, but no sound came out. So he grabbed her, pulling her close and giving her the most passionate kiss he could muster.

Emma squeaked, and she managed to uncross her arms just in time. She clutched at his shirt and
kissed him back.

The whole bar had gone silent. Everyone was staring, eyes wide, jaws dropped, and when the kiss broke, Killian grinned and took Emma's hand. "Shall we?"

She nodded turned a bit to smile at her friends, who continued to stare. "Sorry. We're going to leave now."

"Wait, what's happening?" Killian heard Mary Margaret start to freak out as he pulled Emma towards the door, and he just laughed. He stopped when he opened it for her, but he turned back to her friends and winked. "Emma and I have been lovers for almost two years now. It's tiring acting like we're not just to keep you all from getting mad."

"I KNEW IT!" David yelled from the bar. "You jackass, Jones! I knew it!"

Emma laughed a little and pulled Killian out of the bar. "We're not sorry!" She shouted, just before the door shut behind them.
"Cut!"

Emma groaned and pushed Killian's chest lightly. This was the sixth take of their monumental 'first kiss' scene and neither of them seemed to be able to do it without laughing. The director looked like he wanted to be annoyed, but he laughed every time they did, so it was getting to be difficult to steel themselves into this.

"Sorry. That was me." Killian grinned a bit and pulled Emma close again. "I can't help it. I lean in, and then I just start to laugh.

Emma pouted a little and pushed Killian back again. "That's rude. I don't laugh when I look at you. Are you trying to make me feel ugly?"

"No." Killian shook his head and grinned. "You're beautiful as always, darling. I just think about how nervous we're both getting over a fake little tongue-less kiss when we've done it for real plenty of times."

"WHAT?" One of the women on set dropped whatever she was holding and stared at the two of them.

Emma's eyes widened and she looked at Killian. "You ass! You promised!"

"Oh. Whoops." He grinned a little and took her hand, pulling her close again. "I'm just saying that I may be able to kiss you better if I can kiss you for real."

Emma rolled her eyes. "That is absolutely not what you said, and you know that's not how it works." She pushed him a little again, but not with any force, as he was still holding one of her hands. "You need to take this seriously."

"All right." Killian let go of her and prepared himself. Emma glanced over at the director, who was staring at them almost as if he couldn't believe what he just heard.

But that was enough. The next take went completely smoothly. Perfect. Great. And the scene after, and the one after that. Basically Killian was acting the way he usually did, the way he should have been doing all day. Emma wasn't sure if she should be pleased or annoyed.

And when shooting was over, she sat and ran a hand through her hair. Killian sat next to her and handed her a cup of coffee. "Why did you do it?" She looked at him when she took it from him.

"Blurt it out?" He drank from his cup and shrugged a little when she nodded. "Honestly? I got possessive."

"Of me? Why? It's not like I'm going to cheat on you or anything." She frowned a bit. "If that's why..."

"No. That never crossed my mind, love." He looked at her. "But Neal's been hovering around you a bit too much for my liking, lately, so I broke our promise. Sorry."

Emma laughed a little. "Neal? Really?" She poked his arm lightly and shook her head. "Not my type. You know that better than anyone. Then again, I guess I'm kind of glad you did. I was tempted to break that promise myself." She shrugged and drank some of her coffee.
"Why?" Killian's brows furrowed a little. "That's not like you. Me, I get jealous a lot. You know this. But you?"

"I get jealous. I just hide it way better than you do." She poked him again. "Or I wear tighter clothes, or higher skirts, or sexier underwear on our dates."

"So you're possessive of me, but you're a minx about it?" He grinned. "I like whatever you wear, especially when it's on the floor, but I can't say I mind when you wear sexy knickers."

"Well, Milah is pretty pissed about the bomb you dropped. Did you see the way she just dropped an armful of props and stormed out of the studio?" Emma smiled a bit, almost too innocently. "Maybe she'll stop staring at your butt now."

"Oh? Was she? I never noticed." He leaned in a little, grinning. I was too busy staring at you.

"Were you?" She grinned and leaned in as if she were going to meet him halfway, but she stood suddenly, glancing down at him. "I'm tired."

"Are you?"

"Mmm. Aren't you a bit tired? We're done for the day aren't we? I mean, unless you still have something to do here?"

"No. Nothing." Killian all but hopped up and grinned. "You know what might be the best thing about breaking our promise?"

"What's that?" Emma sipped her coffee again as she walked at his side.

"We can start coming to work together without saying we just bumped into each other at Starbucks."

"That's the best thing?" She laughed. "How simple. I think getting to go home together is a lot better."
These days were the worst days. The ones where he sat at his laptop with his head in his hands, wondering how the hell he was going to get his column done with enough time for his editor to check it, yell at him to make changes, and then repeat the process before being able to leave the office.

The wall he hit today was particularly thick. It wasn't unusual for him to get writer's block. He often did when it was time to write reviews, but in this case, the book he was reviewing was SO bad that he couldn't think of a single thing to say about it.

Killian never understood why people liked his reviews, even his negative ones. His editor said it had something to do with his humor. True, he came to the company to write, but he never thought people actually wanted to hear his opinions. So he tended to stress himself out. What if he screwed up and said the wrong thing? What if he alienated his readers?

"Are you stuck?"

Killian whirled around in his chair and nodded. His editor was leaning in the doorway, arms crossed as she always seemed to do. "Emma, the book is so bad, the only thing I can think to write is that there are better reads on the back-alley walls in the industrial district."

"So don't review it." Emma stepped into the office and closed the door behind her. "I've been watching you for the past hour. If you keep pulling on your hair like that, you'll be bald by the end of the week."

"But...the deadline." He wasn't sure if he was upset or relieved by her suggestion.

"It's fine. David expressed an interest in writing a review this time. So I'm going to let him do it." She shook her head. "And before you get upset or offended about it, I've got something I want you to try."

He blinked a little and tilted his head just slightly. "What?"

"Well, when I interviewed you last year, you wanted to write, and you didn't care what, right?" She didn't wait for him to respond before she kept talking. "I want to try something new with the site, and I want you to do it."

"I don't know what you're asking of me, Emma."

Emma leaned back on the closed door, arms still crossed. "Do you know why I hired you?"

"My devilishly good looks?" He grinned, chuckling a little when she rolled her eyes.

"No. And it wasn't because you tried flirting with me in your interview. It was because the writing samples you sent me were fantastic. At the time, I had no leeway with what I could do with you, but after a long argument with Sidney, I have finally gotten the okay to create a new subsection of the site for you. It's going to be a lot of work, but I know you can handle it. I also know you'll enjoy it more."

"So what is it?"

"We want you to run a literary section. You'll write serials for the website. Short pieces, long pieces
broken up, who cares. But you'll also be looking for other authors to contribute to the subsection as well."

He stared at her, eyes wide. Was she really giving him such an opportunity? She really did know him better than he knew himself, didn't she? "Emma, I..."

"You'll do it won't you? So I can let David write reviews and get him off my back?"

"I'll do it. I'll absolutely do it." He grinned. "I'm so happy, I could kiss you."

"You could. Just not at work hm?" She blinked, then shook her head a little as a blush crept to her cheeks.

Killian chuckled a little. "Why Emma, do you want me to kiss you?"

"I am not answering that. I didn't offer you this promotion because I like you, you know. I offered it to you because I think you'd be good at it."

"But you like me. You argued with the boss for me."

Emma stomped her foot once and opened the door. "I will send you the details. Check your email in a little bit." She started to walk out.

"But you like me, Emma! Let's go on a date!"

She stopped, though her back was to him. She shook a little, and Killian arched a brow. Was she that mad?

"Fine. One date!" She stormed into her office and slammed the door.
The last time Emma had to suffer through someone's wedding, the bride purposely threw the bouquet at her. She managed to dodge it, just barely, so that it landed in the hands of some single woman who wanted to get married.

This time she avoided the whole mess altogether and left for the bathroom when the toss began. Well, by leaving for the bathroom, she actually just bee-lined it right to the bar and ordered another drink.

The bartender looked at her with what looked like pity, but Emma just sat and sipped from her drink.

"Bloody miserable isn't it?"

She turned her head and looked at the only other person sitting at the bar. He was two stools away, but he was looking at her. "This? Yeah, a bit. I hate these things."

"Me too. I've been sitting here since dinner. If I can't distract myself with food, at least I can distract myself with a bev or four."

Emma smiled a little at that. "That's pretty much my plan right now, too."

"Killian." She grinned at her.

"Emma." He took another sip of her drink. "Friends with the groom?"

"Yeah. And you the bride, I imagine. Since you conveniently found your way to the bar just in time to miss the gaggle of women fighting over some flowers, as if that predicted anything." He chuckled.

"Yes. Last time, the bouquet was thrown right at me." She shook her head slightly. "I'm pretty sure that was the plan again today, so I figured I would just save myself the headache."

"Good plan." He nodded once and looked at her. "So, Emma. Would it be too forward of me to sit next to you?"

She blinked a little, not expecting that, but then again, here was a man who just started talking to her and already seemed to understand some of her feelings better than her friends did. "It would be forward of you. Too forward? Not really." She nodded to the stool next to her.

He slid off his seat and moved over to sit next to her. "I was thinking too forward would be asking if you wanted to leave."

She laughed a bit. "That absolutely would be too forward."

"So instead, let me buy you a drink, and chat you up enough to get you to consider giving me your number."

"That is rather forward, yes. But..." She smiled a little. "I like that."
So short. So tired. :O I may not get a chapter up tomorrow, but that all depends on how late I get home.
Amnesia (18)

Killian sat up in the chair a bit as the doctor checked the paperwork. It was the third one he'd seen this week. The first two found nothing wrong with him, so mutually referred him to this third one. This one was supposed to help him remember the things he didn't remember.

He was skeptical, of course. He didn't know what he forgot, really. He just woke up one morning and didn't remember. Had he been in some sort of accident? Had he gotten hit on the head or something? He didn't know. No one else seemed to be able to tell him, either.

What he did know came from what he was told: his name was Killian. He had a wife named Emma, who was probably on her way this very minute, since she was away visiting her parents when this happened to him. He had a stepson named Henry, who had actually been the one to find him and had taken him to all of these doctors.

So he sat up straight and looked at the doctor, watching his face as it contorted a little upon reading his file.

"This is most strange." The man said after closing the folder. "You have no injuries or signs of trauma, but you can't remember anything."

"Well. no. I know whatever Henry's told me."

"And you have a wife? What does she think about this?"

"She's on her way home. She was away when I woke up like this, but as far as I can remember, I've always been like this." Killian slumped in the chair. "Henry wouldn't show me any pictures. I think he's a bit angry with me for forgetting his mum."

"Ah." The doctor nodded and scribbled down some notes. He looked up a bit when there was a bit of a commotion in the waiting room, so he stood and opened the door.

"Let me in there to see my husband!" It was a woman's voice, and Killian turned to look. He assumed from the angry tone of the voice, and the distinct sound of Henry's saying "Mom, he's ok!"

"Let her in." The doctor sat back down and looked back at the notes.

Killian kept watching as the woman walked through the door. Blonde and beautiful, though her eyes were red from what was probably crying and a lack of sleep. She looked at Killian, and the rather angry look on her face crumbled and she launched herself at him, throwing her arms around his neck and letting out a strangled sob.

He sat there, not sure what to do as this woman who was supposed to be his wife hugged him. At least he had good taste, but seeing here didn't jog any memories for him, so he didn't make any real move.

She definitely noticed because she pulled back and looked at him, brows furrowed. "Killian?" She sounded a bit helpless, begging, as if that would do something. But Killian just looked at her, and he watched her expression fall again, this time in heartbreak. And he felt something in his chest, too. Something telling him that he shouldn't make her feel that way.

"Mrs. Jones, your husband has amnesia. He doesn't remember you." The doctor shook his head and looked at them.
"What? Henry said he had been in an accident, but amnesia?" She sank to the floor and sat there, crumpled, her body shaking a bit, though Killian couldn't tell if she was crying or not.

"Well, we found no sign of physical injury." The doctor frowned. "I suspect it's more psychological than anything, but he doesn't remember any triggering event."

Killian watched the woman the entire time. This was Emma. His Emma. Henry's mom. He knew that much because Henry had told him. But now he started to understand why Henry wouldn't let him see any pictures. The lad probably hoped seeing her would jog his memory.

"Cursed..." Emma muttered from her spot on the floor. She had her hands on the rug, and Killian saw the way she shifted, her body tensing, her fists clenching.

"Excuse me?" The doctor arched a brow.

"It's a curse." She spoke more clearly and looked up at Killian. "It has to be. Killian is always pissing someone off. He probably pissed some witch off this time and was cursed."

"That sounds ridiculous." Killian shook his head.

"It does." The doctor agreed and nodded. "That sort of thing can't happen."

Emma frowned. "I'll show you." She got up from the floor and reached out, cupping Killian's cheeks in her hands and staring down at him. "I can feel it. The magic is there. You're definitely cursed."

"Mrs. Jones, you're overtired and overemotional. Magic doesn't exist. This isn't some sort of fairy tale." The doctor frowned. "I am going to try hypnosis to see what triggered your husband's amnesia."

"I knew I should have moved back home." Emma muttered under her breath. "I'll fix it." She leaned in and kissed Killian.

Something happened then. Killian didn't know how to explain it, but he felt something rush through his entire body. He felt something else being pushed out, and when Emma pulled back from the kiss and looked at him, his lips curled into a bit of a grin. "It's about bloody time, love."

"Is it?" Emma frowned a bit, hands still on his cheeks. "Next time, I'm going to leave you like that."

"You wouldn't. You like me too much." The grin widened. How many days had passed this time? What was it? Tuesday? He had accidentally snubbed the witch last Thursday, right? "Not my fault, you know. She wouldn't listen to me when I said I was married."

The doctor was staring, eyes wide. "What the hell?" Several items on his desk seemed to be moved as if some sort of shockwave had pushed them just slightly. "What was that?"

"True Love's Kiss." Emma let go of Killian's cheeks and stood up properly. "My husband is fine, Doctor. You don't need to worry about him."

"What?"

"I was cursed." Killian shrugged much in the same way Emma just had. "I went to pick up dinner for Henry and me, and some woman kept bothering me. I told her I wasn't interested, and I was married. She cursed me. I felt it, but I stupidly didn't think anything of it. I went home, and when I woke up the next morning, I didn't remember any of it."
"That's impossible." The doctor shook his head.

"Well, it happened." Emma looked from the doctor to Killian. "We need to get home. I rushed to get here, and now I'm exhausted. I have to call mom and let her know that you got yourself cursed again."

"And what am I supposed to do? It's not my fault these witches keep doing it."

She shrugged and started for the door. "Next time, just come with me."
How long has they been like this? Emma rested her chin in her hand as she watched the Skype call fail to connect again. The first time, she messaged Killian, but he hadn't replied, so she figured he had just lost track of time and couldn't hear his phone. But when he didn't pick up the second time, she sighed and looked from her computer to her phone. Nothing. Should she message him again?

She sighed and glanced at the clock. Maybe he fell asleep. It was late over in England wasn't it? She closed the Skype window and listlessly clicked on a few things.

She met Killian on a trip to London she took with a bunch of her friends a few years ago. It was a celebratory trip: Emma's graduation from the academy, Mary Margaret's engagement to David, Regina's promotion, and Ruby's, well, Ruby just wanted to come and party with them. They were in a pub one night, and he bumped into her, accidentally as he claimed as his beer ran down her back, but she later learned he did it on purpose to get her information.

It certainly worked, since he ended up bringing her back to the hotel, and one thing led to another, and it was a vacation fling that turned into a full-fledged relationship. Long distance, of course, since she was living in her hometown in Maine, and he was bouncing all over England. But she hadn't seen him in almost six months, and it was getting to be unbearable. She just wanted to fly over there and run into his arms, but he didn't seem to be staying in any one place long enough, and she couldn't get any more extended time off just yet.

So it was tough. Especially since lately, Killian seemed to be increasingly tired. He was working a lot, he said. He needed to make it up to his friends for letting him crash on their couches. The insecure part of her tried to convince her that he had grown bored of her, of their long-distance relationship. That he had found someone else.

That couldn't be true, though. Killian loved her. She knew he did. Every time they spoke through Skype, he told her he loved her. She saw his eyes when he said it, and he never lied.

She sighed a little again and pushed up from the chair. It was sometime after six, so it was extremely likely that he wasn't going to contact her any time soon. She stretched a bit and walked to the kitchen, opening the fridge and pulling out a beer. At the very least, it would calm her over-active imagination enough to make the rest of the night tolerable.

She had barely pulled her hand back from the tab after opening it when there was a light knock on her door. Her brows furrowed, and she put the open can on the counter, walking to the door and looking out the peephole. Whoever was out there was either ridiculously close to the door, or they were covering the thing with their hand. She groaned a little, but opened the door anyway. "What the fuck?"

"Sorry, Love. I wanted it to be a surprise." Killian stood on the other side, his lips curled into that stupid grin that he always grinned when he was trying to be clever.

Emma stood there for a moment and stared at him. She had a mind to punch him for trying to surprise her, but instead she smiled a little. "You idiot." She grabbed his jacket and pulled him towards her, leaning up enough to crush his lips with hers. "You know I hate surprises."

"Mmm. Clearly." He chuckled and kissed her again. "But this is a huge surprise. Can I come in?"

She let go of him and stepped away from the door, watching him lift two suit cases and carry them
inside. "Isn't that a lot for you? Usually you barely fill one."

"Yes, well..." He put both suitcases down and pulled off a bag from his shoulder that she hadn't noticed. "This is the surprise."

"What do you mean?" She blinked. "You...packed a lot, or brought some extra stuff with you? How is that surprising?"

"This is it." He motioned to the bags. "This is everything I own." He looked at her. "I couldn't take it anymore, love. I needed to come here and be with you. I can crash with one of the mates if you don't want me here, but..."

"Wait, you want to move in with me?" She looked at the bags, then at him again. "Seriously?"

"Seriously." He seemed a bit nervous, something Emma absolutely wasn't used to seeing. "Not good?"

"Not good." She shook her head before she launched into his arms and kissed him. "Perfect. Totally perfect! Of course you can move in with me you idiot!" She kissed him again, and again. "But I'm so mad at you for not telling me!" Another kiss.

"Forgive me." He chuckled a little. "I just wanted to surprise you. Plus I didn't want you to yell at me for working extra hours to afford all of the necessities I'd need to come over here." He shook his head.

"Well." She kissed him again. "I feel like I should make you sleep on the couch for that, but I've missed you too much."

"Now you don't have to miss me."
He felt the ground before he saw the person he walked into. It was his fault, for sure, rushing through such a place without really paying attention, and now he was sitting on the ground, backside aching. "Sorry." He managed as he lifted his head enough to see just who he walked into.

She was also sitting on the ground, brows furrowed as she winced and rubbed her hip a bit. Her coffee spilled all over the sidewalk, but luckily not anywhere on her. "Ouch."

He moved quickly to get up, offering his hands down to her to help her. At first she just glared up at him, but she took his hands and yanked hard enough to pull herself up before he had a chance to really help. "Sorry, lass. I wasn't paying attention."

"That much is obvious." She murmured and let go of his hands, wiping some dirt off her jeans. "You're like a tank."

He chuckled a little and checked to make sure nothing else but the coffee was on the ground. "Here, my fault, let me repay you for your drink." He pulled out his wallet and started thumbing through the bills.

"Sure, but you have to come with me."

"What?" He looked at her and blinked. She was smirking at him, and he wasn't totally sure why. It was just coffee wasn't it?

"You're not going to be able to reimburse me for the emotional distress of being slammed into by a complete stranger unless you take me out for coffee and make me feel better about myself." She arched a brow. "I must be invisible, do you know how that makes a girl feel?"

Was she out to scam him somehow? He looked at her skeptically. "It's not that you're invisible, I just wasn't paying attention."

"My self-esteem is crushed." The woman shook her head and looked at him.

"Okay. Fine. I will escort you to get a new coffee." He stepped a little closer to her. How did this happen anyway? He never had anyone react so strangely to something like this. Not that he could really complain, since just based on this little snippet of conversation, this woman seemed to be the type of woman he would try to pick up in pubs. But having someone be so forward was a new thing for him.

"Your name?" She looked at him.

"Killian."

"Mine's Emma." She held her hand out to him, but when he reached out to shake it, she grabbed it and started tugging him along.

"Hey!" He stumbled a little before he fell into her pace and managed to walk next to her rather than be dragged behind her. "What the bloody hell, Emma?"

"I'm in a bit of a rush." She said as if that made everything okay. "Your little moment of absent-mindedness is going to make me late for work."
"Then let me just pay you for the coffee."

"Oh no. If I’m going to be late, I want a good reason." She glanced at him and stopped in front of the coffee shop. "You know who Leroy is don’t you?"

"The town gossip? Who doesn't know him?"

"Exactly. He’s in there." She grinned. "Sorry about this." And with another tug, she pulled him into the coffee shop and up to the counter, smiling innocently at the barista.

Killian blinked and stood by her side, realizing after everyone stared at them that Emma was still holding his hand. Without really hearing what she ordered, mostly due to his distraction by their proximity, he let go of her long enough to pull out his wallet and pay. As soon as he took his card back, Emma grabbed his hand again and smiled at him.

"Thanks." She said, squeezing his hand once before lightly tugging him to the counter to wait for the coffee. Two coffees, apparently, as she handed one to him first before taking her own. "Shall we?"

"Sure." He agreed without really understanding, but as they left the coffee shop, hand in hand, something clicked. Leroy was already staring at them intently, even through the window. Within an hour the whole town would know that the two of them were like this.

"Why?" He asked her, letting go of her hand once they were safely out of sight of the front window. "You did that on purpose, didn't you?"

"Yup." Emma smirked and sipped her drink.

"So why?"

"One, because I thought it would be funny to see everyone's reaction. I was going to stop once we got in, but you totally spaced out, so I played it up a bit. It's your fault for not paying attention." She continued to smirk at him.

"So you're trying to get back at me for bumping into you?" He frowned a bit. "Isn't that cruel?"

"I'm not trying to get back at you." She lifted her hand and patted him on the arm. "I'm trying to start a rumor that we're dating."

"We just met not ten minutes ago. That's a little ridiculous, you know."

"Yes, but no one else knows that." Emma grinned at him. "Besides, it makes it a lot easier now."

"Makes what a lot easier? The whole bloody town is going to start thinking up all sorts of things about the two of us." He was incredibly frustrated by this, and he frowned at her, trying to show his disapproval, but she just kept grinning back at him. That made it worse.

"Make you asking me out a lot easier." She stepped past him, her hand dropping from his arm.

"What?" He stared at her as she started to walk away. "That's so messed up!"

"I guess it is." She shrugged, her back to him as she continued to walk. "Call me later, Killian."

"How the bloody hell am I supposed to do that? I don't have your number."

She stopped and looked over her shoulder at him. "You do." She grinned. "Check your phone." She said before rounding the corner.
His eyes widened, and he pulled the phone out of his pocket. Sure enough, it was still on the contact screen, with the new entry for 'Emma Swan.' How the hell did she manage to do that without him noticing? And why wasn't he angrier about this? She completely manipulated him into this didn't she? And here he was, actually thinking about calling her later and following through on asking her out.

Of course he would. That woman was so infuriating, but at the same time, he felt an instant attraction and connection. Damnit. He had totally been roped in. And he didn't even really mind at all.
"I think I'm going to move out."

Emma didn't even look away from the TV when she heard Killian enter and say that. She didn't want him to see the look on her face, and she didn't want to admit to feeling anything that would cause such an expression. "Oh, ok." She tried to keep her voice monotone, but she was sure it wavered a little. After all, they had been roommates for over three years, and Emma was utterly in love with Killian. Now he was thinking of leaving. He probably planned on moving in with some other woman. He always brought them back, or at least it seemed that way. Those were the nights she slept with her earphones in.

"That's it? Oh, ok?" He sounded annoyed, and she heard him take slow steps towards the couch. "You have nothing else to say?"

Emma's eyes remained locked on the TV. "What would you have my say, Killian? You want to leave. You've been gone more than here anyway, and when you are here, my presence seems to annoy you. Do you want me to throw myself at your feet and plead with you to stay when you clearly don't want to be here?"

"You're the one who doesn't want me here." Killian muttered, and the footsteps moved to the kitchen. The fridge opened before the footsteps came closer again, around the couch. He sat next to her and stared at her.

She kept her eyes forward, though she really wanted to look at him. "I never said that."

"No?" He opened the beer he took from the fridge and drank some of it. "Could have fooled me. You always look at me in disgust whenever I'm here."

"That's not true." Now she turned her head to look at him. He looked more startled than anything when she did that. "You're such an idiot!"

Killian's brows knit and he looked at her more than she would have liked him to. "Are you crying?"

"I'm not crying!" She said, eyes shimmering as if she were about to, but no tears actually fell down her cheeks.

"You're about to."

"And you're going to leave, so what do you care?" She turned her head away again and frowned, trying to keep her lips from trembling. If she could be angry, then she wouldn't cry, right? She pulled her legs up onto the couch and hugged her knees to her chest, resting her chin on them and staring at the TV again.

Killian drank the rest of his beer, silent for a while afterwards. "Emma..." He said, turning his body more so he was facing her. "Do you want me to stay?"

She stiffened a little, but remained in that defensive posture. "I'm not answering that."

"So you do." He nodded and reached out, resting his hand on her shoulder.

"Don't." She pulled away from him, letting go of his legs and jumping off the couch. "You don't get to turn this around on me when you're the one who wants to leave." She stared down at him,
frowning. "You don't get to waltz in here like you don't have a care in the world, and make this my decision. I refuse. I refuse to be your excuse, or your scapegoat, or whatever the hell you're trying to turn this into."

He looked up at her, blinking. "Emma, that's not what I meant."

"Then it doesn't really matter what I think does it?"

"Of course it matters. If you want me to stay, then I'll stay."

"That's exactly what I'm talking about. You'll stay if I want you to? So when you're miserable, you can blame me for making you stay here? No. No no no. I am not doing it." She turned and walked away from the couch, heading towards the hallway.

"Emma." He was right behind her, his hand grabbing her arm and stopping her from walking closer to her bedroom door. "I think you've misunderstood."

"If I have, it's because you suck." She kept her back to him. "You come in here and say you're going to move out. You blame me, saying I'm the one who wants you gone, then you act like it matters?"

"It does matter!" He tugged on her arm enough to spin her around. "I only suggested it because lately you seem like you can't stand me."

"How is that possible? You're never home, and when you are, you bring some woman here. This is the first time you've talked to me more than pleasantries in weeks! How could you even think I can't stand you when you avoid me?"

He shook his head a little. "That's..." He frowned a bit and looked at her. "You think I'm avoiding you?"

"Aren't you? Wouldn't anyone come to that conclusion given your behavior?" She yanked her arm away from him. "So if you want to leave, leave. I don't care." She opened her bedroom door and walked in, but before she could shut it, he put his hand against it and held it open, leaning incredibly close and staring at her.

"I'm not avoiding you. Stop walking away from me."

"Let me close my door, Killian."

"Only if you tell me you want me to stay, Emma."

"What kind of stupid game is that?" She frowned at him, letting go of the door and crossing her arms. "That's so childish."

"You're the one who won't tell me the truth. You're resorting to anger because that's what you do when you're upset. You act angry to prevent yourself from feeling anything else."

She arched a brow at him. "And what am I feeling then, aside from anger at your inability to do anything but blame me for everything?"

"You're upset that I said I'd move out. You were about to cry a few minutes ago." He stepped into her room and frowned. "So why can't you just be honest with me?"

"And tell you what, Killian? That I'm tired of fighting with you over stupid shit like this? That, regardless of what this is, it still feels like I'm being ditched, again, because you want to move out?"
That I absolutely hate what you've been up to these past few months?" She sighed and uncrossed her arms, walking to her bed and sitting on it. "You used to be nice to me, you know. You used to talk to me about nothing. You used to act like you were my friend." She bowed her head a bit. "Now you act like you can't stand me."

"I am your friend, Emma."

"Then stop looking at me like I'm the worst person in the world. Stop avoiding me." She refused to lift her head, even as he sat down next to her and put his arm over her shoulder.

"I'm not avoiding you, I promise." He rubbed her shoulder a bit. "I see how you'd think that. That's my fault. I should have been honest with you from the start."

"About what?" She couldn't help but lean against him.

"I quit my job at the shop a few weeks ago. The manager kept flirting with me, and she basically said that she'd fire me if I didn't..." He shook his head. "I took up the night shift down by the docks. So...I'm not home a lot because I'm at work."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"Because it's embarrassing, and I knew you'd storm in there if I said anything."

"I wouldn't have gone unless you filed a report, you know." She lifted her head a little and looked at him. "And what about the women?"

"Oh. Well." He shook his head. "I was trying to regain control of myself. Probably not the best way to do it."

She made a bit of a face. "Well....some warning would be nice. Sleeping with earphones in is uncomfortable."

"It won't happen again. I promise." He grinned.

"That's not what I mean, Killian. It's okay, just warn me, so I can go crash somewhere else."

"No, I mean it won't happen again because I don't want to be with anyone else." He looked at her and grinned. "I only want to be with you, you know."
Killian didn't know what he was expecting when he arrived in town for Victor and Ruby's wedding. He hadn't been back in ten years, not after the explosive breakup. Not since Emma sat on the floor of their apartment and cried and cried because he was such an asshole for leaving her, and how could he do this to her? Why did she have to love a bastard like him?

And he knew she was right. That was why he turned away from her and walked out the door, suitcase in hand. It was why he got destructive in these ten years. Why he never got serious with anyone except the bottom of a rum bottle. It's why he bounced from city to city, doing anything and everything that would prove to himself that Emma was better off without him. That she was perfect and pristine, and she didn't need someone like him dirtying her.

So he wasn't sure what he was expecting, but it certainly wasn't this. Emma, jaded and angry, frowning almost the entire rehearsal and dinner. Checking her phone constantly, and completely avoiding him. Their eyes met once, and she glared at him with such intensity that he actually cringed. Maybe coming back was a bad idea, but Victor insisted, and how could he say no to his oldest friend?

"Maybe if you weren't such a shithead, she wouldn't hate you." David seemed to appear out of nowhere, handing him a drink and shrugging. "But it's been ten years, and I think she's only acting like this because everyone expects her to. Emma's been fine for a long time."

"Has she?" Killian took the drink and nodded once. Part of him was happy to hear that she was doing well, but there was a part of him that didn't like it. He was miserable without her, and he kind of wanted Emma to be miserable without him.

"You could ask her yourself." David shrugged again. "But talking to her might be difficult hm?"

"I suppose." Killian glanced at the other man, who only clapped him on the shoulder before walking back to his table. He looked around the room once more, downing the rest of the drink and stretching a little. There was no real need to be here anymore, right? Rehearsal was over. Dinner was over. The wedding was tomorrow afternoon, so he could head back to the inn and get some sleep, couldn't he?

So he said his goodbyes to Victor and headed out of the restaurant, one hand shoved into his pocket and fingering over his keys. The faster he got out of here, the better.

"Killian."

He stopped just as he was about to take a step off the curb, but he made no move to turn, even as he heard the click of Emma's heels come closer. "Hm?"

She stopped, probably about a foot closer, judging from the clicks and the proximity of her voice. "Are you leaving?"

He turned then and looked at her, and unlike the scowl she had thrown in his direction all night, she looked, well, normal. No frown. No glare. Just neutral Emma. "Yes."

"Can you give me a ride?" She shifted a little, and Killian realized how uncomfortable she had to be asking that of him, with the way she averted her gaze as soon as the question left her mouth. "I got a
ride with Mary Margaret and David, but I just..." She shook her head. "I don't like these sorts of things, and I don't want to walk back to my place in these shoes."

"Sure." He shrugged a bit and looked at her, walking to his car and holding open the passenger door for her. "Where do you live?"

"Same place as always." She said as she slid into the car.

Killian's brows furrowed a bit at that. Why would she still be living there, of all places? "Oh." He said once he was in the car, starting it up and looking at her. "Really?"

"I couldn't bring myself to move, to be honest." She shrugged and looked out the window. "It was too much trouble."

"I see." He looked away from her and started to drive, focusing on the road in front of him. Although he hadn't been here in a decade, he still remembered the way back to that apartment building. And when he came to it, he pulled up to the curb and put the car into park, looking at her again. "Here you are."

"Thanks." Emma sat there for a moment, still looking out the window before she suddenly tuned, staring at him with somewhat wide eyes, her hands grabbing onto his arm. "Come up with me."

"What? How is that a good idea?" He arched a brow. "You remember the last time I was in that apartment. That's not something I really want to relive."

Her hands tightened a little on his arm, but not enough to hurt. "I think it's really important for you to come up with me."

He should have said no. He should have yanked his arm back and told her to get out, but instead he found himself studying her face. The way her eyes seemed to shimmer as though tears might fall any second. The way her lower lip trembled just slightly. "And if I refuse?"

"Then I won't get out of your car." She pouted. "Please, Killian. Don't make me guilt you into coming upstairs with me."

"Like you could?"

"Easily. You've got those rules still, don't you?"

He frowned a little. Of course she knew where to hit him where it would be most effective. "Fine. I'll come up." He pulled his arm away from her, but she didn't seem all that bothered by it as she got out of the car and waited for him to do the same.

The walk into the building was agonizing enough. It looked as though no one had bothered updating the decor in those ten years. The only thing that looked remotely new was the elevator, and he just figured that was because it finally snapped and killed someone. He frowned a little when he stepped inside, and it wasn't until Emma pushed the button for the third floor that he noticed her hand was clutching his sleeve.

Without a word, she led him to the apartment and opened the door. It was emptier than he remembered, but it had been ten years.

"Why did you want me to come up here?"

She let go of his arm and turned on the light, kicking her heels off and sighing a bit. "Everyone was
against me doing this, but..." She turned enough to look at him. "I...don't want to do it anymore."

"Do what?"

"Be without you..." She bowed her head and hugged herself a little. "I'm miserable. I'm a mess. I'm sure you're fine and you moved on no problem, but I haven't."

"What?" Was he hearing this correctly? "And everyone knows, so they were against you telling me?"

She shook her head. "My therapist is the only one who knows how much of a mess I am. To everyone else, I'm well put together. No problems. They were against me talking to you because they didn't want you to dig up painful memories."

"That I left you?"

She nodded once and seemed to hug herself a little tighter. "I was pregnant. I was going to tell you that night, but those pictures..." She bowed her head."They were fake, did you know that? That stupid...She did it to break us up because she was jealous. Your rules were too important to you, so you never would have cheated on me. Not willingly."

He stared at her. What did she mean by all of this? The reason he left was a lie concocted by some jealous woman? "You...were pregnant?" That was the most important issue, wasn't it?

"Yes." She looked at him for a short moment before she looked back down on the floor. "I was in so much pain when you left that I lost it..." Her hand slid down over her stomach. "I'm still not over it even though it was ten years ago."

"Are you blaming me?" He frowned.

"No. No I'm not. You left me because you thought you had betrayed me. You probably punished yourself for a bit afterwards, but you're too strong for any of that, so you moved on, right?"

"No," He shook his head. "I'm still punishing myself, Emma."

"Why? You did nothing wrong. It was all that woman."

"I just found out I did nothing wrong." He walked over to her and rested his hands on her shoulders. "If I had known, I would have come back sooner. I would have never left."

"I don't blame you, Killian." She looked up at him. "I might have blamed you at first, but after...When I found out it was a lie, I was so relieved, but I was so heartbroken because you were gone."

"It's going to be harder for me to stop blaming myself, you know."

"I know." She lifted a hand and rested it on his chest. "You're very much a person who acts based on this. So it'll be harder for you to accept what you just found out."

"Emma..."

"Come back home, Killian..." She leaned forward and rested her head against his chest. "Put my pieces back together again..."

He stood there, his hands dropping from her shoulders. How did this all happen? He knew he was still desperately in love with her even after all these years, but he didn't deserve her. He never did,
right? But here she was, clutching his shirt and trembling in his arms, begging him between soft little
sobs. He wanted nothing more than to be everything she ever wanted or needed, but could he do it?
Would he be good enough?

"Emma, I..."

"You won't do it, will you? You have a life now. You probably have a girlfriend waiting for you."
She pulled herself out of his arms and wiped the tears off her cheeks.

"Only if you're the one waiting for me." He lifted his hands to her cheeks and gently wiped the rest
of her tears. "I am a mess without you, too, but you deserve way better than me."

"There is no one better." She looked up at him.

"Then I will stay." He nodded once, managing a small little smile, but it seemed to be enough to
encourage her. "For you. For me."

She fell into his chest again and let out a strangled sob. "I don't want to be away from you ever
again."

"I won't go anywhere, love."

Chapter End Notes

The angst!
"Hot chocolate with a pump of caramel, whip, and cinnamon, right?"

Emma saw the cup rest on the table in front of her even before she finished registering the voice. She looked up at the man who spoke to her, blinking once and somehow managing not to be startled by a complete stranger getting her exact order correct and placing it in front of her. "I'm not the type of girl who takes drinks from strangers."

He laughed a little, and Emma noticed the way his eyes lit up when he did, the grin remaining on his lips even after the laughter stopped. "I know, love, but I make this for you almost every morning, and this is the first time you've come in to work here without ordering it. So I figured you might need the pick me up after a few hours of that. Don't worry, it's on me."

She arched a brow at him, but the vague recognition came and she shrugged. It was true that she had been sitting in this corner of the shop for a few hours, laptop open on the table in front of her as she flipped through pages of notes. "Well, thank you I guess." She blinked at him, but managed a small smile.

He grinned again and walked back behind the counter. She went back to working on her thesis, occasionally drinking that hot chocolate, breaking her own rule about drinks she didn't order or get herself. That guy had to know who she was if he memorized her order like that, so he had to have known that her dad was the sheriff, and that her mom was the principal at the elementary school, right? Everyone seemed to know that, as evidenced by the way none of them really talked to her.

She shrugged off the unpleasant feeling and went back to work. If she could just get past this one bump in her research, she could finish off her thesis and head back to the city to defend it. She could finally finish grad school, and she could get out of this little isolated town.

It wasn't that she didn't like growing up in Storybrooke. It was really nice here, and spending the summer and the semester back home to work on her thesis was definitely helpful. Boston was always so busy, and she had been worried she wouldn't get everything done if she had stayed. So a sublet and a long car ride, and she was back in her old bedroom at her parents' house. Back at the local coffee shop almost daily. Back at the docks when she was feeling particularly stuck.

The man who had brought her the hot chocolate was definitely new to the town, or at least new enough to have moved here in the past six years while she was away at school. Maybe even newer, since she had come in here over the Christmas break and didn't see him. Then again, she wasn't really observant, and it wasn't until he spoke to her that she really looked at him.

Just like it wasn't until she finished the hot chocolate and grabbed the cup to throw it out that she noticed he had written on it. A name, a number. Killian? Really? She looked up at the counter again, eyes wide, and he was grinning like an idiot. Had he been watching her the whole time?

"Need a refill, lass?" The coffee shop was pretty much empty except for them, another person behind the counter, and some older couple sitting off by the window, canoodling in that weirdly cute way that old couples canoodled.

"Eh? N...No." She started shoving her notes and things back into her bag, saving her work and fumbling to close the laptop.

"Well, if you change your mind, you should call me." He winked. "You should take down that
number before you throw out the cup."

Oh great. He did notice that she noticed. He had been watching her. For some reason it was both exhilarating and annoying. Did he do this with all of the other girls that came in? She frowned a bit and shot him a glare that probably could have stopped his heart dead if he didn't just laugh it off.

"The hell is this?"

"An attempt at flirting with the most oblivious woman I've ever encountered." He grinned and leaned on the counter. "Do you know how many times I've written my mobile number or a note on your cup? You haven't called me yet, so you probably never noticed."

She blinked. Occasionally she had noticed the little notes. The ones that simply said 'good luck!' or 'you can do it!' Little encouraging things that she never really absorbed, but somehow always appreciated. The notes came when she sat here. She guessed the phone numbers came on the days she didn't.

"See?" He chuckled. "Such a stubborn woman." He shook his head a little. "You should probably pay more attention. You never know what I might write on the next cup."

She kept looking at him as she put her laptop away, slinging the bag over her shoulder and walking right up to the counter. "Do you do this often?"

"Yes. Almost daily." He grinned, and she figured he knew exactly what she meant, but he didn't seem fazed by it. "The only days I don't are the days you don't come in. At first I thought you might be ignoring me, but after today? Utterly oblivious."

"Why are you trying so hard, then?" She shook her head and put the empty cup down on the counter. "Isn't this some form of harassment?"

He shrugged. "I like you."

"You don't know me."

"But I want to know you." He looked at her, completely serious. "I want to know you, who comes in here alone all the time, orders the same, comforting drink, and sits at that table and works away, reading books, highlighting papers, typing away without a care in the world."

"So you want to get to know me because I'm a nerd?"

"Nah. Because you're serious. When I moved here last year, you weren't here." He smirked a bit at her."But I had heard stories. The only one who graduated in this town and left this town. Everyone else took over family businesses, or started a family. Not You. The Sheriff's daughter who couldn't wait to leave."

"What does that have to do with being serious?"

"Because everyone talks about doing something with their lives, but you're actually doing it. It'd admirable."

"So you keep trying to give me your number for that reason?"

"That, and you're incredibly gorgeous." He winked.

"Ugh." She shook her head and took a step back from the counter.
"Don't forget this, love." He held up the cup as she turned and started walking to do the door. "Or I'll have to give it to you again tomorrow."

She stopped, her hand resting on the door handle before she looked over her shoulder at him. This time she grinned. "You won't have to. I've already memorized it, Killian." She felt a wave of satisfaction wash over her at the surprised look on his face, and she walked out of the coffee shop.
"I can't do this anymore, Killian."

He looked across the table at Emma, her eyes red and puffy. She had been crying again. Crying because of him. His problem. His attitude. Everything. He knew it. He knew he was the one who needed to fix this because Emma had been trying and trying, and he had been resisting.

So as she put the ring down on the table in front of him, he stared at it for a long moment, unable to say anything. Unable to let himself show the torrid of emotions that raged through him.

"You're leaving me?" He asked quietly. It was less of a question and more of an observation. She should have done this long ago, but she stuck with him, and he never told her how he felt about it. Would it be too late now?

"Not exactly." She sighed and bowed her head. "I'm giving you an ultimatum"

"Which is?" Shaking fingers reached out to touch the ring she put on the table. "If you're not exactly leaving me, then what's this?"

"I love you." She said, head still bowed. "I love you so much that sometimes I wake up at night and I cry because I can hear you throwing up in the bathroom. I love you so much that the thought of you leaving me scares me to the point where I'm afraid I would die." She lifted her head and looked at him. "I love you so much that I sometimes think I'll go down that path with you."

He winced a little and looked at her. "No, Emma..."

"And so I'm not exactly leaving you. I can't live without you Killian. I will die if you do. Maybe not physically, but I won't ever love anyone again. And I'll never forgive you, or forgive myself if you die because of this."

He sighed and looked down at the table again, fingering that ring as the shame washed over him. He knew he was hurting Emma, and he tried to stop, but he didn't know how, he couldn't do it. No matter how many times he tried, he didn't think he had the strength. Not after this long.

"But I won't marry you until you're sober. I won't even be your fiancée until then." She leaned back in her chair and sighed. "I can't. As long as I agree to be with you forever like that, I feel like I'm enabling you. So I will support you if you decide to recover, and I will always love you, but I won't enable you anymore."

"I understand." He pushed the ring back to her. "But hold onto this for me." He shook his head. "Put it somewhere safe, and when you accept me again, put it back on." He watched her. She looked at him for a long moment before she took the ring back and put it on her necklace.

"Fine. For now. But this time you can't just try to stop. You have to stop."

He nodded a little. "I want to...I really do..."

"Good. Then go to the hospital. Find a treatment center. Go to therapy. Something. Everything. I don't care how you do it, just do it...Please." Tears filled her eyes again. "I miss you."

He winced a little again and nodded. He knew that she meant the him that didn't rely on the alcohol. The him who was confident and happy. Not the man he was now. The one who was already drunk
by noon on any given day. The one who always felt so angry and miserable. He hated himself when he was like that, so how could he expect Emma to like him? "Emma..."

She shook her head. "Don't make excuses."

"No, I'm not going to do that. You're right." He sighed and ran his hand over his face. "You deserve better than this. You deserve better than me even at my best." He looked at her again. "I will go to Victor and ask him what to do...I promise. For you."

"Killian, don't do this for me."

"No. For you. But also, and mostly for me. I love you. I have always loved you, and I will always love you." He managed a little smile, probably the first one he'd shown in months. "And I need to do this so I can continue to love you. So I can see you smile again. So I can live long enough to have a family with you." He slumped a bit in the chair. "So I can have something good in my life. You're everything."

She reached out and rested her hand over his. "I will wait for you, no matter how long it takes. And I will be by your side as much as you want me to. I will support you as you fix your present, so we can build our future." She patted his hand once before pulling hers back.

"I will do my best so you're not waiting long."
Picking the lock was the easy part. It was getting Killian to stop commenting about every nice thing he saw in the house that was the most difficult. "Shut up." Emma hissed at him as she moved slowly through the living room, towards the kitchen.

"You're sure it's here?"

"Positive." She moved to the basement door and opened it, keeping the lights off as she descended the stairs. It wasn't until she got to the bottom that she took out the phone she had swiped from the homeowner earlier. She held it up, turned on the flash, and click.

As the light filled the room, the cages became visible. The howling of the cage's inhabitants echoing through the room with each picture. Click. Click.

She ascended the stairs again and glanced at Killian. "Did you grab what I told you to grab?"

"Yup." He held up a small sack that should be filled with jewelry and any other small trinkets or electronics.

"Good." She leaned over and kissed him before nodding. "Let's get out of here. I got what I came here for." She led him out of the house, making sure all of the doors were locked behind her.

"How many more times do you think we'll need to do this?" Killian asked as they slipped into the woods where Emma's car was parked, out of sight of any of the houses.

"Depends on how many more people decided to do something this sick and twisted." She slid into the driver's seat and showed him the pictures on the phone, watching the way he recoiled at the images.

"Bloody hell, that's worse than you said."

"Yeah." She nodded, but then a smirk spread across her lips. "Looks like our friend here left himself logged onto Facebook." A quick message. An upload. And the phone was tossed out of the window, as Emma drove it, not too far from the house, but not on the same street.

"You're so cunning." Killian chuckled and sorted through the bag. "Should we do the usual with this?"

"Yeah. Gold'll handle it. As always." Emma pulled up to the Station and got out of the car. "You can handle that, can't you? I have a feeling quite a few phone calls will be coming in soon." She looked at him and smiled.

Killian nodded and kissed her once he was out of the car. "You're so sexy when you're this devious."

"Am I?" She kissed him and patted his chest, pulling her gloves off and smirking. "I'll make sure to be extra devious when I get home tonight, then."

"I look forward to it."
He noticed the moment she moved into the small cottage by the shore. She was the loveliest woman he had ever seen, and she brought warmth to this cold little village, but even though her mere presence was like a light in the darkness, he never saw her smile. Well, she faked it with the other villagers. When they spoke, she faked a laugh, or her lips curled up in a not-smile. No one else seemed to notice, but he could tell. The woman's eyes remained dull. Like his own.

It was weeks before he learned her name. Emma. Such a beautiful name. Like some sort of princess, hidden amongst the villagers. A hidden gem in a pile of stones. She certainly carried herself like one. Her posture exuded confidence, and she looked elegant in everything she did, even when it was mending, or fishing, or tending to her garden.

Another month and he learned exactly why she had come to the cottage on the outskirts of that remote village. She was with child. She sobbed every night. Cried into her pillow like it was the only thing she could do. Every night, even as most of the villagers began to shun her for being unwed and pregnant. The larger her stomach grew, the more they ignored her. And he realized he couldn't just watch anymore.

It was a rainy day, eight months after Emma arrived that Killian stood at her door, knocking once as the water soaked into his skin.

She opened the door and looked at him, eyes wide. "Can...I help you sir?"

"Aye, lass." He smiled a little at her, water dripping from his hair and onto his nose. "Do you have it in your heart to help a stranger keep the chill out of his bones?"

She nodded once and let him in, grabbing some towels and handing them to him. "Why don't you get out of those wet clothes so they, and you, can dry by the hearth?" She closed the door behind him and picked up his sopping clothing as he carefully peeled it off.

"Thank you." Killian sat by the fire, wrapped in the towels. He watched the flames dance for a bit before he looked at her. She sat in a chair just a little bit away, knitting some small blanket or other. "You're a brave one, allowing a man like myself in here and letting me disrobe in front of you."

"What's the worst you can do to me?" She looked at him and shrugged. "Kill me? That might be a welcome release, if it weren't for the child growing inside me. But if you killed me, you'd kill him too, so we'd both be saved from this wretched world." She sighed and shook her head. "I own nothing beyond what you see. I have no family to ransom me..."

He arched a brow. She really was worse off than he thought. "Just commenting on your bravery, lass. That's all."

"Well, then thank you. You're the first person to call me that. I'd much rather be called brave than a harlot or a sinner." She looked at him. "Unless you think I have some sort of deal with the devil for being a woman all alone with a child in her belly."

"Not at all." He shook his head. "Where I come from, it is not a sin to bring life into the world. And being with child and without husband doesn't necessarily make you a harlot." He watched her carefully. "Unless you are a woman of business?"

"No." She folded her knitting into her lap and continued to look at him. "I was taken for a fool, though." She sighed a little. "Your home sounds like a much better place for a woman like me than
"The far shore." Killian looked at her, smiling a little. "It wouldn't be the kind of place you can raise a child."

"Oh." She slumped a little, but soon shook her head and looked at him once more. "You must be a little warmer by now."

"I suppose. I can't feel the heat."

Her brows furrowed and she stood, walking over to him and reaching out to touch his forehead. She blinked when her fingers touched him. "It's like ice..."

"I am chilled quite thoroughly. I have been for a while. But I can feel your heat, Emma."

She stepped back a bit. "How...do you know my name?"

"I've been watching you. Since you came into this home." He arched a brow a bit. "I know that sounds quite startling, but don't be alarmed. I can't hurt you, and even if I could, I wouldn't."

She stepped back more. "That's not comforting at all."

He chuckled. "I mean it quite literally." When he grinned, the towels fell to the floor, through him, actually, and she gasped a little. "I am quite dead."

Her eyes widened and her hands trembled a little, but she didn't back away anymore. In fact, she stepped closer. "You're a ghost?"

"Aye. Have been for a few decades."

"Then how come I can see you? How come I picked up your clothing because you were wet? Spirits don't have bodies."

"No, we don't. But it is the night of the new moon, when spirits have a bit more power, and I wanted to visit you." Maybe he shouldn't have been so honest, but she was no longer staring at him out of fear.

"Why...?" She whispered, sinking to the floor, one hand coming to her stomach. "You're not going to possess my baby are you?"

He laughed again. "No no." He shook his head a bit, his hair no longer wet. Neither were the clothes that reappeared on his body. "I came because you always look so sad and lonely. And as someone who's suffered under the same feeling for years, I wanted to ease your pain just a bit."

"I'm not suffering, sad, or lonely. I just don't like people."

"Ah. That's a lie. You cry every night. It echoes in the walls." He stood and walked to one, resting his hand against one. "Why do you stay here if the people make you so miserable?"

"This cottage..." Emma looked around. "When I first came here, I felt...home. I don't know how to explain it. Like I belonged here."

"And so you stay even though you are alone?"

"Yes, but I don't feel alone here. I feel less alone inside these walls than I ever did where I used to live." She hugged herself a bit. "That must be because you were watching me."
"Well, I had no choice really." He shrugged. "I built this cottage, and I died in this cottage." He looked over his shoulder at her. "My name was etched into the nameplate by the door, but you never changed it."

"No need." She looked at him. "So you're Killian Jones."

"At your service, love."

"And what service can a ghost do me?"

"I can ease your loneliness." He shrugged and walked away from the wall. "Only in presence, though. I'm afraid I won't have the power or energy to physically comfort you." He winked.

Emma looked at him for a long moment. "You've been here, easing my pain this whole time...Whenever I went to the village, I was miserable, but as soon as I came back here, it was like I was wrapped in a warm blanket." She took a step to him and lifted her hand again. "You really can't touch me?"

"No." He lifted his hand to hers and blinked.

"But I can feel you, Killian. I felt your forehead earlier, and I can feel your hand now." She ran a finger along his palm.

"That's the new moon, love. Come sunrise it won't be possible." He smiled sadly at her. He would have liked nothing more than to pull her into his arms each and every day, but as it was, this was too much strain on his energy.

Until she grabbed his hand, interlocking her fingers with his. "I'll fix it."

"Excuse me?" He blinked and yelped when she pulled him closer to her. "Emma...?" This shouldn't be possible. Touching one area was one thing, since he could concentrate his energy there, but when she tugged him, he felt the warmth of her body against his, the protrusion of her belly against his abdomen, and her breath against his face. "W...What?"

"According to my parents, I have a vast amount of power...as a product of true love." She looked up at him, lifting her hand to touch his cheek. "I can feel you."

"E...Emma...I'm dead."

"How did you die?"

"I was hit over the head by a jealous man. When I woke up, I was like this, and I have not changed since that day, decades ago."

"And you're sure it was decades?" She ran her fingers along his cheek and he shivered. "Maybe it was only months."

"Emma, what are you getting at...?" His eyes started to close when he felt her fingers move into the hair at the back of her neck. "I'm..."

"You're not dead. A spirit, sure, but...you are so cold. And no one knew of you dying. If you had died, wouldn't someone have found and buried your body?"

"I...guess..." Why was he feeling so much? Warmth spread through him from where her hands touched his flesh. One at the back of his neck, one holding his hand. "I don't know..."
"So you could be wrong about dying decades ago. You just can't remember." She whispered, her lips mere inches from his. "You've watched me these months, and you've saved me without me realizing it."

"Emma..."

"Do you love me, Killian? Is that why you care?"

"I...care..." He whispered and looked at her, and it started to click. He felt things. He had feelings of happiness and sadness. He felt a connection to Emma that caused him to feel more than curiosity. He genuinely wanted to be by her side. "I feel things...I shouldn't."

"Because the dead don't feel." Her lips almost brushed against his, but she stopped just short. "You love me, don't you?"

"I..." His eyes searched hers. This was supposed to go so differently. She wasn't supposed to be so forward, or so powerful. He just wanted her to know that she wasn't alone. "Yes..."

She smiled then. An actual smile. One that reached her eyes. And that was it. The heat of her mouth against his changed everything. A bright light. A flash of memory and pain at the back of his head. A curse, uttered by a vindictive man.

When she pulled back from him, he fell to the floor and actually felt the wood against his body. It was hard, but warm from the heat of the fire. "What just happened?"

"Didn't you know that true love's kiss can break any curse?" Emma reached her hand down to him. "I didn't remove your name plate because I felt there was some power in it. Looks like you were cursed into it. Your spirit existed because of magic."

He took her hand and slowly got to his feet. "So...I'm alive now?" He patted himself on the chest. "Really alive?"

"Really alive." Her hand continued to hold his. "I already feel the warmth coming back." She smiled a little. "Welcome home, Killian."
Emma sat on the bench outside the small tavern, looking down at the notes her parents had scribbled for her. It was the first time she had been asked to do the kingdom tour in their stead, as they had the new baby, and there was only so much one of them could do without the other. So it was up to Emma to take the journey, checking on villages, talking to people.

She hated it.

Talking to people was not her thing. It never was. Her parents knew that. And yet here she was, being a good daughter, sitting in a town days away from the palace, contemplating ducking into the tavern for a drink or eight.

"You need help, lass?"

She looked up from the parchment in her hand and blinked at the man standing in front of her. Tall, dark, handsome. She shook her head a little and offered him a shy smile. "I am okay, thank you."

He offered her a smile in return and bowed lightly. "Well, lovely, if you change your mind, I'll be right inside." He winked and walked past the bench, into the tavern.

Emma watched him walk into the building before she looked back down at the parchment. Her father's handwriting wasn't always the clearest, and she couldn't quite make out what he wanted her to see here. So she just figured she should see everything. That way her father couldn't tell her she missed something, right? And then she would be helpful. Then again, maybe she shouldn't be too helpful, or her parents would ask her to do this again.

"What is it, Princess?" One of the men leaning on a lamppost looked at her. One of the knights in plainclothes. She had decided that it was easier to move around without the entire entourage following her. So when she stood, he watched her and arched a brow.

"I'm going to go into the tavern. I will be okay. It's small." She looked at him, frowning a bit as she brushed off her skirts. "Do not follow me."

"But my orders——"

She cut him off and smiled. "Your orders are to keep me safe, correct? If you follow me into the tavern and call me by my title so openly, I will be the least safe woman in there." When he nodded, she smiled again. "Thank you." She pulled her shawl a little closer and pushed through the door. It was still early enough that most of the rowdy patrons didn't seem to be in. Instead it was quite a few old men reminiscing about days past, some younger men chatting at a table in the corner, and that man who had asked to help her earlier.

She watched him for a moment: he sat at the counter and slid his finger over the mouth of a bottle of rum, seemingly lost in the action, though when he stopped long enough to take the drink, he stopped mid swig and turned his head towards her. "Change your mind, lass?"

She shrugged and walked over to him, sitting on the stool next to him and smiling. "I had a list of things to see here, but I lost it." She said, stopping only to turn to the barkeep and order an ale before turning back to the man. "Do you think you can help me with that?"

"Sightseeing eh? Well, I can certainly tell you're not from around here."
"How so?"

"Too pretty." He winked. "Seriously. Most of the men here work on the ships. The women tend the shops and the fisheries. Most lasses don't take care of their appearance. No need to." He shrugged.

She tilted her head a bit, but she put some coins down on the countertop when the barkeep returned with her ale. "So I'm too pretty to be a hardworking girl then?"

"Oh I'm sure you're hardworking in some other way. Just not with fish guts and large knives."

"Are you implying something that should offend me, sir?"

"No no." He chuckled and leaned in a little closer. "You carry yourself too much like a noblewoman for that, love." He whispered, glancing to the side as if to check if anyone was watching them.

"Is that so?" She smiled a bit and looked at him. "Well, perhaps that is a bit more accurate, though I do work. I'm working right now." She drank some of her ale and gently pushed him back a bit to give some space. "And since I don't know what exactly I should see, perhaps you can help me?"

"I would be more than happy to show you around the village." He grinned. "It'll cost you though?"

"How much?" Emma arched a brow.

"Your name, and perhaps a drink later." He grinned.

She smiled a bit and nodded. "I can pay that no problem, but it would be proper for you to tell me yours first hm?"

"Killian Jones, at your service, lovely."

"Emma Swan." She smiled and held her hand out to him, which he promptly took and, bowing over it like a true gentleman, kissed her knuckles, his eyes locked on hers the entire time. She felt heat rise to her face, but she simply smiled at him, waiting until he sat up again to pull her hand back. "How charming."

He chuckled and corked the rum bottle after filling a flask and tucking it into his doublet. "I am quite the gentleman, I assure you."

Emma finished her ale and put the mug down, nodding once. "Seems like it. I hope it's not just an act, Killian." She stood and watched him. "Shall we?"

He nodded and stood, offering her his arm. which she took and stayed by his side as he escorted her out of the building.

The tour around the village wasn't all that exciting, and Emma couldn't really understand why her parents wanted her to spend so much time here. She assumed it was because of the harbor, which was in a pretty pivotal location, but she couldn't see how that would justify multiple nights here. Maybe there was something else he wanted her to do that he hadn't told her?

"Emma, love." Killian leaned in a little and whispered in her ear. "Do you have a scorned lover by any chance?"

"No." She blinked at him and was about to ask why, but she saw him glance to the side, and sure enough, one of her bodyguards was lurking. "Oh, him?" She laughed a little and leaned just that much closer to Killian. "That's Edward. He's harmless."
Killian puffed his cheeks for a moment before he frowned a bit. "Edward?" For a moment he looked annoyed, but he shrugged it off. "And who is he? Why is he glaring at me in such a way?"

"He is one of my guards, and he probably thinks you're a danger to me."

"So you are a noblewoman?" Killian arched a brow.

"I didn't deny it before, did I? I just said I still worked." Emma smiled a little. "Edward won't hurt you unless you try to hurt me. Of course, I'll hurt you first." She grinned up at him. "Care to try?"

He shook his head and chuckled. "I would much rather make you smile than make you feel pain."

"Smooth." She laughed and leaned a little against his arm. "So, Killian, I promised you a drink hm?"

"Aye, you did."

"Shall we, then? I wouldn't want to forget to pay you for your services. And perhaps I'll do it again if you aren't busy tomorrow." Maybe staying an extra night in this village wouldn't be so bad.
Best Friend's Sister (21)

Killian sat on the couch and half-listened as David spoke to him. He still felt a bit awkward here, since normally he would have gone home for Christmas and the rest of the winter break, but Liam was deployed, and scrounging the money to head back to England to an empty house just seemed foolish. So his best friend had offered him a place to stay during the break, which was just about the nicest thing anyone had done for him.

Nicer still now that he met David's younger sister Emma. He didn't even know David had a sister, and yet there she was, in the kitchen, humming slightly as she did whatever she was doing in there. And so he half listened as David talked about his plans to go out on a date with Mary Margaret, and maybe they could make it a double date if he wanted, since they could call Ruby.

He looked at his friend and blinked a little. Ruby was nice and all, but she definitely wasn't his type. In fact, she was as far from his type as one could possibly get. Emma, however, was exactly his type, but there was no tactful way to tell your best friend that you wanted to date his little sister. "I don't want to go on a date with Ruby."

"No?" David blinked a little, but shrugged. "What about Regina?"

"No bloody way. She's way too controlling for me," Killian shook his head and shrugged. "You know, mate, it's fine if you go on a date with your lass. I can stay here." He glanced into the kitchen again.

This time, David seemed to follow his gaze and he arched a brow. "You're not serious are you?"

"About what?" Killian turned his head back to him and blinked rather innocently for someone who was just watching Emma a little too intently.

"You want to put the moves on my little sister?"

"I said no such thing. Besides, when have you ever known me to be anything but a gentleman?" Killian grinned. "Why, do you think Emma would fancy me?"

David blinked, and he actually seemed a bit taken aback by that. "Wait, you are serious? That's why you want to stay here?"

"I don't mind." Emma called from the kitchen. "But I think you forget that I have ears." She leaned out of the doorway and looked at the two of them. "And yes. I think I would fancy you, Killian." She smiled an almost mischievous smile before going back into the kitchen.

"What?" David jumped up and walked into the kitchen. "What do you mean by that?"

"I mean you should go on a date with your girlfriend and let your friend stay home without forcing him to go out with Ruby or Regina." Emma's voice almost sounded annoyed. "You always try too hard to set people up and it usually doesn't work well."

Killian remained on the couch and looked at the TV, though he never bothered raising the volume because the conversation in the kitchen was much more relevant to his interests. At the very least, he wouldn't go in there, although they were talking about him.

"That isn't what you meant." David grumbled a little. "I can't let my little sister date my best friend."
"Why not?" Emma asked, and Killian really wanted to know the answer to that question as well.

"It's weird. And I know things. And what if he hurts you?"

"And what if he doesn't?" Emma sighed and put something down, and not gently judging by the loud sound whatever it was made. "And what if I end up being really happy? What if he ends up being happy? Or what if I end up hurting him? We're adults, David. We can make our own decisions...besides..." Emma walked out of the kitchen, looking right at Killian with a smirk on her lips. "Killian is my type."

"How do you know? You barely know him!" David followed her.

"Well, for starters, we made out the other night at the party." She grinned more.

Killian chuckled a bit and looked at David just in time to see the other man's eyes narrow a little. "We were drunk, mate. We all were. Besides, I kept my hands visible at all times." He held his hands up as if to prove a point, but then Emma sat right on his lap and curled her arms around his neck, grinning at her brother now rather than at Killian.

"See, David?" Emma's grin changed into a more innocent smile. "Your friend was such a gentleman, even when I was trying to get his pants off."

"WHAT!"

"That didn't happen!" Killian's eyes widened. "It didn't!"

Emma laughed and remained in Killian's lap. "Oh man. You really are easy to rile up!" She shook her head a little. "Relax. I'm teasing you."

David's hand rested over his chest, and he appeared to be trying to calm himself down. "That's not really nice."

It was Killian's turn to grin as he rested a hand on Emma's back and rubbed it just a little. She glanced at him out of the corner of her eye, her cheeks pinking just slightly before she looked back at her brother. So Killian smirked a bit and slid his hand up her back a bit more. "Really, mate. You're the one who wanted me to stay here with you for the month. I would have stayed in the dorms if you hadn't offered. So if we do get together, you have no one to blame but yourself."

David pouted a little. "You shouldn't tease me so much. It's not nice."

"I assure you, mate, I am not teasing. I do wish to woo your sister. And we did kiss quite a few times at the party." Killian's grin faded, and he tried to look as sincere as possible, not because he wasn't sincere, but because he didn't want his friend to lunge over the couch and punch him. "So you really should go on a date with your lass and let me stay here."

Emma shifted a little in Killian's lap, and he was pretty damn sure she did it intentionally, since he had to shift in reaction. "Really David," she said with a smile. "I will be okay. Chances are, I can kick Killian's ass anyway if he tries anything funny."

David sighed and waved his hand dismissively. "I won't argue anymore. I know if I do, you'll just do things together just to go against me." He walked behind the couch and towards the door.

"Perhaps." Killian grinned, turning his head enough to watch him.

"Tell Mary Margaret I say hi." Emma smiled, though her back was to David, and she didn't seem all
that inclined to move.

David just grunted as he pulled on his coat and boots and stormed out of the house. As soon as the door shut, Emma slid off Killian's lap and looked at him. "Sorry, did I go too far?"

"With what, love? The lie about my pants or sitting in my lap?"

"All of it." She blinked a little. "The kisses too."

"Oh no, Emma. We definitely snogged. You were quite gone, so I stayed at your side all night. Maybe you should drink a few fewer bevs, hm?" He smiled a little and lifted a hand to touch her hair. It didn't really bother him that she didn't remember the kissing, since he knew he still had several weeks to attempt it again.

Emma's cheeks flared and she stared at him. "What?"

"I'm not surprised you don't remember. You could barely stand up. So I sat with you until you fell asleep, and then I carried you to your room and sat outside your door, so no one could try to take advantage of you."

"Really?" Emma blushed a little more, as if that could happen given how red her cheeks were.

"Of course. It would be wrong of me to leave you in such a state." He shook his head, but in a moment she was in his lap again and kissing him, this time without the aid of alcohol. His eyes widened a bit, but he wrapped his arms around her and kissed her back.

When the kiss broke, Emma smiled against his lips and whispered, "Thank you."
Emma sat at the table, head bowed over the paperwork in front of her. Her tears had long since stopped and left her eyes aching. She knew they were having problems, but she honestly thought it was something they could work out. But apparently not, since she was now staring down at the divorce papers Killian left under the door this afternoon.

When had it gotten to this point? They had been married almost five years, and happily so until about two months ago. Killian started acting strangely. He stopped answering her calls. He stayed at the docks longer than he usually did, or he went to the bars after and didn't stumble in until after 2 am. She hadn't seen him for more than an hour a day sometimes, if she even saw him. There were times when she couldn't see him for three or four days at a time, and when she did see him, he was drunk.

And now this.

She didn't know what to do. If she called anyone, they'd tell her father, and he would go after Killian himself. And Henry was at Regina's for the night, not that he hung around her much anymore now that he was in high school. Liam was only two, so he didn't understand anything except that mommy needed hugs when she's sad. So what now?

Killian wasn't going to go after custody, or alimony, or any of it. Did that make it better? How could that make it better? Emma sighed a little and looked at the top paper. She couldn't even bring herself to do anything more than flip through all of them. She didn't want to read everything. She didn't want to fill anything out, or sign anything. She just wanted her Killian to come home and hold her and tell her he loved her.

But that wouldn't happen anymore, would it?

There was a knock at her door, and for a moment she debated not getting up, but she did. Wiping her face and patting her cheeks, she looked out the peephole and blinked. Well, it absolutely wasn't anyone she would have expected to see in this circumstance, so she opened the door. "Smee...?"

"Mistress." He nodded and glanced around the hallway. "May I?"

She nodded and stepped aside, letting him in and closing the door behind him. He stood there, pulling his red hat off his head and fumbling with it as he always did when he was nervous. "Are...you here for Killian's things?" She knew her voice trembled a little, but she didn't care.

"No." He shook his head and slowly pulled some paper out of his pocket. He watched her as he did it, reaching out and handing it to her. "I just came to tell you that the Captain wants me to pick up the signed papers this week...But I told him tomorrow was too soon. Mistress needs some time to recover."

Emma carefully took the paper. It was folded over, and on the top read 'She's listening. Read when Smee leaves. Tell him Friday.' It was definitely Killian's handwriting. When she looked up at Smee again, he nodded. "Oh...yeah. Is...Friday okay?"

"Of course." Smee smiled at her before he pulled his hat back on his head and opened the door. "Friday then."

Emma closed the door behind him and sighed a little. She looked around the room once and frowned. Who was this mysterious she that was listening? Was the apartment bugged? Should she look? No, she should read this first, shouldn't she?
She sat back at the table and put the folded note on top of the divorce papers. With a sigh, she unfolded it and looked down at the writing. It was definitely Killian's. She'd know it anywhere.

And it was the Killian she knew.

It was a simple note. 'Don't sign the papers.' Her eyes widened at the line, and she reread it at least ten times before she looked down the rest of the note. 'I am a horrible actor, love, so I am sorry for hurting you. Staying away was the easiest, and the safest for Liam. Smee will bring you another message from me on Friday. If you need reassurance, remember this: a Captain always needs his ship, and I gave mine up for you.'

She stifled a sob and looked down at the paper. Tears that shouldn't have been able to form dripped to the paper and smeared some of the ink. This was some sort of plot? Killian couldn't tell her about it until now?

Oh. When this was all over, she would make sure he made it up to her.
"We're going to the Enchanted Forest, and we're finding someone who can help you."

Killian looked at Emma and smiled sadly. "In all my years of life, love, I never heard of anyone who could heal that powerfully."

"That doesn't mean there isn't someone." Emma bowed her head, clenching her fists at her side. She was probably forcing her tears back so she wouldn't cry, and that just made Killian smile a little.

"If that's what you want to do, then we'll do it." Another smile. Killian reached out and took one of her hands, trying to be as encouraging as he could in the situation. He didn't totally understand the doctor's words after they scanned his head, but he did understand 'maybe a year to live, if that.'

Emma nodded and moved into him, leaning her head against his shoulder and closing her eyes. "I will do anything I can...because I won't give up."

He kissed the top of her head and nodded. "All right. When shall we leave."

She shrugged a little and curled into him a bit more. "As soon as we can..."

He simply nodded. He knew saying more right now would be too much for her. So he held her and nuzzled her hair, letting her cling to him as long as she liked.

Chapter End Notes

Short because I don't want to write too much sad.
"You didn't finish your part of the lab report again?" Emma sat at the table in the library, chin in her hand as Killian laid his head on his arms. "What was it this time?"

"Work." He sighed and looked up at her, eyes a bit bloodshot. If she hadn't known Killian so well, she'd think he was lying to her and had actually been up drinking all night. But she knew Killian worked most nights as a security guard at the campus center.

"So do you want me to help you get it done now?" Emma smiled a little as she watched him. She couldn't help it. She really had a soft spot for him.

"Yes and no." He groaned. "I can do it, but I want you to help me stay awake while I type." He sat up and pulled his laptop out.

"I can do that." Emma grinned a little. She had no problem helping Killian do his work, but she was getting tired of him being so tired every day. The only days he didn't seem tired were the ones they actually had lab.

"Thanks." He winked at her once before he set to typing.

It only took about four minutes for him to droop, so Emma nudged his leg with her foot. "Killian. Stay awake."

"I'm awake." He perked up a little and began typing again.

So Emma just watched him, chin still in hand. What could she do to get Killian to take better care of himself? He had been like this as long as she had known him. Sleeping between classes, occasionally leaning on Emma during class or lecture. All because of his job, so he could afford his crappy little apartment off campus.

When he started to slump again, she tapped his leg a second time. "Killian."

"I'm awake. I promise. I was just resting my eyes." He shook his head as if to shake off the sleepiness.

"If you can stay awake the entire time..." Emma slid her foot against his leg just a bit. "I'll finally let you take me on that date you've been asking me about for the past few months." Maybe it was a cheap tactic, but Killian did confess some feeling to her, and he had been asking her out just about every weekend. So what could it hurt? Plus, she did like him. She had just been holding out because she didn't want to date during school.

"Will you?" That did it, at least for a bit. He was totally perky, and he even hummed a little while he typed. But again, he started to slump about fifteen minutes later.

"How is it coming?"

He jumped. "Good...good..."

Emma smiled and turned his laptop around. "Just nap. I'll do this."

"But Emma...you always cover for me."

"Then you can make it up to me." She started typing, a smirk coming to her lips.
"How?" He yawned and put his head back down on his arms, but he kept his head turned, watching her as she worked. "I'm not good at anything else."

"For starters, you can pack up your things and move out of that shitty apartment and move into mine with me." She kept looking at the screen, but she saw him almost fall out of his chair, he jumped up so quickly. "Second, you can quit that horrible job that makes you like this."

"Emma..." He shook his head and sat back down. "I couldn't..."

"You will." She looked at him and arched a brow. "I'm insisting. My apartment has a second bedroom. You know that. You sleep in there all the time during those longer stretches between classes."

"But rent...?"

"Well, if you feel that strongly about it, you can get a much better part time job, one that doesn't ruin your sleep schedule, and you can buy your own food and pay for half the utilities."

"But...How could I do that?"

"Well, I don't really have a problem with my friend being my roommate, and I have even less of a problem with my boyfriend moving in with me." She looked at him and arched a brow. "Unless you stopped wanting to be that?"

"No! No!" He waved his hands a bit. "I want to. I really really want to. But won't your parents be mad if I mooch off you?"

"I don't care." Emma grinned and finished his part of the report, putting it together with her part and looking at him again as she sent it to the professor. "The agreement I made with my father is that I would get good grades. I never said I wouldn't get a boyfriend, or move in with anyone."

"But you didn't want to date during school?" Killian shook his head. "Are you compromising that for me?"

"Yes, but that's my choice." She smiled a little and closed his laptop. "I chose to stay single during school because I thought it would help me focus on class. Now I know myself better, and I know I can be with you and still do well. Besides, if you live with me, we can hang out without going out all the time, right?"

He looked at her, jaw dropped, as if unsure what to say, but he slowly nodded. "All right, but I insist on giving you money. I will quit my current job, but maybe I can work during those afternoons between classes."

"All right." She smiled and stood. "Well, shall we get you some coffee, so you can make it through class?" She held her hand out to him.

He took it and stood.
"You look more nervous than most women I meet, love." Killian grinned at his client, who fidgeted in her seat across from him at the small cafe where they agreed to meet. Emma Swan, a normally incredibly busy woman who called him in a fit of desperation because she had to go back to her small town in Maine this week for some sort of reunion, and she absolutely could not go alone.

She blinked a little and patted her cheeks lightly. "Is it obvious? I'm not blushing am I?"

"A bit. But there are other things." He leaned forward a bit. "You bite your lower lip quite a bit. If you do that too much, I'll be accused of being too rough with you." He winked once before leaning back. "And if you can't go to this event alone, and I am supposed to be your loving boyfriend, it would be best not to give people the wrong idea, hm?"

She nodded once and patted her cheeks once more, taking in a deep breath and looking at him. "Sorry. I've never done this before. I just..."

"You just don't want everyone in your tiny little hometown to think you're a failure because everyone there bases success on family and relationships."

"Yes..." Emma looked at him and blinked. "How did you..."

"I am also from a small town. I understand." He grinned and leaned forward a little. "And to people like us. The rebels of that kind of life, we view our successes much differently. I am successful because I make others happy. You are successful because you have a career in protecting people."

She nodded a bit and managed a little smile. "I should be alarmed that you read me so well after five minutes, but I'm so relieved." She relaxed significantly, and Killian smiled a bit. She was pretty when she was nervous, but she was absolutely sexy when that anxiety left.

"Kindred spirits, perhaps." He shrugged and sat back, drinking a bit of his coffee. "Now, Emma, you want to drive there? That's quite a long journey is it not?"

"Yes, but..." She shrugged. "I mean it's a few hours, but I figured we could get our story straight in that time, and I'm not really all that comfortable with any of them picking us up at the airport."

"Sounds like a solid plan of action to me." He grinned. "I suppose that means it'll give you time to get used to me touching you without your cheeks flaring." He reached out and slid his fingers over her hand as if to prove a point. And of course, her cheeks immediately went red and she bowed her head a bit. "See?"

"Y...Yeah."

Killian chuckled a little and patted her hand lightly. "And the money?"

"I'll have it the day we go." She seemed to calm a little at that, though his hand was still resting on hers.

"All right. Then where shall I meet you?"

"You tell me. I'll pick you up," Emma pulled her hand back and pulled out her phone, looking at him. "It's easier that way."
"True." He chuckled. "Then I will text you the location hm?"

"Sounds good to me." She tucked her phone back into her pocket and stood. "Thanks, Killian."

"Thank me after everyone you know becomes jealous of you." He winked, then settled back and watched as she smiled a bit awkwardly and left the cafe. He knew he was in trouble with this one. Within minutes he already felt like he wanted more than this, but he would have to behave. It wouldn't be right for him to make a move on a client like that.

Unless he could get her to make a move first.
Emma leaned her head back against the cinderblock wall. Her hands rested on her stomach, not wanting to look at the way it pushed against her shirt. How could this happen to her? What had she done to deserve all of this? First Neal sets her up, and now she's pregnant?

"Swan. You have a visitor." She blinked a little and looked over at the guard. It was the same woman who brought her that package with the key. And as hardened as the guard was, she always seemed to look at Emma with a bit of pity.

"I don't know anyone." Emma said and sighed, pushing herself up off her cot. "Who could possibly be visiting me?"

"Don't know. Some guy. The father maybe?." The guard let her out and escorted her to the visitor's room, bringing her to a table where a man sat, his eyes brighter than anything she had ever seen, even though everything else about him seemed so dark. Well, it definitely wasn't Neal. If it had been, she absolutely would have turned and walked the other way.

"Emma." The man smiled at her as if there was some sort of familiarity there. There wasn't. He sure did have a nice smile though.

"Hey..." Emma sat across from him and arched a brow a little. She waited until the guard had stepped back enough to give them the illusion of privacy before she continued. "And you are...?"

"Ah. Yes, of course. My name is Killian." He grinned a little and rested his arms on the table, leaning forward a bit so he could inch closer to her. "I'm here to help you."

Emma arched a brow at him and sat back in the chair a bit. "Well, I won't lie and say I don't need help since I'm currently in prison for something I didn't do, but how can you help? Are you a lawyer? Are you going to get me out of here?"

He shook his head and looked at her, though she did notice that he stole a glance down at her stomach and he clicked his tongue a bit before he locked eyes with her. "Unfortunately no, I'm not smart enough for that." He shook his head and shifted a little.

She blinked, noticing then that he only had one hand. Why hadn't she noticed before? Maybe it was the way he sat, or the way he leaned his arms. She shook her head and looked back at his face, so he wouldn't think she was staring. "So...how are you going to help me?"

He grinned a little. "Loving you."

"What?" She frowned at him. "What kind of screwed up person are you? You just walk in here and think you can say something like that to me and I'm not going to think you're a creep?"

"I had no doubt in my mind that you would think I'm a creep. But I know you, Emma." He shook his head and sat up a bit more, resting the handleless arm on the table and smirking a bit. "I know you were set up. I know the person who did it did that to you as well." He motioned towards her stomach with that arm. "And you're feeling very lost and alone right now."

She rested her hands on her stomach and frowned at him. "And you think that's going to make me think you're less of a creep?"

He chuckled as if her defensiveness didn't even bother him. "Eventually you'll understand. But I also
know your parents."

"I was abandoned as a baby, so if you know those assholes, I don't want to know you."

"And if I told you it wasn't by choice?" He arched a brow and leaned forward again. "That your father had hid you away just before getting stabbed? That your mother wanted to keep you with her, but she was terrified you'd be killed as well?"

"That's ridiculous."

"Is it? You were found in the woods, as far as anyone's told you, hm?"

"And how do you know this?"

"I know your parents. I also know the kid that hid with you."

"No one was with me. I was alone." Emma's frown deepened. Who the hell did this guy think he was? Coming in here and saying all this nonsense? It wasn't going to work.

"Hm. All right. I didn't expect you to believe me." Killian shrugged a little as if it didn't bother him at all. "You wouldn't believe me even if I had evidence."

"You're right about that." Emma watched him, the frown still on her face. It was almost more infuriating how little he seemed to be bothered by this whole thing. He just sat there and grinned at her and tapped his fingers from his one hand on the table. But then again, there was that tiny shred of her that wanted to believe him, and she knew he wasn't lying. She could tell. "Killian...?"

"Yes love?" He grinned. It made her heart skip a beat.

"Even if I don't believe you, you're not lying are you?"

"There's not a shred of dishonesty in my words to you, princess." He winked. Another skipped beat.

"Then..." She glanced over at the guard. "You'll visit again won't you? And you'll tell me everything?"

"Every day, beautiful."

She smiled a little and got ready to stand, but he reached out and touched the hand she put on the table. It sent some sort of shock through her, but she simply blinked, hoping he couldn't tell just what that did to her. "What?"

"When you get out of here. When you both get out of here..." He glanced at her stomach again. "I'll take care of you."

"I'm not..."

"Hm. We'll see." He winked and let her go.
"So why are both of you here?" Killian sat at his desk and looked at the two women sitting across from him. He knew Regina Mills was the mayor in this town, and since Henry's last name was Mills, he assumed Regina was his mother. She was frowning at him, but from what he heard from basically everyone else in town, she frowned at everyone. The other woman was younger, and she looked nothing like Regina. Or Henry, really. He vaguely recognized her as well. Was she the deputy? Or was she sheriff now? He never went to town meetings.

"We're both Henry's mom." Regina said and looked at Emma. "Emma's his biological mother, and I'm his adoptive mother." She looked back at him, still frowning. "Didn't that come in his file? That we're both raising him?"

Killian blinked once. He didn't recall reading anything about that. And the more he looked at them, the more he began to understand, or maybe misunderstand in this case. "So you two are...?"

"No!" Emma laughed a little. "No no. Henry just wanted us both in his lives, so we've agreed to be civil with each other for his sake." She shook her head a bit. "We both want what's best for him."

"Ah." He didn't know why he felt so relieved, but he relaxed a little in his chair. "Then you know why I called you in today?"

"Because he's not doing his homework." Regina muttered and shot a look at Emma. "Maybe you should stop running around with him in the afternoon?"

Emma raised her hands and shook her head. "It wasn't me this week. I don't know what he's been telling you. Regina, but I've been too busy with work to pick him up from the bus."

"Well, he hasn't been coming to my office like he's supposed to if you can't pick him up." Regina's frown deepened. Killian didn't know a person's face could contort that much. But he stayed silent, watching the two women half-argue before they both stopped at the same time, their eyes widening. Emma turned back to Killian first. "Has Henry's father been around here?"

"Not that I am aware of. I haven't seen anyone come to get Henry. He always gets on his bus." Killian frowned. "Is the father a problem? Should I call social services?"

"No." Regina sighed. "But he's a bit of an idiot. He forgets that Henry has responsibilities as a student. He's probably been hanging out with him all week and didn't want to tell either of us." She rubbed her forehead a little. "I'll talk with Henry tonight."

"I'll have a discussion with Neal." Emma frowned and slumped a bit in her chair. "I'll make sure to pick Henry up from the bus today. I'll have David take over that part of my shift."

"Well, they're at recess right now." Killian shook his head. "Would it be easier for you to pick him up at the school? I am more than happy to stay with him as long as you need. I can monitor his homework, too, if you'd like." He smiled a little, and for a moment he wondered why exactly he offered that, but part of him really just wanted an excuse to see Emma again. Regina was nice to look at, and all, but Emma seemed much more like his type. Not that she gave him any indication that wooing her would be possible, and he certainly wasn't going to push it.

"That would be a huge help." Emma smiled and glanced at Regina. "I'll work the details out with Mr. Jones here, so you can go back to work. I'll call you and bring Henry right to your office."
Regina looked at her and arched a brow, and a little smirk came to her lips. She glanced back at Killian before looking at Emma again. "Oh? All right." She stood and turned to Killian again. "Thank you, Mr. Jones." She didn't even wait for his response before she walked out of the classroom.

Once the door shut, Emma groaned. "That woman is impossible." She muttered before looking back at Killian. "You don't have to worry about Henry. Despite our weird situation, he's surrounded by more loving family members than he can probably handle." She smiled a little smile and Killian found himself smiling in response.

"That's not something I would question. I was just concerned because he hasn't had his homework all week, and that's not like him." He looked at her. "I didn't mean to start some sort of family issue?"

"We always have family issues." Emma shrugged. "Without getting into any details, Henry has three parents. Two of us are responsible. One of them is not. His father just came to town a few weeks ago, so Henry has been spending as much time with him as he can, I guess. It's not like he'll stay long anyway, but I will talk to him."

Killian nodded once and looked at her. "So this is unusual."

"Yes. Very. Henry has two stable mothers and an instable father. Though..." She shrugged. "He will probably getting a stepfather soon, if Regina's got any say in that." She laughed a little. "Sorry. You don't need to know any of this."

"It's fine. Sometimes it's easier to keep an eye on a child when you know at least which adults are in his life." Killian smiled a bit at her. "Otherwise, parent night might get a bit awkward."

Emma laughed. "Well, Regina's much better at those things than I am. I'm like the step parent with visitation rights, but I think that's ok. Regina is a very good mother to Henry, so I can't complain." She shrugged. "But I will pick him up after school. You really don't mind staying with him for a little bit?"

"Not at all. What time will you be able to make it?"

"Hm. 3:30 probably." She bit her lip. "But should I call the office if I'm going to be a little later?"

The way she was looking at him was a little more than just a mom worrying about her son. Or at least Killian hoped he wasn't misreading the slight flirtation when she looked at him after that question. "I'll give you my number. It would be easier if you just called me." He grinned and wrote it down on a post-it for her.

She took it, and her fingers brushed against his. Was that intentional? "Thank you. Mr. Jones."

"You can call me Killian."

"Then you can just call me Emma. Most people do anyway." She smiled and stood. "I'll call you." She looked at him a bit longer before she left the room.

Killian sat back in his chair and looked at the doorway. The bell rang outside to end recess, and he wondered if he would be breaking some sort of rule if he asked his student's mother out on a date.

"Was that Emma?" Henry's question snapped Killian out of his daze.

"Ah. Yes. She is going to pick you up after school, so don't get on the bus."
"Hm." Henry looked at him a bit, then smirked. "Did you ask her out?"

"What?"

"She was blushing when I passed her in the hallway. She didn't even notice me."

Killian chuckled. "No, lad. I didn't ask her out."

"But you want to."

"I don't know what that has to do with her picking you up from school."

"Because there's no need for her to pick me up from school." Henry kept grinning at him. "You know the station is right across the street, right? I could just walk over there if she wanted me to. So are you going to ask her out?"

"What makes you think I want to ask your mother out?"

"Because you spaced out. We all got back from recess and you didn't notice." Henry grinned. "I'm okay with it. I mean it'd be pretty cool for my mom and Emma to have good boyfriends."

"And your father?"

"Eh." Henry shrugged. "Neal's...not really boyfriend material. Plus Emma is way better off without him." He grinned. "He's good for going to the movies or the arcade, but he's not good for making Emma feel special."

"So you want me to ask her out?"

"Yup. And I think she does too." He laughed and went back to his desk.

Killian chuckled and stood to start class.
Emma stood in the lobby, arms crossed, frowning a bit at the hustle and bustle of the ER. She always hated these shifts. The ones where she just happened to be the officer on duty when someone got into a car wreck or worse. In this case, a car had hit a pedestrian, and so she had to wait while the man was recovering a bit from his surgery.

This place always made her nervous. Every time she was here, it was something gruesome. Last time, a man had been beaten so badly he was unrecognizable. That guy didn't make it.

It was almost enough to make her quit. She could go back home to that quiet town in Maine where the worst that happened was a bar brawl.

"He's awake." The nurse snapped Emma out of her daze and she nodded, following her to the room where the man was recovering.

"Thank you." Emma smiled at the woman before stepping a bit closer to the bedside. At the very least, it didn't seem too bad. Looked like a broken arm and leg. Maybe some fractured ribs. At least there were no amputations, and definitely no death, so that was something positive.

The man turned his head and looked at her. He smiled a dopey smile, probably due to the amount of pain-killers in his system. "Hey, Beautiful." He managed, though his voice was hoarse.

Emma arched a brow at him, but she shook her head and pulled her pad out of her pocket. "I'm just here to take your statement, Mr. Jones."

"I was hit by a bloody car." He muttered, but he continued to watch her.

"Yes, but did you see anything? A color? A make? A model?"

He closed his eyes and groaned a bit before he opened them again and looked at her. "It was too dark to see exactly...but the car...it was a dark color, like black or blue. I hit the windshield pretty hard, so I'm sure it's smashed."

Emma nodded once and wrote things down. "Anything else?"

"Bloody git ran a red. I was on the crosswalk."

"I know. We're going to check the red-light cameras, too." She smiled a little at him, and maybe it was her imagination, but he seemed to be really relieved by that. "If anything comes back to you, I want you to call me okay? I'm going to leave my card at the nurse's station for you."

"Can I call you even if something doesn't come back to me." He chuckled, then groaned a little.

"I'll let that one slide because you're in pain, but flirting with a cop isn't in your best interest."

"Hm. Sorry. I didn't mean to hit a nerve."

Emma shrugged a little and turned. "But if you did just happen to call me, I might just happen to answer." She smirked a bit as she walked out of the room.
Killian clicked through profiles, shaking his head a little at the low number of matches linked to him. Maybe it was reluctance on his part, but if he was going to try out this online dating meeting thing, he wanted to be as picky about his tastes as possible.

So he wasn't shocked that there were only four matches. The first one didn't really suit him. She was too old, and she had a son his age. It also looked like she was married. Well, that was no good was it? The second seemed too...eccentric for his tastes. He wasn't sure why he was matched up with someone who clearly dabbled in the occult.

The third one though? That was more his style. The woman's profile absolutely intrigued him, as it was filled with phrases that made it obvious that she either begrudgingly signed up, or her friends signed her up, and she changed the wording. Interesting. Emma Swan.

Killian spent almost an hour reading and rereading her words before he worked up the nerve to send her a message. Something about this seemed so strange, but at the same time, maybe it was fate? Well, he didn't actually believe in that, but he did believe in odd coincidences. Especially when this woman lived in the same town as him, and yet he never encountered her.

What could it hurt?

So he asked her some questions. Simple things, really. Those stereotypical awkward questions. He wasn't really expecting a reply, so when one came almost immediately, he nearly fell out of his chair. Apparently her mother set up her account for her, that she was wondering why she had been nagging about dates lately, so she took it back and changed all the answers. She was also really surprised to be matched up with anyone given how snarky some of her answers were, and Killian must be a bit of a weirdo.

He laughed. He liked her already. So he replied. Correspondence was a lot easier when you could just quickly type some sentences and send it off. Impersonal, sure, but much less stressful.

Emma agreed.

She also agreed to meet him for coffee tomorrow if he would be up before ten. And she should warn him that if he did anything screwed up, she'd just arrest him. She was a cop, after all.

He stared at the screen for a moment before he replied. Sure. At the very least, she felt safe enough to meet him, though that was probably because she had a gun.

Whatever. It was worth a try, right?
Okay. It's short and lame, but my brain is dead from work today! D:
Emma didn't know what she was expecting when she opened the door this morning, but it certainly wasn't an incredibly attractive man standing on the other side as if he didn't have a care in the world. "Yes?" She looked at him a bit skeptically, standing defensively with her hand on the doorknob, ready to slam the door in his admittedly beautiful face if he tried anything.

"Oh. Hello lass." He looked just as surprised as she was, and she wasn't sure why that bothered her a little. Was he expecting some other person? Did he knock on the wrong door? "I just moved in across the hall." He half turned and nodded to the apartment door behind him. "And when I came in yesterday, this was in my mailbox." He held out an envelope to her. "It appears to be yours. I tried knocking yesterday, but no one was home, and I wasn't sure I could get it to fit in the mail slot for your box. If you weren't home this morning, I was just going to slip it under the door..."

Emma blinked and opened the door enough to take the envelope. She should have been more wary than she was, as something like this could easily have been a way to get her to let her guard down so he could come in and rob her or worse, but he just stood there as she glanced down and read the writing on the envelope. It was for Henry. No wonder he was confused. "Thank you." She looked up at him and offered him a little smile.

He offered one in return, never once taking his eyes off her. "Of course." He nodded once and turned towards his door again.

"And welcome to the building, ah...Sorry." She watched him as he unlocked his door.

He paused and turned towards her again. "Killian."

"Emma." She nodded a little.

"Well, I didn't think it was Henry." He chuckled a little. "Nice to meet you, Emma."

"Yeah, well..." She smiled a little again, and she opened her mouth to say something else before she felt a tug at her arm. She turned and blinked. Henry was standing there, looking up at her with a puzzled expression. "Oh, speaking of..." She pulled open the door and nodded. "Henry, this is Killian. He just moved in across the hall."

Killian blinked. Clearly a child wasn't what he was expecting when he knew there was a Henry in the apartment. He seemed to get over that shock well enough, because he grinned and nodded his head. "Hello, lad."

"Hi." Henry looked at him, then looked at Emma. "I'm going to go to school now." He leaned up and kissed her on the cheek. "You don't have to wait up for me." He grinned. "Grandpa's going to take me out to dinner tonight, so I'm going to go there after school."

"All right." Emma smiled. "Oh! Before you leave, here." She handed him the envelope. "It's from your father. It was in Killian's mailbox instead." She smiled.

Henry took the envelope and made a bit of a face before shoving it into his backpack. "Bye mom. See ya Killian!" He ran down the hallway.

Emma shook her head a little and smiled at Killian again. "Anyway, thank you."

"Of course." He looked at her again, and she could have sworn he wanted to ask her something, but
apparently he thought better of it.

So she decided to ask for him. "If you're not busy this afternoon, would you like to get lunch with me?" It was a bit forward, but he was attractive, and he did seem pleasantly surprised that Henry wasn't a husband or a boyfriend, or that his dad wasn't close enough if he was mailing things.

"Of course." He sounded almost a bit too eager, but he grinned a bit. "Shall I knock on your door and pick you up as if it were a proper date?"

She laughed a little. "Sure. How's one?"

"Perfect."
"What's got you like this?" Neal sat next to Killian and watched him as he downed his fifth, or was it sixth? drink.

"Broken heart, mate." Killian muttered and shook his head a little, resting his arms on the bar before he flopped his forehead down, too. "I'll be fine. Jus' let me alone to drink my bevs."

"Hm. I didn't know you were dating anyone." Neal patted Killian lightly on the back. "But no. I'm not going to leave you alone. You're too close to drunk."

"I wasn't dating her. That's why it's a broken heart. If I had her, I'd be happy." Killian murmured into his arms and sighed, pushing himself to sit up. "I'm fine. Seriously. You got work don't you?"

"Yeah, which is why I told Emma to come keep an eye on you." Neal shrugged. "She'll drive you home."

"Bloody fantastic." Killian frowned and ordered another drink. Not that he could tell Neal that Emma was the one he was in love with. After all, Neal was his best friend. They had been mates since high school, and even though Killian had always liked Emma, she was with Neal going on five years at this point. And he knew that Neal was going to ask her to marry him sometime within the next month. Probably on her damned birthday because he was a sap like that.

"She'll kick your ass if you're too drunk anyway, so she's better than me. I'll just enable you." Neal chuckled and stood. Killian just shook his head and kept his gaze on the bottles of booze behind the bar. He heard the door open, and he heard her start walking in their direction before Neal even stood, so he knew he shouldn't turn around right now.

"Ok. You can head out." Even her voice was torture right now.

"Thanks babe." Neal grinned and kissed her before he left. Killian was fortunate enough, or unfortunate in this case, to catch that out of the corner of his eye, so he downed that new drink and frowned.

"Why are you moping now, Killian?" Emma sat next to him and half turned to face him, elbow on the bar, chin in her hand. "And why do I have to babysit you while you get your mope on?"

"I told Neal I was fine. I don't need you to babysit me." He said rather gruffly. More gruffly than he intended, and he felt bad, but he wasn't going to apologize. He didn't need to feel worse than he already felt.

Emma didn't seem to be bothered by the tone of his voice, though. She simply shook her head and frowned. "Is this about what I think it's about?"

"That depends. What do you think it's about, Swan?"

"The fact that Neal stupidly bought a ring and he's going to propose to me." Emma continued to frown, and now she ordered a drink.

"What?" Killian sat up a bit straighter and looked at her. "Stupidly? The hell does that mean?"

"I don't want him to propose to me any more than you do, you know." She nodded a bit to the bartender and took her beer, shrugging. "That's why you're moping isn't it? You don't want me to
marry Neal."

"Neal's my best mate, Emma..."

"And you don't want me to marry him. You want me to be with you." Emma shrugged as if it were normal, drinking her beer and watching him carefully. "I'm a lot more observant than Neal is."

Killian groaned and put his head back on his arms again. "Bloody brilliant. You really should leave me alone."

"Don't want to."

"The fuck, Emma." Killian turned his head to look at her a bit. "What the hell are you trying to do to me? Are you trying to rub it in my face or something? Do you know how bloody difficult this is?"

"You know Neal doesn't love me, right?" Emma arched a brow. "He hasn't in years, and I'm pretty sure the only reason he hasn't broken up with me is because he doesn't want me to date you."

Killian looked at her, unsure how he was supposed to take that. Did that mean Neal knew Killian loved Emma? Or did it mean that Emma wanted to be with Killian? "That sounds pretty stupid. He's not like that."

"Maybe not. But he does know I don't love him."

"That's a lie."

"No. I don't love him. I haven't since that incident with that girl Tamara in college." Emma sighed. "But all three of us are stupid aren't we? You're in love with your best friend's girlfriend. Your best friend is selfish and only wants to keep up appearances, and his girlfriend doesn't want to cause a fight between you and him."

Killian shook his head a little and frowned. Was Emma actually telling him that she wanted to break up with Neal and be with him? How was he supposed to take that? Should he be happy that his feelings were reciprocated, or should he be angry that he had been suffering for years and Emma had been hiding this from him? "Why are you telling me this now?"

"Because I found the ring." Emma looked at him. "And you've gotten distant, so I just assumed you knew about it."

"So this entire time you've known of my feelings for you, and you've just...pretended like you didn't?"

"I didn't know, but now I do. You getting weird about the ring kind of confirmed it for me, so I'm here."

"To babysit me for your boyfriend."

"No, to tell you how I feel because, quite frankly, I'm tired of hiding it. It's lonely." She rested her hand on his arm and smiled at him.

"How long?"

"Since Tamara. Since you picked up the pieces and put me back together again."

"Christ, Emma, that was almost four years ago." There was a pit forming in his stomach. Had they really been in love with each other for all that time and neither of them knew it?
"I know." She sighed and bit her lower lip. "But I thought you hated me after we..." She shook her head a little. "You seemed to get colder after that."

Killian's eyes widened a little. "That was because I thought he found out. And I was trying to protect you because I thought you loved him."

"Such a gentleman." Emma laughed a little. "And look at us now. What a fine mess we've gotten ourselves into."

"Then what are you going to do? He is going to propose."

"I'm not going to let him." She rubbed his arm a bit, having never moved her hand. "He has tomorrow off, so I'm going to tell him. And I'm going to try my best to make sure he doesn't come after you, but I really don't think he will."

"You're much more confident about that than I am."

"Yeah, well...He's been seeing someone else, so he can just propose to her instead."

Killian frowned a bit. He didn't know if he should believe that. Neal would tell him wouldn't he? He told him about Tamara, so if he was dating someone else, wouldn't he have said something? Or did he actually know and want to keep Emma from him? He was growing angry at the whole situation, but he didn't know who he should be angry with. "You can't be serious?"

"He's not good at hiding it, and I am a cop." Her hand rubbed up his arm towards his shoulder. "So...If you still want me when all of this is over."

"You've got to be bloody nuts." He groaned a little and when she started to wilt and pull back, he grabbed her arm and pulled her half off the stool so she fell into him. "Do you know how long I've wanted you?"

She seemed more surprised by that admission than she was when he leaned in and kissed her. And when he pulled back, waiting for her to slap him for being so forward, she simply looked at him and smiled. "You can wait one more day, can't you?"

"I don't know, love. It might kill me."

"Well..." She lifted her hand to his chest and slid her finger over one of the button of his shirt. "I was thinking...that after things settle down, we could get reacquainted in that way we did a few years ago."

"Hm..." Killian leaned in and whispered. "I will be as patient as I can be, but...whenever you come to me, I won't let you go."

"I won't want you to."
Emma looked into the bathroom mirror, the image slightly distorted since she got impatient and wiped the steam away. She looked at herself and sighed. She heard movement in the bedroom and she gently patted her cheeks. How long had it been like this? Quick trysts that began at the inn and were now only carried out in Emma’s apartment.

"Emma, love, are you okay?"

She forced a smile to her lips as she opened the door, her hair still wet and clinging a bit to her face and shoulders. "I'm fine, Killian."

"You're sure?" He looked at her in that skeptical way he always did when she lied. He knew she was lying, of course, but he never said anything. She knew he would rather let her lie and tell him on her own terms than to pry about it.

"Yes." She wrapped her arms around him and pressed a soft kiss to his lips. "But I have to go to work soon."

"I know." His arms came around her and he kissed her back. "Though I don't want to let you go."

She smiled. She couldn't let him know just how much those words actually hurt. "Well, you have to." She kissed him again. "David will start asking questions if I'm late." She pulled out of his arms and walked to the dresser, pulling on clothing.

"Of course. And if he starts questioning, he starts prying," Killian chuckled. Good. He seemed to accept that answer. "And he's bloody annoying when he starts prying."

"He is." Emma nodded and pulled on her jeans. "You should head out too, hm?" This was normal, right? This sort of conversation was one they had every time they did this. Killian needed to leave in a subtle way, not that anyone would notice if he entered or exited the building, as her apartment was above the liquor store where he worked. That was a strange coincidence that Emma always accepted, but often questioned.

"Yeah." He grinned and pulled the remainder of his clothes on. "I will see you soon hm?" He leaned in and kissed her again. "Tomorrow, if that's ok?"

She nodded and kissed him back. "Tomorrow, then." She watched him leave, and her whole body seemed to slump. How much longer could she do this? It wasn't right.

She met Killian when Henry was five. She was bringing him to his first day of school, and Killian was there doing the same with his own son. They talked, and they clicked in a way Emma never felt before, and they became friends. One rainy morning they became lovers. And then Emma found out Killian wasn't single. So she pulled away from him, as any decent woman would do. She wouldn't be the other one. She refused. She didn't want to be the cause of someone else's heartbreak even if she would be the cause of her own.

But she caved after only a few months. She was too weak and too in love with him to avoid him for any longer, so she started talking to him again. Talking. That was it. Until the talking turned to kissing. And the kissing turned to the full-blown affair they'd been having for the better part of four years now.

She needed to end it. It had to be over. She couldn't do this anymore. She would rather live the rest
of her life miserable because she couldn't be with Killian in any way than miserable because she
could only be physical with him.

But every time she worked up the resolve, he'd say just the right thing to melt her again. That he
loves her more than the stars love the sky. That he needs her the way the ocean needs the moon.
Such lofty and poetic things that her heart always skipped a beat and she fell right back into it.

She had to be firm this time. So as she walked into work, she promised herself that when she saw
him in the morning, she would tell him it was over. She needed to go back to being that good person
who never wanted to hurt anyone with her own selfishness. It would be difficult, but she would do it.

As she walked to her desk, she caught that sympathetic look David always gave her when she sulked
her way into the station. "Emma..." He said, as he always did, so she just looked at him and smiled
the same 'I'm really ok' smile. David knew of course. He was her deputy, and his wife was her best
friend. She spent many nights on their couch sobbing about this whole thing.

David didn't seem to want to let it drop today, though. "This is serious, Emma, are you really okay?
Did anything happen to you last night or this morning?"


"Well, I saw Milah yesterday when I was dropping something off to Mary Margaret. Killian was
with her, and so was Gold. It did not look pleasant, that's for sure."

Emma paled slightly and frowned. Did something happen? Wouldn't Killian have told her about it?
He didn't seem any different than normal, and she knew he was a terrible actor. "Did...you hear
anything?"

"No, but it couldn't have been good. She looked very angry, and Gold seemed to be on Killian's
side, for whatever reason. Don't those two hate each other?" David shook his head. "So, I wanted to
check on you because I know you usually see him on Thursday mornings."

"Yeah..." She sighed. "But he didn't say anything to me. He wasn't any different than normal." She
crossed her arms and sighed again. She really needed to end this if those three were in some sort of
conflict. The last thing she wanted was to deal with Milah or Mr. Gold.

"I just thought I'd warn you." David shrugged and went back to his desk.

Emma rested her chin in her hand and started clicking through things on her computer, though she
had a hard time keeping focused. After about an hour of it, she stood and clipped her badge to her
belt. "I'm going to patrol a little."

"I'll go with you."

Emma jumped a little and looked up to see Killian standing at the doorway to her office. She had no
idea how long he had been standing there, but he seemed somewhat amused.

"You can't..." Emma shook her head and tried to push past him, but he caught her arm.

"I have something important to tell you, so please let me come with you." He whispered, a bit
harshly. It was a tone Emma hadn't heard him used towards her more than twice their entire
relationship.

"Killian, whatever it is, you can either tell me here before I go, or you can tell me later." She pulled
her arm from him and practically shoved him out of her way as she forced herself past him.
"I've been lying to you." Killian said simply.

Emma whirled around, and she couldn't tell if it was pain or anger that welled up in her chest. "What?" She stared at him. "What the hell about?"

"Milah."

David stood and walked into the filing room. Emma was grateful for that, but at the same time, she wanted him to stay here to keep her from killing the man who stood in front of her. "How long?"

He shook his head a little. He seemed way too calm for this, and Emma realized that it was pain and anger coursing through her, even as he began to speak. "Hm...Most of it?" How dismissive could he be? "She is Liam's mother, and I was with her when I met you, but..."

"But...?"

"We were never married. So when she was pregnant, Gold knew it wasn't his because he was with that Librarian lass at the time, so he divorced her. I thought it would work out, so I stayed with her as Liam grew, but we never married. Every time she brought it up, I deflected."

"Then the ring?" Emma clenched her fists a little at her sides. Did he know just how horrible she felt about herself? Or is this why he always begged her not to leave him? Could she trust him now?

"Most women don't take kindly to a man who stole a woman from her husband. It was easier. But then I met you." Killian kept his eyes on her, and that made it worse. He didn't even look sorry.

"So you lied to me..."

"Well, yes. You understandably assumed I was married, so you left me." He stepped closer to her. "But that was too much for me, Emma. I had already fallen so deeply in love with you that I couldn't function without you. So I left Milah. And I was going to pursue you honestly, but you came back to me without me doing anything, and I was just so ecstatic..."

"You let me think....for almost four years....And you're just telling me now? Do you know how fucked up that is?"

"I know." He finally bowed his head. "I know. I am quite horrible. But David saw us arguing yesterday, and I knew I shouldn't keep lying to you."

"You couldn't have come to that conclusion years ago? You know, that first time I broke down and told you we needed to stop this because I couldn't ruin everyone's lives? That I couldn't take Liam's dad away from him? You couldn't have just told me then?"

"I should have. Emma, I have no excuses for it. But part of me felt like I didn't deserve you. I felt like I needed to be some horrible person so you could feel less guilty about things, but that backfired didn't it? You were going to leave me again."

"I might still leave you, asshole." Emma sank into a chair and looked up at the ceiling as if that would prevent any tears from falling. "Fucking asshole."

"I know. I am quite abhorrent. And if you tell me you never want to see me again, I won't blame you." He walked to her and rested his hands on the arms of the chair. "But I love you, Emma."

"You lied to me, Killian." She looked at him. She could have punched him, but she just didn't have the energy. "You lied to me for years. You made me feel horrible for being the other woman..."
"I don't deserve you."

"No, you don't. You deserve a kick in the balls."

He nodded once. "If you wish." And he watched her for a moment. "Truthfully, though, while I did leave her, I wasn't really unbound from her. Not until yesterday. She came after me for child support, which I obviously was more than willing to pay. But you know I was always the one taking care of Liam..."

"I know." She sighed and lifted her hand to wipe the tears that started to fall from her eyes. "So what the hell are you getting at? Can I even believe you?"

"I have full custody of him, now." Killian looked at her. "Milah wants to leave. She found someone else, and so I sued for custody. Gold helped me, and I won."

Emma watched the way his face changed. The smile on his lips, the way he looked completely calm. Was that really it? Was he so stressed this whole time because of Liam, not because he was trying to hide their affair from Milah? Not that it actually was an affair, apparently. "So...?"

"So she's leaving."

"And David saw you fighting about all that?"

"David saw Milah and Gold fighting. We had just come from the verdict, and she was incredibly angry with him for taking my side. But she also wanted to leave, and I don't think she really wanted to take Liam with her."

"So Liam is losing his mother..." She sighed.

"Not because of you, love. Because Milah does not want any attachment to this town, or any of the people in it."

"I'm sure she doesn't want to lose him." Emma shook her head. "Do you think she really doesn't want him?"

"No. I think she loves him and knows staying here is best for him." Killian straightened up again and sighed. "But you are right. I should have told you all of this earlier. I didn't want to burden you, but I appear to have made things worse."

Emma looked at him, a few more tears sliding down her cheeks. "Killian...is that all you've lied to me about, or has everything been a lie?"

His brows furrowed. He had to know what she was getting at, right? "That was it. I was trying to spare myself, and in turn I've hurt you very much. I know I shouldn't be forgiven for that."

"I'm pretty pissed about that." She nodded. "And yeah I really do kind of want to kick you in the balls, or punch you and break your nose, or something." She sighed and looked down at her hands as they rested in her lap. "I feel very worthless right now. Like you couldn't trust me, or that you were leading me on. I haven't felt this way in a very long time...Not since Henry's father..."

Killian kneeled in front of her and took her hands. "Emma, it's because you're worth so much that I screwed up. You are the most important to me besides my son. And I love you. I love you as much as a person can ever be capable of loving. And I could sense that you were done this morning. You aren't subtle. And I knew I would have to come clean if I had any chance."
She looked at him, but she didn't pull her hands away from him. He really did always know what to say. "What...do you want from me, Killian? I can't..."

"I want you to love me." He lifted her hands to his lips and kissed her fingertips gently. "I want you to smile at me, and laugh with me. I want to be able to take you on a proper date. I want everyone to know that you're the only woman in my heart, and no one can ever replace you."

"But..."

"I want you to be Liam's stepmother. And I want to be Henry's stepfather."

Her eyes widened. "W...What?"

"I want you to marry me, Emma. But I know you're really angry, so I'll propose properly when I can make you happy again."

She started at him, eyes still wide. This morning she was convinced it had to be over. Even ten minutes ago, she was so done with him after he admitted to lying to her. But now? That simple idea? Her heart felt like it could burst in her chest. Why was she so happy? Could she really marry him after all of this? After the way she felt for so long? After such a lie?

Fresh tears dropped from her chin as she choked on a half-sob. "Killian...I..."

He winced a little. "I'm so sorry, love."

"Well, you should be..." She managed between sobs. "But I...I mean I will."

It was his turn to look at her with wide eyes. "What?"

"I want to marry you." She fell off the chair and threw her arms around his neck, sinking into him and sobbing into his neck. "I want to marry you. I want to be able to come home to you. I want to be able to go to sleep with you, and wake up with you still in bed with me." She sniffled a little, but kept her face hidden. "I want...a house...with a yard...and maybe a dog or a cat."

He pressed his lips into her hair. "Then when you're ready, let's work on that okay?"

"Okay." She lifted her head a little and looked at him. "You're still such an asshole for lying to me, though."

He managed a slight chuckle. "I know."
Killian sat back in his seat and stared at the woman sitting in front of him. She sat with her head bowed, blonde hair falling into her face and around her shoulders, which trembled slightly, though she was no longer crying. What could he say in a situation like this? Neither of them were prepared for what happened, but what was that cliché? It only takes once?

In their case, once was a drunken night after a friend's wedding. She was a friend of the bride's, and he, the groom's. They had sat at the bar and talked, and drank, too much in fact because although they had agreed that leaving together was too quick, several drinks later, it was the best idea in the world.

That best idea that led to the next best idea, which was hours of ridiculously good sex.

That best idea led to a pregnant Emma, sitting across from him at a table in a diner, crying as she told him the news. Crying because she just found out. Crying because she didn't want to ruin his life with this. Crying because she didn't know what to do. Crying because she was completely terrified.

Sure, they had talked some after their night, and they bounced around the idea of meeting up and getting to know each other, but that was a couple of months ago, and they had both been so busy that they hadn't actually seen each other until today.

"Emma." He couldn't stand the silence anymore. "Hey..."

She lifted her head to look at him, tear-stained cheeks flushed slightly from the crying, her eyes a bit red and puffy. She clearly hadn't had any sleep the night before, and he absolutely could not blame her for that. "I'm so sorry..." She whispered.

He shook his head a little and looked at her evenly. "Without thinking about what you think you're doing to me for a moment, think about you. What do you want, Emma?" He wasn't sure how he was remaining so calm about this, but he wanted to make sure that he was there for her. It wasn't a mistake that they met that night. And he really did have every intention of courting her. It just hadn't worked out, and now here they were, thrown together in this situation with very little wiggle room.

"I..." She looked at him, tears threatening to fall again. She shook her head slightly and looked down at their hands. "I can't ruin things for you like this. I'll go to the doctor..."

He leaned over the table a bit and brought her hand to his lips, kissing her fingertips lightly before he smiled against them. "I promise you, love, whatever you want will not ruin my life."

She looked at him again and seemed completely startled by that. Of course she would be. For all their conversations. For all the phone calls and quick texts, they never really had a serious conversation, and they certainly didn't really know each other well enough for this kind of heavy
talk. "But..."

"Listen." Killian spoke softly, his lips brushing against her fingers. "I'm not the kind of man who would think a child would ruin my life. And I'm certainly not going to be upset that I'd be permanently connected to a lovely lass. And that's what you want, isn't it? You want to keep it?"

Emma's cheeks flushed more, and this time not because of the tears. She nodded once and looked down a little. "I know that might sound selfish, but..."

"Then keep it, hm?" He smiled at her. "Keep it. And I will take care of the both of you."

"Killian...is it that simple? We just...We barely knew each other when we slept together, and we definitely don't know each other well enough now."

"I know." He let go of her hand and stood, sliding out of his seat and moving to her side of the table. He sat next to her and gently rested his arm over her shoulders, pulling her to lean against his side. "But we have some time hm? To get to know each other. For you to fall desperately in love with me so we can elope."

She blinked and looked at him. "What? Are...you serious?"

"Completely serious." He grinned at her.

"You want to marry me? But I'll be huge by then..."

"You and I both know that neither of us really care for those fancy weddings. Besides. I already know I'll fall in love with you, so why not make this easy?"

"You want me to love you?"

"Aye."

"And marry you?"

"Aye."

"Killian...That's a bit too forward."

"So was taking you home after that wedding, but we did that, hm?" He grinned a bit and winked. If a little humor helped, it was worth it, right?

"Then..." Emma bit her lip and looked at him before she smiled slightly. "Then you have to move in with me. My apartment is way nicer than yours."

He chuckled a little. "Is that so?"

"Yours is too small, and it smells too much."

"Hey now! My apartment does not smell!"

"It does! You're the one who moved into the place above the fish market. It smells so bad! You're just used to it. At least I live over the bakery."

"Ah. Well in that case, you're right. It would be much better to smell bread than fish guts."

Emma made a bit of a face, and Killian thought the way her nose wrinkled up was absolutely
adorable. Even when she pushed him lightly. "Don't even talk about it. It's so gross."

"Apologies, love." He grinned and kept her against his side. "So when shall I move in?"

"Now."

"Ah. Now who's the one being forward?" But he nodded. "I can gather some things and bring them over, but all of it is a bit too much."

"Make sure you air them out on the way."

Chapter End Notes

This is absolutely a sequel to the wedding one (Chapter 24)
"My father is going to kill you if he finds out." Emma somehow managed to get the words out as they ran, clutching Killian's hand tightly as they rushed through the woods just outside the castle. They somehow managed to dodge trees and bushes as they ran, but they went as quickly as they could. Not so much because they were being chased, but because they wanted to put as much distance between themselves and the palace when the King woke and noticed his daughter ran away.

"Then we have to make sure he either doesn't find out, or he can't kill me." Killian chuckled and slowed once they seemed to be far enough away.

"Well, the most I can do is shield your body with my own if he goes after you." Emma's cheeks were flushed from the running, and with the way she was trying to catch her breath, her corset seemed tighter than usual.

He looked at her and pulled her into his arms, holding her against his chest and grinning. "I couldn't allow such a thing to happen to such a lovely lass." He kissed her then, quick, but passionate.

She smiled. "No? And here I thought pirates were pretty ruthless."

"We are. Why do you think I'm kidnapping the princess?" He winked and took her hand again, helping her through the woods and towards the shore, where his ship was waiting.

"True." Emma laughed and let him help her onto the rowboat. "It is pretty risky to take someone so beloved." She smiled a bit at him before she rested her hand in the water and watched it. "I should feel guilty for wanting to leave...But..."

"You can feel however you want to feel, Emma." Killian murmured as he rowed. "But your decisions are your own, and you shouldn't regret them. That sounds self-serving, since you chose me, but..."

"Of course I chose you. I love you, idiot." She looked back up at him. "And I have been arguing with them for months. I don't want to marry Neal. I don't want to be a pawn for some political thing, even though I know I'm supposed to be..." She shook her head. "I don't care if they're mad at me. I know that's not how a good daughter would feel, but I couldn't do it. I couldn't pretend anymore."

"I'm much better for you than he is anyway." He grinned at her. "And I am much more attractive, wouldn't you say?"

"Don't flatter yourself so much that I'll jump out of this boat and head home." She stuck her tongue out at him, pulling it in just as he leaned forward to try to take her mouth. "You don't need to act jealous. I'm here with you. And I'm too used to a comfortable life to give it up so easily, so if I'm doing it for you, you really have no reason to complain."

"Well, no, but I do want to hear you tell me how good looking I am." He chuckled as he helped her up the rope ladder.

"Maybe." She shook her head a little and let one of the men help her over the railing. "Maybe not."

"Such a cruel princess." Killian hopped over the railing himself and took Emma's hand again. "All right, mates! Let's get moving while the wind is in our favor."

"Aye Cap'n!"
"And don't disturb us!" Killian grinned more as the men whistled and hollered.

Emma rolled her eyes. "Must you encourage them?" But she smiled and let him lead her to his cabin. At the very least, she would need to change into something more comfortable than the now grass-stained and muddy dress she was wearing.

"Better to make it known you're mine than to let them think something else." He shrugged and pulled some clothing out for her, holding it up and nodding. "This shirt will definitely fit you." He handed it to her and held up some pants. "These might be a bit big, but we'll find you something more suitable when we make it to the next port."

"I can't just wear this." She looked at him. "Give me your doublet."

"Oh? Why's that?"

"You're giving me a white shirt to wear when we're on a ship. Unless you want all of your...mates...to see my body when it rains?"

"Excellent point, love." He shrugged off his jacket and unlaced his doublet, grinning at her the whole time. "Would you like me to remove anything else?"

"Not tonight." Emma took it from him and leaned up to kiss him. "Now go. Give me a few minutes to work this out."

"Let me help you."

"Absolutely not. You'll get touchy feely." She pushed him lightly. "And right now I'm too tired for you to start."

"Oh. Is that it? What an excuse." But Killian winked and leaned in to kiss her. "I will do as you wish, but only because I love you. This goes against my nature as a pirate."

"Hm. Lucky me." She whispered against his lips. "Well, pirate. If you behave, I'll let you love me more thoroughly. But for now, I need to change, and you need to go stop your men from trying to open the hatch to get a peek." She glanced up.

Killian tilted his head and frowned at the way the hatch rattled a little. "Those bloody..." He grinned. "I will protect your honor, my lady." He chuckled and climbed up there.

Emma changed as she listened to the thuds and the yelling, though it was muffled as the hatch was firmly closed again. She shook her head a little, and once she fastened the clasps and tied the laces, she sat on the bed and looked down at her hands. It was all too big for her, and she certainly was uncomfortable, but she should be uncomfortable. She was going against everything she ever knew to be with this man. This pirate captain she bumped into one day in town. This man who stole her heart.

Did she regret leaving? No. Did she feel guilty? A bit. But she would hold her head high, and she would deal with things as they came.

And she would stand by Killian's side when her father inevitably sends the royal navy after them. After all, this was true love, wasn't it? And her parents should know about that better than anyone.
"I love you." Killian blurted it out before he even realized the words were leaving his lips. He was sitting on the couch with Emma, watching TV as they usually did after work. He stared straight ahead, too unsure of himself to look at her.

"I know." She said. Totally nonchalant as she sank back into the couch, and Killian realized she probably thought he meant it in some completely non-romantic way. After all, they had been together since they were five. Best friends who stuck together through every relationship, every break up, school, college, work, everything.

Should he emphasize what he really meant? Was it too ridiculous? Would it ruin their relationship? Would she hate him? He glanced at her out of the corner of his eye, and she looked completely unaffected. She just continued to watch the TV, curled up with her legs on the couch and her hands cupped around her mug of hot chocolate. Did she understand how he felt? "Emma..."

"I said I know." Emma glanced at him, and he could have sworn her eyes narrowed a little at him, but maybe he was just imagining it? Maybe he just assumed she was annoyed with him for it?

He said nothing to that, but he did stand and leave the room. How could he be so stupid? His fists clenched a little as he scolded himself for being too hasty. Maybe he could laugh this whole thing off? Maybe he could pretend it wasn't what it was? Maybe he could convince himself it didn't hurt a little? Okay, make that a lot.

"Killian?"

He heard Emma put the mug down on the coffee table and get up, but he didn't turn to look at her. Instead he opened up the fridge and grabbed a beer. When he turned around to grab the bottle opener, he jumped and almost dropped it. "Bloody hell, Emma. Don't do that!"

She was standing right there, so close that she was practically touching him. "Why are you throwing a tantrum?" She crossed her arms and frowned up at him. She wasn't going to move out of his way so he could open the drink, was she?

"I'm not throwing a tantrum, I'm getting a beer."

"You only drink beer when you've had a bad day at work or you're upset about something." She frowned at him, and he couldn't help but feel guilty.

"I'm fine." He lied, and he knew she knew he was doing it, but he did it anyway. He turned his head to the side a bit, jaw set. He knew Emma wasn't going to let this go, that she was going to pry, or press him, or something. He just didn't want to do it right now.

"You're upset because I didn't react the way you wanted me to?" She sighed and grabbed his chin, turning his head back to her, looking right up at him. "Did you want me to act shocked or surprised when I've known for a while?"

His brows furrowed a bit. "So you just shrug me off?"

"I wasn't shrugging you off. I was acknowledging you." She continued to hold his chin. "I know you love me, Killian. You've loved me since we were kids. And I've felt the same way. We're like family, right?"
"Emma..." He sighed. "You're misunderstanding me."

She blinked a little, dropping her hand from his chin and stepping back a bit and looking at him. If he had to pinpoint that look, it was a little bit hurt, wasn't it? "What?"

"I am in love with you. So no, I don't see you like family." He frowned at her and stepped to the side, walking around her to grab the bottle opener. He said nothing else as he started to drink the beer as if it were the only thing that made sense to him right now.

"Since when?" Emma's voice was soft, and it almost sounded like it was trembling.

"I duno. A few years. But I didn't want to ruin this. Looks like I buggered it up." He took another swig,

"I..." Great. Was she crying? "Killian..."

He shook his head. "If it bothers you that much, pretend I never said anything. I don't want you to worry about me. I'll get over it eventually."

"No!" She was pressing against his back, her fingers curled into his shirt. "I don't want to pretend..."

"Emma?" He tried to look over his shoulder at her, but all he could see was blonde hair, since she pressed her face into the back of his shoulder.

"I love you like that, too. For a while now."

"Eh?" Well, he certainly was hoping for this, but he never thought it would happen. "Really?"

"Y-yeah, but I was scared, so I never said anything. So I just let myself believe that we would always just be like this, and that was good enough for me. I figured you had other interests since all the women you've ever dated were nothing like me."

"I did that on purpose because if I wasn't going to be able to have you, I didn't want to try to pretend with anyone else. If they were different, then I knew they couldn't ever be like you." He put the beer down on the counter. "Emma, let me see you."

"No, I'm crying."

"I've seen you cry hundreds of times, love. Let me see you."

She let go of him, but her head was still bowed when he turned around, so he gently lifted her chin and smiled a little at her. She was definitely crying. Tears slid down her cheeks and dripped off her chin. So he leaned in and gently kissed them away. She sniffl ed a little and closed her eyes.

"Killian..."

"What would you like to do about this, Emma?" He gently brushed his thumb over her lower lip.

"I..." She opened her eyes and looked at him again. "I want to be with you."

"Then be with me."
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Emma sat on the railing, swinging her legs a bit as she looked out over the land. The moon shone brightly in the sky, silver light filtering down and reflecting off the dark water. She knew he wouldn’t be back for another few days, but she felt closer to him when she watched like this.

"Emma?"

She turned her head and looked at her mother as she came out on the balcony. "Hm?" She turned and hopped off the railing so she wouldn’t be scolded for the dangerous position.

Snow looked at her, and the sad look on her face made Emma very nervous. "It's about the Lieutenant."

"Killian?" Her heart jumped into her throat and she stared at her mother. The way her eyes seemed to avoid looking directly at Emma, and the way her lip quivered just slightly as if she were on the verge of tears made Emma even more anxious. "W...What is it?"

"We just..." Snow shook her head and held out a small scroll. "Here. I can't."

Emma took the tiny scroll. It must have come on one of her mother's birds. A knot formed in her stomach as she slowly unrolled it, her eyes following the ink, and as she read the words and comprehended their meaning, tears formed as if to block the offending sight. "No..." She sank to the floor, those tears forcing their way down her cheeks, her breath catching in her throat. "I...No. No."

Snow crouched in front of her and wrapped her arms around her. "I am so sorry." She whispered into Emma's hair. "I know there's nothing I can do or say to console you right now, or ever, but..."

"No..." Emma buried her face in her mother's shoulder and sobbed. Painful, body-wracking sobs that caused every muscle to scream in protest. Her lungs burned as they tried to pull in air. How could this happen? How was she supposed to do anything now? How could Killian die? "No..He's supposed to come home this week. He's..."

"I know." Snow kissed the top of her head and continued to hold her. "I know." She whispered.

Emma knew her mother's heart was broken, too. Of course it was. Killian had been a part of their lives for years. He had grown up with Emma, and when he left last year with the Royal Navy, it had been almost as hard on Snow to see him go as it had been for Emma, but Emma suspected that was mostly because Killian was the one to keep Emma in line, and if he was gone, she would grow wild again.

But she was thirteen now. She was a proper princess, just like her parents wanted, though she did it with the hope that when Killian came home, he would fall in love with her and she could convince her parents to let her marry him, eventually, since she was too young right now. But now that was impossible. He was gone. He was never coming back.

"Let's get you inside."

Emma's sobs had quieted, and so she simply nodded and allowed Snow to help her to her feet. She let her lead her into the room, and she let her help her change for bed. She didn't think she had the
energy to do all of this herself, anyway. "What...am I supposed to do, Mama?"

Snow looked at her, and her eyes watered again, but she blinked several times as if that would keep them back. "Right now? You cry. You cry and you scream and you mourn him. And you curse the world for taking him away from you. You let yourself feel every emotion you feel, and you don't feel ashamed for feeling that way." She hugged Emma close and smoothed her hair a little. "And you let your father and I love you, and worry about you. And you're going to find us very annoying over the next few months, or however long you need. We're going to nag you to make sure you eat, and to make sure you sleep. We're going to force you to go outside, and we're going to make you put on a brave face for other people. But we're going to do that because we love you. Because we know that right now you hurt more than anyone should hurt." She pulled back enough to wipe some of the tears from Emma's cheeks. "Because all we can do is try to give you something stable and normal while you work it out."

Emma looked at her, tears still sliding down her cheeks. "But...what about..." She sighed. "I wanted to..." Just the thought of her now shattered dreams caused everything in her chest to get tight again.

"I know. We know." Snow wiped more of her tears. "Killian is your whole world. No one will ever replace him." She managed a little smile. "And that's ok. No one has to replace him."

Emma nodded a little and lifted her hand to wipe her own tears. "So...how am I supposed to live without him?"

Snow sighed a little and took her hands. "Keep him in your heart. Know that his soul is within yours. And as you live, he lives. That's all you can do."

Emma managed a little nod and looked up at her. "I won't die."

Her mother blinked, looking somewhat startled.

Emma nodded again, finding some strength in those words. "I won't die. I won't let Killian fully die. If what you say is true, and my life means he lives in some way, then I will get stronger. And I won't die. But right now I will keep crying. Is that okay?"

"Of course." Snow smiled a little and pushed some of Emma's hair out of her face, her fingers wiping a few more tears. "You are such a strong girl, so don't be afraid to cry. It shows how much you love him, and remember, love is strength." She kissed her on the forehead. "Come to me or your father for anything, okay?"

Emma nodded and carefully pulled out of her mother's arms. "Okay. I need some time alone..." She knew her mother would understand. Her mother always seemed to understand.

"I will come check on you later, all right?" Snow kissed her forehead again before leaving the room.

When the door was shut, Emma pulled her robe on over her nightgown. She walked back out to the balcony, bare feet unable to feel the cold of the stone as she leaned against the railing. She looked up at the moon, now blurred through a fresh set of tears. "Just watch me. I'll become so pretty, and so great that you'll regret dying."

Chapter End Notes
I AM SO SORRY!!!!! If it's any consolation, I was totally tearing up and wiping my eyes as I wrote this.

I am going to take a little break from CS stories because of NaNoWriMo. I have my own story to create, though who knows how that will work out. I will be back to CS in December for sure. It'll also give me some time to figure out what to do next! I have several AU s to write, some I started, some I just have ideas for. <3 Thanks everyone for reading!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!